

Gender Parity Key to Sustainable Development in Africa: A Reading of Margaret Ogola's Characterization in *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo*

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Abstract

This paper is a reading of Margaret Ogola's projection of the contributions womenfolk have made towards the social, political and economic development in African society from pre-colonial times right through the post colonial period in the two novels The River and the Source and I swear by Apollo. Focusing on social structure as instrumental in the politics of exclusion that African women have had to endure for so long, the paper seeks to examine the author's exploration of social intercourse as depicted in the two texts. Women constitute more than half of the world's population. Their contribution to social and economic development is monumental yet in many of African cultures they have been ignored as equal partners. Gender-based inequality is demonstrated in African culture as sources of suppression of the development potential in women. However, the thrust of the texts' argument is that enabling the population regardless of gender to actively participate in social and economic well-being is crucial for long term and sustainable social, political and economic development of any society. It is against this backdrop that the proposed paper seeks to locate Margaret Ogola's novels within the thematic frame of gender inequality in Kenyan society. The paper also intends to bring out the causes and possibilities open to the problem of gender disparity as envisaged by the author in the two texts.

Key Words: Gender, Disparity, Social Structure, Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

A number of national and international conventions have emphasized that giving opportunities to both genders to actively participate in social and economic welfare is crucial for long-term sustainable social and economic development of any given society. Given that women constitute more than half of the population and economic potential in Kenya; it is likely that their exclusion from social and economic endeavours is reflected in failures that would affect economic choices and growth.

In her fiction, Ogola suggests that the triggering of economic development has to do with changes in gender parity. These changes are possibly initiated by education and the spread of Christianity that began during the colonial period and transcend to post-colonial. Education and Christianity as explored by Ogola are critical catalysts for gender equity. Education especially for girls has social and economic benefits for society as a whole. Educated women have more economic opportunities and engage more fully in public life. However, gender disparities are still persistent in most sectors in Kenya particularly in education. Girls' education in developing countries is particularly important for the welfare of the family and the future development. Education makes women more aware of the discrepancy between their ideas and the practice of gender. There is a strong correlation between a country's growth rate and gender parity as reflected by the education opportunities accorded to both male and female children. Gender disparity reduces growth by reducing the pool of talented people whose ideas and efforts lead to social and economic advancement.

Patriarchy has its roots in cultural settings of male dominance and superiority that has *interpellated* the male perspective as the social perspective. Patriarchal cultures have from time immemorial produced oppressive gender relations and women are always assumed to come second to man. Households are entities where the family patriarch rules over the wife or wives and children. Women specialize in childbearing and in those production activities that can be undertaken simultaneously with childcare. In essence, the societal allocation of gender roles is closely related to ideas about responsibilities of women as mothers, wives and family care-takers. The hierarchical order expounds on gender disparities and their linkages to development. Establishing economic structures and incentives that encourage gender parity are likely to affect values and customs and vice versa-both working for economic development and growth.

In Kenya, majority of early African novels were written by men. It is only in the 1970s that women writers joined the literary arena. This is explained by the fact that it is only then that women had greater access to education hence the ability to write. From then on, African women writers have consistently published a steady stream of novels exploring the highs and lows of human conditions especially the oppressive and discriminatory practices against women. In this regard, female writers such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Grace Ogot and Rebecca Njau among others provide the female perspective of society.

For a long time, there has been the belief among feminists that as a group, women are treated differently and oppressively and that they are subjected to discrimination. This is as a result of society being generally patriarchal, patterned in such a way that it privileges men rather than women.

Lerner (1986) asserts the importance of examining women's experience in its own terms:

Women have been left out of history not because of the evil conspiracies of men in general or male historians in particular but because we have considered history only in male-centred terms. We have missed women and their activities because we have asked questions of history which are inappropriate to women. To rectify this, and to light up areas of historical darkness, we must, for a time focus on a woman-centred inquiry considering the possibility of the existence of a female culture within the general culture shared by men and women (Lerner, in Rivkin & Ryan, 1998, p. 576).

It is not only in history that women have been marginalized but also in literature. The fact that most female characters are peripheral in male fiction is evidently clear; the reason being that the unsatisfactory appreciation of women in life has been mirrored in literature. One such text that comes to mind is Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958). In the text, Okonkwo the protagonist rules his household with a heavy hand. He bullies his wives and is prone to violence. The status of women in the society in the text is very low for they are seen as part of the property owned by a man. Okonkwo is described as having "a large barn full of grain and three wives." (p. 6). He strives to make his children conform to the conventional definitions of gender. He encourages his son, Nwoye, to listen to masculine stories of violence and admonishes his daughter, Ezinma "to sit like a woman" (p. 40). This, as such is a society that finds women and their behaviour despicable with no positive attribute to emulate. Thus, Okonkwo wonders how and why for all his fame, he has a woman for a son (p. 140) and calls himself a woman for the agony he feels after killing Ikemefuna.

In addition, many female characters in male fiction are portrayed within the framework of their traditional roles as wives and mothers. The social values are so strong that the respect and love accorded to a woman is relative to the degree of her adaptation to these roles. For example, while Achebe's Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* slaughters a goat for one of his wives who has had three sons in a row, Elechi Amadi's Madume in *The Concubine* (1966) is demoralized by his wife's inability to produce a male heir. The consequences of a woman's unorthodox behaviour is shown as Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* beats Anasi his wife "for failing to provide his meal" (p. 26); and Ekweume in *The Concubine* attempts to physically discipline Ahurole for being strong-headed. In fact, the extent to which Amadi portrays Ahurole's spirit of independence as unacceptable is heightened in her attempts to poison her husband. Thus, a woman's honour and dignity often is seen in her adherence to idealized norms of wifedom and motherhood.

Male writers have created in their fiction an image of the African woman which needs to be re-structured against the background of the woman's traditional roles and the social and economic realities of the present (Oladele, 1984, p. 2). Female representation in texts has typically been as objects rather than subjects and as passive rather than active agents of history. It is these images pertaining to traditional positions and roles, that female writers have found distorted and have sought to "correct the misconceptions and to give first hand information on women's perception of society." Jones *et al.* (1987, p. 2) further observes that women and the cause of womanhood have been inadequately served by the male-authored novels. The suggestion is that African male writers are either unable or unwilling to present women in their totality and have therefore resorted to the use of stereotypes and that their treatment of issues that most deeply concern women have been understated.

