MARGARET OGOLA'S IMAGINATION OF MASCULINITIES IN
THREE NOVELS

BY

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To all those men who have shaped my life. This is for you.
To James, my darling husband, for his encouragement and understanding and for playing both mum and dad to the boys as I buried my head in books. No words can appropriately express my gratitude for your support. Babies Os, Emma and Charles, I appreciate the sacrifices you made and having understood that mummy had to be away to work on her ‘homework’.
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Gender - Gender refers to aspects of behaviour which are changeable: a socially constructed expectation, capabilities and responsibilities of men and women as opposed to male - female which is called SEX. Socially constructed male attributes are referred to as masculine while socially constructed female attributes are referred to as feminine.

Feminist Criticism - This refers to literary criticism that examines the social and cultural aspects of literary works with particular reference to what those works reveal about the role, position and influence of women with an aim of raising consciousness about the importance and unique nature of women in literature.

Masculinity - This refers to aspects of behaviour which are changeable: socially constructed expectations, responsibilities and capabilities of men. These expectations are not homogeneous but vary from society to society.

Patriarchy - It refers to a (system of) social structure that is male-centred and controlled and is organised and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic.
ABSTRACT

This study investigates Margaret Ogola's portrayal of male characters in three novels namely, *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo* and *Place of Destiny*. Of primary concern to the study is the establishment of male identity types in the novels. The study is also aimed at studying the re-creation of male characters as exhibited in the author's works. Furthermore, a comparison of the presentation of male and female characters in the texts is carried out. In this regard, the researcher sought to answer the question: what kind of man does Ogola envision in the society? To answer this question, the study endeavours to interrogate the extent to which the author’s male characters emerge from invisibility to respected people in the society. The study is hinged on the premise that there are few critical studies on men. A study of male characters in Ogola’s work enriches the available criticism on the author’s art. Reader response theory that recognizes readers as active players in the realization of the meaning of a work of art guided this study. Reader response theory was supplemented by deconstruction theory that emphasizes the instability of knowledge and multiple interpretations. The study employed qualitative research design since it involves description of evidence as depicted in the texts. Data was obtained from a close reading of primary texts supplemented by secondary texts. Data obtained has been presented in the form of description and analysis throughout this thesis. One of the findings of the study is that male characters in Ogola’s works can be categorized into two main classes, one: those men who subscribe to traditional male socialization and therefore practise emasculated masculinity and, two: men who defy traditional male socialization and display a more emancipated masculinity. Additionally, the study shows that Ogola redefines her male characters by defying traditional male socialization that encourages unnecessary aggression, shunning display of emotions and upholding traditional cultural practices that encourage women’s subjugation. A comparison of the representation of male and female characters in Ogola’s works reveals that Ogola gives fair representation to both male and female characters. The study concludes that Ogola offers diverse images with different roles and different options for men. The study recommends that a comparative study be conducted on Ogola’s representation of male characters and the representation of male characters by other female writers across Africa.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the Study

This study is based on the assertion that characterization, which is a deliberate and conscious effort by the author to achieve certain desired effects in a piece of work, is paramount in the delivery of the author’s ideological perspectives. According to Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle in *Introduction to Literature Criticism and Theory*, characters are the life of literature (63). Without characters there would be no story. According to Busolo Wegesa in *A study guide to Margaret A. Ogola’s The River and the Source*, characters are usually the creation of the writer (26). Busolo further argues that even where the narrative is true, characters still remain open to manipulation by the writer (ibid). He contends that “it is the writer’s decision to present a specific trait and to suppress others” (26). He concludes that “there are many choices open to the writer in the presentation of characters” (ibid). Presentation of characters in any way is always motivated. On her part, Marjorie Boulton in *The Anatomy of Prose*, observes that “the unbreakable convention of every art is that the artist chooses those aspects of the subject he wishes to treat in detail, ignores or almost ignores everything else, and suits the details of the treatment to the chosen matter” (109).

To elaborate characters as being the writer’s creation for an intended purpose, E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* categorically states that the writer gives his characters names and assigns them sex (55). In order to pass on authorial ideology, the writer also allocates his characters “plausible gestures and causes them to speak by the use of inverted commas and perhaps to behave consistently” (ibid). Forster further posits that “their (characters) nature is conditioned by what he (the author) guesses about other
people and about himself and is further modified by the other aspects of the novel” (55). In modeling his characters, a writer thus shows how people are, behave, and how they ought to behave. John Mugubi in *The Child Character in Adult Literature: A Study of Six Caribbean Novels*, is equally categorical that the “writer’s preference in terms of character-types should never be taken for granted but rather be perceived as a vehicle through which the writer lays bare his or her message” (1). Writers’ portrayal of characters is almost always influenced by whether they desire to challenge societal expectations or to perpetuate those expectations. Peter Schwenger in *Phallic Critiques* observes that “the subtle expectations that one has of others and of one’s self in this matter of the sexes can be more accurately conveyed by literary style than by official articulation” (20). For Mugubi, an author’s distinctive view of how people relate and ought to relate will be reflected in the presentation of every character (2). By choosing to employ male characters in her works, Ogola must have considered them most appropriate in delivery of her social vision.

The portrayal of the male character in the works of female authors and how this portrayal contributes to the author’s ideological perspective on the issue of male and female relations has not received serious scholarly attention. Focus on one gender, at the expense of the other by critics amounts to discrimination. Male characters in the works of Ogola have largely been ignored or dismissed as non consequential by critics such as Wegesa (1999), Oloo (2005) and Odhiambo (2006). By disregarding the male character in the art of female authors, critics do great injustice to the work, themselves and their audience, as they overlook important arguments being advanced. This study explores this
gap by undertaking a critical analysis of the male character in the works of Margaret Ogola with the view of laying her message bare.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Characterization is central to all literary creations. It is through characterization that a writer carves out the plot and registers her themes, and, in the end, articulates her social vision. Through characterization, a writer mirrors society as well as illuminates human experiences. Although the works of Margaret Ogola have enjoyed commendable criticism, this has often been done with the female characters’ interests and seldom those of the male characters. Focus by critics on one gender at the expense of the other amounts to discrimination. Male characters in the works of Ogola have largely been ignored or dismissed as non-consequential by most critics such as Wegesa (1999), Oloo (2005) and Odhiambo (2006). This study sought to fill this gap by undertaking an in depth analysis of the male character with a view of unveiling the writer’s social vision.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to establish Ogola’s representation of male characters in three of her novels: *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo* and *Place of Destiny*. The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Describe types of male characters in the three selected novels.
2. Examine how Margaret Ogola redefines her male characters.
3. Compare and contrast the portrayal of male and female characters in the works of Ogola.
1.4 Research Questions

1. What categories of male characters can be described in the three selected novels?
2. How does Ogola redefine her male characters?
3. How do male and female characters in the works of Ogola compare and contrast?

1.5 Research Assumptions

1. Male characters in Ogola’s works can be classified into various categories.
2. Ogola redefines her male characters in the three novels.
3. Male and female characters in Ogola’s works can be compared and contrasted.

1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study

Ogola’s works have enjoyed considerable attention from various scholars. In the Kenyan education system one of her books, *The River and the Source* (1994), is, for the second time, being studied as a school text in secondary schools. A number of critics, for example, Wegesa (1999) and Tom Odhiambo (2006), however, have concentrated on her portrayal of the female characters and showed how the female characters enjoy a lot of attention from the author to the point of being glorified. These studies reveal that like Buchi Emecheta in *The Joys of Motherhood* and Flora Nwapa in *Efuru*, Ogola has ensured that “women play crucial roles in her novels and are put in situations where they prove their mettle, show initiative and contribute maximally to the development of enduring social values in the community” (Taiwo 15). The male character in the works of Ogolá has not attracted much attention from critics. Furthermore, previous criticisms of the author have been done from a feminist perspective while this study sought to critique the works from a deconstructionist perspective.
Previous studies conducted on the works of female authors for instance Oloo (2005), Mule (2007), Taiwo (1984), Jacobus (1979), and Abungu (1997), have tended to examine the portrayal of the female characters and revealed the extent to which female authors dismantled or upheld stereotypes about women through their portrayal of the female character. According to Ernest Emenyonu, such studies have focused on the female character and “revealed the extent to which the authors redefine images of womanhood, provide new visions and reshape African women in fiction” (xiii).

Olga Kenyon in *Writing Women* contends that “fiction can prove vital in giving us images about how we are and how we wish to be” (132). Fiction has social responsibility. Therefore, considering that literature has revealed discrimination of the female in society, it is important to turn to the same literature for plausible suggestions to the solution of the social problem at hand. This present study on the male character unearths alternative forms of male socialization with a view of achieving harmony with regard to gender relations and immensely contributes to the growing body of knowledge, insights and judgements on women writing.

Ogola’s novels have been selected for this study in preference to other authors like Nwapa, Emecheta and Ogot for the reason that they are written over a spread of a decade during which time there has been a lot of societal gains in terms of female empowerment. A survey of available critical works regarding Ogola shows that many critics have concentrated on *The River and the Source* as compared to the other novels. The Present study aims at examining all the three novels from the male character perspective.
1.7 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

Ogola has written *The River and the Source* (1994), *Place of Destiny* (2002), *I Swear by Apollo* (2005), *A Gift of Grace* and has also co-authored *Educating in Human Love*. Her title *Mandate of the People* was published posthumously. To achieve its objectives, the study chose the three novels due to their diversity in the areas of concern. These novels were written within a spread of a decade that is between 1994 and 2005 a period that experienced tremendous social change in terms of gender roles. The study is further limited to portrayal of the male character as opposed to the female. The study also leaves out other aspects of the works like style and language.

1.8 Literature Review

1.8.1 Introduction

In the review of available literature, the research has adopted a three-fold approach. Firstly, there is a review of literature on critical men’s studies in relation to gender. Secondly, a look at the portrayal of male characters by female authors in general is given. In this way a general understanding of how female authors have treated the male characters in their works is created. Finally, the researcher narrows down the review to the available literature on Ogola’s works. In this case, there is a focus on what critics have to say on the selected works to provide ground for the present study.

1.8.2 Examination of Critical Men’s Studies

A quick reading revealed that the subject of males as an integral composition of gender has not been as widely explored as has been the subject of women. In most cases studies on gender automatically venture into female concerns. These assume gender to be synonymous to female. Lahoucine Ouzgane and Robert Morrell in *African Masculinities*
observe that the subject of masculinities in Africa remains ignored (1). These authors further argue that men are not the same, a fact that they assert has “occasioned the shift from the concept of masculinity to that of masculinities” (4). The scholars are of the opinion that masculinity is not biological but that it is the cultural ideal established for what it is to be a man (ibid).

This negligence of the male then raises pertinent questions such as whether the male is contented and has no reason to complain. Paul Hoch in *White Hero Black Beast Racism, Sexism, and the Mask of Masculinity* is of the opinion that men have a myriad of concerns but are simply afraid of voicing them owing to social, economic and historical structures that have promoted male oppression (6). The male oppression in turn led to female oppression as carried out by men. Critical men’s studies such as Hoch (1979) and Anzetse Were in *Drivers of Violence* concludes that there are social, economic and historical structures responsible for violent behaviour in men. These scholars argue that addressing the causes of male violence could lead to male liberation.

**1.8.3 Exploration of Male Characters by Female Writers**

Focus on the works of female writers has been as though responding to Bessie Head’s sentiments as quoted in Adeola James:

> The ancestors made so many errors and one of the most bitter-making things was that they relegated to men a superior position in the tribe, while women were regarded, in a congenial sense as being inferior form of human life. To this day, women still suffer from all calamities that befall an inferior form of human life. (5)
Critics of female art have consistently proven how this subversion is contested in the works of female authors through characterization and plots.

Wesley Brown in *Women Writers in Black Africa*, in her analysis of the work of black women writers, observes that in these works, the victims of inequality and male insensitivity are not only victimised by their external circumstances, but are also at a disadvantage because they lack strength, resourcefulness, and a vital sense of their own integrity as women (181). The critic notes that “their inner weakness often stems from the degree to which they have internalized male modes of perception until they accept male notions about female inadequacy and about masculine privilege” (ibid). She further postulates that all the major (female) writers are “preoccupied with the woman’s personal strength - or lack of it when they analyze sexual roles and sexual inequality” (181). This study (carried out here) acknowledges Brown’s contribution to the criticism of female literary works and gives us justification to focus on the male character in female works.

Olga Kenyon in *Writing Women* observes that Emecheta “offers stories of immigrant experience, a record of the effects of marginalisation and a woman’s triumph over oppression” (132). From this criticism it can be deduced that critics of female authors have had the woman at the centre stage. Contrary to the above position, the present study has focused on the male character.

Daphne Watson in *Their Own Worst Enemies*, undertakes a criticism of female popular literature from a feminist perspective and is convinced that “women are their own worst enemies since despite the spread of feminist sensibilities, popular women’s writing continues to be shaped by older more patriarchal assumptions” (115). While
Watson’s study assumes a feminist approach to female art, this study has employed a deconstructive approach to the presentation of male characters in female works.

Ernest Emenyonu in *New Women’s Writing in African Literature*, is of the opinion that “those first generation female writers and their emerging successors of the second generation continue to visit and revisit the common issues of being female in Africa, the third world and defining reality from the perspective of the African woman” (xiii). The researcher in this study has looked at female works from the perspective of the African man.

Katwiwa Mule in *Women’s Spaces. Women’s Visions: Politics, Poetics and Resistance in African Women’s Vision*, asserts that criticisms of African women writing in the 1980’s and 1990’s were concerned with the issues of victimhood, identity and agency (5). Thus, female authors are redefining images of womanhood, providing new visions, and reshaping distorted characterizations of African women in fiction. Mule further argues that for women writers, the act of writing is an attempt to balance if not to overturn, the degrading stereotypes created by colonial as well as African male texts (ibid). In this study, an attempt has been made to identify the redefining of images of male characters as portrayed by female authors.

According to Durosimi Jones and Marjorie Jones in *New Trends and Generations in African Literature*, Rosemary Moyana’s criticism of Tsitsi Ndangarembaga’s novels shows that the author “has put masculinity to question by the very fact of asserting the rights of women and claims of femininity” (26). Killam and Rowe in *The Companion to African Literatures* point out that female authors “celebrate women’s courage, dignity, intelligence, emotional depth, and inexhaustible capacity and thirst for growth” (302).
Oladele Taiwo in *Female Novelists of Modern Africa* contends that some female writers write to protest the image of women projected in the works of male writers (13). The scholar contends that some female writers try to “glorify the role played by women in society and thereby help to raise their status (ibid). He further observes that a female writer is “particularly concerned with the role of women in local, national, and international affairs and writes mainly to highlight these roles” (15). This study preoccupied itself with the role of men in society as presented by the female author.

Maurice Abungu in “Character Transformation and Socio Historical Awareness in the Novels of Marjole Oludhe Macgoye” undertakes a study of the novels of Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye and examines character transformation and social-historical awareness (73). He concludes that Macgoye “praises female characters by detailing issues affecting them in order to sensitize the society to have a fresher glance at their plight” (ibid). The critic also asserts that Macgoye “subverts repugnant socio cultural structures that militate against women’s progress” (iv). While the study gives the socio-cultural structures that support subjugation of women, the analyses in this study sought to examine male characters.

### 1.8.4 Critical Works on Ogola

Evan Mwangi in *Africa Writes Back to Self,* terms Ogola’s *The River and the Source* a “feminist intervention”. Mwangi is of the opinion that the uniqueness of the novel lies in the way it uses the epic to subvert the masculinism typically associated with the genre (119). Consequently, while Mwangi has looked at *The River and the Source* as an epic novel advancing female ideology, the researcher, in this study, has focused on masculinity as presented in Ogola’s novels in general.
Tom Odhiambo in “Writing Alternative Womanhood in Kenya in Margaret Ogola’s *The River and the Source*” writes:

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 society agency and identity. In the process these characters rewrite the persona that has been allocated to women in post-colonial Kenya’s national story. (235-250)

Odhiambo further postulates that Ogola’s text seeks to project Kenyan women as “capable” of claiming their rightful place and identity in the broader national life (235-250). In as much as this study is very relevant to the work under consideration, it has not dwelt much on what the author does with the male character. This forms the backbone of this study.

Pamela Oloo (2002) focuses on language and gender and undertakes a feminist stylistic analysis of Ogola’s novel, *The River and the Source*. She examines the changing roles of women in an inevitably changing environment (v). In her study, she had set out to identify the linguistic resources - the process types (material or mental), verb types (transitive or intransitive) and the participants’ roles (subject or object) of the characters that portray the changing roles of women in society (2). Oloo notes that the male characters in *The River and the Source* have very short life spans (5). She concludes that through the transitivity choices made and by designating grammatical and social subject as female, Ogola discredits the male subject and privileges the female subject (103). The critic further observes that men ‘fall apart’ in Ogola’s fiction in order to make room for
women, hence by the end of part one all the male characters are either dead or in exile - thus creating a new narrative space for the representation of women (104). According to Oloo, through various transitivity options, Ogola is clearly seen to have succeeded in coming up with a positive image of the female character - as subject rather than object, active rather than passive (102). While Oloo’s study is based more on language analysis it also makes little reference to the male characters.

Wabende Kimingichi’s (2000) study of Ogola’s *The River and the Source* and Marjorie Oludhe’s *Coming to Birth* is an examination of the portrayal of the female characters in the two novels. The critic concludes that the two authors succeed in correcting the negative image of the African woman in literature. This study focuses on the portrayal of male characters in Ogola’s novels.

Anne Khadudu Baraza (2004) in “Character Portrayal in Margaret Ogola’s *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo*” undertakes an analysis of both male and female characters in the two texts. While her study is very relevant to the researcher’s work, the researcher notes that Baraza employs sociological, stylistics and feminist theories in her criticism while the researcher employs reader response and deconstruction theories. Further, the feminist theory employed by the critic then guides her to conclude that “Ogola is a feminist writer who like other feminist writers tries to give voice to the woman in society” (80). The current study focuses on the voice of the male character. Given the scope of the critic’s work, that is an examination of both male and female characters, Baraza is unable to carry out an in-depth interrogation of male concerns in the texts and in her conclusion recommends further studies on “character portrayal” from a “different angle” (81). The researcher thus fills this gap by concentrating on the portrayal
of the male character not only in *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo* but also in *Place of Destiny*, the author’s third novel that had not been published by 2004.

On his part Wegesa (1999) undertakes an almost holistic approach to analyzing *The River and the Source*. He looks at the themes, plot, language and style and character and characterization. This kind of approach made it difficult for him to have carried out an exhaustive criticism of any of those aspects of the work. Wegesa is categorical that the “key characters in *The River and the Source* are female while the males exist to assist the development of the story” (27).

From the above evidence it is apparent that discussion of female art has been centered on the plight of the female character. Focus on one sex by critics amounts to discrimination. Consequently, this study sought to unearth the author’s social vision through the presentation of the male character in her three novels.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

Reader Response Theory guided this study. In a review of Wolfgang Iser’s *The Act of Reading*, Inge Crossman asserts that reader response criticism, acknowledges the reader-oriented approach where works of literature are not seen as fixed objects or finished products but as practical ones. With reader response, reading is no longer a passive going over of what has already been composed, but rather an active process in which the reader participates. Once created, a work is no longer autonomous but, relies on someone else for its realization. (192).

