

**LIBERATING THE POTENTIAL OF KENYAN WOMEN IN  
MARGARET OGOLA'S NOVELS**

**BY**

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## **DECLARATION**

I, CATHRYNE CHEROP, HEREBY DECLARE THAT “LIBERATING THE POTENTIAL OF KENYAN WOMEN IN MARGARET OGOLA’S NOVELS” IS ENTIRELY MY OWN WORK, THAT ALL THE SOURCES THAT I HAVE USED HAVE BEEN PROPERLY REFERENCED AND THAT I HAVE NOT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED ANY PART OF DISSERTATION AT ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY FOR A DEGREE.

CATHRYNE CHEROP \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

AS THE CANDIDATE’S SUPERVISOR I, PROFESSOR CHERYL STOBIE, HAVE APPROVED THIS DISSERTATION FOR SUBMISSION.

PROF. CHERYL STOBIE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

The research in this dissertation examines Margaret Ogola's portrayal of female characters in three of her four novels, namely: *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo* and *Place of Destiny*. The main argument in this dissertation is that: through liberating the potential of Kenyan women in the texts, the author attempts to empower women. Of primary concern to this study is the way Ogola unleashes the potential of women through her narratives by analysing the impending liberation of Kenyan women in her fiction. I examine how Ogola restructures the image of women using different strategies to influence and boost women's liberation and independence in their changing society. I further examine the classification of female characters: those who subscribe to traditional and tyrannical female socialisation, and those who go beyond the chains of patriarchy and advocate for emancipated femaleness. I analyse the traditional practices and cultural beliefs that bar women's liberation and their progress, and also examine how the author privileges and gives voice to her female characters in their bid for liberation and independence. The analysis justifies the author's aims to unmask the biased image of women in Kenyan society as demonstrated by her texts. Lastly, I analyse the principle of gender equality, and examine how the author gives cultural legitimacy to female power in her works of fiction. In this regard, my research is guided by African feminism theory and post-colonial studies. The analysis also takes a sociological approach as a focal point that informs the study on the plight of women and girls in the Kenyan context.

I conduct my analysis in this study in a way that not only seeks to engage with the literariness of each of the primary texts, but also highlights the socio-economic value inherent in the texts, as well as how they function as vital tools for the liberation and independence of Kenyan women in the present time. The fourth novel, *Mandate of the People* (2012), is intentionally left out of my research because many of the issues tackled in it are similar to those found in the first three novels.

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this project to all Kenyan women who go an extra mile in pursuit of their economic, social and political aspiration in quest for their liberation and independence.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Background to the Study

Margaret Ogola is a Kenyan woman author and a dedicated key novelist in the Kenyan literary scene. Her first novel, *The River and the Source* (1994), has been on the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) syllabus from 1999 to 2002 and from 2012 to 2016. It earned the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for the best first book in the Africa region, and the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature in 1995. *The River and the Source* is currently studied in the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University literature curricula. Ogola is an important author who has made a foremost literary contribution, yet her writing has received relatively little attention. Her fiction is socially committed in nature and concerns a human society that cares for both genders. Her narratives examine the social and economic status of women, championing their welfare in society. Her literary work responds to women's exploitation and marginalisation in society. She highlights the values of women's liberation, personal commitment and integrity right from pre-colonial to post-colonial times and into the present time, showing the development over this period. She has explored the continuity of societal virtues through the books' themes.

*I Swear by Apollo* (2002) and *Place of Destiny* (2005) have equally not received the critical consideration that they deserve. There is a scarcity of criticism focused on Kenyan female writers, although they have dramatically contributed to African literature. Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie underscores the fact that "African women writers should be committed to their third world reality by offering readers the right African perspectives" (1994, p. 64). She argues that "nothing could be more feminist than the writings of women writers in their concern for and deep understanding of the experiences and fates of women in society" (p. 64). Ogola's literary position reveals a deep understanding of African women and their concerns. This study recognises and responds to the fact that Ogola's narratives have generated little criticism. Lloyd Brown asserts that African women's writings have been omitted from the main canon of writing, foregrounding the following:

Women writers of Africa are the other voices; the unheard voices rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the repetitive anthologies and the predictably male-oriented studies in this field. (Brown, 1981, p. 3)

For this reason, the present study brings Margaret Ogola's works of fiction into perspective. It analyses three of Ogola's four novels. The fourth novel, *Mandate of the People* (2012), is intentionally left out of my research because many of the issues tackled in it are similar to those found in the first three novels. Another reason for leaving out the above-mentioned novel is because it was posthumously published and it missed the author's input in the normal editing stage.

This dissertation analyses the developing liberation of Kenyan women in Ogola's fiction. It seeks to examine how Margaret Ogola restructures the image of women in three of her four novels, namely: *The River and the Source*, *Place of Destiny* and *I Swear by Apollo*. The argument in this dissertation is that: through liberating the potential of Kenyan women in the texts, the author attempts to empower women in Kenyan society. In *Writing African Women: Gender, Popular Culture and Literature in West Africa*, Stephenie Newell notes:

Gender images and ideologies constantly shift to account for their changing status. This has led to the emergence of new perspectives which interrogate, reformulate and analyse inherited, popular codes. (1997, p. 1)

Newell expresses the impact of social changes in society and how the society itself responds to these social variations. She examines how images are altered in literature by indicating that images of gender are not static as they vary with time. Newell's argument is appropriate to this research because I intend to examine how gender images are constructed and remodelled in society to provide for the changing times, predominantly in the present novels under study. I, therefore, examine the liberation of women in the context of the African traditional culture and specifically the Luo culture to which the author belongs, and other socio-economic and political structures within the confines of society in general.

The main concern of this research is how Ogola uses the above-mentioned structures to influence and boost women's liberation and independence in their changing society. The study examines the classification of female characters: those who subscribe to traditional and tyrannical female socialisation, and those who go beyond the chains of patriarchy and advocate emancipated femaleness. It analyses the traditional practices and cultural beliefs that bar women's liberation and their progress, and examines how the author privileges and gives voice to her female characters in their bid for liberation and independence. This analysis will attempt to certify the

author's aims to unmask the biased image of women in Kenyan society as demonstrated by other literary texts, for instance Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's fictional writing. This study, through the thematic analysis, brings into perspective the role of Kenyan women, portraying them as the pillars of society. Naana Banyiwā Horne contends that several images of African women provided in literature vary from images presented by their male counterparts. She foregrounds the following:

By virtue of their gendered experiences, women writers are inclined to depict female characters in more realistic terms, with a great deal of insight, and in meaningful interaction with their environment. Women writers tend to create a woman's world in which women characters exist in their own right, and not as mere appendages to a male world. (1986, p. 120)

The above concept chimes with Ogola's representation of Kenyan women in her fiction.

### **Margaret Ogola: Relevant Biographical Information**

Margaret Ogola is a Kenyan female post-colonial novelist. She is a celebrated author and a doctor who dedicated her life to the treatment of HIV and Aids in East Africa. Dr Ogola served as a pediatrician and the medical director of Cottolengo Hospice for HIV and Aids orphans. As a pediatrician, Ogola was the children's ambassador. In addition to the prizes already mentioned, she is also a recipient of the *Familias Award for Humanitarian Service*. Ogundipe-Leslie highlights the roles of intellectual women, noting:

Women intellectuals must generate knowledge and engage in inquiry and action regarding our interests as women in the context of the genuine liberation of women in Africa as the continent liberates itself economically. (1994, p. 160)

Ogola's narratives champion liberation of African women. Her first novel, *The River and the Source* (1994), is didactic in nature. Anne Jerono Jose comments: "She is a writer deserving serious critical attention, yet she has received almost negligible critical opinion" (2014). *The River and the Source* is an epic story that tells the story of three generations of women in a traditional Luo community, and relates the changing dynamics of the community and the women's shifting place within it. She is one of the most outstanding Kenyan women authors who openly share her thoughts and feelings in fiction. Ogola narrates the role of women in their

traditional and cultural context, highlighting their day-to-day experience. Her writing also touches on the plight and concerns of women in contemporary Kenya and Africa in general. Therefore her fictional writing displays a rich African cultural heritage present not only in post-colonial African literature but also more widely in Anglophone world literature. She was born in the Western part of Kenya in 1958 and her contribution to Kenya's literary scene is praiseworthy. She has written four novels and a children's handbook. Her latest work of fiction titled *Mandate of the People* was published posthumously in 2012.

In addition to her writing, Ogola was a fearless defender of women's rights. In a speech at the Fourth World Conference on Women held at Beijing, Ogola had the following to say:

A woman is a powerhouse of creativity, development and peace. Conflict between men and women is therefore unnecessary because a woman brings an equal and powerful complementarity to the common human condition. Women have been entrusted with the capacity to transmit life which is the most precious gift that anybody can give or receive. Without life no other good is possible. (1995)

The above speech reflects Ogola's concern for women. Her strong commitment to serve and represent women is reflected in her fictional writings. Thus, her literary contribution is noteworthy because it exposes women and girls to a full realisation of their hidden talents, leading to their potential liberation and independence. A further dimension to the significance of her life and writing is the fact that she was a Roman Catholic who proudly associated her identity with Catholicism. Ogola was a member of Opus Dei. This is a part of the Catholic Church that spreads the Christian message that every person is called to holiness and every honest work sanctified. Christian doctrine, divine guidance and cultural measures help to serve the Church and society to spread peace and joy in the world. The organisation endeavours to change the world for the better, and hence find fulfilment in taking seriously the Christian duty to help persons in need. Ogola's fictional work was greatly influenced by Opus Dei. Her position as a writer has been shaped by the Catholic Church's values and its doctrines. Through her narratives she openly gives her views on equality through religious teachings. She has courageously explored issues of faith in her fictional work, linking them with women's success and liberation. Her women characters find spiritual satisfaction and solace in church through the Virgin Mary. Anne Jerono Jose states:

The author's strong convictions that Catholicism is the answer to problems associated with patriarchal control may be seen to stem from her own religious affiliations. Ogola is a committed Catholic subscribing to the ideas of the sanctity of marriage, motherhood and the family. The author espouses a society whose transformation and order is sustained by Catholic doctrine and values. (2014, p. 133)

### **Women's Situation in Kenya**

Like many other countries in Africa and elsewhere, Kenya is a male-controlled society. Gender-related challenges still face the country. Women and girls continue to be educated at an inferior rate compared to their male counterparts, increasing their dependence on men. The pace of their presence in the social and political arena is still very slow. Tom Odhiambo argues:

Post-colonial Kenya continues to grapple with the problem of gender inequality. Whether through acts of omission or commission and despite notable and significant achievements such as Wangari Maathai winning the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize and the appointment of several women to senior government positions, Kenyan women still compare poorly to their men counterparts in several spheres of life. This is why it is significant that stories of successful women or success by women, whether real or fictive, need to be told and highlighted. (2006, p. 35)

Gender disparities are more distinct in marginalised regions of Kenya, for instance Samburu, West and East Pokot, Masaai region, Turkana and the North-Eastern parts of Kenya. In these regions cultural norms and practices still thrive, and parents often exclude girls from school despite the affirmative action that was recently incorporated into Kenya's new constitution in 2010. Women in their patriarchal homes still experience domestic violence and abuse. Men as spouses take the role of the head of the family and physically abuse the womenfolk. Some communities exclude women in the decision-making process. For instance, land is highly valued in Kenya; culturally, men are conferred with land ownership and not women because it is believed that women too are part of men's property. The above-mentioned regions still practise forced and early marriages, and female genital mutilation. Female genital mutilation is not an illegal offence for females over eighteen years, and so they are rendered vulnerable to negative cultural practices despite the government's bid to end these negative practices. Though most issues that affect women and girls are addressed in legal contexts, only a few have been enacted

in practice. The Kenyan government tries to ensure women have legal access to and control over property, including land.

Generally, women in Kenya have been worst hit by the HIV and Aids pandemic. This is because of the harmful widowhood ritual practice that they are exposed to. The western part of Kenya, specifically Luo Nyanza where Ogola comes from, has a high rate of HIV prevalence. Ambasa Shisanya, in *Widowhood in the Era of HIV/AIDS: A Case Study of Siaya District, Kenya*, offers the following insightful information (as will be discussed in the context of illness in chapter two):

Luo women are believed to acquire contagious cultural impurity after the death of their husbands that is perceived as dangerous to other people. To neutralise this impure state, a sexual cleansing rite is observed. In the indigenous setting, the ritual is observed by a brother-in-law or cousin of the deceased husband through a guardianship institution. However, with the emergence of HIV/AIDS, many educated brothers-in-law refrain from the practice and instead hire professional cleansers as substitutes. If the deceased spouses were HIV positive, the ritual places professional cleansers at risk of infection. Thereafter, they could act as a bridge for HIV/AIDS transmission to other widows and to the general population. (2007, p. 606)

In view of the above, women from Luo Nyanza have been rendered vulnerable due to this traditional cultural practice. This study examines ways in which Kenyan widows could be empowered socially and economically in a bid to emancipate them from destructive widowhood ritual practice. Gender social bias is another factor witnessed in some of the marginalised communities. For instance, a boy child is given education priority over a girl child because it is believed that she is going to get married and benefit her husband's family. The same is also witnessed in the enrolment of girls in Kenyan public universities; Jane Onsongo in her research provides the following explanation:

The inequity in admissions also presents itself in the courses on which women are enrolled. Analysis of students' enrolment in public universities by selected courses by the Ministry of Education confirms that relatively few women are enrolled in science courses and especially in engineering [...] The fact that women and men follow different courses

serves to reinforce inequality in terms of the kinds of occupations women enter, and this impacts their position in society. (2006, p. 31)

The above phenomenon brings into sharp focus the social and cultural biases that impede the progress of women. This study employs literary discourse to explore avenues through which women can engage the society in order to reverse their beliefs and their attitude towards giving them equal educational opportunities. In *Exploring the Bias: Gender and Stereotypes in Secondary Schools*, Elspeth Page and Jyotsna Jha of the Commonwealth Secretariat argue that:

Gender equality in education is about boys' and girls' entitlements to access education. It is about the process in education facilitating the realisation to provide a range of equal opportunities to expand capacities of all children to the fullest. This in turn will contribute to the development of a just, responsible and passionate society. (2009, p. xvi)

This leads to the conclusion that women in Kenya are still vulnerable and their concerns ought to be voiced and the gender inequities gap closed. This research study will attempt to improve this situation by examining the potential liberation and independence of Kenyan women.

### **A Selective Overview of the Treatment of Gender in Kenyan Literature by Male Authors**

Kenyan literature by male writers from the early phase of African literature to the present encouraged the marginalisation of women. Carole Boyce Davies, in *Transformational Discourses and Hearing Women's Voices*, argues that women have sustained a critical voice of men's misconception in their fictions. She foregrounds the following:

The struggle to produce and to be heard is commonly experienced among women in academic and other social contexts. The distractions and subversions are myriad. There is rejection, condescension and derision; there are institutional trials and abuse; there are personal attacks, distortions and attempts at minimisation. (1994, p. xi)

This is true of Kenyan and African literature in general. Gender inequality in African men's writing is visible, providing a biased gender representation in their fictional works of art. The female characters are at the margin of their narration. Besides Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, an icon of not only Kenyan but African literature, is one of the leading and most celebrated novelists of African literature. He casts a large shadow over the canon of literary works in Kenya, and his forthright sentiments about language, publishing and

writing make his presence vital within the African literary world. His female characters are at the periphery of his narration rather than central. His approach to the female world is mostly influenced by Marxist ideology, colonial experience, Kikuyu traditions and its social-cultural backgrounds. His writing focuses more on the male characters. Charles C. Fonchingong points out that:

Borrowing from the Marxist ideology of haves and have-nots points to the minimal position of women in Africa as reflected in Ngũgĩ's Kenyan society. Ngũgĩ's women represent the downtrodden and the pariahs of his society. (2006, p. 137)

In his novels, for instance *The River Between*, the female characters drive the narration and help the male counterparts in the novel achieve their goals. Indeed, in his novels the men come out as heroes. Women in Ngũgĩ's narrative come after men: his works of fiction do not have female characters with positive identities. They are given patriarchal roles, for instance 'passive wives', 'prostitutes' and women working under the jurisdiction of men. Most of the female characters in his novels are victims of patriarchal rule. For instance, in *The River Between* Muthoni's death is due to female genital mutilation, and Nyambura flees from home because of her father's harsh rules and conditions. Ngũgĩ's narratives lean more towards Mau Mau and colonialism, and Kenya's struggle for independence, than an interest in gender relations. Nettie Cloete focuses on the significant contribution of Ngũgĩ concerning the theme of women and transformation. She underscores the following.

His representations of women, however, in many ways are traditional and patriarchally stereotypical, although his empathy with the victims of oppression does at times extend to women as a marginalized group. (1998, p. 31)

Kenyan male authors have a similar way of writing to other African male authors. Fonchingong affirms that:

Central to the plot construction and characterization of African male writers is the patriarchal subjection of women. The repercussion of a woman's unorthodox behaviour is shown as Okonkwo heavily beats Anasi, his wife for failing to provide his meal and Ekwueme in *The Concubine* (1966) attempts to physically discipline Ahurole. Thus a

woman's honour and dignity often consist in her strict adherence to idealized norms of wifehood and motherhood. (2006, p. 139)

Alongside Ngũgĩ, Charles Mangua and Shilaho wa Muteshi and others in the Kenyan literary scene is Meja Mwangi. *Going Down River Road* (2001.a) was awarded the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for literature. His fictional representation of women is scanty. His novels, for instance *The Last Plague* (2001.b) focus on the colonial resistance against the British in Kikuyu uplands. His method of narration is similar to Ngũgĩ's in that he positions his male characters at the forefront of his narration. His writing focuses on poverty and people's suffering.

Binyavanga Wainaina is a founder of *Kwani?* a literary network and magazine that serves the East African community and brings together African writers across the continent, breaking down barriers between nations. *One Day I will Write about this Place* (2011), a memoir of his youth, discusses a young male artist.

Contrary to Kenya's tradition of androcentric writing is Francis Imbuga's perspective in his writing. He is a Kenyan playwright and a literary scholar. His works of art put women at the centre of narration. He carefully weaves femininity, dominance and power in the traditional African hierarchies. His plays *Aminata* (1998) and *Betrayal in the City* (1976) were once studied in the Kenya English education syllabus. Imbuga is one of a minority of male novelists in Kenyan literature who put women's issues to the fore. Therefore, his works of fiction tend to liberate not only men but also women and girls.

### **Women Authors in Kenya**

Creative writing in Kenya is still male-dominated and male-centred. This is because of the social status bestowed on African male writers. Initially, they were accorded free public space and their commitment gave them attention. The recognition of women in the public sphere is limited, and for this reason the status of African women writers is underrated. The female authors who dare to speak out about the condition of women in the Kenyan context have a tough and difficult road ahead of them. Alina Rinkanya discusses three novels by Kenyan women authors. She foregrounds the following:

[The] Kenyan women authors, brought together with a common idea: to visualize a future that would be alternative to those gloomy apocalyptic pictures drawn in many a recent

African novel. This idea of a better future, provided (or symbolized) by a female protagonist, is presented in different ways. (2014, p. 154)

Rinkanya points out that: “The idea of a brave female character that gives the others (and the readers) a hope for ‘alternative’, positively portrayed and rather utopian, then dystopian future, is strongly expressed in the novels by East African female writers from Uganda to Tanzania” (2014, p. 145).

Kenyan women writing speak of the reliance and vulnerability of women, their liberation and independence, and their situation in general. Florence Stratton calls for the heterogeneous character of subject constitution in fiction. She observes the following:

The patriarchal situation puts the African woman in a particular kind of double bind [...] It creates difficulties for men reconciling the fact of women’s participation in the liberation struggle with that of exclusion from national politics, and accommodating the notion of freedom and equality upheld by the liberation movements with the actual subjugation of women. (1994, p. 17)

Stratton calls for a fair representation of gender in African literature. Some narratives of Kenyan women writers explore the experiences of contemporary medical menaces, such as Aids and cancer. Jean O’Barr, in discussing feminist matters in the fiction of Kenya’s women authors, notes the following:

By looking at the social life from the points of view of women, these authors place women at the center of their works and see them in their full complexity, dealing with multiple issues and playing multiple roles. (1987, p. 58)

Besides Kenyan women authors’ limited presence in the fundamentally male-authored world of literature, women and issues of specific interest to women have often been neglected and misrepresented in the fictional work of Kenya’s male writers. Their narratives showcase their inability to narrate women’s concerns through their female protagonists. The female characters portrayed in the fictional works by male authors is guided by the society’s stereotypes. Their representation is not a true reflection of women’s identity. Despite the difficulties mentioned above, the effort that the Kenyan women writers have put into the literary world is

commendable, notwithstanding a late start. In “Women’s Identities in the Kenyan Landscape” Ovvocato Manuela asserts:

Between the 1960s and the 1970s, which correspond to the golden age of Kenyan literature, only a small number of women writers’ fiction works made their appearance in the Kenyan literary community and were published. Kenyan literature by women writers began in particular in 1966 with the publication of Grace Ogot’s *The Promised Land*, the first novel by a Kenyan woman writer to arouse foreign interest. (2013, p. 14)

Analysing female literary development in Kenya from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial era and the present time, women writers, for instance Rebeka Njau, Grace Ogot and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, among others, have often tried to deal with women’s concerns in their work of art. Their educational career opportunities and their background experiences have enriched the fictional world. They have invested in themes related to Kenya’s traditional culture and current events, often situating women at the centre of their fiction, and challenging the sexist bias of their male counterparts. Manuela also points out that:

Works and novels by women writers in Kenya have been an attempt to go beyond literature by male authors reducing female characters to stereotypes and, to a larger extent, they have acted as a weapon to challenge male authority and to reinscribe women into authorship and citizenship. (2013, p. 16)

This is witnessed in Ogot’s narratives. She goes beyond the society’s stereotypes by portraying able female characters. Stratton’s *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* highlights the works of four African women writers, one of them being Grace Ogot. She points out that:

In writing against patriarchal power, Ogot also writes against representation of women such as Ngũgĩ’s. Portraying women as subjects of national aspiration, she constructs an alternative form of subjectivity. (1994, p. 79)

Ogot is one of the first women authors in Kenya. She is also the first Anglophone African female writer to be published. Most of her fictional writings are didactic in nature. She is a founder of the Writers’ Association of Kenya and also one of the pioneer figures of Kenya’s literary scene. Ogot wrote her first short stories in the early 1960s and her first novel, *The Promised Land*, in

1966. This novel depicts the immigration of a young farmer and his wife from Kenya to Tanzania. She foregrounds the liberation of Kenyan women, giving her heroine Nyapol a voice. Ogot's narrative questions female identity in East Africa. She puts female subjectivity in her narrative to the fore and subverts the concept of the ideal African wife.