Female writings as such seek to subvert the gender paradigms by among other things developing complex issues. It is the contestation of this study that Ogola rises to the challenge of coming up with the positive

image of the African woman. In fact she lives up to Ngara's (1985) statement that "committed African writers are extremely sensitive to the social problems of their day and are constantly coming up with them, hoping to play their part in changing society for the better" (p. 1).

Literature Review

A few general studies have been done on the changing roles and images of women in African Literature but a large corpus of existing criticism on Margaret Ogola is in the form of K.C.S.E. study guides on *The River and the Source*. However, these guides concern themselves with a wide spectrum of issues thereby lacking in detailed analysis.

Anyango (2002), in her study entitled *Language and Gender: Transitivity choices, Analysis of Margaret Ogola's The River and the Source*, notes that the shift of gender paradigms in the text has a lot to do with the linguistic means that Ogola employs in dealing with the social issue of gender. She acknowledges the fact that women in male-authored texts are pushed to the fringes of society. She contends that Ogola challenges and reverses the gender paradigms by using language in such a manner that it makes women present and visible in the text hence making heroes of her female characters. This paper looks at the social changes that contribute to the changing roles and images of the African woman.

Kurtz (1998) in a review of texts by female writers observes that in *The River and the Source*, it is men who are tropes, caricatures or static symbols and that the real heroes are the women - Akoko, Nyabera, Awiti, Veronica and Wandia (p. 151). This observation implies that it is the women who have hitherto been portrayed as tropes, caricatures or static symbols and that Ogola's text therefore, marks a departure from the trend. This critique is relevant to the current study in the sense that it focuses on the shift in gender paradigms in African literary works. However, Kurtz does not explore the author's social vision and the role women can play in socio-economic development.

Simatei (2001) in a chapter, "A Chosen People?" in his critical work *The Novel and the Politics of Nation Building in East Africa*, notes that Ogola inverts patriarchal genealogy in order to inscribe a matrilineal history. He observes that the author gestures towards Christian (Catholic) ideology which it promotes as the essential foundation for family life as well as national life. This paper seeks to build on both the idea of matriarchy and religion and transcend it by including Ogola's other fictional work, *I Swear by Apollo*.

A number of other studies, not specifically focusing on Ogola, throw some light on the issue of gender as well. These include Ciarunji Chesaina's *Women in African Drama: Representation and Role* (1987) which makes an incisive and wide study of the portrayal of women in African drama, by both male and female artists. In an analysis of a wide range of texts written in English, Kiswahili and French, Chesaina concludes that the African woman has always been depicted with stereotypical undertones by both male and female artists. A large portion of the available texts assign women the roles tailored for them by society and places them in the unenviable position of automatons operated on by men and subjects to men's sexual satisfaction, she argues. Her criticism which is not only an exploration of gender politics in African Literature but also a stylistic study makes a worthwhile contribution to studies on African fiction. Mule, (1991) in his study *Swala la Mwanamke katika tamthilia ya Kiswahili* contends that women as a group are discriminated against on the basis of their sex and proposes that the question of their liberation must essentially originate within them. He concludes that women writers have indeed championed their cause by rise to the hitherto lacking feminine voice by reclaiming their rightful place in society. Mule's (1991) study is feminist in approach and focuses on two Kenyan female writers, Sheila Ali Ryanga (*Zinduko*) and Ali Katini Mwachofi (*Mama Ee*), but it differs from the current study in that it is more concerned with the increased emergence of female writers who rise up to take up positions previously occupied by men. The current study is interested in how social change has contributed to the changing roles and images of the African woman.

Lugano, (1989) in her study *Mwanamke katika Riwaya ya Kezilahabi*, examines the place of women in four fictional works of Euphrase Kezilahabi and concludes that the writer portrays women as creatures of little value in society. She laments the lack of positive growth in the female characters in the novels. This paper builds particularly on the theme of gender and transcends it by looking at how social changes affect the social roles and images of women.

Matiangi, (1992) in *Images of the African Woman in Buchi Emecheta's Fictional Works* draws the

conclusion that Emecheta is indeed sensitive to the plight of the African woman and presents her characters more positively. He draws attention to the fact that all central characters in Emecheta's works are women and posits that their centrality draws attention to them. This constitutes a shift from the background position to which women have for a long time been relegated and, in his opinion, positions the women as being there to be seen and to be heard. Mtiang'ani's analysis deals with the question of theme rather than style. Further, he examines the literary works of a non-Kenyan female writer. This paper examines the works of a Kenyan female writer and secondly lays emphasis on the reversed gender paradigms.

Mboya (1997) in his *The Woman and History in Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's Fiction* notes that the characterization in Macgoye's fiction portrays the woman as the underdog who is brutalized by history. This paper looks at the African female writer in pursuit of reversing this kind of secondary status assigned to women in society.

Chukukere, (1995) in *Gender Voices and Choices*, notes that Grace Ogot's pre-occupation with the female character together with her experiences is an extension of the primacy of her status in oral tales. Though Luo women as portrayed by Ogot are not militant advocates of sexual equity these tales reflect the endemic war of the sexes, the dilemma of the women as they wrestle with the ambiguities of their situation. Ogot's heroines neither adapt any revolutionary standpoints nor politicized attitudes. Thus, the resolution of their dilemma is limited in a way. This failure to resolve positively the crisis in their fictive lives reinforces their dilemma, especially regarding the sacrosanct nature of traditional sexual conventions. What finally emerges is the spectacle of women who are totally unable to reconcile negative traditional norms with their more positive counterparts in a larger, more universal context. This paper seeks to build on this dilemma as a way of analyzing social change and how it affects the female image.

Statement of the Problem

The social and economic realities facing Kenya have shifted substantially from the colonial through to the post-colonial period. In Kenya, just like in most Sub-Saharan African countries, women bear greater responsibility for meeting basic necessities for their families, yet they are systematically marginalised in terms of resources and the freedom of action they need to carry out their responsibilities. Studies show that when women are empowered the whole society benefits and prosperity is experienced in the respective society. This paper demonstrates that any society cannot achieve its maximum potential unless all genders of the social divide are included.