In his title *The Act of Reading* (1974), Iser shows how texts anticipate the presence of their audience and how a text’s potential is realised during the reading process. A major stimulus to reader participation according to Iser, are textual “gaps” and
blanks since they invite the reader's projections (Crosman 192). The text/reader interaction is described as a close relationship of instruction-giving and meaning assembly. To clarify the nature of this process, Iser introduces the concept of the “implied reader” which designates a network of response inviting structures which impel the reader to grasp the text. (ibid).

To understand the importance of the text - reader interaction, it is important to note that Iser posits another kind of interaction that precedes the reading process namely the “between the text and.... Social and historical norms of its environment” (Crosman 192) For Iser, literary texts are acts of communication whose purpose is the reformulation of existing thought systems in order to bring about the “imaginary correction of deficient realities” (ibid).

According to Inge Crosman (1980), Iser refers to novels as “systems of perspectives”. The various perspectives refer the reader to a selection of the social, historical and cultural aspects of the text (repertoire) not by copying reality but by presenting these aspects of reality in a unique and striking combination that will catch the reader’s attention and invite him to scrutinize them (192). Iser thus conceptualizes literature as a recodification and transformation of existing thought systems in order to provide an answer to problems. (ibid).

K.M. Newton in Interpreting the Text, observes that according to Norman Holland’s version of reader-response criticism, reading is a personal transaction of the reader with the text in which there is no fundamental division between the text’s role and the readers’s role (142). Newton is of the opinion that Holland places too much emphasis
on the reader as an individual and fails to take sufficient account of the fact that any text
one reads is already a social production and any relation that the reader has with it will
also be socially defined (ibid). Hence the transaction with a literary text cannot therefore
depend purely on individual identity (142). Newton concludes that the text has otherness
not as a pure object with a meaning in itself but in the sense that there is a general social
agreement as to the kind of constraints that determine meaning within that discourse.

This study adopted Iser’s version of reader – response criticism and looked at how
Ogola presents the various social historical and cultural aspects of society to come up
with solutions to the existing male concerns. In embracing Iser’s version of reader-
response criticism, this study sought to prove that as Robert Diyanni states, “literary
works do not have an independent or objective meaning that is true once and for all and
that is identical for all readers” (1372). In this study, the researcher elucidated on how
Ogola’s texts are concerned with, among other issues, male as well as female characters.
However, the study acknowledges that other readings and criticisms may as well give
different meanings from those of the study.

Besides Reader Response Theory, the study employed Deconstruction Theory.
Diyanni observes that Jacques Derrida, the main proponent of deconstruction theory,
argues that deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random or doubt or arbitrary
subversion, but by the consistent tearing out of differing forces of signification within the
text (1382). In this regard, deconstruction is not aimed at destroying the text but disputing
the claim for common meaning to a text (Ibid). Consequently, a deconstructive reading of
a text is then a search for obscured contradictions within a text that necessarily lead to
multiplicity of meanings of the same text. Additionally, deconstruction emphasizes
identifying a prevailing ideology that needs to be subverted, undermined, or otherwise called into question (Diyanni 1382). A deconstructionist reading of Ogola's works, focused on the male character that seemed to be obscured by the female to evolve with a different interpretation. Both Deconstruction and Reader–Response Theories agree on the plurality of meaning and therefore complemented each other in guiding this study.

In the reading of Ogola's three novels, the study proceeded from the premise that there exists no explicit meaning as advanced by Deconstruction and Reader Response theories. The researcher sought to show that the recreation of male subjects in these novels is permissible to different interpretations depending on the perspective that one adopts. Furthermore, as Marjorie Boulton (1954) puts it, "a literary text is a complex structure which can support many different readings" (109). Therefore, the deconstructive and reader- response reading of the selected texts involved a double reading of the text as the researcher analysed the recreation of the male character by female authors.

1.10 Research Methodology

1.10.1 Research Design

The study employed qualitative research design since it entirely relied on descriptions for data analysis and presentation. The study was library based. It involved textual study in which data presented for analysis was collected from primary texts and other secondary sources as guided by the study objectives.
1.10.2 Population and Sample

Purposive sampling was used in the choice of the three primary texts selected for this study: Margaret Ogola had published three novels at the time of conducting this study namely, *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo*, and *Place of Destiny*. All the three novels were considered based on evidence of common features such as the presentation of unconventional masculinities.

1.10.3 Data Collection

1.10.3.1 Primary Data

This one was obtained from the reading of all the primary texts mentioned in section 1.10.2. The researcher was guided by the objectives of the study. The three novels for this study are read simultaneously and are critically analyzed for their discernment of alternative masculinities.

1.10.3.2 Secondary Data

Library research was utilized in gathering secondary data. This involved readings obtained from secondary materials from the library, journals, critical works and the internet. Critical works on the subject of masculinity are consulted and aid the researcher to put across convincing arguments. Works of female literary critics are considered to obtain a general understanding of how women writers’ works have been received by critics and provide the study with the justification for a different viewpoint. Cultural writings are consulted and inform the study on various male stereotypes. Other sources were used to enrich this study especially in the area of social change so as to achieve a detailed study.
1.10.4 Data Analysis

Both primary and secondary data were used simultaneously in this study. The selected texts were subjected to close reading. Features such as the depiction of traditional forms of socialization, the redefinition of the male subject and how the author builds up her social vision through the male characters were given literary attention.

Data was presented in the form of descriptions, analysis and use of relevant literary arguments. This involved giving an elucidation of the interpretation of the findings from the selected novels, augmented by secondary sources.

1.11 Organization of the Study

This thesis has five chapters. Chapter one consists of the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the justification and significance of the study, the research objectives, assumptions, scope and limitation, literature review and theoretical framework, and the research methodology. In chapter two, the study tackles the first objective where the male character types in Ogola’s selected novels are identified and discussed. In chapter three, the study critically examines how Ogola redefines her male characters by contesting traditional forms of male socialization. Chapter four compares and contrasts the representation of male and female characters. Chapter five summarizes the study’s findings.

Chapter two focuses on the types of male characters in Ogola’s works.
CHAPTER TWO: TYPES OF MALE CHARACTERS IN OGOLA'S NOVELS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the types of male characters as portrayed in the three novels. For the purpose of this study the term “male character-type” has been employed to refer to a kind of behaviour as guided by one’s mindset regarding what it is to be a “man”. The research premise is that gender is a socially ascribed mode of behaviour to the different sexes, as opposed to sex which is biologically defined. The researcher takes cognisance of the fact that a particular man’s mindset is a product of his interaction with society. The importance of historic, economic and technological aspects in the shaping of a society’s definition of masculinity is reckoned.

The study has classified men into two broad types: those who practise traditional, repressive and emasculated maleness having succumbed to society’s scripting of what it means to be a “man”; and those who rise above such societal dictates and assume more emancipated progressive maleness. In discussing the two broad categories of male character types, the study further examines men in the family as fathers, husbands, brothers and boys. The analyses here also go outside the family and look at men from the two categories above as professionals and men in general. To build a strong case on male emasculation and emancipation, a keener look on the concepts of masculinity and patriarchy is followed because the study considers them major forces in the determination of a man belonging to either of the two categories.
2.2 “Masculinists”

The term “masculinists” is employed in this study to refer to men who advocate for masculinity. According to Janet Sayers in *Sexual contradictions*, masculinity can be said to be the particular ways, ideas and practices in which boys and men have been socialized even indoctrinated to believe that that is how it is to be a “man” (23). It is the society’s definition of qualities and characteristics of a man. Masculinity differs from society to society and it also changes over time in relation to social, historical, technological and economic adjustments in society. To elaborate on the concept of masculinity as learned and therefore subject to change, Hoch (1979) writes:

It is rarely difficult to decide whether a baby is male or female. It either has one kind of reproductive organ or another. If you are in any doubt, you can simply reach out and touch. It is right there in flesh and blood. But no one has ever touched ‘masculinity’ or ‘femininity’. They are not flesh and blood; they are ideas, social conventions which change with time and place and social structure. (17)

Hoch’s observation underpins Ouzgane and Morrell’s opinion that masculinity is a “fictional construction” (11). The argument in this study is that men actually act out what they think to be the right way of being a “man” following their upbringing. This includes the notions that are passed onto small boys as they grow up on how to behave and how not to behave so as to attain masculinity. Society, for instance, instructs small boys to be competitive by urging them never to allow the “other” boys to beat them at whatever they engage in; be it in the play ground or in academics.

Hoch further elucidates on masculinity when he points out that:
the present masculine role includes prescriptions about what job
the manly man should have, what cars, clothes, after shave, foods,
drinks he should consume; how he should walk, talk, fight, dance,
sit, eat, hold a cigarette, throw a ball, copulate... the requirements
are endless and exacting. (18)

The above observation corroborates the researcher's conviction that masculinity is
simply scripted; that over the years, society has preoccupied itself with producing a
prototype for acceptable male behaviour and general lifestyle. Society which includes
media, for example, is awash with adverts of "real" men driving expensive and extremely
powerful vehicles implying that those who do not are therefore "lesser" men. This set
"standard" then pushes many men to strive for the powerful machines regardless of the
means of obtaining them. Men who fail to be in possession of the powerful and luxurious
vehicles are constantly harbouring feelings of failure and maintaining low self-esteem.
The media has socialized men to believe that in order for them to attain masculinity they
must have well paying jobs that consequently enable them to chase after and conquer
beautiful women whom they must go out of their way to treat well by providing material
provisions.

From the preceding discourse, it appears that these men just live out their lives
like robots as they struggle to confirm to the prescription of how to be men.
Unfortunately, these prescriptions exert undue pressure on them until they eventually
realize the stakes raised for them on how to be a "man" are simply unrealistic and
therefore unachievable. This makes men develop a sense of inadequacy. It is this

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realization that drives men to invent ways of dealing with this developed sense of inadequacy.

Hoch further points out that our society's notions of masculinity (and femininity) were just among many different possibilities (33). Hence, there is no need of men "killing" themselves to fit in one particular description of masculinity regardless of the burden it imposes on them. The writer's observation resonates well with the fact that in traditional Western Kenyan cultures such as Luo, Luhya and Iteso, it is the men that build family houses while in traditional Maasai community the responsibility of erecting a house is vested on the woman. Such variations in cultural practices are evidence that indeed masculinity is learned. Given that masculinity and femininity are socially ascribed sexual roles, Hoch then questions why women have had the courage to challenge these roles and aim to overturn them while the men have not. He wonders:

More and more women are severely questioning their assigned social roles. Men have scarcely begun to question theirs. There is a considerable irony in this. Is it that the males – thinking themselves to be rulers in this society – feel they have no reason to complain? Or is it perhaps that we are so increasingly pressured to identify our masculinity with the performance of these roles that we are unable – indeed frightened- even to contemplate the necessary questions? (6)

The argument advanced here is that men, just as women have done, need to re-evaluate their socially ascribed roles so that they too can end up reclaiming freedom long lost to socio – cultural dictates.
Were points out that according to society, "Masculinity needs to be expressed as control, strength, efficiency, competitiveness, toughness, coolness under pressure, logic, forcefulness, decisiveness, rationality, autonomy, self sufficiency and control over emotions" (71). This problem of socially ascribed male roles herein referred to as masculinity and the need to conform to them has posed serious challenges to men. Consequently, Were further contends that boys and men harbour great insecurity about the male credentials (ibid). They are always engulfed by feelings of failure and inadequacy since they fall short of the society’s prescription of being male. Were is of the opinion that since it is hard to embody masculinity, many men fail to be “fully masculine” and this failure to embody “full masculinity” makes them feel like they are not real men (71). It is these feelings of insecurity and inadequacy resulting from the pressures of masculinity on men that the study herein refers to as emasculated maleness. The same is termed by Were as male disempowerment.

This male emasculation/disempowerment is detrimental to the performance of maleness. The resultant situation of this male performance in the society is conflict among men themselves and women and children that the emasculated/disempowered men must interact with. According to Rowan this “sex-typed identification among adult males is associated with low self-acceptance, high anxiety, and neuroticism” (Rowan 60).

According to Hoch, this neuroticism is responsible for the decreased life expectancy of men, in comparison to that of women. It is argued that men worry too much as a result of their state of insecurity and instability. This exposes them to heart diseases. Hoch contends that men suffer from “ulcers, stomach or colon cancers, cirrhosis of the liver and many other diseases produced by the tension of the rat race” (18). Were
equally argues that most men have many psychological difficulties that go unattended owing to the fact that society does not expect them to vent out these problems (70-71). The resultant situation is that men then seek to escape from their troubles by turning to substance addiction further exacerbating their problems.

Addiction to substances like alcohol and tobacco predisposes the culprits to contracting lifestyle diseases like cancer. Further, substance addiction complicates men’s peaceful existence in society as the drugs are usually debilitating making it impossible for the men to contribute to the well being of society. This consequently puts the men at loggerheads with other society members. For instance, the Kenyan media has on several occasions reported cases of women holding demonstrations to protest against their drunken husbands’ inability to perform their marital responsibilities.

In view of the opinions held by the scholars above, the study argues that indeed men are clinging to masculinity for various reasons that include lack of awareness of the knowledge that masculinity is not the same as maleness. The other reason is that masculinity is embodied in a people’s culture and that it takes time to change.

Hoch’s observations are key to this chapter because they delve into the question of male socialization and subsequent repercussions on their lives and those of the other sex that they interact with. Additionally, Hoch’s insights shed more light on the age-old debate on masculinity and go a notch higher in analyzing the issues by suggesting possible ways of redress out of patriarchy. This position resonates well with Ogola’s portrayal of masculinity.

Ogola has presented masculinity as fluid and varying from person to person. Through the character of old Igana Magu, Ogola manages to show the destructive nature
of emasculated maleness in society. On the other hand, Aoro Sigu becomes the embodiment of male emancipation. This fluidity of masculinity is what this chapter hopes to expose.

2.3 “Patriarchists”

The study employs the term “patriarchists” to refer to persons who espouse patriarchy. Patriarchy socialises men to consider themselves superior to women and advocates for the domination and subjugation of women by men (Were 62 - 63). Were further argues that despite patriarchy conferring upon men numerous privileges and advantages, these are tied to certain responsibilities and expectations of the man (64). Some of these expectations include being in control and manipulating their environment to bend to their will. The writer contends that men in a patriarchal environment are constantly failing to be in control of their environment due to technological and socio-economic factors (65). This inability to control their environment has left men regarding themselves as failures since they were “meant” to be “conquerors.” Consequently, these men have developed feelings of shame and have low self-worth. Were deduces that the feelings of inadequacy have inflicted emotional wounds and scars that on conscious or subconscious levels disempower African men (ibid).

The point is that patriarchy which in essence is a product of repressive traditional masculinity has assigned men certain characteristics that are detrimental to them and to the women they interact with. Hoch encapsulates patriarchy to be a “short sighted reaction” to the oppressive and repressive sex roles imposed upon men by societies (24). Thus, in advancing patriarchy, men are in fact victims as opposed to villains. Men being so oppressed and dominated by societal pressure to be “men” displaying qualities like
being emotionally detached, pursuing wealth and being macho, find it difficult to live up
to this expected standards of behaviour. They, therefore, then project the feelings of
worthlessness to women by perpetuating female oppression so as to appear to be in
control while covering their inadequacy.

In the African society it is common to hear talk of families where men are “sat
on” by their wives. These families are considered to be so simply because the men
involved are liberated from repressive masculinity as upheld by patriarchy. These are
men who have given their spouses the latitude to make decisions and are normally
contented. They seem to lead rewarding lives. Nevertheless, society finds the calm and
tranquility exuded by such men confounding. This is because it defies conventional forms
of masculinity that dictates that men and women be at constant war. Society frowns upon
“docile” or peaceful men and dismisses them as lost. Some members of society simply
conclude that men who defy traditional male socialization are indeed under some spell
and write them off as people not in control of their actions.

This kind of male liberation is depicted in the lives of Ogola’s numerous male
characters such as young Igana, George Mwaghera, Mark Sigu and Aoro Sigu. Ogola’s
construct of male characters echoes Were’s conviction that African men, along with other
men in patriarchal societies, have the challenge of dealing with the demands of
patriarchal societies and constraints of masculinity (72).

2.4 Emasculated Male Characters

The above discussions on masculinity and patriarchy, clearly point out that men
are socialized into repressive masculinities throughout “recorded history”. The argument
in this study is that men are victims of male socialization and they continue to display this
conditioning in their day to day living. Men who advance retrogressive masculinities also perpetuate patriarchy. The ensuing discussion evaluates the performance of men who embrace patriarchy and conventional masculinity in their various capacities as members of society.

2.4.1 Men as Fathers in the Family

Ouzgane and Morrell assert that gender studies have devoted a great deal of attention to womanhood and motherhood without equivalent discussions of manhood and fatherhood (6). Lack of studies on fatherhood undermines the role of fathers in child development yet on the contrary the role of fathers in child development cannot be overemphasized. It is central to the shaping of children to determine whether they turn out to be responsible members of society or otherwise. Unfortunately, traditional male socialization has seen some fathers fail to be desirable parents to their children with disastrous consequences to society.

Were argues that disempowered men impose their authority in their home by becoming unapproachable parents who should be regarded with fear (88). These men, he points out are normally threatened by the fear of losing control over their family members (a proof of their masculinity) in the face of the changing society, rendering that kind of control irrelevant. Ogola’s portrayal of Magu Senior in *Place of Destiny* corroborates this observation. Magu senior is the epitome of fathers who subscribe to traditional masculinities. The narrator points out: “He was the ultimate despot, the absolute and unquestioned monarch. He was not only above the law, he was the law itself” (11). Magu senior is a dictator in his family. His children fear him. The man is so full of anger and sometimes acts violently towards his children if he thinks that they have committed a
misdemeanor. Dialogue and civility has no place in his vocabulary. For instance, when he is called to school to pick his daughter, Rigia, who had become pregnant, his first reaction is to slap the girl very hard. The narrator relays: “This riot act in her case accompanied by a ringing slap from her father whose impact must have dislodged at least a few neurons from the fetus’ aspiring brain if the shock waves cascading through its mother’s brains were anything to go by” (10).

It does not occur to Magu Senior that what the girl really needs at the time is empathy to help her go through the unexpected and burdensome situation. Unfortunately, Magu senior turns out to be hypocritical as he practises double standards with regard to his daughter’s pregnancy. The narrator tells us as much: “He on the other hand was an accomplished predator in the heartless market place for purveyance of tender female flesh. Yet he held her guilty but himself blameless” (11).

Once again the author picks this episode to condemn patriarchy that has always had double standards with regard to what is right and wrong in society. Patriarchy holds it heroic for men to move about with multiple sexual partners yet on the other hand finds it detestable for women to fall pregnant outside marriage and repugnant for them to engage in multiple sexual relationships. This is a critique of patriarchal tendencies in society.

With regards to Rigia, Magu senior adds more misery to the expectant young mother’s life by ruthlessly sending away the boy responsible for the pregnancy when he tried to reach out to the girl’s call of distress. This old man handles his children without an iota of decorum. For instance, he is responsible for the grim life lived by his only son Magu junior, whom he considers a “born loser” and pokes fun at because he considers him effeminate. According to the narrator, the boy’s crime that attracts such ridicule from
the father is that he fails to “display such admirable and enviable male attributes as uncalled - for aggression, total selfishness, disregard for other people’s feelings and untrammeled acquisitiveness” (12). Magu senior’s reaction to his son’s unconventional male behaviour is a true reflection of society’s perception and subsequent treatment of men who shun conventional masculinity. These are always antagonized; a fact that then discourages other men from following this seemingly “cowardly path”. Men then adopt conventional masculinity; at least to earn approval from society. The result is the burden of disempowerment.