Rebeka Njau is one of Kenya's veteran female authors. Her one act play "The Scar" denounces female genital mutilation. Her novel *The Sacred Seed* (2003) examines the betrayal, violence and plunder that Kenyans suffer every five years as a result of tribal politics. Tesa Koki is the main character. She is a city woman who returns to the village after being raped by the corrupt president of her country, Dixon Chinusi. The novel exposes the psychological wounds and torture that women have undergone through the abuse of patriarchy and dictatorship in the society, and their determination to heal the society. Njau presents the destruction of the resourcefulness of women in traditional African societies by modern regimes and points to ways in which women's power can be restored through the demolition of class hierarchies. Through her novels, Njau narrates the plight of Kenyan women and highlights her concerns for their liberation and independence. Her heroines come out as victors.

Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye is one of the most prolific Kenyan women writers. She is referred to as 'the mother of Kenyan literature'. She was born in England in 1928 and came to Kenya in 1954 to work as a missionary, and later settled and married Oludhe Macgoye in 1960. She remained in Kenya for the rest of her life, developing a career as a writer of Kenyan literature. The Luo tradition is manifested in her literary work. Her novel *A Farm Called Kishinev* won the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for literature, while her novel *Homing In* (1994) won second place in the Jomo Kenyatta prize for literature as well in 1995. *Coming to Birth* (1986) was awarded the Sinclair prize for fiction upon its release in 1986. *Coming to Birth* is her most celebrated work. It tells a story of a young woman coming of age against the backdrop of a nation attaining independence from colonialism. It has been used as a set book in Kenya's English and literature high school syllabus. She is a prolific writer, revealing the range of her talent by writing and publishing not only novels but also poetry and short stories. Other works by Macgoye include *Victoria and Murder in Majengo*, *Street Life*, *The Present Moment* and *Song of Nyarloka and Other Poems*.

With women's education come exposure and awareness and the inevitable reaction to their plight in society. African women have contributed a great deal to education and literature. Oladele Taiwo underscores the fact that "pre-literate African women contributed a great deal to education and literature. Their art was verbal and their purpose didactic" (1984, p. 1). Indeed, literature has proved to be an important tool in expressing the female condition. The women's silence caused by patriarchal structures was broken by these Kenyan women authors in the mid-sixties. The next decade of feminist writing by African women advanced the recognition of women's concerns and their relevance. Women's writing in Kenya has shown how a pattern of assertion by women has emerged and has impacted on the canon of African literature. Marie Kruger, in her book titled *Women's Literature in Kenya and Uganda*, makes the following observation:

For nearly a decade, writers' collectives such as Kwani Trust in Kenya and FEMRITE, the Ugandan Women Writers' Association have dramatically reshaped the East African literary scene. This dramatic shift is evident in the success with which Ugandan women's groups have collaborated with local publishing houses to steadily increase the literary presence of female authors, or in the efforts of Kwani? magazine to promote the work of Kenyan scholars and writers, journalists and visual artists in an innovative print format. Though some of the women writers have been honored with prestigious literary awards, their works have not received sustained critical attention. (2011, p. 1)

### **Critical Works on Ogola**

In line with Kruger's comment, in general Ogola's works of fiction have received less than substantial attention from numerous scholars. One exception is Anne Jerono Jose, who, in "An Examination of Catholicism as Social Vision for Women Emancipation in Post-Independence Kenya", positions Ogola as an African feminist. Jose believes that Ogola, like western feminists, exposes the workings of patriarchy, but differs from some of these counterparts in her holistic vision:

Ogola sees the man as a contributor to women's woes. However, she does not suggest separatism. [...] Though patriarchy is responsible for the African woman's woes, Ogola does not condemn it. She clearly recommends a co-existence of male and female members of society. Her women characters do not live in isolation though they suffer in the hands of their male counterparts. (2014, p. 135)

Consequently, while Jose has looked at *Place of Destiny* and *The River and the Source* as a social vision for women's emancipation, she believes that men are insufficiently represented. I focus on women's total liberation and independence in general in three of Ogola's novels as stated. A number of previous critics, such as Jose (2014) and Tom Odhiambo (2006), have explored Ogola's portrayal of the female characters. Wabende Kimingichi's "Moulding a New Image: Gender Perspectives In Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *Coming to Birth* " evaluates the women characters in relation to their flexibility to the changing culture alongside the evolution of a new nation, Kenya. The critic argues: "Margaret Ogola and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye build characters that break out of the community barriers that block their progress and venture into fields that are generally thought of as a male domain" (2000, p. 62). Anne Khadudu Baraza examines how the male and female characters are portrayed in Ogola's works. She concludes: "Ogola's male characters are deliberately diminished while the female character is over elevated" (2004, p. 84). This study is applicable to my work because it employs sociological and feminist philosophies. Frodwa Wahove Immaculate (2014, p. 107) examines Ogola's portrayal of male characters in three of her novels. She concludes: "Ogola offers diverse images with different roles and different options for men."

This study reveals that Ogola echoes the work of other African female writers such as Bessie Head, Marjorie Macgoye, Ama Ata Aidoo, Grace Ogot, Rebeka Njau, Flora Nwapa, Mariama Bâ and Buchi Emecheta. They all positively portray the image of African women, calling for their emancipation, liberation and independence. Ogola has "glorified the role played by women in society and thereby helped to raise their status" (Taiwo, 1984, p. 13). This synopsis forms the backbone of this study. Odhiambo's "Writing Alternative Womanhood in Kenya in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*" argues:

Ogola's text seeks to project Kenyan women as capable of not only telling their own stories but also of claiming their rightful place and identity in the broader national life. The several female protagonists in the text representing different historical periods in Kenya's history symbolically articulate a kind of womanhood in contemporary Kenya that projects its own societal agency and identity. In the process these characters rewrite the persona that has been allocated to women in post-colonial Kenya's national story. (2006, p. 235)

## **Research Objectives**

The aim of this study is to establish Ogola's representation of female characters in three of her novels. The themes of education, modernity, tradition, family relations, religion and Christianity, illness, moral values, and women as the pillars and backbone of society are discussed. The study also examines love and marriage in Ogola's work and how it contributes to the representation of liberated women and their capabilities. The study examines the author's representation of male characters in relation to their contribution to re-visioning of the family and critique of patriarchy. Lastly, the study intends to analyse the principle of gender equality, and examines how the author gives cultural legitimacy to female power in her works of fiction.

## **Literature Review**

In the review of related literature, the research has embraced a three step approach. In relation to gender, a review of literature on critical women's studies in Kenya has been looked at. Secondly, the examination of the portrayal of female characters by male authors in Kenya has been dealt with. In this manner a general understanding of how male authors have treated the female characters in their fictional writing is created. Finally, the research narrows down the analysis to the available literature on Ogola's works. In this instance, I place my attention on what critics have written on particular works of Ogola to provide grounds for the present study. This will enable me to gain understanding into what other critics have done in the field. The chief focus of this dissertation is Margaret Ogola's representation of the female characters in relation to the liberation of women's potential in Kenyan society. Much of the early work on Kenyan fiction dealt with the social and political effects of colonialism. The first work to identify and appreciate a female presence in Kenyan literature is Grace Ogot's *The Promised Land* (1966). The novel explores Ogot's concept of the ideal African wife: compliant and submissive to her husband, clan and community in general, and devoted to non-materialist objectives. Ogot examines the representation of the mother and child as part of her larger thematic and symbolic focus on motherhood. The relationship between mother and child, especially mothers and daughters, and the continuity between the generations are features of all Margaret Ogola's novels. Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) critically examines the issues of femininity, political affairs and the social transformation of women. She highlights the most outstanding subject of women in the African continent. She reveals her own subject position that and those of other African women.

My research centres on similar issues examining in depth ways in which Ogola handles women's position over time in Kenyan society.

Oladele Taiwo (1984) examines the contemporary African female novelists. He examines the common concerns and preoccupations of these women writers through their position as women, and is generally favourable to their standpoint. Taiwo's work has been an important guide for my study since this research also studies Margaret Ogola as a contemporary female author. Carole Boyce Davies and Anne Adams Graves in *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature* (1986) attempt to redress the omission of women and expand the interpretation of the whole body of African literary creativity. They explore earlier writings produced exclusively by men and a more functional reading of the recent inscription by both men and women. Their approach contributes greatly to the analysis of this thesis.

Susan Arndt's *The Dynamics of African Feminism* (2002) offers an analysis of theories of African feminism. She highlights African women writers' focus on womanism, which acknowledges that while women suffer from sexism, women and men in African societies are victims of oppressive and corrupt systems, necessitating solidarity and efforts to eliminate inequalities not only for women, but for all people. To a large extent the present study takes the approach of an analysis of characters of both genders in the novel studied. A sociological approach has been used as a focal point to inform the plight of women and girls in the Kenyan context. Stephen Lekalgitele (2012), in his research on high school girls carried out in Samburu district, Rift Valley province, identifies the factors operating within the school that affect the aspiration for higher education of Samburu girls. The study explores the concept of the plight of girls in schools and therefore a general understanding of the predicament of women in society. Fatuma Chege and Daniel Sifuna insightfully identify the challenges to female education:

Obstacles to female education that are often region-specific seem to hinge on various factors that include perceived irrelevance and opportunity costs linked to educating girls, and cultural beliefs and practices that portray girls' education as an unwelcome challenge to male hegemony. (2006, p. 87)

The above approach provides additional information for my research study. Kenneth Little's *The Sociology of Urban Women's Image in African Literature* (1980) examines the modern-day position of African women. He applies his thought to the situation of African women in urban

areas, providing a literary description of urban African women in East and West African novels. In these narratives, he discusses girlfriends, good time girls, mothers, wives, free women, courtesans, prostitutes, and political women and workers. Though his approach to women is gender-biased his work is important in the analysis of my thesis. Although these urban women are free from the bondage of traditional roles, independence is a mixed blessing. Margaret Ogola's main female characters, by contrast, are motivated by ethical values and social commitment even though most of them also live in cities. Modernity and the opportunities it provides women are to be embraced. The approach of Chikwenye Ogunyemi (2007) to women's studies is relevant to my research. She demonstrates how women are viewed and how they function in critical times. She explains how heritage is passed on, in spite of dismal situations stemming from colonialism, post-colonialism and poverty.

Jean O'Barr, in *Feminist Issues in the Fiction of Kenya's Women Writers*, reviews the works of seven Kenyan women writers and their representation of women's attitude and behaviour towards modern-day gender roles. Her basic position is that "by looking at social life from the point of view of women, these authors place women at the centre of their works and see them in their full complexity, dealing with multiple issues and playing multiple [...] roles" (1987, p. 59). O'Barr's work contributes significantly to my dissertation, since my research centres on Kenyan literature and specifically women's studies. Katherine Frank, in *Women without Men*, calls for positive representation of female characters, concluding that: "we need to turn to the growing number of women novelists in Africa in order to find female characters with a destiny of their own" (1987, p. 15). This work is of great value to my study because it provides additional information on the aspects of women's life in general. Christine Obbo's (1980) discussion of the everyday struggles of women in East Africa to economically empower themselves also has direct relevance for my study, as all of Margaret Ogola's female characters strive for economic independence. Obbo's research reflects current women's issues. She notes: "East African women are doing something about their situations by tackling the specific problems of poverty, ignorance and unsatisfactory personal relationships" (1980, p. 141). This study employs a social lens to analyse women's circumstances. Jeane Spurlock and Carolyn Robinowitz (1990, p. 69) insightfully identify the benefits of womanhood and her settings: "A woman learns how to be a mother, in part, by being one, but she also has had a lifetime of learning about how to be a

mother, based primarily on her observation of her own mother, and her knowledge and feelings about that relationship.”

Stratton looks carefully at the fiction of the first Kenyan woman writer, Grace Ogot, which specifically targets Kenyan male domination. She points out: “Ogot portrays women as subjects of national aspiration by constructing an alternative form of subjectivity” (1994, p. 79). Esther Smith (1986, p. 27) outlines diverse images of women which mirror some of the many faces of Africa and facets of inequality in the colonial era. She looks at creative ways of exploring the female images in African literature. My study of the theme of tradition and culture falls in the pre-colonial and colonial times. Naana Banyiwa Horne (1986) in “African Womanhood: The Contrasting Perspectives of Flora Nwapa’s *Efuru* and Elechi Amadi’s *The Concubine*”, notes: “Women authors explore alternate possibilities for self-actualisation outside the sexual roles that are open to their women characters.” She discusses male portrayals of female characters, arguing that they reflect male formations or misconceptions of female sexuality, forming the impression that women have no identity outside their sexual roles. Ernest Emenyonu’s (2004, p. 7) *New Women’s Writing in African Literature* offers insightful ideas into more recent developments in African women’s writing. He provides a useful theoretical example of examining women writers in the context of the struggle to achieve social change in post-colonial societies. Eldred Durosomi Jones draws attention to the following: “The duty of an African woman writer is to first find an objective treatment of womanhood and the problems of womanhood and to correct the misconceptions about women” (1987, p. 2). One of the objectives of this study is to correct the misconceptions about women in their society.

FEMRITE writer Lena Ampadu in *A Journal of the Oxford Round Table* uses a cross-cultural analysis of the works of female writers such as Mariama Bâ, Alice Walker and Nozipo Maraire to argue that “women writers of African origin contest the status quo in the cultural, social and political scopes of their communities by using their craft to present women who defy traditional roles and resist structures of oppression” (2007, p. 67). In this way they give voice to women who had long been silenced and devalued. I argue in this dissertation that Margaret Ogola should be linked to African writers pursuing this project. I draw on Marie Kruger’s *Women’s Literature in Kenya and Uganda* (2011) which discusses “The trouble with modernity” in Margaret Ogola’s *The River and The Source*. Other writings on Margaret Ogola that has been discussed in my

dissertation are from a number of critics, for example, Anne Jerono Jose (2014), and Tom Odhiambo (2006). They have explored Ogola's portrayal of the female characters and examined how these characters receive attention from the author. Wabende Kimingichi's "Moulding a New Image: Gender Perspectives in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *Coming to Birth*" assesses the women characters in relation to their flexibility to the changing culture beside the growth of a new nation, Kenya. The critic argues: "Margaret Ogola and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye build characters that break out of the community barriers that block their progress and venture into fields that are generally thought of as male domain" (2000, p. 86). Anne Khadudu Baraza examines how the male and female characters are represented in Ogola's works. This study is relevant to my work because it employs sociological and feminist theories. By contrast, Frodwa Wahove Immaculate studies Ogola's portrayal of male characters in three of her novels. She concludes:

Once again the message put across is that not all women are good by virtue of being women but that they too are capable of evil. In letting Becky die of Aids, the author seems to accentuate the same point. On the other hand, not all men are evil by virtue of being male. Society has bad and exceptional characters from both sexes. Through this kind of balanced representation, Ogola has succeeded in thwarting gender stereotypes. (2014, p. 128)

The above study has a direct relevance to this dissertation.

### **Research Methodology**

The chosen method of research for this study is literary analysis, relying on close reading and textual critique. I read critically and analysed the three primary texts in order to investigate the author's approach to the representation and liberation of women's potential in the Kenyan society. This reading is informed by feminist literary theory and criticism. It is based on the hypothesis that Ogola's novels attempt to address women's agency over a considerable period of time starting from the colonial to the post-colonial period. She positions her women characters in specific socio-cultural contexts that enable them to acquire liberation and independence. I, therefore, explore strategies the author uses to justify the transformation of women, through the thematic analysis of the texts. The theme of tradition and culture, for instance, is significant in foregrounding women as they struggle to overcome obstacles in a deeply patriarchal society.

This is done with the knowledge that it is the patriarchal social structures that bar women's emancipation and independence. I explore the theme of tradition to understand how women have challenged patriarchal social structures in an attempt to liberate themselves.

The study highlights how the novels oppose blind adherence to cultures that are patriarchal in nature, and call for women's independence and liberation. The study explores how Ogola challenges the traditional practices that deny women their dignity and impede their success. I attempt to demonstrate how women interrogate the institution of marriage and Christianity in a bid to liberate themselves from patriarchal confines. Christianity is embraced because its doctrines offer solutions to women's problems; it liberates them through education and participation in the church. This focus acknowledges that spirituality is part and parcel of the traditional practices and society in general in Kenya. The argument here is that Ogola uses the Luo tradition implicitly to criticise some of the cultural practices and beliefs that hinder women from achieving their potential to become socially, politically and economically independent. The study therefore argues that Ogola uses Christianity as a platform for women's liberation. This study also explores the theme of modernity. It examines the role that it plays in shaping and creating a new image of Kenyan women which embodies women's liberation. It examines how women use modern structures to attain their emancipation and independence. The study examines the theme of illness, widowhood and ritual practice. It analyses the devastating effects of widow inheritance and explores ways in which Kenyan widows can be empowered towards their liberation and independence. This is viewed in light of the high HIV and Aids prevalence in Nyanza province, western Kenya, owing to widow inheritance witnessed in this region where Ogola herself was born. The themes of illness, widowhood and ritual purifications are examined in this chapter.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The study engages with three of Ogola's novels mentioned earlier. In the subsequent chapters I have discussed different modes and strategies that the author uses in her fiction to demonstrate women's ability towards their emancipation, liberation, and independence. Motherhood and the supremacy of women are themes that are explored in this research to demonstrate women's ability in society. The researcher argues that women are at the forefront and in control of their destiny. The research also explores education and career development as a tool for women's empowerment in *Place of Destiny*. The study demonstrates Ogola's portrayal of the importance of education to women, as a means of gaining

self-reliance and financial independence. It also foregrounds the devastating effects of a lack of formal education on women. The study explores Ogola's handling of the theme of love and marriage, showing how she uses it as a vehicle to convey her message of liberation and independence. Gender roles in marriage and the exploration of relationships within this institution are also examined in this research. The novel portrays different types of marriages and how they shape or destroy women in society.

Chapter One deals with the background to the study, focusing on women's situation in Kenya. It provides a selective overview of the treatment of gender in Kenyan literature by male authors, Ogola's relevant biographical information and women authors in Kenya. It outlines the research methodology and theoretical framework that guides it as well as a literature review.

In Chapter Two, the study analyses *The River and the Source*. I examine: the traditional practices and cultural beliefs that bar women's liberation and their progress, and how the author has created a new narrative space in their representation. The study looks at spirituality and Christianity as an avenue for women's liberation and independence. It further analyses the classification of women: those who subscribe to traditional and repressive female socialisation, and those who triumph over the chains of patriarchy and advocate for emancipated femaleness. The theme of modernity and change is analysed in detail in relation to the liberation of women in the Kenyan context.

Chapter Three examines *I Swear by Apollo*. It demonstrates the author's representation of women and transformation, motherhood and their supremacy in society, and her presentation of women as the backbone of society. Chapter Four focuses on the novel, *Place of Destiny* and examines the themes of education and career development, love and marriage, and ethics and morality respectively. It argues that Ogola takes up these themes as a vehicle to convey her message of independence to women. The study shows how Ogola addresses gender roles in society and the exploration of relationships within the institution of marriage. Chapter Five is the conclusion which offers a summary of the arguments discussed throughout the study and recommendations on liberating women's potential in Kenyan society.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is located within the perspective of African feminist theories. It also recognises the need to engage the reconstruction and interdependence between men and women. Stratton's

*Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* illustrates how African women's writing has been omitted from male-oriented studies of African literature. She examines writers from East and West Africa, in English and in translation. This research encompasses women's independence, therefore Stratton's African feminism is the main theory that informs it. Conscious of gender imbalance in African literature, Stratton calls for a fair representation of gender, arguing that:

In certain important respects, the female [B]ildungsroman stands in opposition to the entire African male literary tradition – a tradition to which the very notion of female development is alien. For it is a form which, by its very definition, characterizes women as active and dynamic – as developing. Women are in other words conceptualized not as the Other but self-defining. (1994, p. 107)

Stratton demonstrates in her discussion how African women writers engage with literature by men and the prevailing patriarchal constructs of gender. Her theory of 'inversion' and the identification of the convention of paired women provide a more specific theoretical approach on which I draw for reading the novels. According to Stratton, "inversion operates in conjunction with appropriation, replacing the negative representation of women with positive ones and legitimising female power". She defines the convention of paired women as "appropriation for what is conveniently represented as deviant behaviour for positive identification: freedom, fulfillment and integrity" (1994, p. 174). This insight is very useful when it comes to examining the way in which Ogola's female characters are liberated in her novels. Ogola offers a vision of a society that has undergone a radical female transformation. Stratton's theory embraces female inclusivity of women's liberation and independence:

Contemporary African fiction should introduce a literary convention mode that runs counter to a number of the trends in the male literary tradition, including the tendency to identify women with tradition and to resolve narrative tension with such themes as redemption through marriage and/or motherhood or through repatriation to the village. Such fiction acts as a corrective to the image of women which male writers valorise, for it is the radical not the conservative sister or friend, the one that challenges patriarchal authority, who is rewarded in the narrative. (p. 97)

This feminisation of society is linked to a number of themes that the theory of inversion addresses: tradition, religion and Christianity, modernity, family relations, illness, widowhood and ritual, love and marriage, ethics and moral values. These themes are carefully considered in the analysis of the novels chosen in this dissertation. Theoretical work that is specifically related to these themes reinforces the primary feminist analysis of the dissertation. Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie's approach to women's social transformation precedes and complements this study. She discusses women's marginality and empowerment. She questions:

What does empowerment mean to us as black women of Africa and the diaspora? It means social recognition and dignity just as, most of all, it means space to speak, act, and live with joy and responsibility. (1995, p. 17)

Ogundipe asserts that "one of the commitments of the female writer should be to the correction of false images of the woman in Africa" (p. 61). She believes this approach will ease the burden of African women. She articulates the liberation of African women, arguing that it is not a kindness to be granted by sympathetic men. She affirms: "It is not the result of humanitarian or compassionate attitudes. It is a fundamental necessity for change, the guarantee of its continuity and precondition of its victory" (1994, p. 161). This highlights the objective of this study, as the analysis of the representation and emancipation of women is captured in the discussion of the three novels within this study. Ogundipe argues that "Observing women in their various sites, paying attention to female bonding which is absent from much of the African literature written by men would yield a more correct epistemology of women" (p. 11). Part of this study aims to examine the relationship of women at their place of work and to establish their bonds. Therefore Ogundipe-Leslie's theory brings a useful insight into this study.