This paper also examines how social change affects socio-cultural perception of gender and development in Ogola's fictional world. The woman character depicted in Ogola's fiction is shown to be going through considerable changes that see her contribute greatly to her society's sustainable development in a variety of ways. Women as depicted in Ogola's fiction traditionally have less economic opportunities that hamper their improved lives. In culturally male-dominated societies, women are often restricted from accessing wealth or property ownership education, financial opportunities and decision-making processes both at the level of the family and society at large. However, there seems to be a correlation between the level of development and the role of women in society. This paper therefore seeks to analyze the extent to which women can positively contribute to a society's economic development if given equal opportunities with their male counterparts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Comprehensive library research formed the basic method used to gather material for the purpose of this study. As is characteristic of critical studies, broad readership of the theory of feminism was useful to this work. The emphasis is on the stratification of society based on gender and the women's struggle for equal opportunities over a period of time covering pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times. Other sources included critical works on Ogola's writing. However, on the purpose of authentic analysis the study concentrated on the primary texts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characterization as Redefinition of gender Roles in Sustainable Development

In her fiction, Margaret Ogola creates characters to reflect the changing roles of women in an inevitably changing environment. Ogola's characters play symbolic roles as markers of transition from one historical epoch to the other. Indeed, the author uses her characters to show the kind of treatment the African woman undergoes at certain historical moments. She treats her female characters with a lot of understanding. She gives women protagonists the central positions in her novels, fleets with fidelity their sensibilities and opens up their consciousness while also taking great care not to alienate their male counterparts. Her presentation of female characters can therefore be seen as conciliatory rather than confrontational. Most female characters in her two novels are significantly defined by their struggles to transcend their socially defined gender identities.

Thus, the study of characters and characterization in Ogola's fiction is crucial because it helps us to examine the socio-historical concerns and experiences the author delineates through particular characters. In addition, the creation of particular characters is the author's design to strike a particular image or images of women at certain historical epochs. Ogola's major characters are female and it is the author's contention that women have always been relegated to the periphery of society regardless of the historical era in which they have lived. In the light of this, the author creates female characters who are present and visible in the texts as opposed to the passive, submissive and emotional stereotypes found in male-authored texts. Ogola gives priority to all her female characters by concentrating more on developing them as compared to the male ones.

Characters such as Akoko, Nyabera, Elizabeth Awiti, Vera, Wandia and Alicia are involved in various actions meant to create a reversal of patriarchal social order. These women challenge the status quo by striving to get themselves out of the marginalized positions in which they find themselves. Ogola, therefore, presents women as dynamic forces, agents of their own transformation, active participants not on the fringes or on the receiving end of society.

Indeed, Akoko's first words in Part One of *The River and the Source* "dwaro mara" which means "want mine" are significant. Akoko is not only demanding her toy from her brother Oloo, but also much more from the patriarchal set up. The words are a protest call against the suppressive conditions that women continue to suffer in their male-dominated world, the frustration of being placed at the margins of society. Akoko's presentation within the traditional milieu creates a portrait of a woman who is in many ways dominated, disadvantaged, exploited and excluded, living as she does in a male-dominated and male-oriented world. Akoko's pursuit for independence and her strong determination are the author's design to depict a woman who is visible and demands recognition within the patriarchal set up. It is the author's contention here that if the African woman has to carve a niche for herself and achieve equity in a patriarchal establishment she has to struggle for it. It is in this sense that we envisage an image of a determined African woman who has the capacity and willingness to equally contribute to socio-economic, political and cultural development as her male counterpart.

Right from the day Akoko is married and installed as the Chief's first wife, society expects of her children and particularly male ones. Akoko on her part is not only driven by the social demands but also by her own personal wish to be a fulfilled mother, to have children of her own. The narrator says:

Akoko was duly installed as the Mikai of Chief Kembo and people started to count the days and the moons. At the third moon whispers were heard ... By the fifth month everything was obvious to even the most unobservant dullard. People waited with bated breath and ten moons from the day she arrived, Akoko delivered herself of a son.... people rejoiced for the continuation of the chief's line (p. 25).

In fact it is this social demand for children and more children that sets Akoko and her in-laws on a warpath. Nyar Asembo, her mother-in-law and Otieno, her brother-in-law, want her to reproduce faster so that her rate of birth is at par with the number of cattle paid for her as dowry. The narrator in recounting this stand-off says:

Much has been said by the daughter of the people of Asembo (Nyar Asembo) and her

son Otieno about the thirty heads of cattle that were paid to my father as bride-price. It causes them much bitterness that I have not borne thirty children in exchange for those cattle (32).

The narrator here decries patriarchy's way of reducing a woman into a reproductive vessel for bearing children and the fact that her worth is not any different from that of cattle. Indeed, it is the maltreatment at the hands of her in-laws that shape Akoko into a more defiant and assertive personality. Contrary to the traditional reverence accorded to in-laws, she locks horns with hers. Pre-colonial African and even natural laws of social etiquette demand enormous respect from a girl towards not only a woman who is a mother-in-law but who is also old enough to be one's mother. Through this, the author shows that she is opposed to going over-board in women's endeavours to free or liberate themselves. Although she espouses Akoko's courage and determination, she asks for moderation. However, the irony of Nyar Asembo's accusation is that whereas the African woman suffers oppression and control in the hands of men, she also suffers in the same way in the hands of fellow women. It is of import to note here that the acceptance of this kind of general perception particularly by women themselves is tantamount to perpetuating an oppressive tradition.

This is clearly understood in the light of what Marxist critic, John Fiske (1987) commenting on Louis Althusser, says about the construction of meanings. Fiske argues that meanings and the making of them are indivisibly linked to social structure and can only be explained in terms of that structure and its history. Society then is but a complex network of groups each with different interests and related to each other in terms of their power relationship with the dominant classes. Social relations are understood in terms of social power, terms of domination and subordination. Thus, social power is the power to get one's class or group interests served by the social structure such that social norms are neither neutral nor objective. They have developed in the interests of those with social power by 'naturalizing' the meanings that serve their interests into the 'commonsense' of society as a whole. Social norms are therefore, ideologically slanted in favour of a particular class or group but are accepted as 'natural' by other classes even when the interests of those other classes are directly opposed by the ideology reproduced by living life according to those norms.