Magu senior is such a loathsome father who is after chasing wealth at the expense of personal relationship with his family. His behaviour can be linked to findings of studies by sociologists concerning male socialization. Mark Hotter in *The Changing Family*, for instance, observes that men’s socialization into the role of good provider (and by extension obsession with acquisition of material wealth) can be traced back to historical developments. He argues that it is the industrial revolution and the transition from a subsistence economy to a market economy in the 1830’s that led to “the development of a specialized male role, that of the ‘good provider’ ” (375). Hotter further argues that women having been removed from labour force participation and income generating activities were “devoted to looking for a ‘good provider’ who would ‘take care’ of them and their children” (376).

Hotter also explains that “men were told to concentrate on their jobs and careers; emotional expressivity was not to be their concern. The expression of emotion was to be in the women’s realm” (Ibid). He further postulates that lack of expression became a defining characteristic of the “good provider role” and was even considered essential for
marriage. Hotter observes that a man was defined as “a good marriage prospect if it was felt that he would be a good provider, not that he would be gentle, loving, or tender. Loving attention and emotional involvement with the family were not necessarily seen as part of the package” (376). The exposition above fits in well with Ogola’s reconstruction of Magu senior’s character for although his family has access to material wealth, it remains such an unhappy family due to his emotional detachment and subsequent harassment in a bid to remain the “man” in the home. He does not listen to his children. No wonder he acts unsympathetically towards his daughter when she gets pregnant. He torments her with abuses to such intolerable levels that she is compelled to leave home. The narrator thus informs us:

After the baby was born, the suffering intensified. They lived in the great big house like refugees in a camp. They only occasionally ventured out when the paterfamilias was away. However, his shouted insults and taunts reached such a crescendo that the girl decided that she would just have to leave. So one day she wrapped up her six-month-old bundle of sorrows and left the house. (12)

From the above statement, it is apparent that the girl and her new-born experience no happiness in their wealthy father’s house. They are like prisoners and lack a sense of belonging to the home despite being blood relatives of the owner of the magnificent house. Magu Senior in the treatment of his daughter and grandson is presented as being monstrous. The narrator uses this particular incident to appeal for reason and understanding from parents whenever their daughters get into similar situations.
Magu Senior, as a father, is “absent” in the lives of his children. This absence has adverse effects on his children’s development as evidenced by their predicament. He mistreats his daughter after she gets pregnant; oblivious of the fact that he could have been directly responsible for the daughter’s unfortunate plight. His absence in the lives of his children could have actually led the girl to stray.

According to Lisa Mancini in “Fathers Absence and Effects on Daughters”, girls who have a close relationship with their fathers delay having sexual relations. Mancini argues that the father’s absence in a girl’s life may trigger a hormonal change that leads to an early onset of puberty that could engender early sexual activity (5). She contends that girls and young women without a stable father figure seem susceptible to “unplanned pregnancy, low-self esteem, dropping out of high school and college. As adults, they are more likely to experience poverty and divorce, and engage in promiscuity” (5). This argument seems to encapsulate Rigia’s life. Rigia has a poor father – daughter relationship that might have caused her to seek attention from men at a tender age consequently falling pregnant. Worse still, lack of understanding from her father makes it impossible for her to stay at home with her baby. She ends up on the streets eventually working as a prostitute thus corroborating Mancini’s argument of promiscuity for girls “without” fathers. She had earlier on dropped out of school due to teenage pregnancy consequently curtailing her chances of a bright future. From the above account of father and daughter, it can be deduced that Magu senior’s behaviour contributes to the daughter’s unfortunate plight.

Mancini further postulates that the father’s absence may result in adverse emotional effects of hurt and hate on their girls (24). Ogola’s portrayal of Rigia’s sister’s
character conforms to that observation. This girl finds Magu senior’s domineering and highhanded nature in the management of their family affairs quite repugnant and devises a way of going round it. She adopts mental withdrawal from the father as a coping mechanism so as to protect herself from the old man’s destructive nature. She keeps to herself and later as a mother refuses to name her male child after Magu senior according to the dictates of the Kikuyu culture. This is proof enough that there is no love lost between them. She openly displays hard feelings against the old man many years after her childhood. This is an indication of the psychological scars carried from her childhood as inflicted upon her by her own father. Mancini’s observations raise pertinent issues regarding the role of fathers in the lives of their children. In this study the argument is that Magu senior handles his children defectively out of ignorance of his importance in their development. Had he been aware of the dividends of positive parenting, he would have behaved differently to the benefit of the entire family.

Jeffrey Rosenberg and Wilcox Bradford in “The Importance of Fathers in the Healthy Development of Children” are of the opinion that helping men understand the “invaluable” even “irreplaceable” role they play in the healthy development of their children may motivate them to make a greater commitment and investment in their families. As it is, most fathers consider themselves only “supplementary hands” in the raising of their children. They do not consider their presence much needed, hence, they tend to leave the burden of raising kids to their women as was the case with Magu Senior. These women sometimes are in agreement with the false notion thus unknowingly become accomplices in the big crime that is curtailing children’s healthy development as they downplay the importance of a father-figure in a child’s life. The end result of this
practice is many socially unsteady children and adults. This in turn leads to dysfunctional families and societies as mankind finds it difficult to cope with the pressures of life. Consequently, these psychologically unsteady people have ended up harming themselves and those around them. The implication of this is that the absence of a father-figure in homes is a health hazard.

The US 2006 Health and Human Report points out that “fathers involved in raising their kids help them learn assertiveness, independence, self-confidence and social skills” (qtd. in Morgan 1). The report concludes that a healthy father-child relationship also helps the young ones to learn how to regulate their emotions and behaviours. Thus, it therefore follows that the absence of a father-figure in children’s lives is detrimental to their development. On the other hand, “children who grow up with involved fathers are more comfortable exploring the world around them and are more likely to exhibit self-control and pro-social behaviour” (Rosenberg and Bradford).

Rachel Morgan in “The Importance of Fathers in Raising of Children” asserts that the father’s presence in the lives of their children helps them develop intellectually, emotionally and socially (1). In Place of Destiny, Magu senior’s poor relationship with his son amounts to child abuse since he resorts to taunting the boy, subjecting him to psychological torture. The result of all this is a boy who thinks very lowly of himself as he confesses: “I suffered from very low self esteem and did not do too well at school” (182). This poor performance at school corroborates Morgan’s argument above and is also directly linked to the existing father-son relationship. It is highly likely that the boy lacked concentration at school as his mind was constantly preoccupied with thoughts about the ill treatment he received at home at the expense of acquiring knowledge as
dispensed by the teacher. Yet all this is simply engendered by the old man’s embrace of retrogressive masculinity which he thought was lacking in his son’s character; as relayed by the narrator:

The youngest was a fifteen-year-old boy who suffered grimly and silently because his father considered him not only a born loser, but also effeminate because he did not display such admirable and enviable male attributes as uncalled-for aggression, total selfishness, disregard for other people’s feelings and untrammeled acquisitiveness. He was the butt of his father’s every joke. (12)

Magu Senior’s domineering nature as a father is depicted through his interference with his children’s personal lives. He is overbearing towards his children and feels that he alone knows what is right for them. The children, boys or girls, cannot make choices even in a matter as personal as the picking of a life partner without his interference. He throws out the man that made her daughter pregnant and later picks quarrels with his daughter-in-law causing her to humiliate his son. This man cannot trust Magu junior to run the affairs of his family. He therefore makes it his business to intervene in a matter as trivial as division of toys between Magu junior’s two sons. This fact that sees him pick a quarrel with the children’s mother who gets so incensed at the turn of events eventually resorting to end her relationship with Magu junior.

Magu Senior is also uncultured since he adores money and thinks that because he is affluent he does not have to subscribe to cultural norms. This is because in traditional African societies it is a taboo for a father-in-law to confront and worse still, act impertinently towards a daughter-in-law. Such an act would attract huge fines for
sacrifices in a bid to pacify the spirits and keep off a bad omen befalling the family as punishment from defying tradition. As a result of the altercation with her father-in-law, Magu junior’s wife then decides to walk out of the marriage with the young ones after informing the father and the son of the latter’s inability to sire children. Her departure leaves the young man feeling exposed and even useless. Out of disillusionment following his wife’s departure and the accompanying embarrassment arising from the discovery of his impotence, he resorts to drowning his misery in tobacco smoking. He then contracts cancer and seeks treatment while awaiting his imminent death.

Magu Senior belatedly discovers that his earlier ardent pursuit of masculinity was a futile exercise. His adopted lifestyle did not enable him to lead a fulfilling life. Instead it only created in him feelings of inadequacy with every step towards masculinity. He thus resigns from living up to masculinity and like his son resorts to smoking ‘like a chimney’ to ease life’s tensions. Were observes that most men failing to cope with set standards of masculinity resort to health impairing activities like drinking and smoking tobacco to “ease tension and discomfort” (126). Ogola’s construction of Magu junior’s character fits in well with Were’s observations. Ogola’s and Were’s explanations can be projected to the Kenyan case where in the month of September 2011, the Kenyan media was inundated with stories of men dying from drinking illicit alcohol in parts of central Kenya; Nyahururu and Nanyuki towns. The disheartening fact was that more and more men continued wallowing in this self-destructive practice despite government initiatives to prevent them from consuming the poisonous substance.

In adoption of Were’s perspective above, this study holds the opinion that the drinking adopted by the young men is in essence a display of symptoms of a larger
societal problem. Hence concentrating on solving the drinking issue per se, passing legislation on designated drinking hours as in the Kenyan case of the “Mututho Laws”, however noble, remains a wrong approach. The better course of action is essentially a re-examination of societal structures that perpetuate long established forms of male socialization that are counterproductive and “lay down the extremely heavy physical and psychological burdens the present pattern of sex roles imposes on men” (Hoch 22).

These structures include family, learning and religious institutions, media, sports and work places. The issue of conventional male socialization to espouse repressive masculinity is essentially a universal problem that will require a multidisciplinary approach, to at least, ease the burden of “manliness”. There is need to help men unlearn earlier learned notions of being “men” and re-educate them afresh on how to be men, since this learned ways are rendering men socially unfit. In her portrayal of both Magu senior and junior, Ogola echoes that fact. Magu ends up as an unhappy adult having led an unhappy childhood, courtesy of a poor father-son relationship.

Just like Magu senior, Napoleon in I Swear by Apollo is an absent father in the life of his child. He is irresponsible and reckless enough to so casually mention the fact that his wife left together with their child. He too believes that men are not nurturers to their children as that is considered the prerogative of mothers; a fact that makes him live comfortably with vague knowledge of his child’s whereabouts. He is a failure for he is unable to rescue his marriage. Worse still, he does not even try to obtain custody of his child. Instead, he happily reports these nauseating facts to his would be in-laws, the Sigu’s. From the narrator’s attitude, it is clear that the author abhors this idea of absent
fathers and observes that “While his friends were hassling around for school fees, some idiot was raising his son for him while he enjoyed life!” (226).

The narrator uses the words “hassling around for school fees” to insinuate that raising a child is an onerous task involving hard work and sacrifice. This explains why some people normally make big sacrifices for their children’s sake. The narrator’s description of Napoleon shows the author’s loathing for anybody called a father who gives up the responsibility of raising his child without his conscience being pricked. The point here is that men should sire children knowing that they will engage in a full time job of looking after them from which they only take leave upon death or maturity of the same children.

This same absence by men in the lives of their children is embraced by Karimi’s husband in Place of Destiny. Karimi’s husband threw her out of the home, together with the son, compelling her to seek work as a house help so as to nurture her boy. Luckily, she ends up with the Mwagheras who assist her to see her only son through education. The boy ends up successfully in his career.

Ogola’s portrayal of Karimi’s husband is reminiscent of the many fathers, as reported in the media and society in general, who abandon their children at critical stages of their development. These run-away fathers then resurface and claim parentage once the same children have beaten all odds to end up as respectable persons in society. It is then that these shameless men drag paternity establishment cases to courts subjecting the very children to DNA tests so as to partake of their children’s newly found fame and success. What these men forget is the untold suffering and the general state of lack experienced by their keen as they adopted a happy-go lucky attitude of abandoning them.
Ogola’s portrayal of the Lebulus (*I Swear by Apollo*) of this world is a stern condemnation of absentee fathers. The message being: once a father one should go ahead and take full responsibility of raising their child as only then will they be worthy of any respect from society.

Ogola contends that fatherhood has little to do with the biological siring of young ones but everything to do with taking care of children by being involved in their lives materially, physically and emotionally. Ogola applauds these sacrificing fathers. The author only tolerates absent fathers when it is proven beyond reasonable doubt that they are deceased and interred.

### 2.4.2 Men in the Family as Husbands

In most traditional African societies, a husband is considered as the head of the family and is bestowed with the responsibility of directing his family in charting a way forward for their economic and social development. Ifi Amadiume in *Male Daughters Female Husbands* points out that as husbands men were expected to provide for and protect their families (93). With this enviable position also rested inherent privileges like service from their wives and children. For instance, the Nnobi of Nigeria training of their girls in readiness for womanhood included teaching them how to cook for and treat their husbands with respect (Amadiume 96). Hence the position of a husband was very powerful and respected in society.

Unfortunately, as husbands, men who subscribe to hegemonic masculinity are cruel to their wives. They treat them as objects as opposed to human beings with a mind and feelings. To these men, a woman is supposed to be seen and not heard and is regarded as part and parcel of the property owned by the man she was married to. This
they do in a bid to exert authority over them so as to try and reclaim their otherwise threatened masculinity. This character of men is exemplified by the predisposition of Otieno Kembo in the *The River and the Source*. Otieno has no regard for his wives. According to the narrator, “Otieno treated his wives like sluts” (43). He thus keeps on marrying more women who, unfortunately, he does not satisfy. This forces others to leave. The narrator says that he “was a weak man who seemed to have a knack for marrying one shiftless wife after another” (43). It seems Otieno’s only work is just to make them pregnant.

In *Place of Destiny*, this cruelty of husbands is embodied in the character of Magu senior. Magu senior treats his wife vituperatively. She cannot make any decision in the home; the man’s verdict is final no matter how wrong it may be. The narrator informs us that he wielded all the power in the home. This leads to the children encountering difficulties. With regard to Magu’s handling of his daughter’s early pregnancy, the narrator argues: “perhaps 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” (11). Magu Senior’s wife, however, becomes incapacitated and unable to protect her daughter Rigia from the father’s viciousness because Magu senior wielded all the power in the home.

Rigia’s parents’ handling of her pregnancy literally sends her to her grave leaving their grandchild to suffer in the world without any one to look after him. Mrs Magu senior is almost like a slave in her marital home with the husband as his master as opposed to a companion. She is powerless and looks on helplessly as her husband sleeps around. The man is sexually immoral and it does not matter to him that the wife is aware of his wayward ways. He sleeps around with impunity and does not expect the wife to
question his behaviour. Magu Senior is also avaricious; he worships money. He is the
sole bread winner; going out to make money as his wife stays at home to look after
children. She therefore has no direct control of expenditure and can only afford to
“squeeze” a small amount of money into her daughter’s hands as she leaves the
unbearable home to an unknown destination. Had she been an equal partner to the
husband’s wealth she would have given her daughter a handsome amount of money since
the husband had it any way. But as it were, she had very little to control and it is from
that meager amount that she takes some and hands it to her daughter.

It is incongruous that a man of Magu senior’s standing should have his grandson
exist as a street urchin. Hence the author is ridiculing such folly from the affluent since it
is taken for granted that the streets belong to the destitute. Through Ogola’s depiction of
the Magu – Rigia scenario, it can be argued that the author’s statement here is that wealth
without peace and happiness could as well amount to, or be worse than, the misery
experienced on the streets. The negative portrayals of men above critique a certain aspect
of male socialization and are an urgent call to society to reconsider its stand on
masculinity.

2.4.3 Men as General Adults

Were is categorical that an adult man is one who has physical, sexual, emotional
and psychological maturity that allows him to exercise self control and to interact with
those in his life in a “predominantly constructive manner” (27). Were further elaborates
that there is a distinction in the conduct of empowered and disempowered men an opinion
that resonates well with Ogola’s portrayal of traditionally socialized men.
As adult men inclined towards traditional male socialization, men are portrayed as being aggressive and inclined towards committing crime. In *I Swear by Apollo*, Johnny, while in the Mara for his honeymoon, encounters drug peddlers whom he chooses to pursue to his own detriment. Upon realizing that they were being pursued, the peddlers ambushed him and brutalized him leaving him for dead as relayed by the narrator: “Why are you following us eh? Pumbavu!” With that the short powerful man gave him a mighty kick in the loin. Johnny was sure that the kick had ruptured his kidney” (274).

These men were law breakers who were also ready to kill anyone who would stand in their way while committing crime. These criminals are eventually hunted down by authorities and made accountable for their deeds. A clear statement from the author, denouncing violence and criminal activity amongst men.

Men are also presented as pretentious as depicted through the character of Napoleon Lebulu, Alicia’s man friend who is unreasonable and thinks that it is fashionable to flaunt one’s wealth and knowledge to impress a girl when in reality it is obnoxious. According to Were, men with low self-esteem and who are experiencing inferiority complex tend to want to make up for their feelings of inadequacy by resorting to bragging to inflate their otherwise deflated egos (141). Unfortunately their actions only expose them more while evoking negative feelings from those around them. This observation explains Ogola’s portrayal of Lebulu of whom the narrator says: “He was having a great time trying to impress his possible future mother and father-in-law” (228). Such behaviour instead, dumbfounded the in-laws who definitely saw through his inadequacy and then strengthened their resolve to ensure this “cheap” man did not end up with their daughter for a wife. And as fate would have it, a call made to Sybil unraveled
Alicia’s relationship problems following frustrations from not being able to reach the love of her heart – Brett. Consequently the two love birds were united. The in-laws were overjoyed at the break of Lebulu’s relationship with their daughter.

Men have equally been portrayed as unprofessional, corrupt and irresponsible. This is depicted by the character of Dr Gara, Johnny’s lecturer In *I Swear by Apollo*. This man values money more than the lives of his patients, to Johnny’s annoyance. His love for money has enabled him to amass quite some wealth as evidenced by the kind of car he drives and the house he lives in. According to Wandia, it would take a ten years monthly salary of two honest doctors to acquire the kind of property Dr. Gara had obtained despite his youth. He is described as “a young, rather unscrupulous physician” (65). It is said that he was known for his greed and therefore was full of himself even where other peoples’ lives were at risk and needed to be saved.

Were is of the opinion that factors like colonization helped infuse corruption into the definition of masculinity as African men were made to believe that only they should be at the helm (93). Thus, they would use whatever means to achieve that end no matter how unorthodox the means may be. Like Dr Gara, Napoleon in *I Swear by Apollo* is found in the category of professionally irresponsible men and is described as a person performing a “nondescript job in a nondescript manner” (225).

Conrad, Lanoi’s boss, in *Place of Destiny* also belongs to the same bandwagon of unprofessional men. He wants to sleep with his junior; Lanoi, as part of her job description thus practicing sexual harassment at work. Conrad, Lanoi’s boss is overbearing and expects women to recognise him and hang around him. He has objectified women and sees them as mere play toys. Sex to him is purely for gratification
and can be granted in the absence of love. His behaviour forces Lanoi to resign from her job. Her resignation is a terse statement to men to stop sexual harassment of ladies at the work place because it is demeaning to both the parties involved.