Patriarchy is one of the traditional social avenues that undermine women in society. It is responsible for women's victimisation, subjugation and servitude. This study examines patriarchy and how women in Kenyan society have gone beyond it. In the understanding and analysis of patriarchy, this research borrows Kate Millett's theory of sexual politics because it is a very important theoretical precursor for this study. Millett asserts that most world cultures are patriarchal in nature, with the family being a representative of patriarchy in the society at large. She states:

The oppression of women is not only economic; that's just a part of it. The oppression of women is total and therefore it exists in the mind, it is psychological oppression. Let's have a look at how it works, for it works like a charm. From earliest childhood every female child is carefully taught that she is to be a life-long incompetent at every sphere of significant human activity therefore she must convert herself into a sex object. (1990, p. 8)

In this regard, Ogola proves in her narratives the importance of women in society. For instance, one of the novels under scrutiny, *The River and the Source*, disregards women's marginalisation and instead opts to put them at the centre of the narration. They are the ones driving the narrative. Millett asserts that:

It is time we realize that the whole structure of male and female personality is arbitrarily imposed by a social conditioning which has taken all the possible traits of human personality[....] We must now begin to realize and to retrain ourselves to see that both intelligence and a reverence for life are human qualities. (1990, p. 8)

Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1977, p. 33) continues to provide a useful theoretical understanding of patriarchy. Her key observation that "patriarchy's chief institution is the family, it is both a mirror of and a connection with the largest society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole", is directly applicable to Ogola's reimagining of the Kenyan family.

This research generally draws on work that has examined the representation of women in fiction. bell hooks (2000, 110) argues that, "To be truly visionary, we have to root our imagination in our concrete reality while simultaneously imagining possibilities beyond that reality", an observation that is directly applicable to Ogola's own project. In hooks's theory, she offers the following:

Radical dimensions of liberal social protest will continue to serve as an ideological support system providing the necessary critical and analytical impetus for the maintenance of liberalism that aims to grant women greater equality of opportunity. (2000, p. 22)

Feminist theory such as hooks's *From Margin to Center* provides the overarching feminist framework for this study. Lois Tyson defines the purpose of feminist criticism as "examining the ways in which literature and other cultural productions, reinforces or undermines the

economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women” (2006, p. 56). This study considers the ways in which Ogola’s novels function as a means of liberating women through representational strategies that give Kenyan women a democratic voice and independence. The whole idea of women’s oppression and male supremacy is placed under the lenses of this study. This research fills the gap of women’s representation by exploring the inequity between men and women.

It focuses on the liberation of Kenyan women, but at the same time looks at men who attain independence. The study justifies Ogola’s approach of emancipating both genders, which is different from other Kenyan female authors such as Rebeka Njau and Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye. This leads the researcher to use Susan Arndt’s theory of African feminism. She defines and discusses the nature of African feminism and feminist African literatures. She foregrounds the following:

African feminist literature can be described as written or oral art which gets to the bottom of African gender relations and the problems of African women – illuminating their causes and consequences – and criticises them. In so doing African feminism aims at upsetting the existing matrix of domination and overcoming it, thus improving the situation of African women. (2002, p. 81)

In this regard, heterogeneity is included in the analysis of this study. I foreground the role men play in conjunction with women’s independence and liberation.

The last theme to be discussed in *The River and the Source* is illness. This theme is examined from the perspective of Susan Sontag’s *Illness as a Metaphor* and *Aids and its Metaphors*. She argues that “the most truthful way of regarding illness and the healthiest way of being ill is to resist metaphoric thinking” (2001, p. 7). She aims to free both patients and the general population from the autocracy of a set of meanings that stand for a medical realism but which have been made to carry the weight of uncertainties about the future. As a doctor, Ogola handles the theme of illness professionally. She aims to liberate her female characters mentally and physically from a health perspective.

## **Conclusion**

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The next chapter discusses *The River and the Source*.

## **CHAPTER TWO: *THE RIVER AND THE SOURCE***

### **Introduction**

In Kenyan society, many communities still have patriarchal social systems in which women are condemned to a low social status. Traditional practices and cultural beliefs are some of the factors that hinder women from achieving their potential and becoming socially, politically and economically independent. The purpose of the study in this chapter is to analyse how Margaret Ogola represents and unlocks the position and role of women in a challenging traditional social context. The chapter examines the traditional practices and cultural beliefs that bar women's liberation and progress, and the way in which the author has re-constructed a new narrative space for the representation of women by suppressing these patriarchal conventions. She introduces female characters who are subjects and not objects of the narration, thereby challenging the society's gender stereotypes. The following three sections of the chapter examine the representation of women in relation to cultural beliefs and traditional practices, religion and spirituality, and modernity and the theme of illness.

### **Synopsis**

Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* (1995) tells the epic story of three generations of Kenyan women that spans the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods in Kenya, the country from which the author hails. The book foregrounds women as they struggle to overcome obstacles in a deeply patriarchal society. It explores the inequality between men and women in Kenyan society.

Many of the novel's characters are independent-minded women: Akoko and Nyabera in the pre-colonial and colonial periods and Elizabeth, Becky, Veronica and Wandia in the post-colonial era. Akoko is a very hard-working woman who becomes a role model and a catalyst for change in a patriarchal society. The second part of the novel, "The Art of Giving", narrates how Akoko lodges a complaint with the District Commissioner and reclaims the chieftaincy. It also describes her journey to Aluor mission and the conversion to Christianity of Akoko, Nyabera, Owour and Awiti. Owuor, Akoko's grandson, enters the priesthood and joins St. Paul's Seminary Rakwaro. He later becomes Father Peter. His cousin, Elizabeth Awiti, joins the new primary school at Aluor Mission. She is academically gifted and becomes a primary school teacher after training at

a teacher's training college. She marries Mark Anthony Oloo Sigu, an accountant. Akoko dies subsequently.

Parts three and four of the novel, "Love and Life" and "Variable Winds", introduce the reader to Elizabeth Awiti and Mark's children: twin girls, Veronica and Rebecca, twin boys, Opiyo and Odongo, two sons, Aoro Sigu and Tony, and a daughter, Mary. We learn in some detail about their schooling and career development.

The novel foregrounds modernity in the twentieth century. It depicts a changing world manifested in distinct ways. The novel also highlights the advantages and disadvantages that come with modernity.

### **Tradition and Culture**

In most traditional African societies men, on the one hand, are considered the pillars of the society. They are accorded the responsibility of leading and heading the family and society in general. Women, on the other hand, are viewed as the weaker sex. As a result they are polarised from men and the patriarchal social order is reinforced. Even in matrilineal societies, a decision cannot be reached without the input of men because they are considered stronger beings than women. The Kikuyu community of Kenya is one example of a tribe with a matrilineal social system. Fredrick Nafukho et al. observe that among

the Kikuyu of central Kenya, before, during and after colonial influence, every Kikuyu was seen as a son or daughter of Mumbi, the mother of the Kikuyu community. Girls and women were generally expected to take a leadership role while children were considered as belonging to the women. (2005, p. 91)

Despite these women being the nominal head of their families, they still do not possess the same rights as their male counterparts as they are disadvantaged in most aspects of life. This is best captured in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel, *The River Between*. The male characters Chege, Kamau, Kabonyi, Kinuthia and Waiyaki play a central role in Ngũgĩ's narrative, while female characters such as Waithera, Nyambura and Muthoni play very passive roles. Men are placed at the centre of the following scene: "He looked up and saw his father pointing at a Mugumo, 'that is a blessed and sacred place. There where Mumbi's feet stood' " (Ngũgĩ 1965, p. 21).

Mumbi is a goddess; it is believed that she is the mother of the Kikuyu community. Despite the respect men pay to the goddess, Kikuyu women and girls are still vulnerable and subordinate members of their community. African male writers generally celebrate the patriarchy. Chinua Achebe, for example, reflects Igbo culture and tradition. He places his women characters on the periphery. This can be seen in his novel where: “Okonkwo ruled his house with a heavy hand. His wives, especially the youngest, lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper and so did his little children” (Achebe, 1958, p. 9).

Some African communities still believe that the absence of sons in a family is a bad omen. They privilege the birth of a boy child because they believe luck has entered the family. The Maasai community of Kenya exemplify this. Telipilit Ole-Saitoti in his autobiography says:

My paternal grandfather, by Maasai tradition had two wives. One of them bore him ten children all of whom died. Aggrieved by this, he asked his half-brother to beget him sons because he had proved a failure [...] One of my father’s wives had given birth to a boy three days after and a lamb was killed. (1986, pp. 3, 25)

His father requesting his half-brother to beget him sons shows how the Maasai community of Kenya are stereotypically opposed to the birth of a girl. In contrast to many male writers across the continent, Ogola provides a narrative space with different possibilities for women in *The River and the Source*, despite the rigidly gender-biased nature of Luo culture and tradition. Oladele Taiwo discusses the role of African women in fiction and society. She foregrounds the following:

Conformity is an important aspect of traditional life. Any girl who tries to upset societal norms does so at her own risk. Some female writers believe that this kind of female set-up is designed primarily for male comfort. They therefore write to show that the male position is not unassailable and try to correct certain fallacies which have gained currency in a male oriented society. (1984, p. 3)

For this reason, Ogola’s narrative tries to correct the above fallacies. She does not disassociate her heroines altogether from traditional Luo practices and culture; her protagonists have a strong awareness of Luo identity. Rather she depicts the ways in which her female characters separate themselves from harmful cultural practices that limit their potential for liberation and

independence. In doing so she moves away from the tendency of male African writers, such as Achebe and Ngũgĩ, to use women characters as objects or tools for the advancement of their stories rather than as central figures with agency. In *Things Fall Apart* and *The River Between* respectively, Okonkwo and Waiyaki drive the narration. The women characters such as Muthoni and Nyambura in *The River Between* are reduced to victims of circumstance. Ogola tries to counter the traditional gender stereotypes that favour boys over girls by re-defining the representation of women and girls. This is evident, too, in her portrayal of male characters such as Chief Odero Gogni, who is presented as a man who cherishes the birth of his first daughter in a family of seven boys:

The baby yelled so lustily on its first gulp of acrid air, that the chief strolling around unconcernedly as befitted his station and manhood thought with satisfaction, “Another rock for my sling”, by which he meant another son. Actually he had already covered himself in considerable glory by siring seven sons. However this time he was wrong because for the first time he was the father of a daughter. Later he would say wisely, with something of turnabout that a home without daughters is like a spring without a source. (Ogola, 1995, p. 11)

Thus in relation to the book title, *The River and the Source*, the woman is the source. Ogola suggests that men should embrace change by defying the expectations of the patriarchy. This is exemplified by Odero’s affection for his only daughter:

With the unerring instinct of a child she sensed her father’s affection for her. That a man and a chief at that should even take notice of a girl child was unusual; after all a son meant continuity and a girl would only depart to go and ‘cook’ for some other clan, but chief Odero found the girl irresistible. (p. 15)

In a context that favours and cherishes the boy child, Odero finds his love for his daughter “irresistible”. Here the author undermines male chauvinism by advocating gender balance at the level of the family.

In traditional African communities, including the Luo, a girl marrying a man two or three times her age is common. This traditional practice is contested in *The River and the Source*. When Akoko attains a marriageable age, her father is careful as to who should marry his daughter. The

narrator states: “Odero Gogni had set his heart not only in his daughter marrying a chief but also that she be the ‘Mikai’ of such a chief” (p. 19). The novel suggests here that for girls to get liberated they should marry within their age group and even opt for a monogamous marriage in order to escape the marriage rows and rivalry that characterise polygamous marriages. Akoko comes of age; she grows and blossoms into a beautiful young woman. She marries Chief Owour Kembo who hails from Sakwa. He takes over the chieftaincy when his father, a chief, passes away. Otieno Kembo, his younger brother, marries several wives. Akoko’s husband, Owour Kembo, chooses a monogamous marriage in which children are born three and half years apart. This bothers Akoko’s mother-in-law and the village elders: “At this point the chief was under great pressure to marry another wife, especially from his mother who felt that the rate at which he was reproducing himself was too slow” (p. 30). But the chief is content with his monogamous marriage and wonders, “How could he tell them that since he married his wife, he had profoundly lost interest in all the other women?” (p. 30).

Akoko’s husband, Chief Owour Kembo, becomes an agent of change by going against the traditional cultural practice of polygamy. Ogola portrays women as having the ability to satisfy their husbands’ needs in a monogamous marriage. Ogola’s message is clear: women have the potential of steering their marriages without the help of co-wives. She favourably contrasts Owour’s marriage with that of his younger brother, Otieno Kembo. Otieno marries two wives in rapid succession and views all women as interchangeable. Otieno’s wives are depicted as completely colourless, unlike the charismatic Akoko. Otieno languishes in poverty while Owour possesses vast herds of cattle and other forms of wealth:

Otieno, Owour’s younger brother had wasted no time in marrying two wives one after the other and already had two children and was expecting two others. The fact that his children were completely lacklustre and unlike Obura was beside the point. His wives were completely colourless as well but since he firmly believed that all women were the same this did not matter either. (p. 30)

Through Otieno Kembo’s characterisation, Ogola offers a clear picture of men who practise patriarchy; that they do not progress and are responsible for women’s depersonalisation and servitude. The novel’s position towards women’s liberation and independence is clear: monogamy is equal to wealth creation for the family, and social and economic independence for

women, while polygamy leads to poverty and female subordination. Ogola's portrayal of Akoko counteracts the dominant view in African culture that women are objects of men's desires and power rather than fully formed subjects with an equal position in society. In this view, women are not supposed to raise their voices or question anything.

Ogola places Akoko in conflict with her mother-in-law. Domestic rows characterise the relationship between the two women. Akoko dares to speak out and oppose her mother-in-law, thereby contesting the prevailing cultural norms. She pours out her feelings in sorrow and anger:

Much has been said by the daughter of the people and her son Otieno about the thirty head of cattle that were paid to my father as a bride price. It causes them much bitterness that I have not borne thirty children in exchange for those cattle. Indeed my continued presence here is bitter aloes to them. Therefore I shall lift their gloom and suffering, and depart from here to go back to my father's house. (p. 36)

Akoko exemplifies the capability of women to defend themselves and refuse to be silenced by the patriarchal system in which the husband's mother has complete power over them. The novel at this point argues for relations based on mutual respect instead of power and fear. This is best illustrated when Akoko leaves her matrimonial home for her natal home when her mother-in-law levels accusations against her while her husband is away: "When Owour Kembo returned from his journey he found an empty house" (p. 37). In the pre-colonial period in which the novel is set, tradition would have dictated that Owour remain at home and not go out in search of his wife. Instead he travels to her home to invite her back, and apologises for his mother's behaviour: "I am profoundly apologetic over this whole matter. On the day your daughter left my house I was away on a journey; otherwise this terrible thing could not have occurred" (p. 43). It is clear here that women are treasured subjects and not simply units of labour and reproduction.

Ogola shatters the traditional African myth that women should bear many children in order to safeguard the marriage institution. Instead she portrays women as good family planners. Akoko herself only has three children; many children, the novel implies, hinder women's development, independence and liberation. While the first part of the novel is set in the pre-colonial period, it is actually addressing the contemporary concerns of Kenyan women with regard to having children, and explores ways in which women can escape the dependency syndrome. Akoko is hardworking, generating wealth of her own. She has a small, manageable family and is able to

support her children. The novel shows the ability of women to create wealth in the family through their own initiative and so achieve independence. As Akoko herself observes, “Do I not always have enough to eat and more left overs to barter in exchange for cattle, goats and sheep?” (p. 35). The size of her herd grows big, indicating wealth. Through Akoko, Ogola depicts hardworking women generating wealth for their families. Taiwo foregrounds women’s economic contribution to society, noting the following:

The contribution of African women to literature and society has been largely connected with their roles as wives, mothers and partners. Their contribution to the economic well-being of society is enormous, much greater than they have ever been given credit for [...] [T]he women are largely responsible for the harvesting of all crops. (1984, p. 3)

In line with the above extract, Ogola aims at liberating her women characters financially through her narratives. *The River and the Source* charts the formation of three female characters, starting with Akoko. This certainly encapsulates Ogola’s project in this novel. Her female characters are active and define themselves by resisting the harmful cultural practices that limit their potential and capacity for independence. This is true of all her characters in the different periods in which the novel is set.

### **Spirituality and Christianity**

During the pre-colonial period, African communities had their own way of worshipping God, based on oral tradition rather than scripture. William R. Ochieng describes traditional Kenyan ways of worship as follows:

The indigenous ethnic religious traditions extended missionary religions and foreign ethnic religions [...] Religion is faith in and loyalty to revealed supernatural powers reflected in beliefs and patterns of devotions communicated through symbols, moral demands and discipline. It is the nature of revealed supernatural powers and the attendant beliefs and patterns of devotion that distinguishes one religious tradition from the other [...] People who have lived and interacted in a given area for a long time tend to have a lot in common in terms of religious beliefs and practices, cults and shrines [...] A classic example of this is the River lake Nilotic Luo in Western Kenya. (1990, p. 84)

The Luo believe in Were, god of the eye of the rising sun. They also revered their ancestors. The ancestral spirits served as intermediaries between humans and 'Were'. The people expressed their concerns to their ancestral spirits and to 'Were'. Ogola champions female emancipation through religious participation. This is exemplified by Akoko's grandmother, Nyar Alego, who intervenes when the baby (Akoko) cries the whole night. She boldly expresses her concerns to 'Were':

“Great 'Were', god of the eye of the rising sun, creator of Ramogi, we revere you and prostrate ourselves before you. Is it not you who brings the rain in season to shower our crops and support new life?” [ ...] And before she could complete that sentence the baby suddenly stopped crying, burped, looked around her dazedly for a while and then fell asleep. (pp, 12-13)

This episode emphasises women's participation in a spiritual context. It is apparent here that the author believes that women too can solve family problems through spiritual interventions. In traditional African societies, women were not allowed to address the ancestors; this was the preserve of only men. Michael Bollig observes in relation to the Pokot community of Kenya that:

In Pokot society, communal rituals are large gatherings sometimes of several hundreds of people. There are rituals of initiation and rituals of age sets and generation sets and ceremonies which are conducted to purify a community and to pray for rain. In these rituals men of wider neighbourhood, sometimes from the entire Pokot area, gather. (1999, pp. 357-358)

This was true of early African participation in missionary Christianity. Ngũgĩ writes that:

Livingstone, the head of the mission, had always shown reluctance in penetrating the ridges. He had always liked the idea of training some mission boys who could then be sent out to spread the good news. (1965, p. 63)

The fact that both Ngũgĩ and Bollig talk only of men's participation in spiritual matters is indicative of the patriarchal nature of Kenyan society. Ogola challenges spiritual gender stereotyping by depicting women characters who address family problems spiritually. Later in the novel, in modern times, Akoko's great granddaughter, Vera, a graduate of Electronic Engineering, joins the Catholic Prelature of Opus Dei as a non-marrying member: “In the end all

Vera wanted was to dedicate her life and her work to God, and there was no turning back” (p. 269). Women are shown as autonomous religious agents. In addition, dedication to religion rather than to husband and family is presented as a viable option for women.

The depiction of women intervening to solve social and domestic problems spiritually counters the stereotype that men are the only ones who have the ability to intervene spiritually on behalf of the society, and serves as a reminder to women that they too have unlimited potential and should not be hindered by patriarchal values and practices.

Akoko loses her husband Chief Owuor Kembo and two sons. Owuor’s brother, Otieno, forcefully wrests the chieftaincy from Akoko’s family. He soon squanders the wealth that Akoko has acquired through her hard work and marries two more wives. When Akoko feels powerless to resist on her own, she decides to get support from *Sirikal*, the “White man’s government”:

When the struggle for wealth and power reached bitter proportions, Akoko decided that the time had come for the battle lines to be clearly drawn [...] As a woman, a widow and sonless mother, the only male in her direct line being a little baby, she was greatly disadvantaged. She had to get massive support [...] She remembered now in the hour of need that at the time of her eldest son’s death a messenger had been sent by *Sirikal* the government [...] She felt the weight of injustice that women have felt since time immemorial in a male dominated world. (pp. 73-74)

She lodges her complaints at the District Officer’s office at Kisumu. The District Officer, a white man, dispatches a team to Akoko’s village to investigate the matter. After three months of proper investigation the District Officer, together with the District Commissioner, decides the case in Akoko’s favour and restores the chieftaincy stool to her:

Akoko returned to her village having won more than a victory for her infant grandson. She had opened up new vistas for her family, which showed another world and a possibility of the different way. (p. 93)

Unlike Ngũgĩ and many other African writers, Ogola identifies some positive aspects of colonisation for the people of Kenya. According to her, British rule held out new possibilities for women oppressed by patriarchal societies. Akoko obtains justice. The novel also celebrates the introduction of Christianity and the school system. Ngũgĩ’s representation of the consequence of

British imperial colonialism for Kenyans is, by contrast, unremittingly one of oppression, exploitation, domination and suffering. Ngũgĩ emphasises the gulf between the white British imperialists and the local people. Revolution is the only option available to the colonised:

She sang of other struggles, of other wars – the arrival of colonialism and the fierce struggles waged against it by newly circumcised youth. Yes, it was always the duty of youth to drive out foreigners and enemies lodged against the people. (1980, p. 210)

Christianity is portrayed as offering a means of escape for Akoko's daughter Nyabera from the traditions that govern the position of widows in Luo society. When Nyabera loses her spouse and children prematurely, she "mourned her husband in disbelief" (p. 98). Life is hard for widowed women:

To be a widow and young was an untenable situation. A husband had to be found from close relatives of the dead man, but such a man had no real rights over the woman, his job being that of siring children to maintain the dead man's name and to keep his widow from wandering from man to man. (p. 98)

Akoko and Nyabera suffer the bitter effects of widowhood in a society in which single women have no place. In Kenya, notably among the rural Luo community in which much of the novel is set, women are still the possession of men, even beyond the grave. Widows are inherited by the deceased husband's clansmen.