In Nyar Asembo and her lot, patriarchy has 'recruited' agents to perpetuate its domination. It is the author's contention here that women as a whole are not a homogenous group but different in the sense that there are those who conform and those who resist the patriarchal status quo. This is also perhaps the author's indictment of the African woman. That the African woman is an enemy of herself for she does not make concerted efforts to free herself of male-domination. In Nyar Asembo the image created is that of women as passive absorbers of stereotyped images. In her female protagonists, Ogola contests the patriarchal ideology as structured, as she tries to make meanings that serve the interests of women, the subordinated group. Through her female protagonists, Ogola argues that the socialization process is dialectical, with a continuous redefinition, negotiation and deconstruction of meaning. In a nutshell the *interpellation* of individuals within particular discourses is never final, it is always tentative and open to challenge and destabilization. Thus, instead of seeing women as dreamy escapist who absorb the images of their feminine inferiority like sponges, they should be seen as active historical subjects who are continuously dialoguing, discriminating, disagreeing and silently rebelling against their gendered conditions.

The hostility experienced at the hands of her in-laws apparently turns Akoko into a dynamic woman who questions and challenges the status-quo. When accused of witchcraft by her mother-in-law, she comes out of her subservient position to challenge the status-quo. In fact, the society around her does not approve of her decision to take control of her own life and to have a say on matters that affect her directly. The society would like to maintain the status quo. Akoko is not only fighting for space within her matrimonial home but also within the patriarchal set up that treats women unjustly. She is agitating for equal recognition from the society so that she is no longer treated as a second class citizen. Again, at her husband's death, Akoko is further turned into a more analytical and critical person questioning the rationale of men owning property even to the extent of grabbing a widow's own hard-earned wealth. Traditionally, women depend on their male kin, fathers or husbands to take decisions on matters that affect their lives.

However, Akoko's male kin, her father, husband and sons have all died, and the only male in her

bloodline is baby Owuor Sino, her grandson. The only male who would protect her, Otieno, her brother-in-law, has turned malevolent behaving like the proverbial "fence that eats up the crops." Otieno has not only misappropriated her late husband's wealth but is also busy encroaching on her personal wealth. As a result, Akoko has radically become a decision-maker in contrast to traditional patriarchal expectations. She decides to safeguard her property by seeking help from the colonial government. Akoko's journey to Kisumu in search of justice is significant because it promises possible emancipation of women from the suppressive patriarchal control of pre-colonial society. She has realized that she cannot hope to get justice from the traditional authority. The narrator says: "She felt the weight of injustice that women have felt since time immemorial in her male-dominated world"(p. 66). Akoko therefore fearlessly fights against patriarchy seeking "massive support" from the government. It is in her endeavour to fight patriarchy from without that we get the image of a dynamic, receptive African woman ready to examine reality from different angles and not just a consumer of all the pre-colonial African ways of life.

As a woman brought up according to traditional ways, Akoko rises above her limiting environment in an effort to make the social order less oppressive to women. In fact it is the narrator's point of view that Akoko is forced to abandon her late husband's home by patriarchy's unfair sexism as represented in Otieno Kembo. The narrator apportions blame for the oppression and subordination of the woman on patriarchy. It is clear that the family as an institution is usually the specific site for the oppression of women. But the oppression that occurs within the family is closely related to the general structure of the society in which particular family institutions exist. The narrator's suggestion is that traditions which are discriminatory in nature to members of a particular sex serve no good purpose and should therefore be discarded as they cause untold misery to the discriminated class. Akoko is forced to lead the miserable life of a *migogo*.

The social background of the pre-colonial society as set out in *The River and the Source* assigns its members roles according to sex. Akoko being a woman is charged with the primary duty of bearing children and so her foremost role in society becomes the rearing of children. As her family grows, though slowly, Akoko's constant attention is focused on her children. Her devotion is to their welfare; provision of food and proper education according to the dictates of tradition. Akoko is a hard-working woman for she engages in extensive agriculture and cattle-keeping.

It is also the author's contention from the example of Akoko to subvert the stereotypical image of women as idlers and gossipers and to demonstrate that the African woman is so overloaded with work that she has no extra time for idling. Women have been over-burdened in this era of patriarchy which is favourably disposed towards the male gender, to subordinate the female. All the difficult and menial domestic chores have been reserved for women. Women's life is but a life of toil. They dig the farms, look after the children, rear the animals in the homestead and cook. Their days are just occupied with laborious duties. In other words, the African woman has the sole responsibility of sustaining her family and society particularly during the pre-colonial period.

To Ogola, the African woman has over the years been charged with the responsibility of feeding herself, her children and sometimes her husband as well, from the products of her own farming activities. Akoko has single-handedly contributed immensely to the welfare of her family and that of the wider society. Through her treatment of Akoko, the author creates the image of an industrious African woman relentlessly working for the welfare of her family. As a defender of the womenfolk, the author feels that the time has come when women should assert themselves. Women should make an up-front struggle for their rights. Thus, she desires a revolution of equality between the sexes.

It is the same experience for Nyabera when she is married to Okumu. As a well-bred daughter of Akoko (and Owuor Kembo), she exhibits the same qualities of industry, determination and loyalty to family. But compared to Akoko, Nyabera is a cultural conformist. Her anticipations like those of any other pre-colonial Luo woman have been designed for her by the community and what she needs do is simply to fit into that specific pattern. For instance, when her husband dies, she has no objection to being inherited according to the cultural requirements of her people. Though she has a daughter, she anticipates for more children particularly sons. Thus she takes her position just as tradition dictates.

However, her experience as an inherited wife leads her to question the institution of wife inheritance. She realizes that wife inheritance as an institution is unfair, oppressive and exploitative to the woman. When

she is inherited by Ogoma Kwach, she discovers that wife inheritance after all does not serve the interests of women but rather that of men, the ruling class. The man in such a marriage has no obligations to provide for his inherited family. His duty is to his own wife and " ... 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 (a scandal)" (p. 91). So when Ogoma Kwach's wife complains to the Council of Elders of negligence from her husband who has turned all his attention to Nyabera, this gives Nyabera room to interrogate polygamy as an institution. She looks critically at the custom and tradition that oppresses and denies an inherited wife love and protection of her husband. She realizes that husband-sharing as is the case in a polygamous relationship is unfair for it brands and prescribes unequal treatment for a man's wives.

Moreover, it grants such a man authority to economically exploit the situation, Ogoma Kwach is determined to give Nyabera a son not just because it is his moral duty but above all so that he can get a foothold on her wealth. Nyabera's realization that polygamy serves only the interests of the male putting the woman in a disadvantaged position, leaves her with no alternative other than to change the course of her life.