In *I Swear by Apollo*, the two men who, without a good reason, fight Johnnie while on his visit to Canada display “uncalled for aggressiveness” (12), espousing conventional masculinity as they use their strength to cause harm to others. They also feel prejudiced and consider Johnnie a lesser person as they choose to abuse him causing him both physical and psychological pain. Johnny, being good at Karate overpowers them to their surprise.

Men have been depicted as being lazy and shunning work; only expecting to be fended for by hard working women. This is depicted by the character of Amor’s brothers (*Place of Destiny* 19). According to the narrator, these men, with the support of their parents, hardly engaged in any meaningful work; theirs was merely looking after cattle the whole day and lazing their weekends away playing games. Unfortunately, this kind of socialization denied them the much needed experience in juggling work; a skill that is crucial to survival in life. Consequently, the two young men as adults find life unbearable, leading one to death through alcoholism at the early age of thirty. The other, having failed to fend for his family ends up a lonely man as his wives, tired of fending for him and his offspring, desert him. The author shows how both men and women or society in general contribute to the socialization that upholds conventional masculinity. However, Amor’s mother quickly corrects this by making Gala’s deserted children, both boys and girls, to embrace work.
Through Amor's brothers, men are depicted as drunkards. According to the narrator, "drinking was another all-consuming type of men's work while hanging around the market" (19). The implication here is that men idle around; engaging in no constructive activities while their wives break their backs toiling to provide for their families. At this juncture, this study maintains that drinking is a form of escapism. Men, finding the reality of providing for their families insurmountable having not been used to working hard themselves, just find it easier to stay drunk. This allows them to evade the society's scrutinizing eye on their performance as men. It is our argument that these men are glad to be dismissed as drunk and good - for - nothing and, therefore somewhat freed from societal responsibilities. As observed earlier, one of Amor's brothers dies early from drinking related complications. Ogola suggests that such drinking is detrimental to men's health. Ogola challenges too much drinking and advocates for responsible use of alcohol.

2.4.4 Boyhood Masculinities

Amadumé points out that socialization of boys among the Nnobi of Nigeria stressed among other things violence, virility, valour and authority (94). Ogola's depiction of disempowered boyhood characteristics seems to resonate with the scholar's observation.

As boys, men are depicted as being violent. In I Swear by Apollo, Johnny as a child exhibits tendencies of being aggressive at school as he fights other children. However, this can be attributed to the social and psychological problems of rejection after his parents' divorce and his mother's irresponsible sexual behaviour and her consequent lack of attention for him. According to UNICEF, vulnerable children who lack attention from caregivers can either act withdrawn or become violent to agitate for attention. It is
no wonder that when Wandia takes it upon herself to mother him, he changes and becomes exuberant and friendly.

Through the depiction of Johnny’s childhood, the author seems to suggest that parenting and family background are critical to children’s socialization and development. It is a wake-up call to parents to consider the consequences of their decisions and their subsequent effect on the persons of their children. The same concern is recurrent when Douglass and Brett become truants for lack of attention from their grief stricken mother following the death of her husband.

Boys are also depicted as having a penchant for defying authority as is depicted through the character of Aoro in *The River and the Source* who defies the prefects’ authority at school. This behaviour earns him suspension from school and lands him in problems at home as he gets at loggerheads with his father who orders him to go out of his house and begin to fend for himself. His father’s response to his wayward behaviour jerks him into sensibility. Had his parents not been keen, the character would have probably developed into an irresponsible lad as an adult but he is rescued by his father’s tough disciplinary measures.

Young men in Ogola’s works are depicted as rebellious. This behaviour stems from social and psychological problems originating from domestic issues as is displayed by Mugo’s friends in *I Swear by Apollo*. According to the narrator, one of the boys misleading Mugo came from a wealthy family. This boy, unfortunately, had problems with drugs, a habit that had put him in serious collision with school authorities, causing him to be expelled from various learning institutions. As a matter of fact, the boy was an approved - school material but only stayed in a normal school because of the parents’
influence. Given that kind of a background, we can deduce that in fact the boy had turned out to be a deviant as a result of his upbringing. The narrator further informs us that these unruly boys were “responsible to no-one” (208). We can therefore conclude that the boys turned deviant from lack of responsible parents. It appears the boys’ parents, and fathers in particular, who were supposed to be role models in their children’s lives; teaching them how to be male, had abdicated their responsibility in pursuit of wealth. The outcome is deviant boys. This supports the adage that a man’s success will be determined by the kind of family he brings up and not the money he makes.

In *I Swear by Apollo*, boys are depicted as substance abusers as exemplified by the character of Gitau, Mugo’s friend who has taken to taking drugs. It is seen as effeminate not to take drugs while one taking drugs is considered being ‘man’ enough. Young Mugo succumbs to peer pressure out of the desire to conform and not be seen as different and so decides to hang around his unkempt and unruly friends. Mugo wants to disapprove his friends who think of him as being a sissy and does it in a way that is likely to hurt his personal development by conforming to his peers’ ways of being a “boy”.

Through the Gitau - Mugo episode, the author highlights the vagaries of youth, and boys specifically; as in the recent past focus has been directed towards the girl child at the expense of boys. Thus, in many developing countries, in both urban and rural areas, boys have taken to drug abuse due to peer pressure as others drop out of school to look for easy money by engaging in child labour and other self destructive vices. Unfortunately, the plight of boys has not attracted as much attention from Government and Non Governmental organizations as that of girls.
The predicament of Mugo and company is a pointer to the problems encountered by boys and is a wake-up call to parents, guardians, governments and society at large that more attention is paid to their issues with a view of supporting them to successfully face this crucial rite of passage. This is because how one spends their precious youth is important in determining the nature of their adulthood.

Youth spent carefully easily leads to a fulfilling and enjoyable adulthood. On the other hand, a recklessly lived youth can affect one’s destiny negatively. This would normally happen to youths who get addicted to drugs and take books for granted locking themselves out of academic and business opportunities and ending up in poverty. Worse still, one may find it difficult to drop habits acquired in youth, like smoking and drinking that are a health hazard as they are thought to cause serious maladies such as cancer and various diseases of the heart. This will eventually lead to pre mature death of the youth. Aoro and Wandia, Mugo’s parents, find themselves in a challenging position not knowing how to handle the boy without alienating him further. Luckily, Tony, the boy’s uncle who is a priest came to their rescue talking him out of bad company. The author here suggests that parenting is a challenging art requiring skill.

Through the same characters (Mugo’s friends), boys are portrayed as being ill-mannered. They resort to, for example, stealing their parent’s money and sneaking out of school. The Stanley boys too display this mischief when they play truancy after the death of their father. These incidents point to one major fact – the state of one’s family is fundamental in the shaping of a child’s behaviour. It further suggests that an unstable family may lead to deviant behaviour such as aggression, delinquency and psychological disorder in children.
Adventure is also another characteristic of traditional male socialization of boys. In *The River and the Source*, Aoro and Tony, for example, take to adventure together with their younger twin brothers. They go fishing and swimming in the river; putting their lives at risk. As a matter of fact, one of the twins nearly drowns. The narrator says that in response to a desperate cry from one of the twins, Aoro and Tony “rounded the bend just in time to see Odongo’s head disappearing under water” (167). Consequently, the older boys are forced to risk their own lives by diving into the water to save their brother. Although they successfully manage to get him out of the water, the narrator mentions that it was actually by sheer luck that they succeed otherwise they could have lost him. Once again, this incident chides boys from taking too many risks in life. It would have been perfectly in order for the boys to inform their parents of their intentions and whereabouts so that proper safety arrangements would be put in place and have them enjoy the same activities without endangering their lives. This would have also saved their parents the kind of shock that sets in upon learning that they would have actually lost a child or children.

Boyhood masculinities are characterized by lack of expression of emotions. In *I Swear by Apollo*, this is seen in the character of the Maasai boy rescued by Johnny. He does not display feelings of pain as he does not cry despite being badly hurt. The narrator reports that “he had been badly mauled by a lion while herding cattle” (254). According to the narrator, “the lion had laid open the youth’s abdomen with one final swipe of its dying paw and Johnny found him with half his gut spilling out” (225). Yet, despite the magnitude of the injuries, “nobody shed a tear or wailed” (255). The narrator further clarifies that the “Maasai personality is stoic” (225).
The character of the injured boy and that of the Maasai community’s reaction to the injuries can well be understood as stemming from many years of indoctrination with the information that boys do not cry: that crying is a preserve for girls who are emotionally and physically weak. Hence in detesting being “weak” like girls, boys would rather die than do anything that would make them be seen as behaving as girls. It is common for mothers to send away their crying young boys who rush back to their laps for comfort; having fallen or having been assaulted by others, only to be rebuked for “misbehaving” by crying. The result is as that displayed by this Maasai boy: suppression of emotions.

Were is of the opinion that “patriarchy socializes men to feel awful when they do not perform to expectations” (66). He further argues that “patriarchy makes it even worse by forbidding the expression of this pain and shame in the form of tears, agony or grief” (Ibid). Thus, by denying men the luxury of ventilating their frustrations through expression of emotion, society deals men a double blow; “that of feeling like less than a man due to his failure to control his environment and the burden of being forbidden to express his pain arising from this reality” (66). Moreover, the danger of this kind of socialization, asserts Van Pelt is that one then ends up turning off emotions of love, happiness and joy. Men, therefore, do not learn to display emotions of affection either; a habit that makes it difficult for them to enjoy fulfilling relationships with women who value affection.
2.5 Emancipated Men

The premise of the study now is that while some men are guided by traditional male socialization, there are those who have defied traditional male socialization and this is exemplified in their various performance of maleness. The study seeks to challenge earlier perceptions of men as “unified” and “homogenous” in their performance of maleness by presenting alternative forms of masculinity as presented by Ogola (Ouzgane and Morrelll 7). To achieve this end, the study looks at male performance in various capacities as fathers, husbands, brothers, men in general and as boys.

2.5.1 Men as Fathers in the Family

According to Theodore F. Cohen in “Reconsidering the Economic and Nurturant Dimensions of Men as Parents”, researchers mostly “studied men almost exclusively in their more public dimensions, as if men’s familial experiences had no bearing on their daily realities” (1). Cohen is of the opinion that sociologists studying families have paid little attention to men as fathers and husbands. Marcia Lasswell and Thomas Lasswell, in *Marriage and the Family* are categorical that “most of the early research placed a heavy emphasis on the mother – child interaction – almost as though fathers were hardly in the picture” (336).

The observations above are important to this study because they corroborate the study’s argument that many scholars and society in general take too lightly the role of men in their children’s healthy development. They, thus, shun them altogether as more attention is directed towards the role of women in the family and the lives of children. These scholars have long declared the role of men in their children’s life as inconsequential. This position is vigorously contested by Ogola and in this study. The
researcher is of the opinion that contrary to perception, the role of men in the lives of children is in fact "irreplaceable". Thus the analysis of Ogola's works paid a close look at the representation of men in families with the focus on them as fathers and husbands.

As fathers embracing positive masculinities, the men in Ogola's world are depicted as being devoted to their children's welfare. According to sociologists David Olson and John Defrain in Marriages and Families, these together with their wives are adopting a cooperative model to parenting known as co-parenting (377). Olson and Defrain observe that the "traditional family roles – in which dad was the provider and mom the nurturer, dad was 'tough' and mom 'tender' – are changing (Ibid). "Co-parenting frees men to spend more time relating to, caring for and relaxing with their children and frees women to pursue outside interests" (Oslon and Defrain 377). This kind of men is also constructed by Ogola: men who show exemplary love and care for their offspring. They begrudge their children nothing as they see the children as the reasons for living. The men are portrayed as being ready to lay down their lives for the sake of their children. Once an expectant father, one prepares himself psychologically and materially to take care of their young ones from "infancy onward" (Hotter 379).

In The River and the Source, Chief Odero Gogni is a good example of a father who shows devotion and commitment to their children. Chief Odero's obsession with his daughter, Akoko, confounds many as the narrator observes: "That a man and a chief at that should even take notice of a girl-child was unusual" (13). He is so proud of her, that when suitors come to ask for her hand in marriage, he acts very choosy to an extent that the daughter begins to feel that at that rate, they were better off building her a house in the compound for she felt the father would never consider any man good enough to be
her husband. Later, when the chief finally accepts a suitor, he does not just hand over his
daughter easily but asks for thirty heads of cattle before releasing her to her husband. He
does all this to show love and value for her daughter. The high bride price ensured she
was almost revered in her marital home. To her father, she was a priced gem from her
parents and a present to in laws. She was somebody precious to be handled with utmost
care and respect.

The man is also portrayed as visionary as is exemplified by the life of Mark,
Elizabeth’s husband, who turns out to be an exceptional father to his kids. According to
the narrator “Mark had the devoted love of his wife and the affection of all his children.
He was not a hard man to love for he was fair and just; was firm but understanding and
evidently loved them all” (180). Mark cares for their unborn child. Just upon learning
that he and Elizabeth were expecting a child, he resolves to work hard so as to be able to
fend for them. The narrator observes: “A child is all he wanted and he would work his
boots off if need be to provide for them. It was time he went for some in - service training
and improve his chances of promotion” (152).

From the author’s depiction of Mark, it is evident that as a father in waiting, he
has already peered into the future, visualizing the kind of family he would like to bring
up. It does not escape his mind that bringing up a stable family will require hard work on
his part. It is from that realization that he draws the inspiration to further his studies and
improve his career and consequently his income. As a father, Mark is tormented by the
miscarriage of his first unborn child. He takes responsibility for the loss and this haunts
him. He does not give excuses. The narrator points out:
They discharged Elizabeth after five days. She lost the pregnancy on the second day of her admission but had stayed on for observation for further evidence of chloroquin poisoning – but she had none. Mark dared not to look at her – he felt so guilty but surprisingly she wasn’t angry with him. (150)

Mark here is remorseful of his actions despite everything having been done with a very good intention. He meant well by giving his wife some first aid but unfortunately, the results of his “good intentions” turned tragic. Mark’s harboring of feelings of guilt after the chloroquin incident attests to his belief that men too are capable of making mistakes: that they do not have to be perfect or to be seen to always being right.

When the children finally arrive, Mark is concerned about their welfare and gives them a good education. He says: “I have always done my best to provide for you my children. Of all the things I provide, the most important is education and so far I have been pleased with your efforts” (177). He is present in their lives as a disciplinarian and sets the house rules straight that their children must work hard at school. He lets them know that nothing comes easy. This is demonstrated when he threatens to send his son away from home to go and start fending for himself. This followed his misbehaving at school which earned him a suspension from the institution.

As a father, Mark was firm about correcting his son. It did not matter to him that Aoro was asking for leniency from him when the boy pleads: “but father I have not taken breakfast!” In response, he tells him, “Since when did you see breakfast walking in here by itself? Go out and earn yours” (178). The narrator relays that Mark “reached for his belt. Aoro grabbed his shirt and took to his heels” (178). As a father, Mark takes the responsibility of disciplining the son instead of accusing him of being a failure like his
mother, as most men usually do. Thus, while society relegated a foolish son to belong to
the mother while the clever one was identified with the father, to Mark, a “foolish son”
was his to correct. He is a role model to his children as he himself is hard working and
meets his parental responsibilities by providing guidance, shelter and paying school fees.

Through Mark’s interaction with his daughters we deduce that, as a father, he
performed much more than limiting parental responsibility to financial provision. On the
contrary, he was a nurturer as he spent time with the children. The fact that he misses
young Vera’s childhood questions and chattering is evidence that he spent time with the
children. His investment of time in his daughters pays great dividends as evidenced by
Vera’s conduct. Vera, a young woman in high school, is able to stand up to her father
and reason with him while asking for permission to go to the movies with a man. Their
ensuing conversation about the matter presents us an engagement between two equal
adults. Vera asks: “Father, Tommy asked me to go to the movies next Saturday. May I
go? I would really like to” (193). The fact that she so easily approached the father with
such a topic speaks volumes concerning the existing father-daughter relationship. She did
not even find it necessary to go through her mother. The narrator reports that while
asking for the permission “she looked at him levelly but not antagonistically – one adult
to another” (193).

According to the narrator, Mark trusted his daughter, Vera, in making sound
judgments even where matters of boy-girl relationships were concerned and was only
bothered about the repercussions his consent to the request would have on the rest of the
children in the family now that the request had been made in the full hearing of the
others. As a father, Mark knew how much he had invested in his daughter in terms of
good up-bringing and therefore had no cause to worry regarding her character even when left to go out with a man. Vera’s request to the dad before all the other family members is a display of self-confidence, most likely developed from the feeling of security owing to the kind of handling she got from her father.

According to Mancini (2010), this strong father-daughter relationship cultivates confidence in the girl, enabling her to have the courage to speak up to the dad and ask for permission to go to the movies with her boyfriend (28). Their relationship has thus made the girl assertive and able to reason with Tommy when he proposes marriage. Vera, being used and nurtured to reason with the dad, does not give in for the sake of it. Despite Tommy having good reasons to propose, Vera stands her ground and points out that she was not ready for marriage, thus breaking the relationship. Vera’s character echoes the researcher’s findings that girls with a good relationship with their fathers delay marriage and end up successful both professionally and personally. In the novel, we see Vera becoming an accomplished professional. According to Krohn and Bogan, fathers play a significant role in their daughter’s math skills (qtd. in Mancini 13). They maintain that:

Mathematics is typically associated with masculinity therefore females without father figures may have less interest in the subject matter. Female high school seniors were more likely than their male peers to say they did not take mathematics and science courses because they disliked the subject matter … females are discouraged from pursuing a career in mathematics and father absence contributes to this phenomenon by not providing them with a male role model to stimulate interest. (13)

Ogola’s depiction of Mark’s relationship with his daughters and Vera in particular is in agreement with the assertion above. This is evidenced by Vera’s
impressive academic performance. She “achieved As in Maths and Physics and a B in chemistry” (197). That sterling performance at A - level secured her an opportunity to study electrical engineering at university.

Mark, as a father, does not discriminate among his children on the basis of sex. Both boys and girls are appreciated equally and bestowed with an education according to their individual ability and there are no cases of one paving the way for the other.

As a father, he allows his children a lot of autonomy. He is not dominating or tyrannical in his dealing with them. His home is managed democratically although discipline is maintained by the establishment of certain rules like respect for elders. The children have latitude to make their choices which are respected even if they may be wrong. All this is done in a bid to build the children’s independence with just a little guidance.

Mark does not beat his children into submission. Even when Vera was making a big mistake, jeopardising her chances of a good education by forfeiting a chance at a prestigious National school so as to study with her sister in a less glamorous one, Mark still manages to refrain himself from forcing her to make the right choice. According to the narrator, “her father for the first time in his life felt like beating her into submission, but he knew it would only make her more determined” (165).

Mark’s relationship with his daughters and that of Mwaghera and his daughters in Place of Destiny greatly contrasts the kind of father- daughter relationships portrayed in other works like Tumaini (Clara Momanyi), Nervous Conditions (Tsitsi Dangarembga) Utengano (Mohamed Said Ahmed) Nyota ya Rehema (Suleiman Mohamed Suleiman) Rosa Mistika (Euphrase Kezilahabi) and Buchi Emecheta’s Bride Price. According to
Rose Lugano (2005), the above novels, written by both male and female authors portray fathers who are abusive, negligent, domineering, insensitive and unaware of their daughter’s needs (212). Ogola negates those kinds of fathers by presenting alternative fatherhood in her works.