The Luo believe that the death of a husband confers impurity upon the widow and restricts her from participating fully in certain social events. Sexual ritual is thus performed to cleanse her and fully re-integrate her into normal community life. (Agot, et al., 2010, 37)

Women in Kenya have been worst hit by the HIV and Aids pandemic. This is because of the harmful widowhood ritual practice that they are exposed to. The ravages of the HIV and Aids pandemic in the region are greatly exacerbated by this practice. In their study of HIV prevalence and associated risk factors among individuals aged 13-34 years in rural Nyanza province, Amornkul, Paul et al. (2009, p. 13-14) report that:

This population-based study in rural Nyanza Province, Kenya found a high prevalence of HIV infection, among those aged 13-34 years. Ritual sex around funerals, polygamy and widow inheritance are traditional Luo practices that can facilitate HIV infection. Traditionally widow inheritance requires a widow to become a wife of her late husband's brother, assuring her and her children economic and social stability.

The same happens to Nyabera. She conforms to the tradition of Luo widow inheritance and marries Ogoma Kwach, her dead husband's second cousin. They have two children, both of whom die. Life is full of bitterness and misery for Nyabera. She decides to leave her inherited husband and home and find refuge in a Christian community. Ogola critiques the practice of widow inheritance, and portrays the crisis and negative impact it has on women through the story of Nyabera. The practice undermines women's liberation and independence: "Nyabera was full of bitterness and she decided that a change was necessary" (p. 100). Both Akoko and Nyabera turn to Christianity, a religion that holds out the promise of a place for them:

Now in that village a man had once come dressed in a white robe and speaking of a new God who made meaning out of sorrow and suffering and who particularly liked the poor, the orphan and the widow. (p. 100)

Christianity is represented as a modernising force that offers women a context in which they can more fully recognise their potential. It offers an avenue for personal meaning outside Kenyan patriarchal traditions. The novel suggests that one way out of patriarchy and oppression for Kenyan women such as Akoko and Nyabera is through the church:

The description of Akoko, Nyabera and the children as seeking refuge in the church because they have been persecuted by patriarchal tyranny on account of their being women reflects the appeal that Christianity has particularly on women. (Jose 2014, p. 32)

Nyabera tells Akoko of her decision to leave home: "Mother, I have decided to seek the new religion which you have heard about. You know my life is a painful wound to me and much as I try my heart fills with bitterness for me, and also you" Ogola (1994, p. 102). This decision shows Nyabera assuming agency. She and Akoko are the first of a long line of women in Ogola's novels who possess initiative and the ability to look for solutions for their problems. The church also provides a forum for education for women; women's education is a recurring theme in

Ogola's novels. Attending catechism lessons offers a liberating means of education for women, one in which individual aptitude comes to the fore.

Every once in a while the teacher will test to see whether you have understood. Naturally, some people understand faster than others [...] Nyabera was an apt and avid learner [...] [L]ater this affirmation of the central teaching of Christianity would become her favourite prayer, her consolation and source of strength. (p. 105)

The church is a source of solace and healing for women. When Nyabera is baptised, the narrator observes: "The ritual and symbolism of the Catholic church were balm to her wounded soul" (p. 109). Christianity opens doors and offers comfort for women who have been mistreated and undermined by patriarchy. Christianity becomes a means of liberating girls and women from the yoke of harmful tradition and other practices. The transition is marked by Nyabera changing her name to Maria when she is baptised. She, in turn, introduces her mother (Akoko), daughter and nephew to Christianity. The narrator informs us that, "Like the children of Israel, they left the pots of Egypt for uncertainties of Canaan" (p. 112). Here the position of women in traditional African societies is compared to the enslaved Israelites in Egypt. After some time at Aluor Mission, Maria returns to the village, marries and gives birth to a son. But the two years she spends in the village are harsh and miserable, and she goes back to the mission.

When she returns to Aluor Mission one evening she looks thin and haggard, prompting her mother to ask, "What made you suffer like this?" (p. 122). The novel is an indictment of a traditional marriage. Maria's return to the village for two years is presented also as a deviation from the true Christian path: "Bless me father for I have sinned. It is two years now since my last confession. I wish to confess" (p. 124). After the absolution, Maria begins her penance and feels as if a load has been lifted off her shoulders. In contrast to the patriarchal village traditions, the Christian faith is portrayed as woman-friendly. One of the daily prayers is described in positive terms: "The prayer which the teacher said reminded men three times a day that God had chosen to be born of a woman just like us and dwelt among us" (p. 105).

Ogola consistently associates women's liberation with religious practice and Christianity, although in subsequent chapters Ogola's women characters are also inspired and liberated by science and modern careers. Christianity is a source of strength and consolation for women who have been oppressed and marginalised by their traditions and cultural practices. Operating

outside the church means only further marginalisation, as can be seen when Maria Nyabera leaves the church in search of a son. Fortunately the church, with its tradition of repentance and confession, offers a place of return and sanctuary from the desperation of her failed marriage.

Chinua Achebe depicts the effects of Christianity on the Igbo culture and the people of Umuofia somewhat differently:

Mr. Isaac Okonkwo made a short speech placing “the small kola” before his guest. By Umuofia standards he was well-to-do. He had been a catechist of the church missionary society for twenty five years and then retired on a pension of twenty five pounds a year. He had been the very first man to build a “zinc” house in Umofia. (1960, p. 9)

Achebe’s representation of Christianity is ambivalent. In some of his novels Christianity is viewed positively and in some cases it is negatively portrayed. His characters are syncretic for instance Isaac Okwonkwo. He practises Christianity at the same time deeply rooted in his African Igbo culture. The breaking of kola nuts and stigmatisation of the Osu people because they are outcasts are examples of the weight of tradition on Christians. Christianity offers a financial platform for the converts rather than liberation from oppressive cultural practices.

Ogola’s Christian converts, by contrast, embrace the new religion fully, abandoning harmful traditions and culture in the process. Jose contends: “Catholicism is viewed as an element of positive change characterized by progressiveness and fairness as represented in the lives of Akoko, Nyabera and the children, Owuor and Awiti.” (2014, p. 133)

### **Modernity and Change**

Modernity and change comprise one of the themes in *The River and the Source* that comes along with women’s liberation and independence. It is an essential and intermediate move away from the traditional view of society to the modern ways. Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, in *Gender Epistemologies in Africa*, discusses the significant impact of gender in this phase. She notes the following:

In the age of modernity, the effects of the dominance of gender constructs in everyday life cannot be overstated. Very little has been written about gender and the construction of space in African societies. As a result, ignorance and illiteracy on this subject abound,

a dangerous situation given how the organisation of space has the power to locate and circumscribe women. (2011, p. 4)

For this reason, Ogola's narrative brings about a specific sort of change to the women. In the first two parts of the novel: "The Girl Child" and "The Art of Giving", the women characters are victims of patriarchy in their firmly rooted culture, and in the last two parts of the novel: "Love Life" and "Variable Winds", the women characters are open-minded persons who are visionaries. They embrace change and accommodate fundamental outlooks of modernity in a bid to emancipate and liberate themselves. Molara Ogundipe-Leslie foregrounds women's distinctiveness and empowerment by underscoring the following:

All women of the world are discriminated against and subordinated first as women and second as members of the subordinate classes. In their biological subordination and exploitation lies a certain undeniable and binding global sisterhood. (1995, p. 15)

It is obvious that Kenyan women have frequently been exposed to undesirable stereotypes. Taiwo focuses on the role of an African girl, noting the following:

In most parts of Africa, the whole of a girl's life is one long preparation for the useful role she is expected to play in society. This role pertains mainly to marriage and child-bearing [...] When she is betrothed to a man his relations expect her to conform to certain traditions and norms of their family. (1984, p. 2)

The omission of women from public settings and their being denied equitable opportunities to stand up for themselves in their societies also give substance to the marginalisation of women from the critical decision-making process in their communities and families.

Ogola's narrative corrects the above negative stereotypes embedded in women. Her narrative attacks the traditional feminine discourse of the African female as being subjugated, oppressed, ill-treated and only used as a beast of burden. In *Writing African Women: Gender, Popular Culture and Literature in West Africa*, Stephenie Newell notes:

Gender images and ideologies constantly shift to account for their changing status. This has led to the emergence of new perspectives that interrogate, reformulate and analyse inherited popular codes. (1997, p. 1)

Ogola through her narrative calls for contemporary concepts, inventions and a sense of liberation from conventional bonds. She introduces modernism in her fictional work. She does this by deconstructing the African traditional opinions of women by bringing on board women characters that conform to the principles of modernism by reforming their minds in line with economic and social independence, hence adopting values and positive traits for themselves. Ogun-dipe-Leslie underscores the negative impact of stereotypical portrayal of women, noting:

Most African imaginative writers [...] portray rural women as uncreative, bound by tradition and culture. She is consistently depicted as closed to or frightened by new ideas, limited to her narrow world, interested only in what affects her in a small environment. (1994, p. 49)

Ogola's way of expressing modernity interlocks with women's emancipation and independence. For instance, in the later part of the novel there is no bigamy or polygamy because it is an ancient practice. For centuries, women have been typically defined by male-centred practices and traditional beliefs. Male thinkers and social theorists are the ones who brand women as second class. Amy Wharton discusses three different frameworks of gender, foregrounding the following:

Gender matters shape the identities and behavioural positions of individuals. Researchers disagree over the means by which these gendered characteristics are acquired and precisely how they become a part of the person, but they agree that gender enters into how people see themselves, the way they behave and how they view others. While modern life enables people to have many identities, gender identity may be among the most influential in shaping the standards people hold for themselves. (2005, p. 9)

*The River and the Source* depicts women who contest traditional stereotypes without giving up their confidence and hope, in quest of the impending change for both men and women as they review their common roles. Boyce Davies points out that:

Literature is one of the channels through which negative attitudes and stereotypes of women are perpetuated, even created. Modern African literature too, because it has adopted many of the western patriarchal modes of thought and expression. (1986, p. 75)

Like many other African societies, the Kenyan society is basically patriarchal; hence men are considered to be superior to women. Distinct from Western feminism, African feminism does not work against men but accommodates them. Susan Arndt defines and discusses the nature of African feminism, foregrounding the following:

It [is] legitimate to describe Africans' commitment to gender issues as feminist [...] [I]t is necessary to recognise that their feminist commitment has a specific, distinct face that is rooted in the specificities of African societies and of the situation, problems and concerns of African women and men. (2002, p. 70)

Ogola foregrounds in her fictional work the new image of women and at the same time puts the male characters into perspective. She reflects a changing ideology that has come with modernism. Sondra O'Neal discusses the reconstruction of the new image of black women. She expresses the following:

If the larger society does not know who black women are, only who it wants them to be; if even black men as scholars and thinkers writing in this century could not "free" the images of black women in the national psyche, it remained for black women to accomplish the task themselves [...] in drama, poetry and fiction. In most of the texts, they are women who help men accomplish their goals. (1985, p. 25)

For Ogola, the male characters help women achieve their goal of emancipation and liberation. For this reason, women in Ogola's novel acquire new identities through urbanisation. They move from self-unawareness to reassurance and self-confidence. The last two sections of this novel concern a first stride towards women's liberation and independence and their total freedom. Women try to cope with modernism despite their extremely ingrained African culture that regards them as quiet in their roles as wives, mothers and daughters. Women characters in this novel try to indiscernibly encourage their children to embrace modern structures with the hope that the school instils their children with skills and knowledge, and also teaches the values of patience, tolerance and equality.

Ogola's female characters in this novel become central foci for testing the reconciliation of loyalty and hope as well as the likelihood of regeneration. This is a significant overture to

women's emancipation and their pursuit of their rights and status today. She responds to Stratton's call:

Women writers have earned a place in African literary history. Writing in the main against the canon, they have redefined the African literary tradition. Uncovering gaps and silences, exposing biases and prejudices, they have renamed it a male tradition and declared the canon an artificial construct. They have altered the condition of reading African literature [...] By initiating a dialogue on gender, women writers have occasioned a change in the orientation of African literature. (1994, p. 176)

Thus, the author through modernism seeks to uncover gaps and women's patriarchally ordained silences. Ogola in *The River and the Source* uses modern structures in her narrative to aid the liberation and independence of Kenyan women. For instance, she introduces official education in her narrative and institutes schools that enroll both boys and girls. Wharton highlights these social institutions and structures:

Gender organises social institutions. Social institutions thus include large formally organised, public sectors of society, such as education, religion, sports, the legal system, and work and they include the more personal, less formally organised areas of life such as marriage, parenthood and family. (2005, p. 10)

Initially in the pre-colonial period the learning structures were not there. Girls and women were supposed to learn from their mothers and grandmothers, and the same happened to the boys; they learned from their fathers. This situation rendered women vulnerable to patriarchy. In *The River and the Source* Nyabera informs us that:

Growing up under the tutelage of a woman such as Akoko was a demanding job. She believed a young woman had to be intelligent, fast on her feet and hard working. Intelligent because according to her, stupidity in a woman was a sin only greater than stupidity in a man. (Ogola, 1995, p. 65)

Men too had access to different opportunities for learning under modernity; for instance, Peter Owuor Sino joins the seminary leaving behind the traditional duties. Frodwa Wahove Immaculate discusses Ogola's depiction of men:

Men are also depicted as change agents. This is best captured through the character of Owuor, Akoko's grandson, who embraces the new religion by taking to priesthood consequently forfeiting his right to be a chief. This exemplifies a change in the course of one's life from adopting the traditional cultural practices of the Luo that would have required him to get married and rightfully inherit the chieftom from his ancestry. By turning his back to all these, he charts a new course of life altogether which signifies a total break from the past, a past that has long been overtaken by events. (2014, p. 51)

Modernity affects both genders. Peter Owuor's cousin, Elizabeth Awiti, joins a primary school; both of them are Akoko's grandchildren. Elizabeth Awiti is happy that she is embracing a new life and leaving traditional duties behind. Nyabera sacrifices her love for Elizabeth Awiti. She takes her to school and Awiti later joins a Teachers' Training College. They register for Western education after leaving Yimbo. The narrator points out that:

After Owuor had left for the seminary, it was decided that his cousin should join the newly founded primary school in which English, Mathematics, Geography, Nature Study and History [...] were taught. A certificate was issued on passing a tough examination at the end of the course. (p. 129)

This period is shortly after the pre-colonial time. The level of admission of girls in formal schools is very poor. The narrator paints a clear picture of the situation at the time of enrolment: "Elizabeth Awiti was enrolled in the school – one of the only two girls. The other thirty-two were boys. She was almost thirteen and on the threshold of puberty" (p. 129). Ogola's narrative advocates for the transformation of women through modernity, particularly through her focus on girls' enrolment in school. She celebrates their independence by getting them out of traditional practices. At that time, it was hard for boys to access formal education and even more difficult for girls to access formal learning because it was thought this would introduce them to alien ways. The narrator comments: "if it was hard for a boy to get an education – it was well-nigh impossible for a girl. The purpose for female existence was marriage and childbearing – and by the same token to bring wealth to her family with the bride price" (p. 129).

Ogola makes her agenda for the women clear: that they ought to be represented academically. The novel foregrounds the narrator's comments: 'if education was not necessary for boys, it was

superfluous for girls.’ However, for Awiti several factors came together in her favour. The most important was the pioneering and daring spirit of her grandmother and mother” (p. 129).

The mushrooming of schools results from the advent of modernism. This factor boosts the emancipation and liberation of women and girls because they gain knowledge and intellectual skills. Ogola accords women with outstanding capabilities of bravery and endurance usually considered exclusive to men. Education is one of the most important devices of empowerment that the author highlights in her novel. She makes it clear through her narrative that women are the beneficiaries of modernity.

The narrator features Elizabeth Awiti, pointing out that, “A girl to be so clever, to show it openly, and to receive commendation after commendation [is important] [...] Out of the eleven who sat for the examination only five passed and Elizabeth Awiti was the best in them” (p. 130). The author champions women’s and girls’ liberation through modern structures. Her representation of the female characters regarding class performance is brought to the fore. Ogunjide-Leslie discusses the affairs of the African women, their culture and development. She notes the following:

The right to education, expression, information and the management of production are all rights that articulate the same need for socialization. It is, therefore, a perversion to imagine that the discussion on development can be limited to what is called the satisfaction of basic material need. (1994, p. 21)

It is essential for women to embrace modernity as to be liberated from patriarchy and avoid the vicious circle of poverty. In *Post-Colonial Representations: Women, Literature and Identity* Françoise Lionnet discusses the phenomenon of modernity, highlighting the following:

It is not assimilation that appears inevitable when western technology and education are adopted by the colonized, or when migration to the metropole severs some of the migrants’ ties to a particular birthplace, rather the move forces individuals to stand in relation to the past and the present at the same time to look for creative means of incorporating useful ‘western’ tools techniques or strategies into their own cosmology. (1995, p. 11)

In line with the above quotation, Ogola uses the ‘western tools’ to liberate her female characters. Elizabeth Awiti joins the teacher training college. The narrator comments: “Meanwhile, she sat for her examination and got her teacher’s certificate. She was posted back to her school and was grateful for a chance to be near her mother and ailing grandmother” (Ogola, 1994, p. 141). At the same time her cousin, Peter Owuor, follows his priesthood education, showing that both genders benefit from western-style education.

In the novel, mothers are given due consideration and are viewed as sustainers and nurturers of society’s values throughout the narrative. Ogola stresses the role played by modernism for women in bringing radical changes to their community, by registering their children for formal education and socialising them into contemporary structures. They learn arithmetic and religion and effectively secure careers built on education, and not a transition from childhood to maturity where the only duty was marriage. The new education offers diverse opportunities. With the establishment of journal education at the time, in which are novels re set Ogola makes it possible for her women characters to embrace schooling irrespective of the hard conditions they face.

The narrative foregrounds the hospital and its facilities as one of the structures of modernism. Initially, in the precolonial time there were no hospitals or health facilities. For instance, women with complicated pregnancies would succumb to death. Ogola in her narrative introduces health care services that aid both genders, and more especially women. The novel foregrounds Elizabeth Awiti at the time she is expecting her first child:

That evening he brought her some anti-malarial tablets that she obligingly swallowed. The following morning was chaos; not only was she throwing up but she also had fearful abdominal cramps [...] She was admitted immediately in a state of shock and dehydration. Not only had she vomited out everything, but had also started haemorrhaging violently. (p. 159)

Mark Sigu, her husband, had ignorantly given her the anti-malarial tablets without knowing the effects they would cause. The narrator informs us that: “they discharged Elizabeth after five days. She lost the pregnancy on the second day of admission” (p. 159). The novel depicts the importance of health facilities. Tony, Elizabeth Awiti’s son, is dashed to the hospital due to appendicitis. The narrator notes:

Tony was writhing on the floor; clearly the boy was very sick [...] He was scheduled for an emergency operation, but since there was an apparently more serious case before him, it wasn't until the early hours of the morning that they took him to the theatre where an ugly inflamed appendix was incised and removed. (p. 181)

And similarly, Wandia's mother gets medical help when she is admitted to Machakos hospital due to diabetes (p. 262). The author embraces modernity in her narrative as it affects women's emancipation as far as their health is concerned. The novel also depicts the influence of modernism on young boys. For instance, Aoro observes Tony's stitches while at the hospital and a fortnight later, he operates on a stranded frog successfully. This leads him to study medicine as his career.

Revolution requires sacrifice. The author uses change to highlight the features of modernity. Akoko is a product of both the pre-colonial era and a post-colonial time. She suffers because of patriarchy that was heavily practised then, but she gets liberated by Catholicism, which is one of the pillars of modernism. Cheryl Stobie in "Dethroning the Infallible Father: Religion, Patriarchy and Politics in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*" discusses the following:

Devotion to the Virgin Mary has long been significant in Catholicism, and her cult as mother of Jesus was affirmed by the Second Vatican Council, placing emphasis on her ability to provide hope and comfort [...] In Catholicism, Mary symbolises unconditional love, hope, purity, humility and protection for the suffering and oppressed. For the faithful, she is not passive but actively intercedes in the lives of individuals and collectives. She has particular resonance for women worshippers. (2010, p. 430)

Ogola refers many times to female characters' staunch religious beliefs, and in particular their devotion to Mary which gives them comfort and helps them to find strength in their daily lives.

The use of modern courts is one of the contemporary measures the author uses in her novel to liberate her women characters. For instance, Akoko implicates the colonial administration in safeguarding the custody of her grandson. The presence of the British government is a sign of modernity in the narrative. The way the colonial administration handles the matter through the District Commissioner's office is profoundly unimaginable when viewed from a traditional perspective. Initially before the coming of British rule the council of elders was responsible for

settling disputes in the community. For instance, when Akoko clashes with her mother-in-law while her husband is away, she goes back to her father's home, and her husband Chief Owour Kembo goes after her. It is the council of elders that solve their dispute. The narrator points out that: "The following day four young men were given a cow and an ox, he-goat and two nanny goats to drive to Yimbo to smooth the way for elders who would later go there" (Ogola, 1994, p. 40).

The council of elders in the traditional and cultural context of the Luo community and Africa, in general, is bestowed with all the powers to rule on any case. This is seen as biased governance as the community is patriarchal in nature. The British and its way of administration raises some hope and confidence for women through Akoko's case. Otuoma, one of the aid workers at the District Office, confides to Akoko:

"Have no doubt, he will deal fairly with you because he knows right from wrong which is more than you can say for some white people [...] It is customary for difficult cases to be heard more than once so that the truth can be fully ascertained." [...] Akoko returned to her village having won more than a victory [...] [S]he had opened up new vistas for her family, which showed another world and the possibility of a different way. (pp. 88, 93)

A review of the above episode shows Ogola's determination to undermine patriarchal ideology that controls and disempowers women. She represents firm female characters in this text as fulfilled in their womanhood since they resist gender prescriptions that subjugate women. She, therefore, portrays both cultural and political emancipatory possibility for women to gain control over their destiny within the context of common tradition and culture. Conscious of the gendered cultural context within which Akoko and the other female characters in the text are portrayed, Ogola displays modernity through Christianity and British rule which allows them to challenge traditional customs that are at the core of the creation of female subjectivity.