So she goes to Aluor mission in search of Christianity, a new way of life. In this way she hopes to change her life and her destiny. Like Akoko her mother, Nyabera also abandons her community and its male supremacist customs. Nyabera as portrayed in the novel gives us an image of a tortured African woman, a victim of polygamy. The narrator here suggests that patriarchal traditions are held responsible for the African woman's woes.

Akoko is not opposed to Nyabera seeking solace in the Christian mission at Aluor. In fact, she goes ahead to encourage her by saying: "I give you my blessings, my child if you are walking along and you find your path leading nowhere then it is only wise to try some other path" (p. 95). This is an indication that although she is obedient to some extent to the traditions and cultural ways of her people, Akoko is receptive to the demands of socio-cultural change. It is also important to point out here that Akoko like any other Luo woman of her time, is not only imprisoned by the cultural demands of her community but also tied to the needs and life of her children. When she feels, for example, that her brother-in-law, Otieno, does not wish to relinquish the chief's stool to her grandson, she does not hesitate to get help from the colonial administration at Kisumu.

On his part, Otieno is only able to behave in this way because he is supported by the patriarchal set up thereby demonstrating that consciousness is never the product of a pre-given truth but rather of culture, society and history. However, it cannot be argued that all men deliberately oppress women but that most men like most women are part of the masses constructed and controlled by the male supremacist ideologies. Thus, the majority of offences and discrimination against women are committed by men, not necessarily as a conscious discriminatory act but because of their position and influence in a system and society that allows, and even approves of practices where women are exploited.

In a patriarchal system such as the Luo society, men have real power and they use this power to get benefits such as land and cattle in the name of tradition at the expense of women. It is ironical that whereas Ogola portrays colonialism and Christianity as liberating phenomena for the African woman, many male writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe and Jomo Kenyatta among others view Christianity as a tool of oppression applied by colonialists to subjugate Africans and to rob them of their land and freedom. Perhaps the difference of opinion between Ogola and compatriots Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Kenyatta are as a result of the very fact that in most African communities land is patrilineal. So, the African man felt directly robbed and dispossessed of his basic means of production by colonialism.

Society is structured in such a manner that inheritance and property falls under the male line. The inheritance laws inherent in patriarchal systems as such militate against the women. Girls and women are only important in as far as their roles as wives and mothers are concerned. It is in Akoko that the author shows that socially and economically the family in pre-colonial times is a unit of production and consumption. The labour of the woman is crucial to the operation and success of the community's economy at large as well as provision of the domestic needs of the family yet she gets very little recognition or none at all. In other words through Akoko the author shows the pertinence of the African woman in the family both in production of material goods and reproduction though all her efforts are very much taken for granted. The woman as such is central to any family for in the African context she

and her children constitute the family. In *The River and the Source*, for example, Becky remains with the children when her marriage to John Courtney fails. And in *I Swear by Apollo*, Napoleon Lebulu's wife leaves with their only son when their marriage breaks.

Again, in Akoko (and Awiti) the author focuses on the tussle for power and influence between wives and mothers-in law. In trying to justify her complaint against Awiti, Mark's mother says: "But-but- she's a wife and I am your mother!" (p. 151). As depicted, women in pre-colonial and colonial periods rarely collaborate apart from alliances formed between mothers and daughters as is the case for instance between Akoko and Nyabera, and between Nyabera and Awiti. Ogola's contention is that the hostility among women is patriarchy's way of 'divide and rule' and if women have to be emancipated from patriarchal control, they have to rise above this obstacle as exemplified in the relationship between Wandia and Elizabeth Awiti, her mother-in-law. And in the treatment of Nyabera, the author argues that there is need to recognize and respect a woman's judgement on health matters, such as the number of children one could reasonably bear as opposed to the patriarchal expectations of motherhood which demand self-sacrifice and self- denial. Maria Nyabera's attempt to be a fulfilled mother with a son leaves her "thin and quite haggard" (p. 115).

Through Nyabera, Ogola concisely develops the African concept of motherhood where the bearing and rearing of children, however taxing it might be, is considered the noblest of goals of life. The author redefines motherhood to mean more than just the ability to bear and rear one's own biological children; motherhood means social responsibility to children abandoned by their biological mothers or those orphaned by disease as in the case of Alicia and Johnny who are taken care of by Wandia in *The River and the Source* and Ciro who is also taken care of by Wandia in *I Swear by Apollo*. Nyabera is more of a mother to Owuor than his own mother, Alando Nyar Uyoma who abandons him soon after his father's death.

Nyabera is presented to us as the epitome of suffering and pain. Through immense suffering following the deaths of her family members and including her own children, the author depicts the suffering and pain that the African woman undergoes. The image created here is that of a resilient African woman. In the face of adversity, Nyabera does not give up; instead she has the resilient spirit to go on.

The fact that the author does not venture into her female protagonists' streams of consciousness denies the African woman a chance to speak for herself and to show from her own experience, the ramifications of the demanding pre-colonial African life. Nyabera as depicted undergoes almost a complete metamorphosis from a happy girl with little to worry about to a sad woman almost on the verge of collapse if it were not for the mission station at Aluor. From the disappearance of her brother Obura onwards, Nyabera faces a series of deaths that leave her physically and emotionally drained. As if this is not enough, tradition deals unfairly with her as a subordinate member of society – she suffers the brunt of oppression and exploitation as an inherited wife leading her to conclude that "chik had erred" (p. 91).

Through Akoko and Nyabera, the author demonstrates that women's sacrifices and struggles will help bring about positive changes that will make their lives better. To the author, sacrifices such as Akoko's journey to the colonial office at Kisumu and Nyabera's search for change in the mission station at Aluor, are part of the necessary struggle for women to be emancipated so that others in the future may not have to fight the same battles. It must be pointed out here that besides reclaiming her 'stolen' property, Akoko is also fighting for the chief's stool to be returned to her grandson Owuor. Nyabera goes to Aluor in search of a better life for herself and her family.