In the same spirit, Becky decides to be an air hostess and marries a white man. Aoro takes up medicine as a career and ends up marrying a Kikuyu, while Tony goes ahead to become a priest. Vera, an engineer, opts to being a non marrying Opus Dei. All are allowed to pursue the desires of their hearts even if the parents do not fully approve of the decisions made. For instance, the narrator puts it clearly that Mark would have preferred to have both Vera and Tony lead normal lives by marrying but he accommodates their choices of having different lifestyles altogether.

Like his father before him, Aoro in I Swear by Apollo also brings up his children in the same democratic manner. He allows Alicia to make a choice on her would be husband despite the fact that she brings home an uncultured man for introduction as a suitor. In spite of the man’s behaviour, he is still treated decently in the home although it is obvious that everybody was tolerating the chap. Although the man’s behaviour called for physical and ruthless ejection from the home, he is handled decently. This is done in spite of the fact that he was most undeserving of such treatment. The Sigus understand that mishandling the man would have embarrassed their foster daughter and also infringed on the man’s right to dignity.

The author’s statement here is that parents should give their children a free hand in shaping their destiny. Parents should not be hell bent in fulfilling their unrealized
dreams in their children by compelling them to take career paths and adopting lifestyles they would never have wanted to given freedom of choice.

In The River and the Source, just like his father before him, Aoro too fully participates in the upbringing of his children. He takes equal responsibility with his wife for the kind of family he brings up. When the couple get a first child with a congenital condition, Down’s Syndrome, Aoro does not blame it on his wife. Instead he feels that he is in fact the one who has failed his wife. The narrator notes:

Aoro had tried to tell her; had promised the obstetrician that he could handle it. But words had failed him. The pain and the denial had been too great. The sense of failure was overwhelming; for he had failed; at least in his eyes. He should have been able to give her a perfect first child and he had not. (264)

The feelings of failure on Aoro’s part could be attributed to the fact that he was a doctor and knew perfectly well that no child is born without the joining of the Y and X chromosomes and so it would not occur to him to blame his wife for that would be tantamount to playing ignorant when he was a well- educated professional. Knowledge of having sired a child with Down’s Syndrome pained Aoro for a while, which is very normal for human beings. Being mortal, Aoro finds it extremely difficult to embrace the misfortune. In any case, caring for a normal child is an enormous task and nurturing one with Down’s Syndrome is even more daunting. It is no wonder that some persons, faced with such difficulties, simply opt for the easiest way out: walking out of such marriages or abandoning the children in some orphanages.

Nevertheless, Aoro’s resilience is evident when he later ( in I Swear by Apollo) overcomes the pain and just like the wife dotes on the child and to some extent the child
makes them close. As a couple, they both love and watch over Danny. Aoro enjoys being with his challenged child and does not mind taking him to his work place despite being an accomplished surgeon as opposed to secluding him in some dark corner of the home to avoid embarrassment while with distinguished colleagues, clients, friends and relatives.

The narrator explains that “at first, the patients had been rather taken aback by the short, awkwardly built youngster, with slanted eyes and half open mouth, but his father looked so unapologetic, so proud of him, but missed him when he was away at his special school” (30).

In his handling of the Danny phenomenon, Aoro defies hegemonic masculinity beliefs that men are only to be associated with the strong and perfect. He has embraced this imperfect bit of his being with a tinge of pride. By being “unapologetic”, Aoro has totally accepted his son the way he is. He does not mind what the rest of the world thinks about them. To Aoro, such thoughts are irrelevant and what matters is that Danny is his son and he loves him. By taking care of Danny, Aoro, as a father, is also a nurturer despite providing financial support for his family again disputing the popular belief that only women are nurturers. The child with Down’s Syndrome is a litmus taste to the father as to what quality of a father he is. It tests his commitment to his child and his wife. An examination he passes with distinction.

When the special child, Danny, develops health complications, Aoro struggles on his own to sort out the problems before letting his mother know about the brewing trouble. He later tells her: “I just wanted a little time to find out what it was without worrying you.” (41). This goes against hegemonic masculinity which demands that it is the work of mothers to nurture children and only inform the fathers when things seem to
be running out of hand. Even after the mother has known what the problem with the boy is, she leaves the room but the father hangs on longer in his son’s sleeping area.

In the character of Aoro, fathers are portrayed as being more understanding, magnanimous with a soft spot and likely to give in to their children’s unreasonable demands. This is a challenge to the myth that men are all tough but women are soft on children. Mark junior is aware that he can easily get his father, Aoro, to promise to buy him toys than the mother would.

Aoro manages to bring up a healthy family. The children are free and spirited, a sign that they exist in a loving and caring environment as bestowed to them by both parents, as opposed to living with a tyrannical father as such upbringing leaves children without self-confidence and sometimes becoming violent. Just like Aoro, John in *I Swear by Apollo* too is a nurturer. He makes breakfast and takes Andrea to school while his wife works at her painting.

Brett in *I Swear by Apollo* is presented as a worthy father. While discussing his wedding plans with father Tony, Brett takes time to daydream of his family to be and his relationship with them. Right from the start, he seems to have made up his mind about how he wants to bring up his children. He is committed to them even before their conception. He contemplates:

But yes. Now that he had met the love of his life he wanted children. Of her. He wanted precisely to be the father of her children. He wanted to wrestle on the sitting room floor with her sons and bury his face in the sweet softness of her little girl’s body. All born of his love for her. Yes, how he wanted children! (235)
His commitment to his unborn children goes beyond financial provision to include nurturing and emotional involvement. He vows to himself to perform excellently as a father. He says, “I will protect them with my life. I will love them and give them a good life” (235).

Olson and Defrain define a responsible father as one who “waits to have children until he is prepared to support the children financially and emotionally; he establishes legal paternity and actively provides physical and emotional care for the children, as well as financial support, in cooperation with the mother” (380). Ogola’s construct of Brett’s character conforms to Olson and Defrain’s definition above of a good father.

In *Place of Destiny*, George Mwaghera is available as a father in his children’s lives. When it becomes apparent that Pala, their child, with mild cerebral palsy cannot survive in a normal school owing to the bullying from his schoolmates, it is his father, a professor in history that offers to home-school the boy. His love and care for the child allows him time off his busy schedule, that involves lecturing abroad, to find time to home school his son. This is clear evidence of high level of commitment from a parent, who owing to his academic achievements would have very easily afforded a good teacher for the boy at home; but chooses to carry out the noble duty by himself. This probably was motivated by his desire not to risk his son’s life in the hands of anyone apart from himself.

Mwaghera is an exceptional father to his children. He provides for them and dots on their last born daughter to the point of spoiling her. He loves and respects his eldest daughter, Imani, and is proud of the fact that she made a man of him. His other daughter, Hawi, almost adores him and would like to study history like him more from admiration.
than anything else. She says; “I even want to study history when I grow up and of course I’ll marry someone exactly like Daddy” (55). While a child’s love for its mother is almost taken for granted, that of a father is earned. Thus, for Mwaghera to have earned such admiration from his daughter, he must have been such a first-class father.

Agan Limbe, Mago Igana’s father, acted conscientiously right from that early age of 17 when he realized that he had made a girl pregnant. He readily shows up at her home, cognizant of the girl’s father’s disposition, for he was ready to face the consequences of his actions no matter what. He goes against all odds and tries to reach out to the girl’s father but he could not allow him. Instead, Rigia’s father sends workers to forcibly evict him from his home. However, Agan Limbe’s conscience was alert, prompting him to later on in life look for the girl. Unfortunately, he could not trace her. When much later the son tries to contact him, he jumps at the opportunity to meet his child and is ecstatic about the reunion. He even requests the son to take up his surname; a sign of total acceptance.

The author’s message advanced through the character of Agan Limbe, Igana’s father, to men, both young and old, who lure girls and women into having sexual relations with them and later jump ship when these fall pregnant, leaving the business of fending for their children entirely to their mothers, is that they need to reconsider their stance. These men are reminded to bear responsibility for their actions. Ogola urges such men to come out strongly and face the consequences of their deeds by standing by their girl friends’ side when they need them most. That positive response from such men will ensure social, psychological and material well being of both mother and child as opposed
to abandoning the two while subjecting them to untold suffering as was the case with Rigia and her son.

Mago Igana too becomes a wonderful father to his daughter Amor. He cares so much about her. He is tormented by the thought of being summoned to appear home to attend to her injuries.

In *I Swear by Apollo*, Johnny too becomes overly committed to his heir, John III. As the narrator says: “But Johnny was by then the father of a little person by the name of John III who demanded all his free moments” (282).

Thus, from the above exposition, it can be argued that the kinds of men depicted by Ogola are radically different from those portrayed by other writers like Emecheta and Nwapa. In her representation of men, Ogola offers “alternative, egalitarian / peaceful visions of masculinity” (Ouzgane and Morrell 11).

Ogola’s representation of men is an acknowledgement and a standing ovation to the numerous men who make invaluable contribution to the shaping of their children’s lives. David Knox and Caroline Schacht in *Marriage and the Family*, lament that men have been victims of abusive stereotyping that has implications for their family life. These scholars posit that men, particularly fathers have been presented by the media as “buffoons” whose only involvement was to bring home a paycheck or present weekly allowances (49). Such a view, Knox and Schacht observe, suggests that men are not emotional, nurturing caretakers for their children. Ogola’s construction of the father character has challenged this traditional perception of men as identified by Knox and Schacht.
2.5.2 Men as Husbands.

The consistent pattern presented here is that of a loving and caring man: one that compliments his wife's efforts in the upbringing of children. A husband in Ogola's world is a best friend and a life companion. In *The River and the Source*, Owuor Kembo, Akoko's suitor, "was a man of style a man of Nyadhi, and also a handsome man" (16). He clearly loved and appreciated his wife and was reluctant to take on a second wife despite his wife's slow rate of production. He recognized her intelligence and enjoyed listening to her talk. He had confounded many by failing to beat his wife. He was good to his wife and her family and had conducted himself honorably among his in-laws. He treated the wife as a friend and lived with her in peace. He is not a contentious man; he is considerate and when his wife experiences difficulty while delivering their third child, he earnestly wishes there would be no more births. He empathizes with the wife because of the difficult birth processes she has to undergo; he is aware of the pain and suffering she has to face. He is cognizant of the fact that he is almost directly responsible for the torture experienced by his wife. For those reasons, he shielded his wife from criticisms from his kin. The narrator relays that “he protected his family thus; ...with the father standing resolutely with his little band that everyone so longed to expand” (42).

Owuor Kembo guards his wife from mean in-laws. When, in his absence, his mother had put pressure on the wife for not bearing many children and accused her of having bewitched his son, making it impossible for him to take on another wife who could give him more children, Akoko did not take the accusations lightly. She decided to take off to her people in protest. Owuor Kembo, on returning, was very upset with his mother and brother and warned them never again to interfere with his marriage. The same
case is witnessed when Mark’s mother accuses Elizabeth of not being able to give birth oblivious of her earlier miscarriage; and when she is unhappy with Elizabeth for relocating to her mother’s place in Aluor to go teach there during the state of emergency, Mark clearly asks his mother to leave them alone.

This representation of husbands by Ogola is an appreciation of men who protect their wives from undeserved criticism by their relatives making it easy for them to exist in their midst as opposed to cheering the in-laws as they bully their wives or acting helpless and therefore perpetuating retrogressive cultures that discriminate against women. In traditional African society, these cultures include practices like turning young married women into work machines in their marital homes. Such women are expected to wake up at cock crow and bend their backs tilling their in-laws’ land as well as fetch water, firewood, collect vegetables and cook for large families as other members watch or only perform very simple chores at will. These young women hardly enjoy the luxury of resting but are expected to perform one task after another as though they are robots and not human beings. These cultures dictate that young married women be enslaved in their marital homes.

According to Ogola, when husbands make it clear to all to respect and give their wives space, they protect them from such harassment as enshrined in negative traditions. The portrayal of male characters as defenders of their wives is a direct appeal to men to stand by their wives in marriage, especially where the latter have done nothing wrong but only happen to be on the wrong side of tradition. Such practice, Ogola argues would help change the culture of viewing women and wives as intruders to the families they marry into and definite punching bags for all and sundry that feel like flexing their muscles.
Owuor Kembo, Akoko’s husband, is portrayed as being very supportive of her and respects and loves her. He is contented with her beauty and he refuses to take on another wife. Ogola here shows us what a marriage should be: men and women ought to relate with respect for one another; treat each other as equal human beings and complement one another. Owuor, for example, cherishes this kind of life: he always seeks his wife’s advice on many matters despite being a chief. Akoko in mourning him reckons that men lived with their wives as cats but he had lived with her as a friend despite tradition dictating otherwise. It is no wonder as she lay very old on her death bed she reminisces:

Her thoughts now frequently dwelt on her late husband, dead these thirty years. He had been an extraordinary man; even though she had never appreciated just how extraordinary he was when he lived. He had been a man with no complexity and as often happens with those whose souls have perfect simplicity he had lived an extraordinary life without in any way appearing to do anything that appeared out of the ordinary. What monumental courage he must have had and how that courage had influenced and formed his young bride! What might she not have given to have him beside her as she walked these last faltering steps of her life? (133)

Mark, Elizabeth’s husband, equally loves his wife. It is out of his earnest love and care for her that he gets alarmed on the realisation that his newly wedded wife, Elizabeth, was experiencing nausea and dizziness. He hurries to find out what the matter was and offers to take her to hospital. He goes ahead and prepares her breakfast. He says: “I’d better take you to the dispensary” (149). The narrator reports that “he hurriedly made breakfast as she rested in the chair” (149). Mark is a firm believer in family and jealously
protects them from friends who would actually consider his actions unmanly. The narrator relays the various ways in which Mark treated his wife considerately:

He did things for Elizabeth that would never have even crossed the mind of a full blooded African man - with a low opinion of women bred into him. Mark took to helping her around the house – especially in taking the children off her hands. His friends derided this for a while but when he proved adamant, they gave him up as a lost cause. (163)

Mark’s intense love for his wife was so exceptional that the narrator says he could hardly exist after the demise of Elizabeth. Mark followed her within a year; for as the narrator puts it “she after all had been his life” (287). Mark’s life was intertwined with his wife’s such that they literally became one. So much so, that the man could hardly exist in his wife’s absence.

Apart from being portrayed as loving, the man is portrayed as honest and even remorseful for wrong actions. This is depicted through Mark Sigu who shows remorse and is apologetic for his conduct having allowed himself to get involved in extra marital affair when he sent his wife upcountry. Accordingly, upon realizing how low he had sunk, he remembered how beautiful his wife was and what lovely children he had. He wept for himself and for them. He could not understand his action as “he had never been a promiscuous man even before marriage” (159). He, thus, does not behave like a “total man” and has an earnest self evaluation communing with the self and realizing and admitting to himself that what he had done was indeed wrong; and repenting by shedding
tears and resorting to turn a new leaf. With that, he immediately travels upcountry to his family and gets reunited: they move back to town.

The same love is lavished on Becky in *I Swear by Apollo* as her husband John Courtney is said to have “loved her more than one should love another human being: with his entire being” (95). John was committed to Becky entirely. Unfortunately, Becky seemed dissatisfied with his love and still sought other men. She must have been very difficult to please. John was, thus, compelled to seek divorce following Becky’s unfaithfulness. Even then, Courtney says it was because there were many men insinuating that he would have probably forgiven her if there had only been one man involved. The author ensures that Courtney has strong grounds for divorce; showing that the man had really been pushed to the wall by his wife’s waywardness. Otherwise, John was a good husband and father as evidenced by the fact that his son missed him.

In *Place of Destiny*, George Mwaghera makes an excellent husband to Amor Lore. His commitment to her allows him to pamper her while allowing her time to be her own person. Mwaghera’s commitment, closeness, and sensitivity to his wife and family are palpable. He is so much aware of their routine and operation as a family that when the wife calls him, while he is on a trip abroad, he senses that something must be terribly wrong that his strong willed wife is unable to fool him. His conviction of the fact is so strong that he cancels his trip to attend to family. And he is not wrong, indeed something was dreadfully wrong: his dear wife was facing imminent death having been diagnosed as suffering from cancer and therefore needed him beside her as she faced this defining moment of her life. Mwaghera, as a husband, does not disappoint but goes ahead to do the needful. He walked with his wife through this difficulty. He put his family before
work. He is there for her and even manages time off his professorial duties to accompany her to the hospice weekly upon learning that Amor was suffering from cancer as is noted by his son Pala who says: “these days Daddy goes with Mama to the hospice at least once a week …” (102). This walking of Amor to the hospice is symbolic of the company Mwaghera gives his wife in her sickness and time of need. At a higher level, it is symbolic of the company and support Mwaghera has accorded his wife throughout their married life.

The relationship between the Mwagheras is of high quality; filled with love and romance. This is evidence that the couple did not take each other for granted but deeply enjoyed each other’s union. This marriage is fulfilling to both parties as each exuded maturity. This is demonstrated by the freedom availed for one to pursue their individual interests. This kind of autonomy ensured that none of the parties was ‘killed’ for the marriage to appear to thrive. Contrarily, the marriage flourished with the two spirits making it quite vibrant and alive. Later, Amor, sick and facing imminent death, speaks of how she finds solace in her husband’s company and of their fulfilling marriage life:

Mwaghera opens his arms wordlessly and I go to him. I allow myself the momentary solace of resting completely in his love. When I lift my face from the restful nook in his shoulder, I’m not surprised that it is wet. I recognize even more poignantly than before that I have been fortunate to possess the love of such a man as this. We have both worked hard to create a life that is mutually enriching and an environment favourable to personal growth.
Everyone is both allowed and encouraged to reach for the sky—wherever they imagine that sky to be. (43)

Going by the words of his wife, the man loved her and the woman reckoned that she was loved. She was contented. She, however, does not take her husband’s love for granted but considers it good luck on her side to have partnered with such a man probably cognizant of the fate of her many sisters who are not only locked up in loveless unions but who have to put up with wife barterers as husbands. As for Mwaghera, his love for his wife is so intense that the thought of her imminent demise leaves him devastated. Amor notes:

With that he falls to his knees beside the bed and buries his face in the pillow. Terrible heaving sobs rack his body and I know that no pain I could possibly suffer would ever compare with the agony that were in store for him standing by- watching me die. And there is nothing I can do about it. There is no pain reliever for heartbreak. (45)

Just like his father, Mark. Aoro in I Swear by Apollo turns out to be a wonderful husband to Wandia. Aoro, as a husband, supports Wandia and accepts to be left behind looking after children as his wife pursues higher education. He does not feel intimidated by his wife’s pursuits. Both of them are delighted with Wandia’s achievement. Mark does not advance unhealthy competition with the wife or even try to stifle her efforts. On the contrary, he encourages her to pursue further education and appreciates her achievement. His wife is contented with him in her life. Theirs is a life full of romance despite the coming of children. The narrator points out: “Wandia finally came down and sat in her
favourite place - within the crook of his arm, which, she had said was the only place in the whole world where she felt completely safe. Their children laughingly called it mummy’s space” (39). As a husband, Aoro admits that he too needed the approval of his wife’s respect to feel a man. He needs her approval to build his image as the narrator relays: “It also did wonders to his self image - which generally at least doubled in size while the sessions lasted” (39).