The above discussion shows how British rule and colonialism brought modernity to Kenya. Kate Millett's theories in her book, *Sexual Politics*, demonstrate how patriarchy starts at the family level, asserting that it is responsible for women's subjugation. She notes the following:

Patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It is both the mirror of and a connection to the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole. Mediating between the

individual and the social structure, the family effects control and conformity where political and other authorities are insufficient. (1976, p. 33)

In contrast to the above, Ogola's narrative seeks to give power to the women at the family level. The British tribunal court rules the cases fairly, irrespective of the patriarchy witnessed in the region. Most African male writers in the framework of urban settings portray the image of women negatively in their fiction. Kenneth Little's *The Sociology of Urban Women's Image In African Literature* examines and applies his thought to the situation of African women in urban areas. He provides a literary description of urban African women in East and West African novels. In these narratives, he discusses girlfriends, good time girls, mothers, wives, free women, courtesans, prostitutes, and political women and workers, and examines the modern-day position of African women. He focuses his attention on literature that deals with urban areas, foregrounding the following:

It is the city that provides the best guide to current social attitude and trends. It is there that the major decisions are made, that social change is most rapid and that considerations of traditional origin have been partially superseded. In the city, women are brought into new and different relationships with the opposite sex. There are also other fresh situations to face including modernising influences that affect women's lives beyond the city's own boundaries [...] It is one that enables women to be regarded as participants in the kind of milieu that is developing out of the older order of society. (1980, p. 2)

Ogola narrates the positivity of modernism for women characters. She corrects the negative images of urban women irrespective of overall tendencies for African male writers to portray them negatively. The author foregrounds the contemporary courting and marriage process, using the perspective of two people. Elizabeth Awiti and Mark Sigu. The novel depicts Mark taking the vow, "I Mark Sigu do take you Elizabeth to be my lawful wedded wife, to have and to hold, to love and to cherish, in sickness and in health till death do us part." And likewise Elizabeth Awiti; then Father Peter declared them man and wife. The crowd clapped quite spontaneously" (Ogola 1994, p. 158). Initially, before modernity, the whole clan could find a suitor for their son, and it was the responsibility of the girl's father to accept or reject the proposal. The girl could be the second wife or even the tenth wife to the suitor. With the onset of modernism, such a practice is rendered obsolete. Women and girls now have a voice. They are at liberty to choose the

spouses on their own. This reveals the concept of modernity and the liberation and independence of women. Ogola, therefore, champions women's liberation through modernism by giving them new prospects to replace those that were once ruined.

Vera is highly educated and intensely modern. Through her, the author prudently reflects the importance of women embracing modernity by highlighting their transformation from a traditional set into a new woman, thus representing the necessary transformation of Kenyan women and the nation in general. According to Ogola, modern women stand as a distinct model, easily distinguished from the traditional women. They are associated with open-minded intellectuals and are matched to the positive aspects of modernity. Vera does her advanced level exams, and she passes well in all the subjects. The narrator points out her marks:

[She] had achieved A's in math and physics and a B in Chemistry. She had decided at the last minute to choose Electrical Engineering instead of architecture – which was merely academic; she had qualified for both. (p. 210)

Modernism comes with a change of identity and perception. The choices Vera makes in life are a confirmation of her pursuit of a new identity that seeks fulfilment in the Christian religion. Her father consents to her decision after failing to understand why she chooses that path. The narrator comments:

But he had eventually accepted because he loved her. But she looked so happy, so radiant [...] Women like that tended to marry the most amazing wimps, and Mark had held his head in fear. But in the end all Vera wanted was to dedicate her life and her work to God, and there was no turning her back. (p. 269)

The above episode showcases modernism. Girls and women now enjoy the freedom of choice that was initially not there. The novel depicts modernism in girls, Vera is very protective of her sister. Primarily, in the traditional African societies, the girls were overwhelmed with the task of household chores and home duties and therefore they did not have enough time for their siblings. Ogola's narrative comes with a different option for women. The narrator notes:

Vera [...] took nothing for granted. She was completely loyal and from an early age her sister was the object of her love and protection. It was her business to see to it that Becky

was happy and had everything she needed. She was willing and ready to do battle with anyone who crossed Becky's path, and she was a fearless fighter. (p. 166)

With the emancipation of her women characters through modernity, Ogola carefully depicts the women's optimism, fears, and desires for modernism. The narrative paints a clear picture of campus life. The twin sisters Vera and Becky, Elizabeth and Mark's daughters, are university students. The narrator points out that:

Campus life was exhilarating. For the first time, there were no parents or teachers to watch your every move. The lecturers gave their lectures in the lecture theatres or halls and left it at that [...] The women's halls of residence [...] was the hunting ground for all and sundry, and big cars were very evident especially on Saturdays when well dressed, well-to-do men descended upon the place. It was the thing to have a girlfriend in campus. Only too naturally, the male students did not like it. (p. 212)

Life on campus is fun. Vera does not know what to do with so much autonomy at hand. Girls on campus either date the affluent men that picked them at school or see some campus students. But Vera upholds her steady relationship with Tommy, who proposes to her, but she declines, ending their relationship. Ogola paints a clear picture of campus life to showcase women's emancipation and freedom of expression.

One of the main aims of Ogola's narrative is to bestow modern women with independence. This type of autonomy brings with it other rights: for instance to choose whether to marry or remain single, whether to work or not and the right of sexual expression, among other things. What is most imperative for these modern women is independence and freedom. They are great assets to their families and society in general.

The novel puts Becky into the foreground of attention. She thinks that she has had enough with staying at home and decides to leave a note. The letter reads:

Dear Vera [...] I am leaving home to go and stay with some friends of mine in Nairobi. I am determined to become an air hostess – and they can give me the connections that I need. Please tell mum and dad not to worry. You always know what to say to them while I have always felt like an outsider. I am sure no one will miss me anyway. (p. 211)

Becky shows her lack of moral fibre by sliding away without having a chance to talk to her parents. The image here is suggestive of several modern families whose offspring choose to escape into the world where they think they can make independent decisions. Jose foregrounds Ogola's religious inclination towards her characters:

In the character of Becky, the author is saying that without religion an individual is disorderly and immoral. The author is clear in her vision that choosing a path devoid of spiritual guidance is detrimental to one's own personal well-being. (2014, p. 130)

Becky is a modern girl with a contemporary career. Ogola portrays women with distinct needs and choices. She dares to speak her mind by presenting a carefree character. Becky believes that she is going to fulfil her desires through her friends. Later in the novel we come to see how her bold spirit leads her to destruction. Instead of freedom and liberation she ends up destroying herself. The recurrence of similar female characters in different novels by Ogola is evident.

Ogola intellectualises a contemporary female personality in search of happiness and contentment. This observation is apparent with Becky. She takes what she likes in her choices of life. The narrator points out that:

Becky stayed at home because she couldn't find a job of her liking. She was not interested in teaching in the Harambee schools because "it was boring" as she puts it. So she stayed at home and concentrated on making herself beautiful. (1994, p. 209)

Becky is too engrossed in herself and loves the "good things of life – comfort, expensive clothes, and good looking men" (p. 219). She lives in a classy block of flats, a sign that she is financially stable. The narrator describes her apartment: "Becky's flat, from the carpet on the floor to the pictures on the wall spelled [...] money" (p. 223). Despite the lavish lifestyle that she leads, there is a perfect sense of void. She pursues a white man, John, to be her boyfriend, and later her husband, but that does not give her satisfaction either. The narrator highlights her complaints: "Of course I like money and all it can buy, but there have been richer men who are not only black but have offered me even more than he can" (p. 223).

The author carefully conveys her message: that embracing modernism does not automatically translate into happiness for some women. She, therefore, demonstrates that with modernism may come evil. Becky divorces her husband and starts to live an irresponsible and carefree life. She

throws all caution to the wind and is openly involved in sexual relations with men without caring whether people would know about her loose morality, including her children. The narrator points out Vera's complaints: "Vera was concerned as to the kind of influence her lifestyle might have on her children [...] for Becky changed men as frequently as she changed clothes" (p. 277).

This affects her children, for instance, Johnny, her son, who scarcely talks, while Alicia acts as if her mother does not exist. She contracts the HIV virus at a time when there is no medication, her condition quickly progresses to Aids, and she finally succumbs to death. Her brother, Aoro, adopts her children. She leaves a large insurance cover and a large estate for her children. Ogola paints Becky as an affluent woman who at the time of her death has: "a string of maisonettes, two bungalows in Spring Valley and actually owned a block of offices and shops in Westlands" (p. 284). The narrator explains her arrangements prior to her death: "Her affairs were in spic and span order with everything clearly documented and legally tied up, and her debts were easily cleared by the sale of one of her houses" (p. 284). The author depicts modern women as intelligent and orderly.

Contrary to her family's expectations, she elicits a responsible identity before she dies. She appoints a firm of trustees to run her affairs on behalf of her children and for their benefit. She also names Vera as the custodian of her children. Despite the differences between her and her sister, Becky believes that Vera can make an excellent mother for her children, as she points out in her will.

Ogola uses Becky's will to conceptualise women's independence. All along she seems irresponsible, but as she faces death she becomes the caring and concerned mother of her children. She develops a reasonable attitude towards her children. Her wish to be like her sister rather than herself is affirmed when she entrusts her children to Vera, whose attributes she respects. She is aware that her sister has no intentions of marrying, making a home and rearing children, yet she appoints her a guardian of her two children. The faith she has in her sister's goodness and responsible, caring self, leaves Becky in no doubt that wherever Vera will be, she will make time to play a mother's role to her children. While one may have imagined that Becky does not face things seriously, the inevitability of her impending death does not result in self-pity. Instead, she faces death bravely. However, she learns her lessons about vanity and wealth when it is too late.

Ogola's female characters become progressively resourceful and independent as the novel embraces modernism. In the later part of *The River and the Source* subjects like women whose behaviour has been influenced by patriarchy have disappeared altogether and are replaced by the image of powerful superwomen and girls. This observation is apparent in Wandia Sigu. The novel foregrounds her seeking clinical answers after the recovery of her son Daniel, who has Down syndrome. Jose argues, "The author also suggests that illnesses such like Danny's are there so that the glory of God can be revealed" 2014 (p. 132). The narrator details the following:

After the discovery of her son Daniel, it was natural that Wandia's interest in pathology – the study of disease processes as a whole should find its expression in haematology – the study of diseases of the blood. Immediately after the second degree, she joined the University and became a lecturer and so became a teacher as well as a healer. She then got a scholarship to study haematology. (p. 291)

Wandia's career in medicine becomes an obsession that defines her identity and personality. This is a sense of fulfilment in her search for independence. The novel focuses on the harmonious relationship between the relatives and also satisfaction for women in this kind of marriage set-up. The novel further highlights Vera's relationship with her sister-in-law Wandia:

She found Wandia sitting on the balcony of their flat sunning herself in the warm evening sun. She had not been at work for a couple of days because she had a bad cold. She was pregnant and had confided to Vera that she was expecting twins. Vera was delighted and treated her like a priceless and breakable porcelain object. (p. 278)

The above extract depicts women's change through modernity. The woman-to-woman relationship is a close bond, and this is a strength to them. Ogola's narrative illustrates women who serve their immediate families. It depicts Elizabeth's mother-in-law wanting to take charge of her son's family when Aoro her grandson was born. The narrator thus informs us that:

When she heard about it, their paternal grandmother was furious. "How can you allow that woman to take off with my grandchildren? Is this why they refused to take a bride price for her? So that they could treat us like dirt?" (p. 167)

With the onset of modernity, Ogola gives voice to women in their families without the interference of relatives, for instance, Wandia's mother-in-law has no influence over his son's

family. Ogola through her narrative offers a paradigm shift for women from that of women taking the back-stage to them being significant figures in the society. Aoro Sigu takes care of the family as his wife Wandia Mugo Sigu continues with her education. He embraces parenting while his wife continues with her studies. Ogola's narrative paints a picture of equality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making, at all levels.

With modernity come inter-ethnic and biracial relationships. The novel foregrounds a new society that accommodates all races and ethnic groups. This establishes the fact that society is now expanding, making the world a global village. Inter-racial marriages are now commonplace. The author depicts Becky as being comfortable with her Canadian husband.

Ogola casts female characters who achieve their freedom by embracing other tribes or races. Aoro's wife is a Kikuyu from Central Province. She comes from a different community from her husband. The writer uses her to demystify inter-tribal marriages. Ogola uses the above-mentioned theme to re-imagine the place of women in contemporary Kenya. The narrator highlights Becky's conversation with her sister Vera, who seems to worry about her sister's interracial affair, posing the following questions to her, "Have you stopped to think how difficult it is going to be for you and your children? Where will you live? Where does he come from?" And in response, Becky defends her decision to have Jonny as her husband. She courageously says: "He is Canadian. We might live in Canada or here in Kenya – we have not decided. He likes the country and its people [...] He is a nice man – too nice for his own good" (p. 222).

Ogola foregrounds women's autonomy through their interconnectedness with other races. She believes that women will learn other people's culture, hence exposing them to new ways of thinking. Ogundipe-Leslie observes that:

The African woman lives in, or comes from a continent that has been subjected to nearly five hundred years of assault, battery and mastery of various kinds. These historical experiences have taken their toll and left their mark. They can be dated from the historical arrival of Vasco da Gama in the fourteen hundreds. (1994, p. 28)

With this in mind, Kenyan women under the umbrella of the African continent have been subjected to agony, torment and grief under African and colonial traditions and culture; they ought to embrace a biracial or inter-ethnic relationship that comes with modernity. She casts

female characters who accomplish their independence by embracing other tribes or race. The Kikuyu and the Luo people are pitted against each other not only in communal life but also in the struggle for the leadership. Possibly that is why Ogola is eager to carve a Kenyan nation that is cohesive by introducing inter-ethnic marriage in her narration. Modernity and urbanisation are responsible for the abolition of cultural beliefs that look down upon women.

The novel highlights the aspect of parenting styles in modern Kenya. When Vera and Becky are in the prime of their life and boys are milling around. Tommy Muhambe has an interest in Vera. Vera requests her father permission to go with Tommy to the movies. Vera portrays maturity when she asks her father to give her permission to go to the movies. She showcases aspects of adult obligation and respect for her father. This is unlike the practice in traditional times when it was a taboo for girls to openly tell their fathers about opposite-sex relations; the girls were expected to converse with their mothers about their relationships and boys with their fathers. In this case, it is unthinkable for Vera's father to deny her such a huge chance when she had expressed herself very well. A decision on marriage now lies between two consenting adults. It is not like a long time ago when the father accepted or rejected the offer.

### **Theme of Illness**

Women in Kenya have been worst hit by the HIV and Aids pandemic. The western part of Kenya, specifically Luo Nyanza where Ogola comes from, has a high rate of HIV prevalence. Ambasa Shisanya, in "Widowhood in the Era of HIV/Aids: A Case Study of Siaya District, Kenya, details that, "Luo women in the indigenous settings are exposed to cultural cleansing rite of their husbands. A ritual is observed by the brother-in-law or cousin of the deceased husband through a guardianship institution. The educated brother-in-law because of the emergence of HIV/Aids refrains from the practice by hiring professional cleansers as substitutes therefore exposing them to the risk of infection. (2007, p. 606)

Ogola's narrative puts into perspective illness and its effects. The novel portrays several women characters who suffer due to illness. Women from this region have been rendered vulnerable due to the antiquated cultural practice of "cleansing" or re-marrying widows. Ogola's narrative examines ways in which Kenyan widows could be empowered socially and economically in a bid to emancipate them from destructive widowhood ritual practices. Nyabera conforms to the tradition of Luo widow inheritance and marries Ogoma Kwach, her dead husband's second

cousin. They have two children, both of whom die. Life is full of bitterness and misery for Nyabera. She decides to leave her inherited husband and home.

In the last two parts of the novel, Ogola brings on board the overwhelming effects of HIV and Aids, and how women are vulnerable to this type of illness. Through her narrative, Ogola portrays different sociological, medical and cultural discourses that emerge from the spread of HIV and Aids and other illnesses, especially to the women. The first case of HIV to be discovered in Kenya was in 1984. This is ten years before Ogola writes her first novel, *The River and the Source*. In her novel, she spotlights Aids and its devastating effects on individuals and their kin. The novel foregrounds Becky Sigu. Her infidelity and promiscuity lead to the breakup of her marriage. She later contracts HIV and dies of Aids-related illnesses. This comes after the birth of her two children, Jonny and Alicia. She is a reckless mother, having multiple partners. Vera, her sister, informs us that:

Since she and John broke up, she has thrown all caution to the winds. It is almost as if she hates herself. Every time I see her she has a different man, and she does not care who knows it and that includes her children. (1994, p. 279)

Her children and immediate family undergo pain and suffering due to her illness. The novel reveals Vera trying to settle Becky's children while she was sick. "I went there today and told her to send the children to mum and dad or their father, and she insulted me.' Her sickness causes tension and lack of understanding in the family" (p. 280). Her parents, Elizabeth and Mark, are greatly disturbed by her change of behaviour. Ogola depicts the desperation that comes with illness, especially Aids. This is accompanied by heavy weight loss and grief that engulfs the family. Ogola foregrounds the consequences of irresponsible behaviours. She conveys her message to the women about the consequences of sexual promiscuity; that it leads to contracting sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and Aids, which is incurable. The narrator comments: "My friend, Aids is spreading faster than wildlife. Sexual behaviour and attitudes are very hard to change. For a long time, people only feared pregnancy" (p. 280).

Through her fictional work, Ogola campaigns for women's health awareness. She calls for the abolition of harmful widowhood ritual practice, for instance, wife inheritance. Susan Sontag shows how the metaphors and myths surrounding certain illnesses, especially cancer and Aids, add greatly to the suffering of patients and often impede them from seeking proper treatment.

She demystifies the fantasies surrounding these diseases, arguing that: “the most truthful way of regarding illness and the healthiest way of being ill is to resist metaphoric thinking” (1978, p. 7). Sontag aims to free both patients and a panicked population from the tyranny of a set of meanings that stand for medical reality but which have been made to carry the burden of fears about the future. Drawing out the similarities between public perspectives on cancer disease and tuberculosis, Sontag shows that both diseases are associated with personal psychological traits. In particular, she says that the metaphors and terms used to describe both syndromes lead to an association between repressed passion and the physical disease itself.

Ogola calls for women to shun practices that would expose them to illness, for instance widow inheritance. She reveals the effects of HIV/Aids in a non-metaphoric manner, clearly showing causes and effects of the disease.

### **Conclusion**

Ogola does not disassociate her characters altogether from Luo tradition and culture, but detaches them from harmful traditional practices that hinder their independence and success. Despite the peripheral treatment of women in the Luo community, the author places woman characters at the centre of her narrative, portraying liberated women who are capable of challenging societal norms, and who do not compromise themselves with the forces of patriarchy. *The River and the Source* advocates women’s liberation and for gender equality and opposes the oppression of women. The novel challenges blind adherence to cultures that are patriarchal in nature and calls for women’s independence. It challenges the traditional practices that deny women their dignity and which impede their success. Christianity is embraced because its doctrines offer solutions to women’s problems; it liberates them through education and participation in the church.

Akoko is an exemplary character in this regard; she resolutely refuses to bend to conservative patriarchal forces. She dares, for example, to challenge her brother-in-law Otieno, who has forcefully taken over the chieftaincy, by reporting the matter to the District Commissioner in Kisumu. In the end she is rewarded for her efforts; the chieftaincy is reclaimed for her family. Ogola’s attitude to Christianity contrasts with Karl Marx’s (1957, p. 42) view which describes religion as “the sign of the oppressed creatures, the heart of the heartless world, it is the opium of the people.” It also contrasts with Ngũgĩ’s representation of Christianity. Its introduction by

British missionaries, in Ngũgĩ's view, brought nothing but exploitation, political instability and trauma for local people.

For Ogola, Christianity is primarily a place that offers solace and hope to the oppressed, a solution to the people's problems, and a viable way of emancipation and liberation, especially for women. Maria and Akoko are delivered from the chains of patriarchy through Christianity. Most of Ogola's women in her fictional work possess a fighting spirit that can hardly be expected at the beginning of the novel, which covers the pre-colonial era. Her narrative is suggestive of a new society that builds the capacity of women and girls to the realisation of their full liberation and independence; her characters are in control of their destiny. The novel defines these modern women as different from women in the pre-colonial time. They have embraced modern structures in a bid for their emancipation and liberation.

The author's modern women characters are geographically located in cities and towns, and their relationship to urban and modern life is clearly linked to urbanised female ideals. Ogola uses the theme of modernity in her writing to unlock the characters' potential. Her narrative identifies formal education as a way of liberating Kenyan women. The novel explores change that builds and increases women's opportunity in the job market, hence placing value on them and reducing poverty, therefore making them financially and socially independent. The image of the new women represents a positive view of true modernity and a hope for a strong future Kenya. The study concludes that in direct opposition to modern women, the traditional women affected by patriarchal ideals reveal disillusionment and vulnerability, depicted in disparate manners; for instance, Akoko and Nyabera. Ogola projects these women as the primary voice of change in her fictional writing.

Ogola explores female subjectivity. In this context, the traditional women express and depict freedom and independence at last after embracing modernism and finding their voices in a new and changing world. She depicts modernity as the agent of change for women. The modern women and girls are manifested in distinct ways: as self-assured women searching for subjectivity and independence.

Ogola creates an assortment of qualities that women have regarding leadership and management roles in contemporary Kenya. In *The River and the Source* she shows us that women's sound judgment and suppressed voices can be effectively important factors in bringing liberation and

equality to people's lives. One of the traditional burdens of women in the novel is polygamy. The major concern is that women in polygamous marriages are looked down upon and they are depicted as representing vices and bad habits. Contrary to the above, Ogola's women in her fictional writing embrace monogamy which comes with modernity. The women in Ogola's fiction remain a ray of hope and a source of strength.

The women characters, for instance, Becky, express disillusionment with modernity, fears of female subjectivity, and fears of the alienation that accompanies the urban, cosmopolitan world. Ogola's writing narrates the contemporary world.