Akoko and Nyabera's determination to get recognition in the patriarchal pre-colonial society confirms that they are defiant to tradition and cultural confinement. They defy tradition and cultural confinement by changing from what appears to be passive acceptance of the status quo to one of eager questioning and a willingness to take a firm and decisive hand in shaping their lives. The narrator says of Nyabera: "When it came to making ruthless decisions, she equalled her mother" (p. 2). Perhaps Nyabera's decision to educate her daughter Awiti is part of the "necessary change" (p. 92), an intention "to cut herself off" from the cultural disregard for women as practiced by her patriarchal community. Through Nyabera, Ogola argues that bride-price and dowry systems should be annulled for they benefit the men but contribute to the oppression and exploitation of women. The plight of women in relation to traditional customs is a principal concern in *The River and the Source*. Ogola uses Akoko and Nyabera, as assertive revolutionary

women to castigate customs which have outlived their usefulness.

Brought up in Aluor mission, Awiti is not keen on subscribing to the socially recognized laws on relationships. Thus, courtship in the sense that is witnessed between Awiti and Mark Anthony was unknown in the pre-colonial context. Fathers simply chose partners for their daughters and "love was not a prerequisite for marriage". Girls are portrayed as being especially passive in matters relating to marriage in the pre-colonial times. However, in Awiti, the author shows how circumstances have changed and girls in colonial period are increasingly getting involved in matters that directly affect their lives. Awiti falls in love with Mark Anthony and only informs her mother and grandmother about her wish to marry him. Awiti's mission upbringing and her acquisition of formal education has liberated or inculcated in her a sense of freedom. Thus, her perception of herself and other people is clearly more objective as; shown in the way she competes with the boys in her class and even when she is nicknamed in the Teachers' College by her colleagues, she does not relent or lower her moral standards to please anybody. Her decisions are not shaped by cultural etiquette but rather by formal education and Christian standards and outlook. In Awiti, Ogola depicts the positive impact of formal education in inculcating freedom of thought and conscience. The image reflected here is that of a dynamic African woman, receptive to change.

If an educated woman does not conform to society's idea of what a woman should do, she will encounter numerous prejudices and obstructions. At the Teachers' College, the men thought of Awiti "as an object of derision not desire" (p. 127). As a teacher, the villagers do not understand her: "She was an object of curiosity, a woman who worked at anything apart from tilling the land and rearing children" (p. 132). The social expectation that an educated woman is to be eyed with suspicion and not be married is here proved wrong for Awiti makes a success of her marriage. On the issue of marriage the author posits the idea that marriage is much more of a commitment for women than it is for men. When Awiti learns of her husband's infidelity, she submissively decides to keep silent about it. To her, "she was learning the first cardinal rule of marriage: not everything has to be blurted out" (p. 160). The author's contentment is that marriage should be a commitment for both men and women so that no one is taking advantage of the other. One notes here that although Awiti is independent-minded and does not subscribe wholly to tradition, she values the marriage institution.

Through her, Ogola is saying that the African woman could be independent and free of traditional confinements but still honour and respect marriage. The author is not against patriarchy as long as its attendant practices which militate against the woman are avoided. One such practice is that of lack of freedom to choose when to marry and whom to marry. It is also through Awiti that the author demonstrates that roles of men and women within the family are not "natural" except for the biological fact that women must bear children and breastfeed them. Rather, roles are determined by society and thus they are capable of being de constructed if the members of society so wish to dismantle them. Again, on the issue of marriage, Ogola espouses a society where women do not just get married for the sake of fulfilling tradition which expects a woman to be married on attaining a certain age. Just as men, women should have the right to decide whether to get married or lead a celibate life. Women should only plunge into marriage if they envisage attaining happiness and self-fulfilment. Through Awiti's and Mark's marriage, Ogola suggests that the responsibility of the home and the family need not be the burden of the woman. The argument that the man is the breadwinner and makes financial contribution towards the home and family is no longer valid.

Many women such as Elizabeth Awiti contribute to the family income through professions such as teaching. So, since women share the financial burden, it is only fair that there should be more equitable division of domestic labour between marriage partners. In essence, if women continue to be responsible almost solely for the bulk of domestic work, then women will still remain oppressed and exploited within the family. The overload of work in itself, a situation of inequality will mean that women do two jobs; one outside the home for which she is paid and the other inside for which she is unpaid, while men do only one job.

Since it is within the home that conditioning begins leading to the way females are regarded in a society (where masculinity is highly valued), change must begin from here. If changes at the level of the family do not take place, changes in the wider society will not be enough to liberate women. Thus, the author presents Awiti's and Mark Anthony's marriage to argue that since the sexual roles, behaviour and norms that have been build up over a long period of historical time and which have become embedded in our

culture were constructed by human beings, they can be dismantled by human beings. This must be done by changing the social training which men and women receive from childhood onwards by challenging the role stereotypes which continue to discriminate against women. The outcome of this process, Ogola envisages would be a convergence of male/female roles from which both men and women would benefit. What this implies therefore is that men have to learn new skills and sensitivities, learn to do the kind of work they have always been taught is beneath them. Hence, they should learn to make sacrifices and refuse to allow themselves to take advantage of structures which are oppressive to women. They must rise above the fear of being regarded as unmasculine. Mark Anthony for instance.

Men should for instance accept that childcare is not a shameful activity to be derided at; rather men should bear responsibility for domestic work and take it as a necessary part of the collective organized struggle to liberate society. In a nutshell, no solution to the problem of women's oppression within the family is possible without a total restructuring of society as a whole. Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1974) recommends the same:

The solution is not to "integrate" them into the structure of oppression but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves" (p. 61).

In Mark Anthony, therefore, Ogola is saying let men not put themselves in the position where they are saying (to paraphrase Tolstoy):

I sit on a woman's back choking and making her carry me; telling myself and others that I am sorry for her burden and would help her by all means possible, except by getting off her back.

Norms, values and roles including the gender roles are culturally determined and are socially transmitted. Much of what are considered to be inherent differences are more the result of cultural conditioning and are subject to change. The marriage institution is therefore the battleground for the woman's struggles against patriarchal control as exemplified by Elizabeth Awiti's children.