Later after her graduation with a PhD in medicine, and in appreciation of the person that is her husband, Wandia terms Aoro as her greatest blessing and attributes her success to his support. As is evident in their ensuing conversation, Aoro congratulates her for her achievement, “You surely earned it, my girl” (281). Wandia, however, quickly acknowledges the support Aoro accorded her. She confesses, “Only with your help” (281). The narrator elaborates on Aoro’s support for the wife when she says:

Without his constant encouragement, she would have faltered and maybe even given up. She knew that she was lucky to have him. He was big hearted and full of self confidence and begrudged her nothing. He had chosen one way and she had chosen another and each enjoyed what they did- he the cut throat world of private practice and she the equally competitive world of academic medicine. They had a good marriage, lovely children and professional satisfaction. It was a good life. (281)

Aoro is monogamous and faithful to his wife: a pillar of her strength. This should explain Wandia’s assertion that Aoro was her best blessing. In his relationship to Wandia, Aoro handles her lovingly as evidenced by his frequent use of endearing words like
sweetheart and honey while referring to his wife. In *Place of Destiny*, Igana too uses the same words while addressing his wife Imani.

Aoro’s superb handling of his wife, Wandia, could have been influenced by his upbringing. Rosenberg and Bradford observe that “fathers who treat the mothers of their children with respect and deal with conflict within the relationship in an adult and appropriate manner are more likely to have boys who understand how they are to treat women”. The author’s portrayal of Aoro and Wandia in *I Swear by Apollo* and that of his father, Mark’s handling of Elizabeth in *The River and the Source* resonates well with Rosenberg and Bradford’s observation.

As husbands, the men are constructed as having triumphed over traditional forms of masculinity as these take to openly displaying their emotions before their wives. Mwaghera, in *Place of Destiny*, weeps at the reality of his wife’s imminent demise after she was diagnosed as suffering from cancer. His wife, Amor, elaborates, “terrible heaving sobs rack his body and I know that no pain I could possibly suffer would ever compare with the agonies that were in store for him standing by-watching me die (45).

In *I swear by Apollo*, John Courtney weeps upon reading a letter from Wandia, informing him of his African children’s whereabouts. According to the narrator, the information in the letter stirs strong emotions in him as revealed in the words, “but when he read her second letter, John felt so deep a sorrow that he wept, with a terrible heaving sound- the way men who have never found easy recourse in tears, weep” (99). Hence, when Sybil takes the letter that caused him pain, he hands it over without resistance: a sign of surrender and openness to his wife. This kind of openness enhances his relationship with Sybil. Crying here is not an indicator of weakness but is therapeutic and
reenergizing leaving one strong to fight another battle after ventilation of feelings of disappointment.

In the crafting of the characters of Mwaghera, John, Igana and Aoro, the author has modified, “conventional understandings of men and masculinities by offering different images, roles and different options for men” (Ouzgane and Morrell 11). According to Kivai’s criticism of Half of a Yellow sun by Adichie, the men are sexually irresponsible (76). This is something that Ogola greatly contests in her novels by depicting largely upright men. This study concurs with Khainga J. Ndonji that a good number of writers have often depicted a world without a fair representation of men (76). Men are not the heartless people we have been convinced they are. In her construction of male characters, Ogola has made a step towards correcting the bias.

The male character in Ogola’s world does not feel intimidated to receive financial support from the wife. They work together to build a family. This is exemplified in the life of Johnny and Kandake in I Swear by Apollo. Kandake had long established herself in her career and had her own car before their marriage. The narrator reports that Kandake, “had been appointed an attache to Kenya’s Ambassador to Korea” (253). Hence, for Johnny to have married her, he must have been at peace with the fact that the girl had more money than him. Mwaghera, In Place of Destiny, too lives with a moneyed woman and this does not cause misunderstanding between them.

As a husband, the male character recognizes his wife as an equal partner in the business or raising children even disciplining them. He does not feel ashamed to seek her advice. This is evident in The River and the Source, when Vera asks to go to the films with Tommy Muhambe, and Mark openly tells her that he will confer with the mother
before making a decision. He does not want to look the “know it all” but admits that some situations require the intervention of one’s partner to solve.

The male character through the construct of Mwaghera in *Place of Destiny* is portrayed as a man of controlled anger. Once when his wife threw a kettle of hot tea at him during a domestic quarrel, he simply shrugged his shoulders and walked away (28). He is capable of perseverance and withstands the wife’s unrealistic nature. Despite their troubled marriage, he does not consider quitting or resort to the comfort of a mistress as Amor reminisces: “It, however, never occurred to us to leave each other, so we eventually decided to stop fighting un-winnable battles and give each other some breathing space” (29). He is gentle and tender hearted (30), as opposed to being rough and ruthless with his wife and children. Mwaghera cares for his wife and gets solicitous upon discovering the wife’s debilitating disease. He walks up to her with a tray of food. He acts tenderly towards his ailing wife (45).

Through the character of Mwaghera, men are portrayed as having the ability to genuinely mourn their dead wives. They are humane as opposed to being the happy-go-lucky creatures without feelings and impervious to emotions of deep loss especially where it concerns their loved ones. Mwaghera mourns Amor for a very long time – five years- showing how much he had loved her. This counters the stereotype that men are nymphomaniacs who are always in more than one relationship at any one given time, hence were such an eventuality to take place, they would not feel so sad but would just turn to the other existing partner and no love would be lost; that instead of mourning, they would have actually identified another sexual partner by burial time.
Ogola’s portrayal of the male character proves that men too suffer a deep loss upon the demise of their wives. The writer’s portrayal of the suffering, loneliness and general struggle experienced by Mwaghera upon his wife’s death is a wake-up call to society to reconsider the plight of widowers. That society should come up with support groups for widowers to help them surmount their psychological turmoil. The assumption has always been that it is quite easy for men to get over the death of their wives, marry and get on with life. On the contrary, widowers like widows face emotional turbulence and destabilization and are in need of support. This text shows that it is just as painful for a man to lose his wife as it is for a woman to lose a husband and that society should soften its stance on handling of widowers.

Marriage relationships contracted in Ogola’s novels are distinctive from the ones presented in Marjorie oludhe’s *Coming to Birth* and *Homing in*. These, observes Abungu, “offer least reciprocity” (13). Marriage relationships presented by Ogola are equally a great improvement from the ones depicted by Flora Nwapa in *Efuru* and Buchi Emechata in *Joys of Motherhood* where marriages are presented as burdensome and not rewarding to women. Killam and Rowe point out that “Nyapol in Grace Ogot’s *The Promised Land*, feels that ‘marriage is a form of imprisonment’” (301). On the contrary, marriages in Ogola’s world are quite fulfilling, having been made so by the participation and appreciation registered by the male characters towards their women.

As a husband, the male character has been presented as sober and not under the power of alcohol. He is indeed in control of the amount of alcohol he consumes. Hence consumption of liquor does not leave him at loggerheads with his wife as he remains responsible towards his duties in the family. This is presented through the character of
Aoro in *I Swear by Apollo* who while serving tea to his sister and wife also brings along “an unusual bottle of beer for himself” (55). The “unusual” bit suggests that he rarely takes beer and has been pushed to by the too stressful reality of having to face his son’s bout of cancer.

### 2.5.3 Men as Adults in General

As an emancipated adult, the male character is depicted as displaying respect for women as opposed to objectifying them. When in a relationship, he is patient and chaste, decent, committed and faithful; not influenced by the now popular one night stand or Trust condom. He is not promiscuous as exemplified by the lives of Akoko’s husband and Mark in *The River and the Source*. Mark Sigu, while courting Elizabeth, does so sincerely with the intention of marrying the girl and not merely using her to satisfy his sexual desires. He gets into the relationship not for fun, or to hurt, but out of an earnest need to have company with a possibility of marriage. So does Mathew Saisi, Anne Njogu’s college boyfriend as their relationship leads to marriage. The same trait is displayed by Mwaghera, and Igana in *Place of Destiny* and Aoro Sigu, Brett, John, and Johnny in *I Swear by Apollo*.

The male character is portrayed as progressive as opposed to being traditional especially with regard to conducting marriage proposals. As a suitor, the male character is dignified enough or even flattered by a marriage proposal emanating from the woman. He takes it graciously and is even grateful for it. He interprets it for a high level of commitment from the woman. He is mature to see in it a mutual understanding and need to be in a relationship. He is not intimidated to take off for he is not harbouring age old beliefs that a woman who proposes to a man is promiscuous or even a gold digger. In
any case, the two women who propose in the two novels: Wandia and Kandake are well educated professionals. Kandake had established herself as a professional and had a good job and a car long before Johnny completed his studies at the school of medicine. Wandia before her had been academically at par with Aoro when she teases him to propose to her. These two women turn out to have only been genuine in seeking the sealing of their relationships with the men.

The male character comes across as a committed professional as is epitomized by the character of Father Peter in *The River and Source*. The narrator says of his disposition:

> It is possible that with time a priest may take his calling for granted – treating his work as just another job; not so with father Peter. This was especially obvious whenever he celebrated Mass particularly at the moment of consecration; his normally smiling face would be drawn with concentration and his gestures would assume a fluid grace as he lifted the circular host and declared: ‘This is my Body which will be given to you.’ He did not just say it; he lived it, and would continue to live it for the rest of his long life. (148)

It is evident that Father Peter, as a priest, is earnest in serving God. He preached water and drank water leading by example and being true to his God and man alike. He had no secret wife and children and neither did he pry on people’s wives. To Father Peter, priesthood meant more of a calling to serve his master than a normal duty hence the seriousness with which he approaches the handling of the sacrament. The same was later
to be said of Father Tony’s dedication to his work. He never failed to adorn in the priest uniform which was symbolic of the fact that he was on duty 24 hours a day at all times, serving people and helping them understand the human nature.

In *I Swear by Apollo*, this same professional commitment is depicted in the life of Aoro. Aoro, although pursuing a secular job, approaches it with similar commitment. He practises his medicine diligently and conscientiously. He was never too busy for his patients and attended to emergencies without much complaint. He understood that although he, as a doctor, may have seen many patients in any one day, each patient only knew of their case to be the worst in the world and he treated all the cases with the seriousness they deserved. He was so engrossed in his work that the narrator informs us of his busy schedule that made it impossible for him to go on holiday. We are told:

He was much sought after for his skill; but he had been going none stop for the last two years and it was time, he decided there and then, that he took a break from his patients; he would take Wandia for a much needed holiday (29-30).

Later on, Johnny too as a doctor manifests the same dedication in his profession. According to Johnny, being a doctor is a calling to restore human life.

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 chiefdom 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. Holding onto that past would be counter-productive. Adopting new ways of doing things would bring with it more to life in terms of development.

The male character is also portrayed as philanthropic. In *Place of Destiny*, Mago Igana, the young doctor, in turn gives back to the society that raised him as a street child by taking care of others who have suffered the indignity of being homeless. He establishes a home for street children. In *I Swear by Apollo*, Father Anthony too finds time to train young street children on how to play basket ball. His actions reflect a caring heart for the unfortunate in the society and the humility to identify with them.

The male character is seen as a pillar of counsel as evidenced in the character of Father Tony in *I Swear by Apollo*. He is the one that manages to talk sense to Mugo, who was definitely experiencing the vagaries of youth. Mugo had surrounded himself with wayward peers whose company was retrogressive to his acquisition of education and character building. He did not know the best way to keep his friends off and takes to emulate them to the confusion and concern of his parents. However, Father Tony evidently talks the boy back to sanity with admirable ease. The same counseling skills are evident when Father Peter consoles Aoro and his wife, Wandia - both doctors confronted with the burden of dealing with a terminally ill child. He is the one that offers words of wisdom and encouragement at the hospital. This is revealed to the reader by his words, “It is going to be alright,” he said, putting his arm around this wounded parent, his brother (91). *In Place of Destiny*, Amor too relies on the priest to counsel and help her understand matters of destiny as she copes with her imminent death.
2.5.4 Men as Brothers

In traditional African society, men as brothers had more rights in their natal home than sisters who were expected to be married off and establish their homes with their husbands. Boys were seen as heirs and were groomed to inherit their fathers’ property in form of animals and land. Men were also expected to continue the family lineage. Men were major decision makers in the homes as opposed to sisters. In traditional Luo community, married women who went back to their natal homes were referred to as “Migogo” who would only appear in funerals and would have no say in their natal homes (*The River and the Source* 13). Their brothers were expected to treat them as squatters.

Ogola’s male characters as brothers seem to oppose such tradition.

The male character is presented as being protective of his sisters. In *The River and the Source*, Akoko’s brothers are defensive of her. They, for example, allowed her to leave her marital home for her natal home after she is bruised and battered by life following her husband’s death. Akoko’s brothers willingly take her back against the wishes of their wives. Thus, the brothers provide ground for her to fall back to, an indication that she still belongs to her natal home. By so doing, the brothers defy tradition that bars her, a "Migogo" (a married woman who stays in her maiden home) from dwelling in her parents’ home. When she sets off to go seek redress from Serikal, the brother sends his twin sons to accompany her. He cares and loves his sister. *In Place of destiny*, Magu Igana is glad to be reunited with his sister’s son who becomes his only link to his dead sister.

Just like Akoko’s brother, in *I Swear by Apollo* Johnny too cares for Alicia. The narrator explains, “thus, her brother John, generally known as Johnny, teased her in the
rather merciless way brothers have, even though he loved her not merely in a brotherly
way—which is rare enough— but with understanding gentleness born of once shared
suffering” (11). Aoro adopts Becky’s children after her demise. In these portrayals of
men as brothers, Ogola has depicted men as gentle, understanding, and magnanimous
enough to take in their nieces and nephews and use their spare income to put them
through school, not just to alleviate another potential social misfit but to provide solid
mentorship. Indeed John ends up pursuing medicine like his uncle Aoro.

In *Place of Destiny*, Lanoi’s brother, out of love and concern for her sister’s
future, supports and encourages her to better herself professionally by acquiring new
skills. He pays for her computer studies after she was rendered jobless following her
resignation from a job where she was being mishandled by a boss. The message here is
that men and brothers as such should consider their sisters as blood relatives first before
considering them to be other people’s wives. Men should make it possible for girls to
always feel a sense of belonging to their natal home. It is not proper for women and girls
to be seen more to belong to their marital homes than to their natal ones. The implication
here is that just like boys, girls too should be able to inherit their parents’ property, for
they too belong as opposed to being told to concentrate on their husband’s wealth.

As a brother, the man does not play the “know it all” and has no apologies to
make for seeking solace and comfort from his sister when confronted with difficult
situations. On the contrary, he recognizes and respects her wisdom and does not hesitate
to tap it when situations demand that he does so. In *The River and the Source* and *I Swear
by Apollo*, Aoro gets in the habit of calling Vera whenever he is in trouble. Their
closeness can be seen when Vera asks him to make the two ladies (Vera and Wandia) a
cup of tea and he obliges. He has totally overcome and risen above what can be considered male and female roles. This same cup of tea is reminiscent of the cup of tea Mark made for Elizabeth when she was suffering from morning sickness early in their marriage. By seeking Vera’s advice, Aoro sees her as an elder sister who is well placed to advice in times of trouble. He does not look at her through traditional lenses that would have made him look down at her for the reason that she was not only a woman but an unmarried one and therefore more inferior to him, a “man”. Aoro knows that one does not have to be attached to some man through marriage for their counsel to be sought. This portrayal shows men’s appreciation of women as decision makers too in homes.

2.5.5 Youth Masculinities.

As youth, male characters are portrayed as admirable for they are good and respectful to their elders. In The River and the Source, these traits are exposed in the character of Obura, Akoko’s son who was open with his mother, bright, cheerful and hard working.

The male character is portrayed as being dutiful and focused as is embodied in the character of Aoro in The River and the Source. As a student Aoro works hard at school and ends up as a medic. In I Swear by Apollo this trait is revealed in the character of Johnny, Aoro’s nephew, who acquires exceptional academic credentials and ends up as a flying doctor.

Through Johnny’s character, the youth is depicted as a person of integrity. Johnny does not mind taking on his lecturer even if that means jeopardizing his survival at the medical school. He is determined to voice his conviction regarding the medical oath and it does not matter to whom: even if that person is his lecturer holding his future in his
hands. He is hard working at school and responsible for he can be trusted with watching after the young ones while his guardians are away.

The male character is also portrayed as resilient. This is exemplified by the life of Johnny when he survives the acts of omission and commission by his absent parents to turn around and end up as a flying doctor. Andrew Karama, Johnny’s friend, also manages to “cheat” HIV/AIDS by positively living with the disease and ends up realizing his dreams of being an architect: a feat he only manages after receiving encouragement to do so from Johnny. Through the relationship between Johnny and Karama, the author questions patriarchal male socialization that “encourages men to view each other as competitors” (Were 67). Were argues that this competition with each other denies men “sincere bonding” as it makes them find it “difficult to be vulnerable and weak before their so - called male friends” (68). This socialization makes men dependent on women only for comfort. Thus, by having Johnny help Karama, the author has overturned such socialization freeing the man to be able to find solace, support and encouragement from fellow men hence increasing his support base. A widened support base then enables men to lead a rather burden free life, a fact that makes them healthy and socially fit.

In *Place of Destiny*, this same resilience is depicted in the character of Mago Igana who catapults from being a street child to a successful doctor following his ardent pursuit of studies. It is clear that he had not been hardened as a street child and once given an opportunity he embraced it whole heartedly. Ogola’s portrayal of boys is a great contrast from the boys in Barbra Kimenye’s Moses series. The boys in Kimenye’s writings take their education lightly and are always looking for an opportunity to run away from school.
Emmanuel Chabari in his criticism of Barbara Kimenye’s selected storybooks from the Moses series wonders whether there aren’t “positive masculinities to construct other than say fighting and participating in adventures” (102). This study argues that in the three selected texts, Ogola constructs these alternative masculinities. Ogola’s representation of boyhood masculinities can also be interpreted as a literary intervention to urge for positive ideas of masculinities by ensuring institutions such as school and family aid boys towards their construction of who is a boy and what boyhood constitutes” (Chabari 118).

The youth are also presented as cultured. As a young man, Aoro loved and respected his parents and was grateful to them for the kind of upbringing bestowed to him. He shares a lot with Wandia on their way to meet his parents. He is responsible enough to introduce his fiancée to his parents instead of first adopting a come we stay kind of arrangement before introducing a woman with children to his family. At least he has the decency to seek their consent before settling down with her.

2.6 Conclusion

The study has shown that there are two major types of male characters - the emasculated and the emancipated. The emasculated male characters uphold traditional male socialization and are burdened by it. On the other hand, the emancipated male characters have defied traditional male socialization and enjoy a more liberated; progressive masculinity. Our exposition of the author’s depiction of the male character has clearly shown that men are differentiated rather than homogeneous. The study has repudiated claims from other quarters of society that seek to label all men as being lazy,
chauvinistic, childish, brutes, nymphomaniacs. irresponsible, useless dogs and therefore good for nothing human beings whose only reason for existence and pursuit in life is to cause trouble for women. Some women have indeed long declared that all live men are cheats and that the good ones are dead and buried. On the contrary, this study exposed various responsible and venerable men in Ogola’s world. Ogola’s construction of the male character is a deliberate attempt to re-tell the story of men afresh for this had been misreported so many times over.

Chapter three examines how Ogola redefines her male characters by contesting traditional forms of male socialization.
CHAPTER THREE: REDEFINITION

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to fulfill the second objective of the study as outlined in Chapter One. The chapter seeks to examine whether Margaret Ogola redefines her male characters.