A survey of the role played by modernity to the benefit of women's liberation and their independence in the Kenyan society leads one to the conclusion that Ogola's message all through her novel is that women can empower themselves by taking the initiative and devising novel strategies that enable them to face patriarchal society. Akoko's second generation, starting from Elizabeth Awiti to Wandia Sigu, enjoys the benefits of monogamous marriage. According to the novel, women embrace modernism for their emancipation, liberation and independence. Through the theme of illness Ogola discloses the effects of HIV/Aids in a direct manner, clearly showing the causes and effects of the disease. Modernity is a mixed blessing, but it offers women options for education, self-advancement and autonomy beyond the patriarchal roles imposed on them by tradition.

## CHAPTER THREE: *I SWEAR BY APOLLO*

### Synopsis

*I Swear by Apollo* is a continuation of *The River and the Source*. Most of the characters continue with the same roles in *I Swear by Apollo*. The novel foregrounds the lives of Aids orphans, Alicia, Jonny and Lisa, and how they are guided to adulthood by their aunt, Wandia Sigu. It depicts independent women such as Mwikali Nzomo, Alicia and Wandia among others. The novel also features the effects of biracial marriages in the contemporary world. John Courtney travels from Canada to visit his long left children in Kenya. Lastly, the novel foregrounds a powerful woman president taking over the presidency in a coalition government featuring her as a tough and fearless woman and a darling to the international community who dared Kenyans to dream again.

This chapter critically analyses Ogola's novel *I Swear by Apollo*. The study examines the re-creation and positive re-construction of women as exhibited in her narrative. Ogola corrects the misconceptions about women. The chapter has three thematic sections: the first part deals with women and transformation, the second section explores motherhood and the supremacy of women, and the third examines women as pillars of the society. The above themes demonstrate how women are the authors of their own emancipation and independence. Oladele Taiwo discusses modern African female novelists. She notes the following:

The success of a novel often depends on the type of material used and the mode of communication employed. A concern that is basically tradition may become exciting if it is made relevant to the modern world. (1984, p. 215)

Ogola's writing relates to the contemporary world. In this regard, Carole Boyce Davies underscores the following: "African women must address the problems of women's position in society" (1982, p. 1). Elizabeth Oldfield affirms that: "African women's act of writing is simultaneously the creation of women's identity and transgression of boundaries" (2013, p. 1). She points out, "The role of a story teller offers African women the opportunity to transgress boundaries while appearing to comply with forms of behaviour associated with normality" (2013, p. 14).

Ogola's female characters go beyond the society's expectations of women. She depicts productive, selfless and independent women characters. The novel highlights and appreciates the role women play in their environment. The author uses instrumental women characters, for instance Wandia Mugo and Sybil, to convey her message of emancipation, liberation and independence for women. The novel also features the hard tasks that women do in their daily lives, hence portraying them as the pillars and backbone of the society.

### **Women and Transformation**

Ogola is one of the increasing number of women novelists who foregrounds the concerns of women through fiction. She draws attention to the women characters, portraying them as liberal and independent. She therefore explores change that builds and increases their opportunities in their immediate surroundings. She depicts women that reach their full potential. Her writing narrates the experiences of women. It seeks to transform and emancipate them socially, culturally and economically. As demonstrated in the text, the author re-constructs the influence women have in the society by rectifying their distorted image. The novel privileges the women characters. The author instils them with hope and energy and potential to break free from patriarchal structures that confine them to vulnerability and over-dependence on men. *I Swear by Apollo* depicts independent and well-grounded women characters who have influence over their families and society in general. Wandia Mugo is the main character in the novel. She is a professor and a chairperson of the department of pathology. Ogola's narrative breaks from the common stereotypes of the African male fictional writings such as Achebe's and Ngũgĩ's whose narratives are male-centred and give women passive roles. Florence Stratton observes the following:

In characterizing African literature, critiques have ignored gender as a social and analytic category. Such categorization operates to exclude women's literary expression as part of African literature. Hence what they define is male literary tradition. (1994, p. 1)

The narrative depicts empowered women characters who are strong leaders in their households and communities. The author does this by infusing her women characters with professional roles. She portrays working class women who transform their society. The novel foregrounds an outstanding performance of a female character serving in the Kenyan government. She is the minister of education. She is a tough, competent and courageous woman (Ogola, 2002, p. 10).

Through her narrative the author campaigns for women to be actively involved in the running of the government. The narrative restores hope and transformation through the women characters.

Alicia Courtney is a twenty-four-year old teacher of music. She inspires almost every group of students to extraordinary performance. The author portrays women with social power and ability to inspire and develop themselves and the people around them. Vera is an engineer and also a member of requests Opus Dei, an influential group of the Catholic Church. She treats other people's hearts and souls with delicate tact, stepping gently but firmly. The author gives freedom of choice to her female characters. For instance, when Vera becomes a Catholic nun this showcases women's ability to make personal choices different from conventional social requirements to marry and have children. In the case of *I Swear by Apollo*, the author bestows and empowers Vera with a firm decision to join the Catholic sisterhood, hence the novel depicts transformation of women by portraying women who exercise choice. Ogola therefore calls for a society that respects women's choices and boundaries.

Another female character, Mwikali Nzomo, is in her final year studying medicine at the University of Nairobi. In a class of both males and females, the narrator describes her as one of the best minds in the class. The above depiction counters the stereotype that only men are intelligent beings. This narrative therefore campaigns for women's social change and empowerment.

Ogola portrays the viewpoints of women characters, and believes in the transformation of women. She offers them a ray of hope in their patriarchal dilemmas. She does this through the change of her characters into better persons in the society. Similar to Ogola, Bessie Head (1971) reconstructs the social history of women and their society. She transforms Margaret Cadmore Junior into an independent being. Margaret belongs to the untouchable tribe of the Masarwa which is depicted as a second class community, especially the women. *I Swear by Apollo* promotes a redefinition of women's status.

### **Motherhood and the Supremacy of Women**

Motherhood is a fundamental stage in African traditional societies. Apparently it is associated with various forms of patriarchal abuse. Ogundipe-Leslie explores the oppression of women within marriage, noting the following:

The oppression of women within marriage takes various forms. First, the woman loses status by being married [...] With marriage, she becomes a client or possession; she is voiceless and often rightless in her husband's family [...] She also loses much of her personal freedom. (1994, p. 75)

Contrary to this, *I Swear by Apollo* gives voice and power to the women within the family dynamics. It portrays mothers who have positive influence over their children and the people around them. Ogola depicts strong mother figures in modern urban settings in her fictional work. The novel puts into perspective Wandia Mugo, a mother of six children. She is also a foster parent to Lisa, Alicia and Jonny Courtney. She writes a letter to John Courtney in Canada asking him to come over and visit his children, Alicia and Jonny, whose mother died while they were young. The letter reads:

Dear John, I hope with all my heart that this letter finds you [...] I have tried to the best of my ability to care for your son and daughter and they have turned into two very fine people [...] [T]hough you have tried to play dead they know that you their true father are alive. And if you are alive then the only interpretation they can put on your behaviour is that you have rejected them. (Ogola, 2002, p. 99)

The above letter demonstrates courage and power. Ogola depicts fearless women who are able to solve a crisis in the family. She presents Wandia as a very influential woman character in the novel. She takes full responsibility for all the children in her home. She takes Alicia to a music college and enrolls Jonny Courtney in a medical school. Ogola counters the idea of women's subjugation by painting a picture of women who are able to look after their homes and children. Her narrative carries a message of hope to the women in patriarchal homes: that they too can have a say as far as their family is concerned. Wandia embraces the task of raising her children. She raises them correctly from the time they were young into adulthood, taking up the challenge of the adolescence crisis. She guides: "You are a man now, Jonny, and it is unworthy of a man first of all to make to make such rash judgment without bothering to get sufficient fact" (p. 29). The above portrayal shows how the author undermines the patriarchal ideology that a man's opinion is always right. She depicts women as good mothers and advisors to their children and foster children. She gets them out of the confines of the kitchen and bestows them with the ability to take charge of their kin.

Ogola demonstrates the supremacy of women in the society. She designates women as influential subjects. This is through Sybil, John Courtney's wife. She encourages her husband to go back to Africa to visit his children after the receipt of Wandia's letter. Sybil advises him: "You will have to go and see the children [...] Try to bring them back with you if they are willing. I would love to meet them" (p. 102). The above episode depicts the construction and transformation of women. This demonstrates the strong influence women have over their spouses. Esther Smith draws attention to the following:

The complex collage of images in African fiction reflects complex realities, but if an image is worth a thousand words, the tableau of a thousand women in the vast panorama of African literature projects a powerful picture [...] These images communicate a strength of purpose of women more than equal to the tasks they set themselves. (1986, p. 42)

The novel depicts women's change and transformation. Napoleon Lebulu is the Director of Culture and National Heritage. He is a proud and arrogant man. Despite his age difference of over twenty years from Alicia's, he asks her for her hand in marriage. This proposal comes after only a few weeks of dating, and Alicia declines the offer (pp. 231-233). Alicia's refusing to get married to Lebulu portrays transformation in women. This refusal depicts women's independence. Ogola's narrative puts women's choices and freedom at a new level.

*I Swear by Apollo* reflects women who take charge of individual decisions rather than being controlled. Danny Sigu's Down syndrome affects his mother, yet she does not give up. Instead she takes good care of him despite her friends' and neighbours' discouragement. The narrator comments:

Her friends and neighbours had long since given up trying to understand why an intelligent woman of the world might want to have six children even without the spectre of Down syndrome hanging over one. (Ogola, 2002, p. 82)

Instead, Wandia makes her home open for Danny's friends to come and visit. The above situation portrays vulnerability in women and their families. These point out the crucial role women play in their society: that they remain by and large the primary caregivers. This is an indicator of women's restoration and hope. The novel provides hopeful and resilient women

characters with an optimistic vision for their kin. Wandia believes that “one must always hope” (p. 79). Through her narrative, Ogola visualises a progressive society that is female-oriented. The author positions instrumental women characters who manage to balance careers and motherhood. Wandia is a professional and a good mother; she builds mutual trust in her children. The narrator observes:

She had tried to raise her children with the understanding that unless they themselves went out of their way to lose it they would be trusted to handle their lives and their studies in a responsible manner. (p. 20)

The above depiction contrasts with most of African male writers’ literary work in their portrayal of women. For instance, in Wole Soyinka’s play, *Death and the King’s Horseman*, Elesin Oba, the King’s horseman, before his passage to the world of ancestors takes advantage of the women around him for his material well-being. Soyinka’s women characters are subjects of male victimisation. His women characters do not play independent roles but rather help the play’s hero to accomplish his sacred duty. In this regard, Oladele Taiwo notes: men and women novelists must reflect and indulge in introspective thinking. She discusses the following:

Men, as in many other facets of African life, have dominated the field and successfully pushed the women to the background. Furthermore they have created in their fiction an image of the African woman which needs to be closely re-examined against the background of her traditional role and the social and economic realities of the present. (1984, p. 1, 2)

Contrary to the above, Ogola puts her female characters at the forefront and also in control of their destiny. She defines women’s liberation and independence through the depiction of her female characters.

### **Women as the Backbone of Society**

Despite the patriarchal structures witnessed in the society women are still the pillars of the community and society in general. Boyce Davies (1986, p. 244) notes:

Preliminary surveys of African literature reveal that the novels of men, like the negritude poetry, treat mothers more as symbols than as living, suffering individuals.

For this reason Boyce Davies foregrounds the need to hear women's voices as well as making their voices heard. She asserts the following: "It is not only the condition of silence and voicelessness that seem the most pressing [...] but the function of hearing or listening on the part of those who wield oppressive power" (1995, p. 3). For this reason, Margaret Ogola's novel *I Swear by Apollo* advocates women's supremacy in society. Her narrative defines the women's world by expressing the weight they carry and their importance in the society. The novel demonstrates love and respect for women. It depicts hardworking women in the society. A particular character, Sybil, is a notable artist. She earns her living through her artistic prowess. The narrator notes that: "Sybil was pre-occupied with her art [...] [H]er work was so evocative [...] it required immense concentration" Ogola (2002, p. 101). By contrast, Ogundipe-Leslie discusses the submissive traditional woman, noting:

The rural woman is often depicted as subordinate, dependant and passive. In many novels she does nothing except to endlessly serve food and kolanuts to men and then get beaten up by them for their her pains. She is full of complexes, feels inferior and is wholly dependent on the man materially. (1994, p. 51)

In contrast to the above, Ogola acknowledges women's ability. She honours them by celebrating their achievements in the narrative. Andrea, Sybil's daughter, is able to learn from her mother's artistic prowess. The narrator notes, "she was already showing definite artistic powers – a third generation artist on her mother's side" (p. 157). While young, as the narrator points out: "Sybil was a single-minded kind of a person. She called in her brothers and painted a gory picture of the kind of things that were likely to happen to boys who did not go to school" (p. 158). Ogola's narrative depicts resourceful women who aid their family members. For instance, Sybil takes the responsibility of instilling discipline in her siblings through visual images. The above portrayal depicts women as the pillar of the family. The author positions instrumental women who transgress the boundaries imposed on them by their society. With regard to the above, Boyce Davies (1995, p. 9) notes: "the boundaries imposed to contain black women's full expression of their creativity include those of geography, ideology, religion, sexuality, economic and social class, and poverty." In African traditional culture women's creativity is traditionally associated merely with procreation.

Ogola's novel challenges the above notion. Her narrative is that of women's progress and achievement. It emphasises the role and importance of women. Wandia, a career woman, nurtures her children into responsible adults. She gets them into flourishing careers, for instance Jonny Courtney becomes a successful flying doctor. This narrative is a turning point for women. *I Swear by Apollo* corrects the distorted image of women. The author depicts instrumental women with a sense of direction. Ogundipe-Leslie questions:

What does empowerment mean to us as black women of Africa and the diaspora? It means social recognition and dignity just as, most of all, it means space to speak, act, and live with joy and responsibility. (1995, p. 17)

One example of showing some dignity in *I Swear by Apollo* is Jael Odongo Sigu's wife. She is a hard-working woman living on the farm. The novel points out that:

Aoro Sigu [...] was a powerful looking man. He was assisted by his wife Jael, a friendly and gregarious person [...] She managed her husband and five children with impressive efficiency. (Ogola 2002, p. 146)

Ogola's depiction of rural women is different from Achebe's. Molar Ogundipe-Leslie underscores the portrayal of women in one of the Chinua Achebe's novels entitled *A Man of the People*, noting:

Most African imaginative writers either by omission or commission, portray rural women as uncreative. Bound by tradition and culture [...] She is constantly depicted as closed to or frightened by new ideas, limited to her narrow world, interested only in what affects her in a small environment [...] The women in Chinua Achebe's novels and others can be said to simplify this variety of uncreative rural women. (1994, p. 49)

Ogola's rural women are resourceful. For instance:

Jael was a remarkable woman. This year alone they had twenty acres under wheat, ten under maize, five under potatoes [...] but each year she seemed to have impressive surplus for the market [...] [S]he spent quite a bit of time behind the wheel of her little pickup delivering farm produce. (p. 107)

The novel explores the economic situations of women. It depicts them as hard-working agents who contribute to the well-being of their families and who benefit from their labour, hence ensuring economic independence for them. Christine Obbo highlights African women's struggle for economic independence. She reflects the current issue:

Women take action to bring about change in their personal circumstances and hence, indirectly wider social change. It has been shown that East African women are doing something about their situations by tackling the specific problems of poverty, ignorance and unsatisfactory personal relationships. The women are convinced that, if they dealt with poverty and acquired independent sources of income then dealing with other areas of their lives would be relatively easily. (1980, p. 156)

The above economic portrayal contrasts with the Kenyan male literary works, for instance Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* and Ngũgĩ's *A Grain of Wheat*. These narratives negatively portray the image of the female characters. They are either portrayed as prostitutes or destitute female workers. Naana Banyiwa-Horne expresses the depiction of various images of African womanhood by African male writers. She details the following:

Male depictions of female characters are often from a fiercely male perspective, reflecting male conceptions or rather misconceptions of female sexuality [...] They tend to overplay the sexuality of their female characters, creating the impression that women have no identity outside their sexual roles. (1986, p. 120)

Ogola moves away from the above use of stereotypes. Her narrative positively constructs the identity of women. She depicts them as strong and economically independent, for instance Jael.

The novel intentionally brings into perspective male characters with passive roles in the narrative, for instance, Wandia's husband, Aoro Sigu, and John Courtney, Sybil's husband. The author purposely does this so as to appreciate and bring into focus the insightful work of women. She paints a clear picture of women and the supreme roles they play, portraying them as backbones and pillars of the society. Horne further notes:

By virtue of their gendered experiences, women writers are inclined to depict female characters in more realistic terms, with a great deal of insight, and in meaningful interaction with their environment. Women writers tend to create a woman's world in

which women characters exist in their own right, and not as mere appendages to a male world. (1986, p. 120)

The author uses politics as one of the structures that exhibits women's ability. She portrays a country that attains its freedom and independence through a woman. The narrator informs us that:

Her Excellency [...] had taken over the presidency in a coalition government after the unsung demise of the former incumbent. She was a tough and fearless woman known to have faced down armed policemen at a time when the law of the government was rife. (Ogola, 2002, p. 10)

Ogola depicts tough leadership in women. The novel foregrounds Her Excellency fighting corruption:

Of course she had many avowed enemies, especially those who had brought the country to its knees through massive institutionalised corruption. She had treated them with the same ruthlessness with which they had raped the country before bleeding it dry. (p. 10)

Ogola visualises a new Kenya where women take the lead. According to Ogola, women are capable of fighting corruption, a vice that is deeply rooted in many African governments. The narrator comments: "Many were surprised that a woman could bring such cold ferocity to the art of governance" (p. 10). Commenting on the above portrayal, Alina Rinkinya argues that: "the woman character epitomizing the nation [...] not in relation to the family but "squarely and explicitly" in social-political sphere has been driven to an unheard-of height, representing an allegory of alternative future of the nation with its alternative leader" (2014, p. 154).

The above portrayal differs from Ngũgĩ's novels. His novels deal with pre-colonial and colonial times and its aftermath. His female characters, for instance Wanja in *A Grain of Wheat*, only help the Mau Mau fighters accomplish their goal of resisting colonialism. In contrast to the images which show women's unequal or inferior status, there are also some women of superior abilities (Smith, 1986, p. 31). Ogola's narrative portrays women as the stronghold of the society. She therefore counters the ideology of the African male authors' representation of women as passive. The novel informs us:

[Her] Excellency was a darling of the international community and the intellectual fraternity. Therefore the college thrived as did many other institutions which had all but sunk into miserable decline and decay after years of mismanagement and deliberate sabotage. (p. 10)

Ogola's narrative campaigns against patriarchal ideologies and emphasises women's abilities and power. She uses reversal techniques where the female characters take up the role initially thought to be that for men. Ogola's narrative upholds women's values. Her writing responds to Ogunjide-Leslie's call:

We wish to have power which recognises responsibility in dignified freedom; power which positively promotes life in all its form; power to remove from our path anything, person or structure which threatens to limit our potential for full human growth as the other half of life's gendered reality; power to collapse all screens that threaten to obscure our women's eyes from the beauties of the world. (1995, p. 17)

In view of the above, the novel lifts restrictions imposed on women and the prevailing social norms that bar them from their liberation and independence by creating a new structure of their representation. Ogola depicts women with outstanding roles. For instance, the author foregrounds Wandia as follows:

She had well defined opinions and was always ready to express them, even the more unpopular ones, if the need ever arose. She had a thoughtful and productive mind, yet was recollected and tended toward a calm solitude. (Ogola, 2002, p. 16)

The above portrayal depicts women as optimistic and innovative. Ogola foregrounds her women characters as subjects and not the victims of circumstance. She envisions a society where women's input is taken into consideration. Monica Bungaro discusses women's shift from marginality to centrality. She notes the following:

Women's marginal position often becomes a source of strength within and between which they fluctuate, as the act of dissecting reality makes them no longer just "outsiders within" but also "insiders within". This is often clearly seen when their fiction is informed by historical and social economic actuality. (2004, p. 95)

Ogola's narrative gives strength to her female characters out of their marginal position. For instance when Wandia's son, Danny, gets sick, Wandia becomes strong and offers her support to her family. The novel pictures Elizabeth as having a cordial relationship with her daughter-in-law, Wandia. Wandia comments: 'Elizabeth would have been very proud of me.' [...] Elizabeth had been her late mother-in-law dead these many years. They had been very great friends" (Ogola, 2002, p. 23). The author underscores the fact that harmonious relationships lead to a better and peaceful society. Hence the narrative depicts nobility in women in fulfilling peace in their society.

The novel brings into perspective a mother in hospital. She has a sick new-born baby with a skull malfunction. The narrator observes:

The fact that the baby was the first child of a young mother did not help at all. The father had taken one look and had bolted for parts unknown, but the mother hung on grimly, hounding everybody half to death for something, anything to be done [...] [T]he mother's pleas became stringently insistent. (p. 38)

Through the above extract the author unveils the complex situations women experience in their everyday lives. She depicts resilient and autonomous women who respond to challenging circumstances and who overcome the barriers that come their way. The novel depicts them as the pillars of humanity. For instance, when the father of the above child disappears his mother is the only one left clinging on to the baby. Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi discusses the power of representation wielded by African women novelists, noting the following:

African women often emerge not only as victims but also as survivors of a cruel geography and a painful history. African women novelists as part of an elite group that has escaped their sisters' plight, feel it incumbent upon them to speak out for their wrecked sisters. (2007, p. 56)

The baby's peculiar forehead gave him the shape of a frog and for that reason no one wanted to name the baby. The narrator details the following: "One of the religious sisters who occasionally passed through the unit came by one evening and after conferring briefly with the mother proceeded to give it a pretty human sounding name – Francis" (p. 39). Ogola's narrative illustrates the capacity of women to name children. This contrasts with the traditional African

society's naming system. It is believed that a man is the sole person to name a child. For instance in Ogola's novel *The River and the Source*, when Akoko is born, it is his father who names him. Ogola shifts her writing in favour of the women. She calls for people to sober up and appreciate women because of the everyday tussle that they go through. Ogundipe Leslie-Molara notes that:

Feminists have posited that the woman writer has two major responsibilities: first to tell about being a woman; secondly to describe reality from a woman's view, a woman's perspective. (1994, p. 57)

Ogola's novels paint a clear picture of a woman's world. Her narratives offer alternative solutions to their problem.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed Margaret Ogola's portrayal of women in terms of reconstructing and empowering their agency as a way of initiating change. She re-defines the status of women in society by going against the traditional African norm. Ogola's narrative revolves around women's transformation and independence. She uses the above avenue to emancipate and liberate her women characters socially, culturally and economically. It is evident that she yearns for a new society that appreciates the input of women. As demonstrated in the text, the author challenges the traditional and modern practices that deny women their dignity and which impede their success by re-constructing the influence women have in the society by rectifying their distorted image. The novel depicts independent women characters that have influence over their families and society in general. Boyce Davies underscores the fact that "the social and historical realities of African women's lives must be considered in any meaningful examination of women in African literature and of writings by African women writers" (1986, p. 6).