Elizabeth Awiti as portrayed is a bridge between the pre-colonial African society and the colonial society. Her children break out of the conservative ethnic confinement to form marriage alliances with people from other parts of Kenya and even beyond. Aoro Sigu marries Wandia Mugo, a Kikuyu girl and Becky marries John Courtney, a Canadian, though their marriage brings in the new phenomenon of failed marriages that comes with modernization. It is the author's contention here that the African woman should transcend ethnic and even racial barriers that tend to limit and confine her to a particular locale. In fact it is in Awiti's children that the ramifications of social change are clearly demonstrated. The advent of social change through components of education, Christianity and modernization result in drastic changes. Catholicism brings with it alternatives that enable people like Peter Owuor, Tony Sigu and Vera Sigu to opt out of marriage, an option which is unfathomable in pre-colonial African society. In its dogma, Catholicism professes celibacy particularly of its clergy as in the case of Father Peter Owuor and Father Tony and in the Opus Dei to which Vera subscribes, the lay members are free to choose whether to marry or not. Vera opts to be a "non-marrying member" (p. 252).

Again, in Elizabeth Awiti, the author establishes the idea that formal education gives the African woman access to the urban setting. As soon as Awiti and Mark Anthony are married, "Mark took his bride off to Nakuru with him ... (149). Their children are raised in an urban environment, a fact which cuts them off from traditional society. Their urban upbringing impacts on them in the sense that they have a more objective view of the people around them unlike their parents who tend to stereotype people according to their ethnic groups.

The two parents seem to have misgivings about girls outside the ethnic group. Their idea of a "nice girl" is apparently derived from their ethnic background, rather shaped by social anticipations and constructions. In Awiti's children therefore, Ogola depicts the positive impact of formal education and urbanization as tools for inculcating freedom of thought and conscience. Though Elizabeth Awiti like her mother and grandmother is a round character, the author does not delve deep into her thoughts so that she could tell us how it feels to combine traditional roles of wife and mother as well as her teaching profession. Instead, the author allows us to "hear" everything about her from the omniscient narrator's perspective.

The author in the last part (*Variable Winds*) of *The River and the Source* and in *I Swear by Apollo* focuses on Wandia Mugo, later Wandia Sigu. It is around her that the story revolves. When we come across her in an anatomy class, at the beginning of '*Variable Winds*' she is bold and assertive. Her boldness is demonstrated when she and Aoro become the first to make a go at the cadaver while the other members of the group have yet to overcome their nervousness:

Wandia asserts herself when she insists that members of the group be called by their names and not referred to by their gender. We learn that Wandia is brilliant and performs exceptionally well in her academic work. In fact, she comes top of the anatomy class, a subject considered a nightmare to every medical student. Her performance is superb and Aoro, her close contestant, concedes defeat: "This is the first time I've been beaten by a girl." (231). Aoro's response is typical of the way females are regarded in a society where masculinity is highly valued. The narrator here suggests that Aoro's defeat would have been more tolerable if he had lost to a fellow man rather than to "that slip of a girl Wandia Mugo" (p. 230).

This stereotypical mentality implies that it is below a man's dignity to be beaten by a girl because men are perceived to be superior intellectually to women. Aoro as a matter of fact, goes ahead to give Wandia the masculine attribute of being "a tough lady" (p. 231). Again, In Wandia the author demonstrates that women are changing. It is Wandia who proposes to Aoro instead of the other way round. In pre-colonial African society even where women were allowed to love men of their own choice, it was unheard of for a woman to approach a man and worse to propose to him. Wandia deviates from the traditional norms. Through her Ogola demonstrates that women are venturing into behaviour contrary to tradition. This is the beginning of women emancipating themselves from patriarchal shackles which have bound them not only physically, intellectually but even emotionally.

This, in effect, shows that the class interests of the ruling group are always the focal point at which any social values are based. Ogola here contends that much of what are considered to be inherent differences are more the results of cultural conditioning. Maleness and femaleness are not absolute but rather different and shifting categories on a continuum which represents humanness. There is no reason that the fact of a woman's sex should make her be treated as inferior to men. Ogola has used Wandia to demonstrate that women have made progress towards casting the shackles of patriarchal thinking though the needed change in attitudes and modified behaviour towards women is slow in coming.

To the author men and women are not defined by their external physical characteristics alone but also by their less tangible personality attributes which are inherited. For instance, in intellectual matters women such as Elizabeth Awiti, Vera and Wandia in spite of great odds have proved themselves to be every bit as competent if not more than men. Formal education enables Vera and Wandia to venture into areas (electrical engineering and medicine) previously held to be male domains. It is because of the text's recognition of the need to educate women especially in the sciences, that it celebrates girls who do well in subjects traditionally thought to be the domain of men. Vera performs well in the sciences (p. 185, 197) and proceeds to study electrical engineering at the university. The author here contends that women, as human beings, should have the same opportunities and rights as men and the choice as to what to take up or what not to. Like Akoko, Nyabera, Awiti and Vera, Wandia is a pioneer.

In making pioneers out of women, Ogola is making the statement that given an enabling social environment what men can do, women can do even better. Wandia is a representation of modern day post-colonial change. She represents the new order which gives chance to the woman to pursue education to high levels. However, the narrator suggests that the successful struggle for the emancipation of women can only occur as a result of the elimination of all forms of exploitation and oppression in society. To the narrator, it follows that the women's struggle cannot be divorced from all other forms of political struggle against oppressive conditions.

As such, the elimination of class oppression in society is a necessary pre-condition for the emancipation of women.

Wandia brings out the best in women and proves that one can be a highly educated professional and at the same time be a committed wife and mother. Despite her busy schedule as a doctor and a university professor, she has time and energy to look after a large family, six children of her own, one of whom is

not quite normal and three of whom are adopted from the extended family. In this regard, her husband Aoro says of her: "I am a very lucky man. She does a wonderful job with the kids" (p. 278). Nevertheless, the narrator is of the view that women must be relieved of some part of their domestic burden, in order to realize their full human potential the way Aoro steps in to take care of the children as Wandia goes for further studies.

Through Wandia, the author is saying it is possible for one to combine academic and professional roles with domestic chores successfully. It is also through her marriage to Aoro that the author advocates for the idea that parenthood should involve both parents as the word implies. To the author, bringing up children and caring for them is a physically exhausting and a mentally demanding work. It requires tireless vigilance and a great deal of energy from both parents as in the case of Danny Sigu. It is through Wandia's role as foster mother that we see the effects of broken marriages on children. Alicia and Johnny, Becky's children are devastated by their parents' divorce. Alicia becomes an insecure individual. She is "reserved and withdrawn" (p. 10) whereas her brother, Johnny develops "a deep and turbulent personality" (p. 18). It is only under the care of their uncle and aunt that the two children recover from their trauma. Through Wandia's marriage the author demonstrates how the long cherished tradition of the African extended family system is a great cushion to children of broken homes as well as those who are bereaved. Wandia is a woman of strong character and pioneering spirit and most of her attributes are similar to those of Akoko, Aoro's great grandmother.