3.2 Contesting Traditional Forms of Male Socialization

In the traditional Nnobi society, for a full male adult maturity meant self assertion, strength, courage, adventurousness and self-sufficiency (Amadiume 97). Richard Schaefer in Sociology Matters observes that society expects boys to be masculine and therefore encourages them to be active, aggressive, tough, daring and dominant (178).

With regard to the redefinition of male characters, the research premise is that the author has made it her preoccupation to undermine conventional masculinity and patriarchy – the pillars of traditional male socializations. The author achieves this through negation of socio-cultural structures that propagate masculinity and patriarchy, leading to traditional male socialization. Some of these socio-cultural structures that propagate patriarchy include practices such as payment of bride price and wife battering. As shall be demonstrated here it is indeed possible to have a different crop of men altogether: men that are not chauvinists, nymphomaniacs, competitive, violent, domineering and emotionally detached as is portrayed through the characters of, for example, Owuor Kembo, Mark Sigu, Aoro Sigu, and Mwaghera.

In most African societies, men were socialized to the notion that as males they ought to behave in certain ways. Among the Nnobi of Nigeria, “ideas about the roles
designed for males and females featured in songs about young men and young girls” (Amadiume 97) One of these permitted ways of behaviour for men included being in control of their lives (Ibid).

Were observes that men learn to pretend to be well even when in pain and in distress; they are taught that they should not appear to be vulnerable since pain is something they should “rise above” (50). Other stereotypes of male behaviour according to Sayer include aggression (24). Sayer argues that such traditional gender stereotyping are learned and reinforced among other ways through TV watching (25). Ogola’s representation of male characters shows various ways in which these stereotypes are transgressed.

3.2.1 Trouncing of Patriarchy and Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is about “maintenance of practices” that institutionalize men’s dominance over women (Chabari 28). Were observes that “patriarchy tends to go hand - in - hand with the male domination of the woman in most spheres in life” (62). In a bid to trounce patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, Ogola has ensured that her male figures do negate hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, patriarchy as a form of traditional male socialization is strongly contested by the author through the creation of male characters who are free of patriarchal tenets. As earlier argued, patriarchy is a short - sighted reaction to male oppression by society through sanctioned sex roles. Thus, in her construction of the male characters, Ogola liberates them by calling to question patriarchal doctrines and related practices like polygyny, wife beating and bride price.
3.2.2 Polygyny

As a cultural practice, polygyny enhances patriarchy and by extension hegemonic masculinity. E. A Oke in *An Introduction to Social Anthropology* points out that polygyny is “the marriage of one man to two or more women” (99). Polygyny allows men to have as many wives as they “can take care of”. The assumption usually is that once a woman is provided for materially, she is content and the husband is free to marry another woman for as long as he makes occasional visits to the other wives’ houses for intercourse with the intention of making them pregnant. Sex for women is thence limited and spared for child bearing. On the other hand, the said husband has sex as often as he desires from his many wives and concubines. In that manner, polygyny then restricts women sexually.

As a patriarchal structure, polygyny has been used to subdue women for many years. It allows men to have sexual relations with numerous women at will, but does not permit women to sexually relate with other men apart from their legitimate husbands. Worse still, when such women become jealous of one another and show resistance in sharing husbands, they are castigated by society as being mean and even evil. Consequently, the women feign satisfaction with the situation to fit into society for their survival and that of their children and even their parents. Robert Murphy in *Cultural and Social Anthropology an Overture*, clarifies this by arguing, “although the men permit polygyny, the women do not” (85-86). The position taken in this study is that in advancing polygyny, men’s interests are pursued at the expense of women. In most African cultures, the idea of a woman having many sexual partners is abhorrent.
According to Islamic teachings, a woman having many sexual partners is supposed to be stoned to death. Leila Ahmed in *Women and Gender in Islam* observes that in Islam, “men were permitted to have sexual intercourse with slaves and prostitutes” (14). She also notes that “adultery by the wife (and her partner), however was punishable by death” (Ahmed 14). Such are the inequalities entrenched by society in its handling of men and women.

Ogola undermines polygyny by advocating for monogamous marriages. This is evidenced through her portrayal of Owuor Kembo’s marriage to Akoko in *The River and the Source*. Polygyny is totally vanquished when Akoko’s husband repudiates the cultural practice as early as pre-colonial Kenya when it was the norm and not the exception in the Luo community where the story is situated.

Owuor Kembo refuses to succumb to the dictates of tradition that requires him as a chief to have more than one wife. The author makes the chief, a respected leader, to shun the age old tradition as an example to all community members. By doing so, the author initiates new socialization that is upholding monogamous marriages. As expected, the chief does not get away easily with his chosen lifestyle but has to keep on waging off dissenting voices such as his mother’s and the elders’ that expect him to tow the line by taking on another wife. These people cite ‘valid’ reasons why he should take on another wife – like his wife’s slow production rate that saw her bear one child in about five years.

In imploring Owuor Kembo to take on a second wife, society that is predominantly patriarchal fails to acknowledge that Akoko, the chief’s wife, lacks power to control her production rate. Members of the society seem to blame it on her when they ask her husband to bring another wife. Interestingly, it is as though the chief in his
wisdom had long acknowledged the important fact that human beings do not determine their fertility. Being sensitive and caring towards his wife, the chief had no intention whatsoever to punish Akoko for the dictates of nature. Hence, out of this "rare" insight, he remains steadfast and follows his heart. The fact that the community members and especially Owuor's advisors persistently urge him to take on another wife is a pointer that indeed men simply perform according to the script written for them by society on what it is to be a 'total' man.

In her representation of Akoko's marriage to Owuor Kembo, the author argues that monogamy helps balance out power relations in a marriage better than polygyny. Polygyny seems to uphold a king - subject relationship between a husband and his several wives as the latter compete for the man's attention inflating his already big ego arising from the presence of numerous wives.

Otieno Kembo, Akoko's brother-in-law, is the exact opposite of Owuor. He adopts polygyny to pacify community members otherwise disappointed by his brother's monogamous state. The narrator says that he treated his wives as sluts. The implication here is that Otieno demeaned his wives as he did not look at them as human beings with emotions but saw them as sexual objects meant only for his gratification. Otieno was, however, dissatisfied by the kind of relations he had with his many wives and secretly admires the brother's only wife. The narrator says, "in his heart, in spite of his many wives, he desired his brother's wife who seemed to get younger every year instead of older" (43).

Otieno's secret admiration of his brother's only wife reveals a personality torn between following his heart's earnest desire to have one wife with whom he can enjoy a
meaningful relationship and pleasing society by conforming to its dictates of acquisition of several wives. Otieno’s choice of polygyny is a perfect example of personal goals being sacrificed at the altar of societal expectations. Hence, to manage the ambivalent feelings towards Akoko, he projects his inadequacy towards her by assuming feelings of hatred for her.

In the juxtaposition of the characters of Owuor and Otieno, the writer seems to suggest that a monogamous marriage is more fulfilling when the husband values the wife and the two relate as companions as opposed to one being another’s play toy as demanded by society. In preference for monogamy, a generation later, the author constructs Nyabera’s husband as monogamous too. Owuor sino, Akoko’s second son was also monogamous and a good man, like his father. He was also steady, dependable, unassuming and available to his family. Nyabera’s husband Okumu was good to her too. He tolerated the misfortunes of her losing children. He equally died a monogamous man.

Monogamy slowly but surely is popularized as yet another generation later, Mark, Elizabeth’s husband, too chooses monogamy. Men born of Akoko’s lineage and those who marry women from her family all shun polygyny. However, it is important to mention that adopting monogamy is not easy for the men. It is a practice calling for discipline as temptations are bound to arise as was the case with Mark who takes a misstep. Mark falls prey to the effects of separation of husband and wife in the family. He enjoys an illicit relationship but does not contemplate marriage or having a child outside marriage with his mistress - evidence that the author detests polygyny. Thus, after his wife joins him in the urban area, the issue of illicit affairs does not occur again. We should, thus, sympathise with Mark that he was simply a victim of circumstances. He
confesses that never had he been promiscuous even before marriage and makes a resolution to turn to his family and never looks back till his death. In Ogola’s portrayal of various monogamous male characters, the author has successfully undermined polygyny as a cultural practice that promotes patriarchy.

3.2.3 Abolition of Wife Battering

Wife beating also popularly known as domestic violence against women has been a common and accepted traditional practice in most African cultures (Ondicho 36). Ravi Thiara and Gill Hague in “Bride Price Poverty and Domestic Violence in Uganda” argue that “domestic violence occurs because the man often feels he ‘owns’ the woman and, if the wife does not obey the husband, he may feel entitled to punish or chastise her”(4). Hence in offering alternative male characterisation, Ogola undermines the practice of wife battering.

In *The River and the Source*, Men from Akoko’s lineage shun wife battering as they find it demeaning and simply unacceptable. Instead they embrace dialogue in resolving issues in their respective marriages. This is evident in the character of Chief Owuor Kembo who leads by example when he refuses to be violent towards his wife, Akoko, for deserting her home in his absence. This is an act that would have otherwise called for proper whipping as a disciplinary measure for shaming the chief. On the contrary, the chief opts for sending a delegation to his wife’s home for an amicable arbitration. By so doing, the chief here has once again defied an age old tradition among the Luo.

In the traditional Luo community, wife beating was so popular and widely accepted by both men and women to a degree that when a woman lived with her husband
for long and he did not beat her up, she would wonder why? It was erroneously believed that wife beating was one way of expressing love for one’s spouse. On the other hand, a woman who had been beaten up by her husband would sometime take off to her parent’s home for a break. She was however expected to get back to her matrimonial home after a short period while carrying some flour and chicken to be slaughtered and a meal prepared for her husband as a way of apologizing for having ‘wronged’ him and causing him to beat her. It did not matter whether indeed the husband was on the wrong. So widely accepted was the practice that it was joked that if a man had missed chicken stew for a while he would simply beat up the wife causing her to run to her parent’s home only for her to bring back the much cherished chicken. The characters in Macgoye in Coming to Birth seem to fall for the belief that wife beating is in fact a gesture of love. Ogola’s male characters do not embrace wife beating.

3.2.4 Bride Price

Jean Hay and Sharon Stitcher in African Women South of Sahara assert that “in virtually all African societies, traditional marriage is confirmed by payment of “bridewealth” from the husband (and his close relatives) to the bride’s father (and close relatives)” (82). This was done to “establish the husband’s right to his wife’s labour, and sometimes also to the children she may bear” (Hay and Stitcher 82). Bridewealth was quantified variedly from community to community. Mostly it involved the haggling over the exact “price” by men from both communities with the bride’s side trying to push it as high as possible while the bridegrooms side worked on to reduce the quoted figure to something “manageable” on their part. Thus, “in the process, girls and women continued to be contested terrain” (Kanogo 105).
Bride wealth was seen as payment for the purchase of a wife. This had the implications that the woman became the property of the man and lost rights to major decision making in the family. She, like livestock, was counted as part of the man’s wealth. In some African communities, a monogamous man was regarded as a poor man because he could only afford one wife while a man with very many wives was considered rich because he had paid bride wealth for all of them. Thus, with the payment of bride price a deal was sealed between the two communities that became very difficult to reverse especially where huge quantities of bride wealth were involved. Reversing that kind of agreement would entail the refund of bride wealth. Tabitha Kanogo in *African Woman Hood in Colonial Kenya 1900-50* explains that “such refunds would entail huge losses to the woman’s family” (51). For these reasons women were discouraged from walking out of bad marriages. Thiara and Hague also argue that bride-price can be seen as a symptom of male dominance and power in families (2). Ogola in her novels has sought to eradicate this tradition that seems to “commodify” women.

In *The River and the Source*, Mark, while requesting for Elizabeth’s hand in marriage, is only asked to give a token of appreciation. So does Aoro who gave a token before his marriage to Wandia. Bride price which symbolises the purchase of a woman is eliminated. In *I Swear by Apollo*, when Lebulu was promising to pay high bride price for Alicia, Aoro informs him that his family stopped selling women a long time ago. From the narrator’s voice and attitude, we learn that the author abhors that age old custom for she does not believe that one person can buy another so as to own them as property but that two people who mutually care for one another can agree to live harmoniously to enhance the quality of their lives here on earth.
3.2.5 Domination and Control

Domination is another aspect of traditional male socialization contested by the author. Were of the opinion that “patriarchy tends to go hand in hand with the male domination of the woman in most spheres of life” (62). He further clarifies that men are expected to have “everything under control” (65). It is for these reasons that men seem to always want to be at the forefront of making judgment, initiating projects to the extent that even in a relationship situation, a good idea if proposed by the woman seems to be bad until it is first pointed out by the man when it then catapults into an excellent idea. Muleka observes that male patriarchal values include “control over women” (99).

In Ogola’s works, men are no longer shown to believe that only they must be in control. In *The River and the Source*, this is exemplified in Mark’s character when his daughter, Vera, approaches him with a request to visit the movies with a boyfriend. Mark, as a father, does not respond to the request immediately. Instead, he informs her to give him time to consult his wife before giving a verdict. In openly admitting the need to consult the wife, the author creates a man who does not dictate nor make it his prerogative to make all important decisions in the home.

In *I Swear by Apollo*, control is no longer a determination for maleness as is seen in the character of Johnny while relating with Kandake as his girlfriend. Kandake visits Johnnie and picks him up in her car and drives him around. *In Place of Destiny*, it is Amor that picks and drives Mwaghera on their way home from the airport after the later had cut short an international official trip following an unusual call from his wife. This driving of the men in vehicles can be interpreted to mean giving direction in real life.
Men are socialized to accept women who are aggressive and those that can challenge and reason with them; women who can advise them as opposed to those who look up to them as though they are some demi-gods as was the case with Magu senior's wife in *Place of Destiny*. In *The River and the Source*, Owuor Kembo was happy that his wife was not afraid of him and that she could discuss just about anything with him. Faced with pressure to take on another wife he contemplates:

How could he tell them that since he married his wife, he had profoundly lost interest in all other women? She was unafraid of him, and spoke candidly on almost any subject. She also had an acerbic but witty tongue, which unless she was angry with him, rarely ever failed to make him laugh. Besides her advice on most matters was sound and he formed the habit of going over to her hut after the evening meal just to hear her talk. (27)

From Owuor's thoughts, we deduce that the qualities that endeared him to the wife are her ability to discuss matters freely with him. Owuor also valued her opinion on issues generally and appreciated her counsel on various matters. It is evident that in Akoko, Owuor had a personal advisor and a companion. He loved his wife for her resourcefulness.

Men are no longer socialized to believe that only they can approach women for a marriage proposal. This was exemplified in the character of Wandia in *The River and the Source*, where upon having been in a relationship for long with Aoro and seeing no marriage proposal forthcoming, she decides to take things on her hands and asks: "When are you going to propose if at all?" (240). This proposal excites Aoro hence his response: "It isn't everyday a girl proposes to me. As a matter of fact this is the first time – so
forgive me if I don’t … - yes I’ll marry you. Any day you want” (240). Aoro does not end the relationship but enjoys the whole idea of Wandia reminding him to ask for her hand in marriage. They later marry and he continues to love and respect her in spite of her proposing the marriage.

What matters in a marriage is the mutual need for a relationship and not who proposes the marriage. Honesty and sincerity are upheld so that when a woman makes the first move as was the case with Kandake to Johnny, the man does not take off considering that a great crime and poor socialization or a sign of promiscuity from the woman. A woman is taken to be an equal partner with a mind and sexual feelings that they too can express towards the object of their love. That old socialization of men being the first to propose meant that women should suppress their sexual feelings: a form of subjugation.

3.2.6 Romantic Relationships with Older Women

In most traditional African societies, men were expected to marry women who are either their age mates or much younger. Marriage of older women to younger men was not acceptable. In contemporary African societies, sexual relationships between older women and younger men are abhorred. Where such relationships have occurred, they have been met with a lot of resistance sometimes leading to break-ups. Schaefer is categorical that “traditional norms regarding marriage and even casual dating tell us that in heterosexual couples, the man should be older, taller, and wiser than the woman” (178). This study argues that age restriction for women willing to engage with younger men in sexual relationships is discriminatory to the women.

In Ogola’s works, men are socialized to come to terms with the possibility of relating with older women. In I swear by Apollo, Pala has a girl friend three years older.
He is compelled to exaggerate his age so as to gain her approval as a sexual partner. This shows that women too have been socialized to judge themselves unfairly by expecting to love only older men. Pala’s successful relationship with the girl is proof that indeed age is just a number in matters of relationships and that what matters is mutual understanding and perhaps compatibility. Men should not be deterred from seeking older women for relationships; after all, old men have always married younger women and thus why should it not be the same for women? Whenever old men marry young girls, they are applauded but when old women relate with younger men, they have to do so in hiding as society, especially in Africa, finds such relationships repugnant. This amounts to discrimination against women. However, the fact that Pala knows that when the lady finally discovers his actual age, she might take off, is proof enough that society is still averse to such relationships and that despite the small step made, the battle is far from being won.

3.2.7 Display of Emotions

Were observes that masculinity “demands the suppression of a whole range of human emotions such as the need to cry, tremble, express fear and distress” (70). The scholar regrets that “because of the way masculinity is constructed, when the man feels these emotions, he perceives himself to be less masculine and therefore not a ‘real man’” (Were 70). In contestation of that repressive traditional male socialization, Ogola has created men that display emotions.

In her construct of the male character, the author has shunned machismo and ensured that the man openly displays emotions through crying as the practice is good for the soul and therefore healthy. Men and society in general had hitherto treated men
unfairly by not allowing them to cry, making them susceptible to emotional breakdowns and sometimes succumbing to death having found no avenues to ventilate their sorrows.

Through crying, men are allowed to openly declare that something is wrong and they need assistance or help to cope with whatever situation. Mwaghera in Place of Destiny, faced with his wife’s imminent death, breaks down and cries before her. In I Swear by Apollo, John Courtney cries upon reading a letter from Africa informing him about his children. Indeed the wife quickly helps him make decisions in relation to these children. She helps organize his life by suggesting that the husband travels to Africa to meet his children. The move helps him reconcile with his past. He sorts his life out by having the children travel to Canada, thus, establishing a lasting link with that side of their parentage. This also helps heal the said children’s psychological wounds that had been inflicted by an absent father. Therefore, in expressing their feelings, men can easily attract help that will leave them healthy and more useful to society.

Igana, in Place of Destiny, while relating with his wife, Imani, sits her down to share his feelings of both excitement and apprehension following his discovery of his uncle and a pointer to his possible roots. Imani concernedly pays special attention to her husband’s tales about the discovery of his roots. She says: “I decide to sit down and listen to this whole business from beginning to end” (179). This exposure makes them achieve an exemplary emotional bonding as the man has totally opened up to his wife. That is the kind of relationship maintained by the couple through their marriage life and it leaves both satisfied. Igana and the wife have seemingly put love at the centre of their relationship as he confesses, “as for our life together, whatever it may bring our way, may love always be the reason and love the purpose” (196). David Knox and Caroline Schacht
in *Marriage and the Family* contend that close emotional relationships may provide great life satisfaction for both women and men (53).

Mwaghera and Amor as a couple also display emotional bonding. This couple remains in love long into their marriage as is evident in their handling of each other. They have transcended beyond being mere companions to soul mates which makes Mwaghera’s heart ache so much upon the realization that he was about to lose the most important person in his life. Such a relationship is only achievable through emotional attachment. Ogola’s painting of marriages seems to be in agreement with Knox and Schacht observation.