With reference to motherhood and the supremacy of women, *I Swear by Apollo* is in support of mothers and girls. Her narrative recognises and appreciates the vital efforts women put into their families and society in general. Through her narrative she makes it clear that a society cannot operate without the influence of women. She therefore calls for a change of perception towards the women. Ogola's writing bestows women with success and independence. Her narrative liberates women from the patriarchal structures that hinder their independence. Ogola defines motherhood differently; she gives it a new meaning. Taiwo explains:

Women have a primary responsibility of bringing up children. It is true that the father is available to provide logistic and psychological support of a kind that gives the child comfort and security. But it is the mother who has the child under her prolonged and detailed care, moulds its character and ensures that her offspring conform to societal norms. If the child fails it is the mother who is generally considered to have failed. (1984, p. 7)

Ogola's narrative challenges societal bias against women. Her message is that women should be accorded space and due respect. Of significance is Ogola's construction of women as pillars of the society. Her distinct portrayal of women characters signifies their importance in the society. The author, through the portrayal of Wandia, calls for people to see the new image of women, that of commitment to self, family and society. For instance, Wandia has high self-esteem, and is firm and courageous. Ogundipe-Leslie discusses the role of African female writers in relation to their socialisation, noting the following: "the female writer should be committed in three ways: as a writer, as a woman and as a third world person, and her biological womanhood is implicated in all three" (1987, p. 10).

Ogola's work of art positions instrumental women who transgress the boundaries imposed by their society. She attempts to show that women are capable of initiating social change by breaking the patriarchal structures put in place to silence them. The author's women characters liberate themselves from societal structures that limit their emancipation. Therefore, the fact that the author gives her women characters power to go beyond the patriarchal barriers to emancipate and liberate themselves showcases her efforts to narrate and acknowledge their success. Jean O'Barr discusses Kenya's women writers, noting the following:

Central to Kenyan literature, individuals redefine and reaffirm their psychological, emotional and social identity. Without exception the women in the novel take advantage of the educational, economic and attitudinal opportunities offered by modernisation. (1987, p. 63)

The chapter also demonstrates women's supremacy in the society. Ogola through her narrative believes women are the backbone of its society. The novel offers a turning point for women. For instance, she uses political structures in her narrative as one of the avenues to exhibit women's social and political abilities. Ogola deconstructs restrictions imposed on women that limit their

potential for emancipation, liberation and independence. Ogola portrays independence in her female characters. Through her narratives she corrects the distorted image of Kenyan women in literature by Kenyan male writers.

## CHAPTER FOUR: *PLACE OF DESTINY*

### Synopsis

*Place of Destiny* (2005) is a modern-day story that features characters in the contemporary world. It foregrounds independent and instrumental women who overcome barriers imposed on them by their societies. The book highlights the importance of education for both men and women and the role it plays in the elimination of poverty. It also features a marriage under patriarchal rule, as well as single parenthood and the devastating effects it has on mothers and their children. The book depicts two types of men: those responsible for women's liberation and independence, and the ones responsible for women's subjugation and downfall. *Place of Destiny* also coils around love, suffering, grief, separation and reunion. The novel depicts Amor Lore. She is the main character in the novel. The book foregrounds her in two different scenes: at home and work. She is a hard-working woman with a sense of balance in her life. She influences other characters, for instance, Lanoi Sompesha, to achieve their goals. Later in the novel, Amor dies of cancer leaving behind her company under the leadership of her son. The novel depicts Igana Mago and her rise to recognition and independence from the street life. It also foregrounds several women characters such as Rigia and her mother who suffer at the hands of close relatives. The novel ends with a reunion and the contemplation of life and death.

In this chapter I am concerned with the examination and analysis of Ogola's novel *Place of Destiny* (2005). The study explores ways of liberating the potential of Kenyan women. It also demonstrates the strategies the author uses to defy the patriarchal dictates and stereotypes to emancipate her women characters. I will primarily focus on the female characters, but the male characters will also be part of the analysis. The chapter has three thematic sections. The first section is the theme of education and career development. This section classifies women into two categories: those who ascend the social ladder through formal education and those who become entrapped by lack of it. The second and the third sections explore the themes of love and marriage, and ethics and morality respectively in relation to women's liberation and independence.

Ogola's narrative connects the destiny of women and girls to the realisation of their full liberation and independence. Jean O'Barr (1987, p. 57) states her view of African male writing:

“fiction written by African men takes a far less sophisticated view of women’s life and sees them as secondary figures in the environment of males”. Ogola counters the above notion. Her female characters play a central role in the narrative. Katherine Frank calls for positive representation of female characters. She draws attention to the following:

Most African novelists have been written by men, and they tend to focus on social, historical, and political rather than personal or domestic themes [...] but the fact remains that we need to turn the number of the growing women novelists in Africa in order to find female characters with a destiny of their own. (1987, p. 14, 15)

Most of Ogola’s women characters have a clearly delineated and inspiring “destiny of their own.”

### **Education and Career: Tools for Women’s Empowerment**

“A brief glance at women all over the world today suggests that women are oppressed in education attainments, participation rates and occupational structure [...] [A]ll are weighted against them” (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994, p. 27). Ogola uses her narrative to strengthen, emancipate and liberate her female characters. Her narrative emphasises the importance of education for women’s liberation and independence. She places her women characters at the forefront in the field of education. Stephanie Newell (1997, p. 1) believes that gender images in literature are not static, pointing out: “Gender images and ideologies constantly shift to account for their changing status.”

According to Torild Skard (2003, p. 89), “Education increases the productivity and income for women”. Education is a tool that Ogola uses in her narrative to sensitise women to its importance. James Smith and Spurling Andrea (1999, p. 4) define learning as:

a process carried out by individuals and groups. What is learnt, that is the output, counts as knowledge or skill. This can take the form of the ability to do something which could not be done before; or a new understanding about the world.

In rural Kenya, women are still educated at an inferior rate compared to their male counterparts. Gender disparities are more pronounced in marginalised regions of Kenya. Stephen Lekalgitele (2012, p. 54) in his research carried out in Samburu district, Kenya, Rift Valley province, concludes the following:

There are a number of factors operating within the school that affect the aspiration for higher education of Samburu girls, these are: cultural practices, such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages, betrothal, pregnancies and high value attached to bride wealth and the community's negative attitude towards female education.

These are some of the factors that contribute to a high dropout rate among the Kenyan girls. Ogola uses education in her narrative as a platform for women's independence, emancipation and freedom. This observation is evident in *Place of Destiny*. Amor Lore holds a Master's degree in Business Administration and a postgraduate diploma in Human Psychology. Her business is successful and she is also financially stable. She details:

I like my financial independence. There is an incredible sense of power and freedom in being able to direct money [...] Almost every good that needs to be done in this world requires money. (Ogola, 2005, p. 33)

Through the characterisation of Amor Lore, the author portrays the importance of education to women as a weapon of self-reliance and financial independence. This narrative corrects the cultural stereotype that 'a woman's place is in the kitchen'. Amor is a very intelligent and ambitious woman. Lanoi Sompesha, one of her employees, describes her relationship with Amor as cordial; she notes, "she is quick to give praise and to be trusted by her is highest accolade to any employee" (Ogola, 2005, p. 35). She recounts: "my previous employer had taken it for granted, that my job description included listening to him drone on and on about the political situation, the country's slide to the dogs and anything else that caught his ire" (p. 35). Ogola carefully contrasts the above two situations in the employment sector. She portrays educated women who build trust and motivate their staff. She depicts them as good managers who contribute to the prosperity of their employees and workplace in general. Therefore, the author challenges women to view education with seriously, because it is the key point in improving their well-being and their surroundings, hence providing independence and liberation for them. Molara-Leslie (1994, p. 11) makes the following comment:

Observing women in their various sites, paying attention to female bonding which is absent from much of the African literature written by men, would yield a more correct epistemology of women.

Amor sends her children to school to acquire education: her daughter, Malaika Mwagera, studies Architectural Engineering at the University of Nairobi, while Malaika's elder sister, Imani Mwagera, is a graduate and teaches at a secondary school in Bundus. Ogola speaks through her female characters. In this context, she portrays a household where a mother is educated, and the children, and especially girls, are also graduates. The author reflects a society where women get an education so that they can open up new horizons for themselves, and their children. In this regard Kenneth Little (1980, p. 2) posits, "What is scrutinised is the extent to which the literary work itself captures or reflects the mood and spirit of the author's own social environment".

Lanoi Sompesha holds a degree in economics. Her employer gives her a scholarship to study for a Master's degree in Business Administration. She talks of the situation:

The company is more than willing to pay for such capacity building, the employee would not be given any significant amount of time off, and they would have to work during the day, attend evening classes and study during their own time. (p. 40)

Ogola's narrative paints a picture of growth and development of women at the work-place. She believes that women's growth at their place of work leads to a significant change in social status, hence independence. Chikwenya Ogunyemi (2007, p. 181) underscores the following: "Needing everybody including women brings the issue of educating the people for maximal participation in nation building." Ogola boosts her characters' independence through capacity building. Sompesha goes back to school to increase and sharpen her skills. The author portrays women who are able to influence their future through education, leading to increased earning capacity, and therefore addressing their social and economic challenges.

She depicts independent women who fight for their own rights in their place of work. Sompesha, before working for Amor Consultancy Firm, quits her job after three months of work when it became apparent that her boss expected her to accommodate his penchant for young flesh. The above character portrayal showcases self-confidence and independence. Ogola's narrative draws attention to education as an eye-opener for the women. She depicts educated women such as Lanoi Sompesha who are aware of their human and legal rights, and who make self-informed choices.

Malaika Mwagera studies Architectural Engineering; she does an internship with a firm of architects. She passionately loves her career course passionately, as shown by her comment, “but architecture is my first love [...] I have learned to take refuge in my studies and lately my work. I am now doing internship with a firm of architects. I always like the business of building and creating human habitats” (pp. 63-64). Sheila Rowbotham (2006, p. 40) draws attention to the importance of women’s venturing into the field of science and embracing technology, she notes: “It is possible for women to learn about scientific ideas and contribute to technology.” Ogola’s narrative promotes female advancement in the field of science and technology; she calls for women to take up the challenge in science. For instance, by making Malaika Mwagera study Architectural Engineering, Ogola dedicates her efforts to liberate women and girls from stereotypes that hinder them from tapping their full potential; she encourages them to take up courses that are believed to be tough and for men. Her novels suggests that women can be the champions of technology.

Imani Mwagera is the first born-child of the Mwagera family. She graduates with a degree in education. She hopes one day to run a school of her own. She gets enough money for her subsistence out of her teaching career. Her mother informs us: “Imani calls once a month to let us know that she is alive and well, she has never asked for financial or any other kind of assistance” (p. 66). Here Ogola paints a picture of education and women’s financial independence, suggesting that women should embrace education, because it is a key to their liberation.

As intimidated earlier, Ogola’s narrative uses education as a tool to liberate not only her female characters, but also the male characters. Her novel differs from the other Kenyan female writings such as Rebeka Njau’s *Ripples in the Pool* and Marjorie’s Oludhe’s *Coming to Birth*. They foreground the struggle for independence and liberation in the post-colonial period in Kenya, putting women at the centre and men at the periphery. Ogola, typical of a womanist perspective, views men’s plight as significant too. Igana Mago comes from a humble background. He is a physician specialising in palliative care and consults with all the major hospitals in the country. His childhood is characterised by poverty and immense suffering. He is born to a single mother; and grows up in the slums of Nairobi. His late mother was a prostitute. He recounts: “she was at home all day, but went out to work every evening, having fed me and put me to bed, thus, I

started spending long hours of the night alone very early in life” (p. 109). He visits the city centre to beg and scavenge. He started sniffing glue to kill the hunger and to obtain relief from the harshness of the reality of life. He is adopted into a rehabilitation project and he luckily gets a scholarship to study from primary school, all through to the university. He is proud and thankful that he has made a success of his life. He marries the love of his life. Education emancipates him from the yoke of poverty and street life.

Ogola’s narrative foregrounds the devastating effects of a lack of formal education on her female characters. Rigia, Igana Mago’s mother, drops out of school due to pregnancy at sixteen years old. Her father chases her away from home. She gives birth to a baby boy, and names him after his father, Igana Mago senior. She goes to live in the slum. Her suffering intensifies and without money and a job, she gets introduced into prostitution by a slum neighbour. She finally succumbs to death. Her son, Mago, recounts:

She had been found dead in a lodging, probably murdered by whoever she had been with that night. They buried her in an anonymous grave at the public cemetery and I was not there to mark the place. I was too little, too frightened, too alone. (p. 110)

The above portrayal in the novel is an example of the many women in the contemporary society who get enslaved due to lack of education. The author believes that lack of education makes women such as Rigia unaware of the dangers and consequences of indulging in prostitution. The author uses education as a tool to emancipate her women characters out of the vicious circle of poverty. This narrative resonates to the UNICEF Kenya 2015, report:

The capacity of families to care and protect orphans is overstretched. This, combined with the increasing levels of poverty, has resulted in many children heading their own households, living in institutional care or surviving on the streets.

Ogola’s narrative therefore focuses on education as a basic need. Her concern is relevant to the plight of women in the society. She argues that education makes women and their families less vulnerable to the harsh realities of life. The author also presents the case of Tosh. He is Igana Mago’s friend, and they both live in the slum.

Tosh's mother brewed and sold hard liquor [...] Tosh never knew when the shack he called home might turn into a free for all battle zone, and eventually he started spending nights at our shack. (Ogola, 2005, p. 109)

Cera is an eight-year-old girl. She is immensely affected by her mother's social lifestyle. Her mother's many lovers habitually abuse and molest her. This makes her quiet, sensitive and withdrawn. She is taken to the hospice for extensive treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and amazingly she does not contract HIV. Ogola portrays education as essential to women. She believes it increases their health awareness and survival rate. Her portrayal of women with education is suggestive of their independence; she strongly believes it gives them power to make suitable health decisions for themselves and their kin.

Auka is a nine year old boy. His late mother, a hawker, is run over by a truck as she tries to escape the city council police on their perennial crack-down on hawkers. The novel suggests that it is lack of education that makes her opt for hawking in order to meet her needs and those of the family. Ogola's narrative strongly calls for women to get education, because it is a powerful tool that will emancipate and liberate them from the vicious circle of poverty. This is in line with Kenya's new constitution that was passed in 2010, which calls for the narrowing of gender gaps in education and learning, and providing a framework for addressing gender issues and inequalities in the education sector. Ogola is an advocate of women's liberation and independence. Through her narrative, she captures and affirms education to be an important tool that empowers and liberates them. She envisions a society that firmly believes and supports women's independence through education.

### **Love and Marriage**

Love and marriage are recurrent subjects in *Place Of Destiny*. Ogola utilises this theme as a vehicle to convey her message of liberation and independence to women. She addresses gender roles in marriage and the exploration of relationships within the institution of marriage. The novel portrays different marriages and how they are responsible for shaping or destroying the women in society. The marriage between Amor Lore and Mrema Mwaghera has lasted for twenty-five years. Mwaghera lectures at the University of Nairobi and they have four children; Imani, Malaika, Hawi and Pala: three daughters and a son. Their union is a normal one, with normal challenges that characterise the institution of marriage. Amor notes:

Typically, we wasted the first ten years of our life together trying to change each other and recreate each other in his or her image. The fights were always exhausting and sometimes spectacular. (p. 28)

Amor has cancer of the liver, and despite her ill health, she still has an undying love and spirit for her family. She relates well to her children, and their relationship is based on mutual understanding. Ogola's narrative reflects a close-knit family that is bound by love; the author's message is that women should have happy and stable families so as to pave the way for their liberation and independence at the family level. The Mwaghera family experience a health crisis due to the mother's ailing condition. The whole family offer support to their sick mother. Her spouse and children spend hours sitting by her bedside. Amor and Mrema's many years of marriage have made them inseparable. This union is characterised by love and friendship. Amor's illness deeply affects her spouse. He sees the world to have come to an end without his wife. He voices his concerns:

“It was clear from the beginning that she needed my love and affection, and [...] that I be there to share her moments of pain or sorrow or defeat; to listen to her when she needed to talk.” (p. 135)

Ogola's narrative suggests that families need to stick together in all the seasons; in happiness and in ill health. Mwaghera's behaviour is reminiscent of the Christian marriage vows: “For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part, according to God's holy ordinance” (Batt 1993, p. 53). Mwaghera stays with his wife until her last breath. He laments:

“She was a courageous woman, but I know that she suffered, yet for love [...] she tried to the very end to mitigate our suffering [...] [T]hough we watched by her bed constantly, she somehow managed to die alone. I would have preferred her to breathe her last in my presence.” (Ogola 2005, p. 152)

A family is a very important component of society. Dysfunctional families contribute immensely to the production of a dysfunctional country (Ogunyemi, 2007, p. 154). A family is therefore the foundation of a healthy community. Ogola portrays a stable and supportive Mwaghera family. They mourn and miss their dead mother. Mwaghera deeply feels the gap left by his wife, “How I

miss you, Amor, my love” (p. 154). The children too are affected. Pala mourns: “It’s been almost three years and a lot has happened since mama died, and dad has tried to make a home for us but, it never really worked” (p. 159). Ogola’s narrative presents women as home-makers; this is in contrast with the traditional African societies, where men suppress their women with patriarchal rules. Mariama Bâ (2012), in *So Long a Letter*, gives a clear depiction of African families: Ramatoulaye has twelve sons; her marriage is bleak, surrounded by social and cultural pressure; her husband abandons her and the sons, and takes a second wife. This highlights Ogola’s perception of women’s liberation; that they are the ones carrying the weight of their families and they should be emancipated from unfair treatment witnessed in their families; for a family breaks, with the breaking of a woman.

Like Ogola, Grace Ogot (1990) foregrounds the liberation of Kenyan women. She gives her heroine Nyapol a voice. They both believe in putting female subjectivity to the fore. In the same manner, Stratton (1994, p. 107) believes in “a form that seeks to subvert the Manichean allegory of gender by putting the female subjectivity in process.”

Upon Amor’s death, Pala, her son, gives a clear picture of their extended family:

“My grandmother weeps in the subdued manner of the very old [...] Somehow, I don’t think she weeps for my mother, I doubt if they had been particularly close. In my life, my mother was a strong and single minded woman. And I know my grandparents would have preferred a woman with mellow gentleness.” (Ogola, 2005, p. 156)

The above episode presents a culture that is frightened by independent-minded women such as Amor. Ogola’s writing challenges women to challenge cultural practices that suppress their independence and liberation.

Mago and Imani Mwachera’s marriage is blissful. Malaika notes: “my parents had a happy marriage and so does my sister Imani” (p. 168). They are happy mainly because they never take the great good fortune of belonging to each other for granted. Ogola’s narrative exhibits a marriage institution that is bound by love and understanding, through the portrayal of Imani and Mago’s happy marriage. She builds characters that are in control of their destiny. Ogola’s narrative suggests that the past does not determine one’s future destiny. This is true of Mago; although his background is humble, he gets a wife who is brought up in an upper middle class

home. Ogola's message is that marriage is built on love, mutual respect and understanding, and not one's past background. Imani enjoys independence in her marriage because she has got the true love of her life.

They have a baby girl. Mago happily says, "Ami is our joy, the reason for our faith, the sign that the spirit of God renews the face of the earth [...] As for our life together, whatever it may bring our way, may love always be the reason and love the purpose" (pp. 195-196). The author portrays Mago as a happy husband and father who knows the importance of love in a family. His family is hinged on a supportive extended family. He gives a clear picture of his extended family: "My father, Agan Limbe, the only grandparent nearby, takes seriously his grandfatherly duty [...] His wife Anita, is a lovely person and has taken to being a surrogate grandmother very well" (p. 195).

Five years after the death of Amor Lore, her husband meets Akwiya, a Ghanaian, and falls in love and remarries. He embraces the Christian principle of marriage "till death do us part". The narrative suggests that one should remain faithful in marriage up until death. According to the author, polygamous marriages are destructive to the women. She calls for both men and women to embrace monogamous marriages because they create stability, independence, and liberation, especially for the women. Ogola treasures this institution. She suggests that it should be treated with utmost respect.

The author compares ideal marriage with a patriarchal marriage and single parenthood, portraying the devastating effects these have on women and their children. Old Igana concentrates on other business at the expense of the family's welfare. He is too harsh on his wife and the children. His wife's only role is to bear children. She cannot question or raise anything in her family because she has been rendered voiceless by her husband, old Igana. This has led to poor upbringing of the children, especially Rigina, who ends up dropping out of school. The narrator points out:

It may be a way of rebellion towards her upbringing, where everything was only valued for utilitarian and material reasons [...] [P]erhaps things would have been different if her mother had shown some spine in at least trying to regulate the balance of power within the family. (p. 11)

The narrative suggests that for a family to overcome the everyday challenges, it should have a closer relationship with its children. The observation from the author's point of view is that the children's success contributes to the liberation of their mothers. Regarding Rigia's mother, the narrative opines that women as wives in their families should make specific choices to fend for themselves and their children because they are the backbone of their marriages. Ogola portrays Rigia's mother in a vulnerable marriage, and struggling with patriarchal power and oppression. The narrator describes Old Igana as an ultimate despot, absolute and unquestioned, who is not only above the law, but the source of law himself. This in Ogola's view bars women from achieving their liberation and independence.