The message Wandia's character passes across here is that such ideals are worth emulating irrespective of whatever period in history one lives and whatever tribe or race one belongs to. The way she relates to Aoro's family demonstrates that people can live happily and amicably together despite their ethnic or racial backgrounds. Moreover, Wandia and Elizabeth Awiti develop so strong a bond between them that not even the death of Awiti could sever this relationship.

The author's contention here is that the stereotypical myth on the enmity between daughters-in-law, and their mothers-in-law is patriarchy's divisive strategy aimed at perpetrating the exploitation and oppression of women. The author here suggests that for women to gain any meaningful liberation they have to form a united front based on trust and loyalty to the group. Thus, the achievement of full equality for women would occur primarily not just as a result of the abolishing of exploitative class relations in the society but also through the direct struggle by women themselves against particular kinds of their oppression. Likewise, while women generally share many social disabilities there are also strong differences in the interests between women of different classes. For example, the solution of a middle class woman like Wandia Sigu to the problems of domestic labour could be to use other women's labour as maids as shown in the text.

The author is suggesting that any sensitization on the emancipation of women cannot achieve its goals if one class or group of women in society can become emancipated only at the cost of exploiting other women. In other words, liberation for a few at the expense of the many, to the author seems not an acceptable solution to women's oppression.

Apparently, Ogola presents a strong woman academician like Wandia to emphasize the idea that the African woman is capable of great achievement. The author paints a positive image of an able brilliant medical doctor and professor as well as a successful wife and mother. It is the author's understanding here, it seems, that a successful African woman is one who combines both the responsibilities of family life and that of a career.

In the character of Becky though, the author is saying that the African woman needs much more than economic empowerment. Becky, though a very rich woman is the most miserable character in the text: "To the African woman, the family is an integral part of being accomplished. The African woman needs socio-cultural empowerment in the sense that she is given equal opportunity to succeed just like her male counterpart. This can only be achieved if society rids itself of unjust and discriminatory practices such as the belief that boys do better in sciences and that girls are only good in the arts. To the author this is simply propaganda by the ruling class to prevent women from participating in certain areas which they selfishly wish to reserve for themselves in order to perpetuate patriarchy. However, the author believes that through equal opportunities for both genders we can greatly develop as a society as shown by the example of the families of Mark Anthony and Aoro Sigu's. Both families are more prosperous, happier

and contribute positively to society's economic, cultural and social perspectives.

It is of import at this point to note that Ogola's protagonists have a high self-perception of themselves. In the face of patriarchy's unfair treatment to the female members of society, we see strong women characters like Akoko, Nyabera, Awiti and Wandia determined to make it in life and contribute to society's development against all odds. The portrayal of the primary characters is a celebration of their heroic achievements in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial patriarchal conditions. Moreover, characterization assists the author to present the concerns and images of the African woman. For example, through Akoko, the author presents an image of a woman who is receptive to change, through Nyabera the author portrays an innocent woman whose life is determined solely by patriarchy's dictates; through Awiti the author portrays patriarchy's constructions designed to inferiorize the woman by not accessing equal opportunities for formal education in colonial era and through Wandia the author portrays the potential of the African woman to contribute to her society's national development in the post-colony.

On the whole, Ogola agrees that although it would take time before African women can liberate themselves from the manacles of patriarchy, there is optimism since there has emerged a new crop of women such as Akoko, Nyabera, Elizabeth Awiti, Wandia and Vera who are rising up and tenaciously trying to present a new image of their gender. The new woman is hardworking, assertive, intelligent and has a strong determination. If such new traits are sustained, the author envisages the patriarchal yoke being shattered. In this sense therefore, one would rightly say that Ogola uses characterization as a means to mirror her social vision.

CONCLUSION

As reflected in the study of *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo*, it is quite clear that Ogola is sensitive to the subordination and oppression of the African woman. It is evident that she concerns herself with issues such as traditional demands on the African woman. As a writer who is committed to art which has relevance to the society, the author's sensitivity to the African woman is demonstrated in the creation and depiction of women characters. The centrality with which women characters are treated in the works studied is, notable and through their eyes, she renders happenings and various developments in society.

The manner in which Ogola depicts her protagonists leads us to the conclusion that she presents women characters positively. Her female main characters are shown to possess positive attributes like hard work, courage, determination, wisdom and intellectual ability. The author, however, posits that the African woman is not as helpless as she has been painted especially by male authors.

From the study, it is clear that African traditions and customs are the main sites of the African woman's trials and tribulations. Ogola hints at this when dealing with the traditional and cultural dispositions in Africa which militate against the African woman's personality. These are such practices as polygamy, wife-inheritance, bride-price and demand on women for reproductive fertility. It can be concluded from the study that the author's position on the plight of the African woman is that life would be better off if some African customs and traditions were done away with and Christianity (Catholicism) taken up as an alternate way of life.

Again, from the study, a number of issues need to be raised preferably for future studies on Ogola. Regarding characterization, Ogola's characters both male and female are poorly represented. The author tends to use the narrative and descriptive method of presenting her story. Though the women characters she presents are positive, she does not really allow them especially through conversations and streams of consciousness to avail evidence to justify the author's intended positive image. The result is that characters are sketchily presented and therefore, not artistically complete.

For the author to achieve complete positive images of the African woman Ogola should have attended to male-female relationships particularly of her protagonists. However, these relationships are also poorly handled. The most noticeable weakness in this connection is the author's deliberate subversion of the male image at the expense of the female one. This, she does by eliminating the male characters through death. The deaths of Akoko's husband and Nyabera's are the cases that come in mind. In the case of living husbands like Mark Anthony and Aoro, Ogola does not give them prominence; instead she places them in

the background.

Ogola therefore, is biased against her male characters. Thus, it would appear that her presentation of both male and female characters exhibit reverse chauvinism. Perhaps this and many other issues will need to be investigated in future readings of Ogola. Again, like the Western feminists, radical, liberal and conservative, Ogola sees the man as a contributor to women's woes. However, she does not suggest separatism. It is important to note here that 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. May be one could be interested in this aspect of Ogola's work as an exploration of what may be referred to as African feminism.

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BIO-DATA

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