The novel foregrounds Karimi Inoti. She is Amor's domestic servant and a single parent. She struggles to educate her son, Micheni Inoti, with the meagre salary that she earns. Her son studies up to university level and he later becomes a manager of a large company. He begs his mother to leave her maidservant's job to go and stay with him, as he feels ashamed that his friends might discover that his mother is a domestic servant (p. 91). The narrative suggests that single parenthood negatively affects the children in the family. It also makes the women overstretch and struggle with their livelihood.

The author highlights the significance of the theme of love and marriage. Through her representation of characters in the novel, she calls for bondage-free marriages because they are significant to women's liberation and independence. Her narrative notes that a marriage that is bound by love interlocks with women's emancipation and independence. The portrayal of Amor's marriage with Mwaghera, and Amani's marriage with Igana Mago provide examples of women characters in *Place of Destiny* who enjoy liberation and independence because their marriages are stable. Ogola echoes the work of other African female writers such as Marjorie Macgoye, Ama Ata Aidoo, Grace Ogot, Flora Nwapa, Mariama Bâ and Buchi Emecheta. They all positively portray the image of African women, calling for their emancipation, liberation and independence. Stratton calls for fair representation of women in the African literary tradition. Ogola is against women's subjugation. Her narratives foreground the emancipation and independence of her female characters throughout.

## **Ethics and Morality**

Ogola's narrative identifies the theme of ethics and morality with women's liberation and independence. Emmanuel Obiechina (1990, p. 151) offers an insightful observation; he notes:

African writers deal with victimization on the two levels: of group and individual consciousness. The theme is explored mainly in plays and novels. They are genres that offer full scope for the exploration of human experience in its extended dimension with possibility of making a statement or clarification of a specific human condition or predicament. (p. 151)

Ogola's writing voices the concern of female independence and liberation. The representation of her female characters calls for the practice of ethics and morality for the realisation of their emancipation in the society.

Amor has two brothers; one of them at the age of thirty dies due to alcoholism, and Gala, her second brother, takes pride in marrying several women, "who take off as soon as they realise that they are meant to keep him in the manner to which he has been accustomed as a male member of the clan" (p. 19). His immoral behaviour sires six children but he is "husband to no permanent wife" (p. 19). His mother takes the responsibility of feeding and taking care of his six children. This humiliates her and the mothers of his children. Taking up the responsibility of six grandchildren leaves his mother financially pressed, thereby hindering her economic independence. Gala's lack of ethics and morality also leaves the children's mothers husbandless; this impedes their potential for liberation and independence. Ogola's writing condemns lack of morals. The narrative exposes immoral characters such as Gala, who are responsible for women's downfall.

The novel foregrounds Old Igana. His behaviour affects his wife and this makes her "a timid mouse at the periphery of existence" (p. 11). Her husband's cruelty and unethical behaviour leaves her vulnerable, thereby unable to realise her potential of being independent in her marriage. Old Igana's wife is one example of women who have been denied their independence; they are not in control of their destiny because they have been silenced by the forces of patriarchy. Ogola's narrative suggests that patriarchal marriages are responsible for cruelty towards women and their subjugation. Old Igana takes pride in impregnating underage girls. He

lures them with his wealth. The narrator points out that “he was a renowned member of the caricature of fatherhood, the sugar daddy club, and was responsible for the material well-being of several school girls of more or less his daughter’s age” (p. 10). The author portrays the above atrocious act to deprive the underage school-going girls of their dignity, leading to school dropout due to pregnancy. Instead of building their careers, they fall prey to immoral characters such as Old Igana, therefore they fail to achieve their independence. The narrative suggests that lack of ethics and morals comes with a price. In his sunset years, Old Igana comes to regret his actions. He pays a heavy price. The narrator comments: “It is clear that he has paid heavily for whatever sins he has committed in the span of his life, he oozes bitterness, defeat and impotent anger from every pore” (p. 187). The novel’s representation of Old Igana depicts men who are responsible for women’s dependence.

Sompesha showcases self-confidence. She emancipates herself from her immoral male boss by quitting her job. Through her portrayal, the author calls for a change of ethics and morals that positively boosts the emancipation of both men and women. The narrative is suggestive of women’s self-liberation and independence.

Ogola’s narrative also depicts men who possess high standards of ethics, morals and integrity. She uses these male characters to emancipate the women around them. Mwaghera respects and treasures his marriage. He does not put pressure on his wife and children. His wife comments: “My husband has never pressurized me into accepting his religion, though we had a marriage ceremony in church” (p. 22). He respects his wife’s decision. The narrative embraces men with high moral standards and who safeguard their marriage by making their women autonomous. This novel, therefore, calls for Kenyan women to make deliberate choices for their emancipation and independence; by embracing good ethics and morals, and resisting patriarchal structures that bar them from realising their goals.

## **Conclusion**

Ogola’s narrative is suggestive of a new society that builds the capacity of women and girls to the realisation of their full liberation and independence; her characters are in control of their destiny. With reference to black women’s writing and identity, Boyce Davies (1994, p. 21) questions, “if black women are not credible speakers, what then is the reception of black women’s writing?” Ogola speaks for the women, through the portrayal of her female characters;

she strongly condemns the patriarchal structures that are responsible for female servitude and subjugation. Her portrayal of the female characters in the novel differs from Jeanne O'Barr's viewpoint expressed in her article, "The Feminist Issues in the Fiction of Kenya's Women Writers". O'Barr foregrounds the following: "The novels give no evidence of an emerging consensus on how to deal with the issues [...] The female characters demonstrate powerlessness" (1987, p. 69).

Ogola gives power to her female characters. She uses the theme of education and career development in her writing to unlock the characters' potentials. *Place of Destiny* identifies formal education as a way of liberating Kenyan women. The novel explores change that builds and increases women's opportunity in the job market, hence placing value on them and reducing poverty, therefore making them financially and socially independent.

Chuei Mareng (2010) notes that "education is essential for improving women's living standards and enabling them to exercise a greater voice in decision in the family, community and place of work." Similarly, Torild Skard (2003, 89) notes the importance of education to women, as it provides "better health for family and children, more education for children and higher productivity and income for women". Ogola's narrative uses the theme of love and marriage to advocate for women's emancipation and independence. Significantly offering the principle of womanist ideology, Ijeoma Nwajiaku (2004, p. 56) observes: "womanism calls for dialogism and seeks interactive perception while repudiating absolutism and dogmatism." In her speech at the United Nations fourth world women's conference in Beijing, she said:

The woman is the heart of the family, and the family is the cornerstone of society, therefore it is very fitting that we should be here in Beijing for the fourth world conference, seeking new ways to enhance her well-being, natural talents and gifts.

The author's message is that love needs to be intertwined in marriage. The novel channels women's liberation and independence to sharing of responsibilities with their spouses. Lack of love and respect in marriage, as the novel suggests, paves the way for patriarchy, women's enslavement and exploitation. Jeanne Spurlock and Carolyn Robinowitz (1990, p. 69) identify the benefits of womanhood and her surroundings:

A woman learns how to be a mother, in part, by being one, but she also has had a lifetime of learning about how to be a mother, based primarily on her observation of her own mother, and her knowledge and feelings about that relationship.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

My primary concern in this dissertation has been to explore the construction, potential and liberation of Kenyan women as represented in three of Margaret Ogola's novels, namely *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo*, and *Place of Destiny*. The study has engaged with these novels in relation to women's emancipation and their independence. In the successive chapters, I have discussed the different modes and strategies that the author uses in her fictional work to demonstrate women's capability towards their emancipation, liberation, and independence. What are significant in the texts are the women's individual persistent struggles to realise their hidden potential within their cultural milieu. The research was built on feminist theoretical constructs. The analysis embraced the approaches of Florence Stratton, Oladele Taiwo, Carole Boyce Davies and Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie among others, in addressing women's experiences in the Kenyan context as presented in the three novels. The study is further informed by other feminist scholars such as Susan Arndt, Chikwenyi Ogunyemi, Eldred Durosomi Jones, and Ernest Emenyonu.

Chapter One dealt with the background to the study, women's situation in Kenya, a selective overview of the treatment of gender in Kenya by male authors, Ogola's relevant biographical information, women authors in Kenya, research methodology, theoretical framework, literature review and research objectives. The above are in relation to women's emancipation and independence.

In Chapter Two I analysed *The River and the Source*, examining the traditional practices and cultural beliefs that bar women's liberation and their progress. From the discussion, it is evident that the author has suppressed patriarchal conventions and structures and reconstructed a new narrative space for the representation of women. She has introduced female characters who are subjects and not objects of the narration, therefore breaking the society's gender stereotypes. The above points of view expressed by Ogola concerning the cultural and traditional representation of women unlock their potential in a changing society, as they strive for their freedom and liberation.

A close reading and consequent analysis of the texts reveal that the female characters can be classified into two: those who subscribe to traditional and repressive female socialisation, and

those who triumph over the chains of patriarchy and uphold emancipated femininity. The study has shown that despite the ill treatment of women in the Luo community where the author comes from, she has placed her women characters at the centre of her narrative, portraying them as liberated women who are capable of challenging their societal norms, and who do not compromise with the forces of patriarchy.

*The River and the Source* advocates women's liberation and gender equality, and opposes the oppression of women. The novel challenges blind adherence to cultures that are patriarchal in nature and calls for females' independence. It challenges the traditional practices that deny women their dignity and which impede their success. The analysis of the novel has established the unique representations of women. The author does not disassociate her heroines altogether from their traditional practices and culture, however; her protagonists have a keen awareness of their Luo identity. Rather she depicts the ways in which her female characters separate themselves from harmful cultural practices that limit their potential for liberation, emancipation and independence.

The discussion suggests that the author undermines patriarchy and male chauvinism by advocating for gender balance at the level of the family. The novel offers a clear picture of men who practice patriarchy: that they do not progress and are responsible for women's depersonalisation and servitude. According to the novel, the author's personal view on women's liberation and independence is that monogamy is equal to wealth creation for the family and social and economic independence for women, while polygamy leads to poverty and female subordination.

It is evident from the analyses that Ogola's portrayal of women characters counteracts the dominant view in African culture that women are objects of men's desires and power rather than fully formed subjects with an equal position in society. Her female characters exemplify the capability of women to defend themselves and refuse to be silenced by the patriarchal system in which the husbands and their kin have complete power over their wives.

In contrast to many male writers across the continent, Ogola shatters the traditional African myth that women should bear many children to safeguard the marriage institution. Instead, she portrays women as good family planners. While the first part of the novel is set in the pre-colonial period, the study argues that it addresses the contemporary concerns of Kenyan women

with regard to having children, and explores ways in which women can escape the dependence syndrome. This encapsulates Ogola's project in her novels. Her female characters are active and define themselves by resisting the harmful cultural practices that limit their potential and capacity for independence. This is true of all her characters in the different periods in which the novel is set.

The analyses have indicated that the author has embraced Christianity because of its doctrines that offer solutions to women's problems; it liberates them through education and participation in the church. Christianity is represented as a modernising force that offers women a context in which they can more fully realise their potential. It offers an avenue for personal meaning outside Kenyan patriarchal traditions. The study suggests that one way out of patriarchy and oppression of Kenyan women in the traditional context, for instance, (Akoko and Nyabera), is through the church.

From the discussion, it is apparent that the author encourages women's participation in a spiritual context. The study justifies the depiction of women intervening to solve social and domestic problems spiritually to counter the stereotype that men are the only ones who have the ability to intervene spiritually on behalf of the society. This serves as a reminder to the Kenyan women that they too have unlimited potential and should not be hindered by patriarchal values and practices.

Ogola believes that women can solve family problems through spiritual interventions despite the traditional restrictions in African societies that bar them from such participation. The study reveals that the author consistently associates women's liberation with religious practice and Christianity. It justifies that Christianity is a source of strength and consolation for women who have been oppressed and marginalised by their traditions and cultural practice. In the subsequent chapters Ogola's women characters are also revealed to be inspired and liberated by science and modern careers, for instance, Wandia and Vera. The analyses indicate that operating outside the church means further marginalisation, for example, when Maria Nyabera leaves the church in search of a son. Fortunately the church, with its tradition of repentance and confession, offers a place of return and sanctuary from the desperation of her failed marriage. Christianity, therefore, is portrayed as providing a means of escape for widows, vulnerable women and their children,

for instance, Akoko and her daughter Nyabera are salvaged from the harsh Luo traditions that govern the position of widows in society.

In contrast to the patriarchal village traditions, the Christian faith is portrayed as woman-friendly. The church is a source of solace and healing for women in general. The study, therefore, notes that one way out of patriarchy and oppression of women is through the church. The study contrasts Ogola's attitude to Christianity with Karl Marx's (1957, p. 42) view that describes religion as "the sign of the oppressed creatures, the heart of the heartless world, it is the opium of the people." It also contrasts with Ngugi's representation of Christianity. Its introduction by British missionaries, in Ngugi's view, brought nothing but exploitation, political instability and trauma for local people. Ali Mazrui (1978, p. 1) offers a more nuanced view, contending that "Christian missionary influence was an important factor in the promotion of education during the colonial period". The consequences of education went beyond those envisaged by the missionaries:

During the colonial era in Africa, education served the purpose of creating not only a reservoir of qualified people that the government could use but also a pool of qualified nationalists who came to challenge colonial presence itself. (Mazrui 1978, p. 1)

The study justifies Ogola's representation of Christianity: that it is a primary place that offers solace and hope to the oppressed, a solution to the people's problems, and a viable way of emancipation and liberation, especially for women. For instance, Maria and Akoko are delivered from the chains of patriarchy through Christianity.

The analyses have established the author's identification of some of the positive aspects of colonisation for the people of Kenya. According to the study the British rule held out new possibilities for women oppressed by patriarchal societies. Such opportunities are for instance the establishment of schools and the introduction of formal education. The analyses also demonstrate the author's use of education in her narrative as a platform for women's independence, emancipation and freedom.

The study justifies the importance of education to women: as a means of attaining self-reliance and financial independence. The author depicts women who can influence their future through education, leading to increased earning capacity, and thereby addressing their social and

economic challenges. Ogola therefore through her narrative dedicates her efforts to liberate women and girls from stereotypes that hinder them from tapping their full potential. The narratives encourages them to take up courses that are believed to be tough and for men. Her writing challenges women to be the champions of technology. She uses education in her narrative as a tool to liberate not only her female characters but also the male characters. The study argues that Ogola's description paints a picture of growth and development of women at their place of work. She believes that women's growth at the workplace leads to a significant change in social status, hence ensuring independence and liberation for them.

From the discussion, it is apparent that through her narratives Ogola uses current possibilities and inventions to liberate her female characters to independence. She introduces modernism in her fictional work. She does this by deconstructing the African traditional opinions of women by bringing on board women characters that conform to the principles of modernism that are in line with economic and social independence. The study has also demonstrated that women in Ogola's novel acquire new identities through urbanisation. They move from self-unawareness to reassurance and self-confidence. The last two sections of *The River and the Source* concern a first stride towards women's liberation and independence and their total freedom. Women try to cope with modernism despite their extremely ingrained African culture that regards them as quiet and subservient in their roles as wives, mothers and daughters. These women work to change some patriarchal ideals by embracing modern structures to uncover gaps and women's patriarchal silences. This narrative is suggestive of a new society that builds the capacity of women and girls, to realise their full liberation and independence; her characters are in control of their destiny. The novel defines these modern women, who differ from those of the pre-colonial time. They have embraced modern structures to their own advantage as well as that of society in general.

It is evident that most of Ogola's women during the historical period in question in her fictional work possess a fighting spirit that can hardly be expected at the beginning of the first novel, which covers the pre-colonial era. The study shows that the author's modern women characters are geographically located in cities and towns, and their relationship to urban and modern life is clearly linked to urbanised female ideals. The analysis draws out how Ogola uses the theme of modernity in her writing to unlock the characters' potential. Her narrative identifies formal

education as a way of liberating Kenyan women. The novel explores change that builds and increases women's opportunity in the job market, hence placing value on them and reducing poverty, therefore making them financially and socially independent. The discussion reveals the image of the new women as to represent a positive view of true modernity and hope for a strong future in Kenya. The study concludes that in direct opposition to modern women, the traditional women affected by patriarchal ideals reveal disillusionment and vulnerability, depicted in disparate manners; for instance, Akoko and Nyabera. Ogola projects these modern women as the primary voices of change in her fictional writing. From the analysis, it is clear that Ogola depicts modernity as the agent of change for women. The modern women and girls are manifested in distinct ways: as confident women searching for subjectivity and independence. Eldred Durosomi Jones draws attention to the following: "The duty of an African woman writer is first to find an objective treatment of womanhood and the problems of womanhood and to correct the misconceptions about women" (1987, p. 2).

The study highlights that Ogola creates an assortment of all merits and qualities that women have regarding leadership and management roles in contemporary Kenya. In *The River and the Source* she shows us that women's sound judgment and voices can be effectively important factors in bringing liberation and equality to people's lives. One of the traditional problems of women in the novel is polygamy. The major concern is that women in polygamous marriages are looked down upon and they are depicted as representing vices and bad habits. Contrary to the above, Ogola's women in her fictional writing embrace monogamy which comes with modernity. The majority of women in Ogola's works provide a ray of hope and a source of strength.

The study demonstrates that some of Ogola's women characters, for instance, Becky, express disillusionment with modernity, are fearful of female subjectivity and the alienation that accompanies the urban, cosmopolitan world. Ogola's writing therefore narrates the contemporary world. The study concludes that Ogola's message all through her novel is that women can empower themselves by taking the initiative and devising novel strategies that enable them to face patriarchal society. In this novel, modernity comes a long way with a change that is traced from the pre-colonial time. Akoko's second generation, starting from Elizabeth Awiti to Wandia Sigu, enjoys the benefits of monogamous marriage. According to the novel, women embrace modernism for their emancipation, liberation and independence.

The study shows that Ogola creates an assortment of merits and qualities for women regarding leadership and management roles in contemporary Kenya. The novel shows that women's sound judgment and suppressed voices can be an effectively important factor in bringing liberation and equality to people's lives. In this context, the traditional women can express and depict freedom and independence at last after embracing modernism and finding their voices in a new and changing world. One of the main aims of Ogola's narrative is to bestow modern women with economic and social independence. This type of autonomy brings with it other rights: for instance to choose whether to marry or remain single, whether to work or not and the right of sexual expression, among other things. What is most imperative for these modern women is independence and freedom to look for self-understanding and their capability to use their intellectual skills and talents to find themselves and their true uniqueness. They are great assets to their families and society in general.

Ogola narrates the positivity of modernism for women characters. She corrects the negative images of urban women in contrast to the tendencies of African male writers to portray them negatively. Modernism is mostly in favour of women and girls because they are emancipated from harsh traditional cultural beliefs. Ogola represents firm female characters in this text as fulfilled in their womanhood since they resist gender prescriptions that subjugate women.

The novel also depicts the influence of modernism on young boys. For instance, as already stated Aoro observes Tony's stitches while at the hospital and a fortnight later, he operates on a stranded frog successfully. This leads him to study medicine as his career. Ogola casts female characters who achieve their freedom by embracing other tribes or races. Aoro's wife is a Kikuyu from Central Province. She comes from a different community from her husband. The writer uses her to demystify inter-tribal marriages.

Ogola foregrounds women's autonomy through their interconnectedness with other races. She believes that women will learn other people's culture, thus exposing them to new ways of thinking. Modernity and urbanisation are responsible for the abolition of some cultural beliefs that look down upon women. The author carefully conveys her message: that embracing modernism does not automatically translate into happiness for some women. The author, therefore, demonstrates that with modernism may come evil. Becky divorces her husband and

starts to live an irresponsible and carefree life. Generally Ogola's female characters become progressively more resourceful and independent as the novel embraces modernism.

The analysis in Chapter Three focuses on *I Swear by Apollo*, demonstrating the author's representation of motherhood and mothers' supremacy in society. The novel gives voice and power to them. It portrays mothers who have a positive influence over their children and the people around them. The analysis further argues that women are the backbone of society. Concerning motherhood and the supremacy of women, Ogola's fiction supports mothers and girls. Her narrative recognises and appreciates the vital efforts women put into their families and society in general. Through her narrative, she makes it clear that society cannot operate soundly without the influence of women. The narrative, therefore, calls for a change of perception towards women.

The author through her text reveals her belief in women's emancipation and independence. The novel offers a turning point for women. For instance, Ogola uses political structures in her narrative as an avenue to exhibit women's social and political abilities. She deconstructs restrictions imposed on women that limit their potential for emancipation, liberation and independence. Arndt calls for an attempt to end patriarchal structures, as she believes in fair representation of gender in narratives. She foregrounds the following:

The necessity of freeing women from the predominant gender conventions can also be seen in the thrust of a broader line of argument, using the image of the five fingers of the hand, which all look similar, yet are different and perform different functions. This allegory supports the argumentation that it was no accident that nature created men and women so differently, hence encouraging men and women to hold different social functions. (2002, p. 30)

In Chapter Four the study has investigated the portrayal of love and marriage in *Place of Destiny*. It argues that Ogola has reconstructed this theme as a vehicle to convey her message of liberation and independence to women. She addresses gender roles in marriage and the exploration of relationships within the institution of marriage. Ogola's narrative reflects a close-knit family that is bound by love: her message is that women should have happy and stable families so as to pave the way for their liberation and independence at the family level. The narrative suggests that families need to stick together in all seasons; in happiness and ill health.

Ogola's story identifies the theme of ethics and morality with women's liberation and independence. She portrays women characters that get liberated out of traditional confines and those that fall prey due to consumerism or selfishness lack of ethics and morality, and the end results are bondage and servitude. The narrative exposes bad characters such as Gala, who are responsible for women's downfall.

Ogola demonstrates the supremacy of women in the society. She designates women as important subjects. The novel depicts women's change and transformation. This relates to Susan Arndt's view on African women. In this regard she addresses the following:

Indeed, many African women are notable for their strong personality and dominant character. They are the heart of the family and seem to hold many reins of family and communal life. (2002, p. 28)

Ogola's narrative puts women's choices and freedom at a new level. She offers them a ray of hope in their patriarchal dilemmas. She does this through the transformation of her characters into better persons in the society.

The observations in the analyses lead to the conclusion that while men have been given recognition, the author through her narratives strives to liberate the potential of Kenyan women. She has bestowed them with abilities to liberate themselves politically, economically and socially.

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