### 3.2.8 Aggression

J.H Goldstein in *Aggression and Crimes of Violence* defines aggression as “behavior whose intent is the physical or psychological injury of another person” (viii). He further elaborates that aggression is not limited to “only hitting someone but also embarrassing another person” (viii). Scholars such as Rowan, (60), and Hoch (18) categorically state that aggression is one of the qualities of being masculine. In elaborating how boys and men are initiated into aggression, Sayers points out that “social learning theorists claim that boys are rewarded more than girls not only by adults but also by other children for being aggressive and masculine in their behaviour”(26-27). In presenting alternative forms of male socialization, Ogola reconstructs men who shun unnecessary aggression and general cruelty.

In *I Swear by Apollo*, Aoro and Johnnie being so incensed by the character of Lebulu, Alicia’s man friend, manage to maintain calm despite the man’s display of outright unrefined mannerisms in a situation where harassment of the man would have
been excused. Ogola’s male characters shun arrogance. Aoro is modest in his dealing with his family members despite being an accomplished and well sought after surgeon. He, for example, prepares tea for his wife and sister when they request him to do so.

In *Place of Destiny*, Mago Igana, the doctor, displays humility in dealing with his colleagues and patients. He cares about their feelings and is afraid of hurting them. This is depicted through Igana’s interaction with Amor at the hospice. Out of good intention and genuine concern about the patient’s whereabouts, he suggests that Amor owns her business with the husband something that infuriates her. He is remorseful that he said something unpleasant to her and decides to tread more carefully while interrogating the patient. He says, “You said you were in pain – are you in any pain?” I hope that here at least I am on familiar ground and will therefore not blunder too much” (76). Here, the good doctor does not wear the all important air and probably seek to justify his words arrogantly. Contrarily, he simply understands the patient and adjusts by dwelling on a matter he considers less controversial – the pain.

### 3.2.9 Embracing Work

Muleka observes that children’s socialization was such that the girls would “be left with all the work to do as their brother’s walk off, ball in hand and catapult strung on the shoulder, heading for their usual place – the playing fields” (101). Muleka’s observation resonates well with the fact that in most traditional African communities, domestic chores were the preserve of women. Men mostly worked outdoors.

In Ogola’s world, wealth acquisition ceases to be men’s only important preoccupation. On the contrary, men too help with domestic chores like cooking and looking after children. This is a challenge to the erroneous belief that domestic chores are
a women’s territory. Hotter observes that the modern man is comfortable with carrying out domestic chores (378). According to Oslon and Defrain some couples share domestic responsibilities equally as “mother and father each do half the child care, half the housework and half the work outside home” (377). Oslon and Defrain argue that “traditional family roles – in which dad was the provider and mom the nurturer; dad was “tough” and mom “tender” – are changing (377). Ogola’s representation of men is in tandem with that of the scholars above.

In The River and the Source, the narrator tells of the amount of help Mark accorded Elizabeth with regard to raising their family: “Mark took to helping her around the house – especially in taking the children off her hands. His friends derided this for a while but when he proved adamant they gave him up as lost cause” (163). Mark was least concerned with what his friends thought about the running of his family. This was evidence that he had achieved true liberation from the chains of masculinity and no longer subscribed to society’s description of “manly” responsibilities.

In traditional African societies, it is considered quite normal for women to break their spines ferrying children on their backs from the fields at the same time carrying firewood on their heads as well as lifting a water container from the stream. All this is done in the full knowledge of their men folk who would be seated under a tree shade playing some “important” game while waiting to be served dinner by the same woman. Hay and Stitcher note:

The great majority of African women are farmers. Most days they work in the fields from four to eight hours, aided only by a simple hoe, in order to provide their families’ basic food. They must also work a second labour day fetching firewood and
water, and drying, shelling, storing and cooking the food from their gardens, all the while caring for their children (1).

Ogola has created a world devoid of such scenes. Thus, in *The River and the Source*, out of love and concern, Mark prepares his wife Elizabeth, a cup of tea upon the discovery of her illness. He tries to make her comfortable to help reduce the pangs of “disease”. Later, when the couple receives news about the demise of Maria, Elizabeth’s mother, Mark voluntarily parks her clothes without a tinge of shame and a feeling of being belittled.

In *I Swear by Apollo*, Aoro too cooks and serves tea to his sister Vera and his wife Wandia while they talk. Also, in *The River and the Source*, when Danny is unwell and hospitalised and the mother is overwhelmed by sorrow seeing her child suffer, it is suggested that Aoro stays behind and watches over him in hospital while his mother, not strong enough to withstand her child’s predicament, takes a rest at home. The nurse quickly informs Aoro, “I think you should return later Dr. Sigu,” suggested the sister-in-charge” (270). A suggestion Vera finds quite welcome as she confirms, “she is right my dear. Let’s go home. His daddy can stay with him until they have finished with him” (270). Men are thus socialized to be responsible family men participating in their children’s lives.

In allowing men to serve tea, cook and watch over babies, Ogola creates men who are no longer socialized to believe that only their welfare is worth the attention of all other family members. Were observes:

Another way through which patriarchy disempowers men is by encouraging both men and women to make the man’s well-being
the centre of attention and by treating the man as one whose needs should be met by other people (women) at the expense of the needs of others. As a result, the ability to be caring to those they love is severely impaired in many men because these men are discouraged from nurturing their own ability to show care for others. (66)

Through the characters of Mark, Aoro and Mwaghera, the author has created men who are socialized to care for others. These men are thus empowered to express their love and are in turn shown love. The result of this is a healthy and fulfilling relationship which consequently leads to harmony in society.

Men are socialized to embrace hard work and to fend for their families. In *Place of Destiny*, Amor narrates how his brothers always idled around as the girls in the family tirelessly performed chores to ensure the well being and comfort of the rest of the family members. In this case, society socialized men to believe that they were not to work so hard in life, especially where farm work and other household chores were concerned since all they needed to do was to pair up with a properly trained and, therefore, hard working girl who would bring forth children and work hard to nurture the man and his offspring. Unfortunately, this kind of socialization had such negative repercussions as grown up men with their own families became irresponsible and failed to provide for their children as was the case with Gala, Amor’s brother, of whom the narrator says:

one has spent the better part of his life getting married to various women who take off as soon as they realize that they are meant to keep him in the manner to which he has
been accustomed as a male member of the clan and an elder at the church like his father before him. (19-20)

The women, tired of bringing up grown – up, able - bodied men, simply throw in the towel and take off from the unfulfilling unions, leaving the children in the care of their old grandmothers. The men, faced with the challenge of broken marriages, become psychologically handicapped and resign to hopelessness. These men end up engaging in life - threatening activities such as drinking that keep them out of touch with reality - reality being too difficult and painful for them to face. Unfortunately, the same men may end up dying at an early age as did one of Amor’s brothers who died of alcoholism at the age of thirty.

Amor observes that society, in the person of her mother, fails to connect the problem with their sons to socialization and instead blames it on the women that leave their not very useful husbands. This turn of events is a criticism of society’s socialization of the male child. The message being that society indeed has been unfair to the male child by keeping him away from certain duties yet expect him to catapult into an industrious, hard - working and responsible family man in adulthood. This confirms the sensibility of the old adage: you cannot teach an old dog new tricks. This being unattainable then causes men to be frustrated as they fail to live up to society’s expectation.

As children, they are pampered and treated like small gods for they are “male” children, heirs to the family, and bestowed with the responsibility of carrying on the family name. They are “special” children. In adulthood, the very society that scolded them for returning a cup to the kitchen after a meal expects them to have somehow
mastered the art of working hard especially where money is concerned and fend for their spouses and children. These ambivalent signals from society to the male children create confusion in their lives leading to feelings of frustration. They, consequently, resort to drunkenness as the remedy to this problem at hand. Boys, like girls, should be trained in life skills by being exposed to hard work when young and these will not disappoint them when they grow up. For example, unlike their fathers, Amor’s brother’s children are trained to embrace work by their grandmother.

3.3 Conclusion

From the above exposition, it is evident that Ogola successfully redefines men who appreciate work, love and care for their families and value and respect women; men who do not consider women to be play toys but respectable beings; men who shun aggression and are not domineering and men who understand that the display of emotions is indeed a crucial human need. In her representation of the male character, Ogola has challenged conventional masculinity and patriarchy by offering different images and options for men (Ouzgane and Morrelll 11).
CHAPTER FOUR: COMPARISON OF THE REPRESENTATION OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter makes a comparison of the various representations of male and female characters. The chapter hinges on the premise that contrary to misconceptions from certain societal quarters that seek to portray male as malevolent and female as benevolent, either sex is capable of portraying evil and good character in equal measure. John H. Neal and Alan S. Slobodnik in their article “Reclaiming Men’s Experience Couples Therapy” point out the mistaken idea among human beings that men are essentially evil (qtd in Brograd 104). This study maintains that a blanket condemnation of men as being intrinsically evil and even incorrigible is unfair.

The study argues that men have suffered a lot of pain from difficulties inflicted on them by society but such cases have gone unacknowledged owing to the fallacy that men are too privileged by established social systems such as patriarchy to encounter any challenges. That only women are so underprivileged and consequently in need of social protection and emancipation from established social systems. Contrarily, the study explores ways in which both men and women have been victims of societal injustice.

The study examines instances where the author has created male and female characters who are weak and those that are strong thereby giving a true reflection of society members. Of major concern in this study has been to unveil the various times when the author has displayed biases against men in her creation of characters. A comparison of the presentation of male and female characters will enable the researcher to lay bare such blatant lies about men with the aim of creating awareness in society.
towards a redress to their plight since literature has a social responsibility to question society with the aim of creating harmony and understanding.

4.2 Victims of Societal Injustice

Both men and women have been portrayed as victims of societal injustice as evidenced by the plight of Tommy Muhambe in *The River and the Source*. Vera breaks Tommy Muhambe’s heart by refusing to marry him after a long courtship. Vera’s treatment of Tommy attests to the various facets of love when men have suffered heartbreaks in the hands of women they loved. Vera should have probably come to that realization that she had no intention of marrying much earlier and stopped encouraging Tommy to love her; thus alleviating the pain she later on causes him making him feel dejected.

Vera’s actions subject Muhambe to untold pain and suffering as is relayed to us by the narrator who quips, “innocence has a tendency to disappear when one discovers in oneself the power to really hurt - good intentions notwithstanding” (203). Despite the fact that Vera did not feel ready for marriage, consequently turning down Muhambe’s proposal, he feels injured. The intensity of his love for Vera had made him so protective and possessive of her that “he would have killed a man who so much as looked at her” (202). The narrator also says that “he felt terrible inside” (202). Therefore, society as exemplified by Vera’s actions has seen many men hurt by heartbreaks to the point of total destruction. Sometimes such men never recover at all, especially, where they had loved whole heartedly. In such cases, these end up vowing never to engage in relationships for the rest of their life time.
In *I Swear by Apollo*, we learn of John’s predicament after his marriage to Becky. It is Becky who turns out to be unfaithful and becomes the first one to sue for a divorce against the husband’s wish. John Senior was willing to accommodate Becky’s peculiar sexual mannerisms for he had discovered that she normally had affairs while he was on official trips abroad. She was promiscuous and therefore unsatisfied with him as a husband and had sexual relations with not just one man but several as clarified by John when he says, “I could have competed with the other man in her life, if it had been one man, but there were several. She really didn’t seem to care who she ended up with” (121).

The narrator categorically states that John was willing to keep his marriage to Becky despite her unfaithfulness but she would not let him stay. Instead, she went behind his back and pursued a divorce. She successfully acquired one and ensured she got custody of the children. This hurt even more as John elaborates:

> Eventually I did the only thing I could do, I left. Everyone believed that it was I who divorced her, but I didn’t have the strength or the desire. How do you divorce a little child for hurting you? But in the end I think she hated my guts. She worked out all the technicalities and just informed me that it had been done, and that she had full custody of the children. Just like that. (Ibid)

From John’s remarks above, it can be deduced that he had been hit three times. First, his wife insists on divorcing him. Second, she obtains custody of the children. Third, society castigates him and even stigmatizes him for “divorcing” his wife, a fact
that must have left him feeling helpless, lonely and with no one willing to listen to or understand his side of the story.

The court’s handling of the John – Becky divorce case is a true reflection of the kind of injustice meted on men on the basis of their sex. One wonders why the jury did not opt to give John custody of the children. Probably, the children would have done well remaining in the care of their more sober parent – the father as opposed to their irresponsible mother, who put her own needs above theirs and those of their father. She cared little how her actions impacted on these other people in her life. By handing the children to Becky, the judgment on the divorce case conformed to traditional male role socialization that confines men to custody disadvantages whenever families break (Knox and Schacht 55). That verdict was very erroneous; it almost caused the children their sanity. They were only rescued from the resultant psychological turmoil by Aoro and Wandia. Through her actions, Becky makes John suffer immensely to the extent that even after remarrying, he remains wounded. The narrator in The River and the Source reports that: “John had been terribly hurt of course and Mark had been furious with her” (251).

The message advanced here is that contrary to the popular belief that men are responsible for women’s unfortunate predicament, some women too are capable of inflicting the same or worse pain to otherwise responsible and considerate men, eventually destroying them. Women’s actions too can be very devastating to the men in their lives. Through the Becky – John marriage and subsequent divorce, Ogola questions the myth that divorces are always initiated by men through their intolerable actions towards women. According to Ogola, society wrongly believes that in unhappy
marriages, it is the women who are subjected to suffering as they persevere to the extent that they can no longer take it, eventually leaving with physical and psychological bruises and wounds with children to take care of single-handed. In the case of Becky and her husband, it is the former who hurts the man and insists on the right to keep the children denying an otherwise willing parent the right to participate in his children’s lives.

Through the depiction of the Becky – John marriage and subsequent divorce, the writer alerts women too to re-evaluate their relations with men. Women should be considerate in relating with men for there to be a healthy and functional society.

In today’s world, it is no longer strange to hear stories of men who are battered and mistreated by their wives. Wambugu Kanyi reports a steady rise in cases of battering of men in Nyeri county by their spouses (12). In modern times when the social space for women has widened, women have also advanced in terms of achieving freedom from illiteracy and financial independence, sometimes earning more than their spouses. Some of these women have at times misbehaved by taking to irresponsible drinking and engaging in multiple sexual relations, thus, hurting their spouses and children. As the social space for women widens, they need to be considerate of their spouses and children by not engaging in nights of carousal.

Irresponsible drinking and sex by their wives causes men to suffer untold anguish exacerbated by society’s unrealistic pressure on men to suffer in silence. The ensuing reaction from the men is to become addicted to substances like alcohol and cigarettes that offer comfort and temporary relief from life’s challenges. Unfortunately, these end up developing lifestyle diseases such as cancer eventually causing them to die young. In worse case scenarios such have ended up committing suicide. The depiction of Becky’s
irresponsibility as a wife clearly shows that “Ogola doesn’t support aggression directed towards men” (Oloo 5).

Young Johnny, like his father, undergoes a lot of suffering because of his mother’s (Becky’s) actions. His parents’ divorce leaves him with many unanswered questions that see him develop deviant behaviour at school as he takes to attacking his schoolmates and throwing tantrums at home. He also took his education lightly and ended up with poor grades. However, all this changes when he finds parental love and care from Aoro and Wandia who adopt him and his sister. He later finds firm footing, summersaulting into an admirable professional doctor.

In Place of Destiny, Magu Junior’s character is another good example of men suffering societal injustice. His wife humiliates him before his parents making it known that he is in fact impotent and that to protect him she had been having sexual relations with the father of her first child: to Magu’s astonishment. We sympathize with this lad considering the manner in which he learns of his limitation – from an altercation between his wife and his father.

Magu’s wife should have been more considerate to inform her husband of his debility and discuss the issue with him before getting kids on his behalf. Since she loved him anyway; and love is honest, she should have stood by him, and probably found a way of dealing with the unrealistic father-in-law. After all, it was unfair for her to leave, yet the husband had until then loved and treated her well. She was not married to the father but the son. It was inconsiderate of her to treat her husband that way. Instead of being sympathetic towards the man she adds insult to injury by referring to him as a fool for not being able to stand up to and challenge his father for treating him badly. She abuses him,
"You fool. Why do you let your father treat you like a dog? Even if you can take it, I can’t take it any more" (184).

Although one would like to excuse Magu’s wife for the outburst, one cannot help wondering why she abuses him with such ease. Could there have been a possibility of her always abusing him, being disrespectful to him and therefore causing him unhappiness? She goes ahead to badly hurt him by taking off with his best friend. At this instance, the best friend too betrays Magu leaving him with no one to console him. He, thus, faces a double tragedy. Worse still, she leaves with both children yet Magu had lived with them as his. Magu should have been accorded paternity rights may be for one child as the other is left with the mother since he lived with, and took care of the children, and was an equal parent with the wife. This should have been so because fathering is not just about siring but about caring and nurturing. Once again, his rights are infringed on and he has nowhere to get redress. This incident helps to bring to fore the question of infertility in men.

Magu’s case allows us to interrogate the treatment society accords impotent men. Ouzgane and Morreli point out, “in a culture that rewards and locates masculinity in a man’s ability to father children, especially sons, the shame of sexual dysfunction is too stigmatizing to bear” (17). On his part, Taiwo categorically states, “a childless marriage has no place in African traditional life” (2). Traditional African society is very intolerant to sterile men.

Society torments infertile men as though they are squarely responsible for their plight. Society considers them less masculine. Hence, these are always a subject of scorn and open ridicule. They are considered useless and good for nothing and always attract
‘unprintable epithets’ from society with or without the slightest provocation. According to Christopher Okemwa in *The Gong*, people without children to create a lineage, are regarded as “true dregs of society and are treated with no care — like those animals in a zoo” (102). Society is always suspicious and non accommodative of this unfortunate lot and treats them as social lepers. Living with sterility, thus, becomes unbearable. Daniel Wako in *The Western Abaluyia and their Proverbs* notes that in indigenous Luhya culture, sterility was frowned upon even in death as a sterile man’s corpse was “removed from the house for burial not through the door but through a cut made behind the house” (29). It is no wonder the narrator in *Place of Destiny* concludes that “sterility in a man is worse than death in Africa” (184). Once again this incident highlights the plight of some men and calls for society to reconsider its values and how it treats the unfortunate among them.

Women too face societal injustice as is exemplified by the life of Akoko. When society finds that she was unable to give birth as quickly as they would have wanted, they begin to put pressure on her husband, Owuor Kembo, to marry another woman so as to bring forth numerous offspring’s. At this juncture, the researcher criticizes society for treating women as child minting machines. Society obstinately demands more children from Akoko, despite their full knowledge of the fact that she, as a woman, was only a vessel through which God realized creation of human beings, and as such had no control on her child bearing rate. Worse still, it did not bother them that hers were difficult births that would easily claim a mother’s life. Such was the magnitude of society’s insensitivity. Luckily for her she finds solace in her husband, who refuses to take on a second wife, and
instead considering the difficulty the wife encountered during child birth, earnestly wished that she did not have to deliver again.

4.3. Strong Male and Female Characters

The author has crafted visionary characters of both men and women. One such man is Chief Odero Gogni as depicted in *The River and the Source*. He is presented as one who values his children in equal measure; not discriminating them along sex lines. The chief, as early as the pre-colonial days, is happy to learn of the birth of his daughter. The narrator says that he took interest in the daughter when she was crying incessantly in a "rather unchiefly manner" (10). Thus, at this point, an already changed man is seen; a different man from the traditional men who deemed the business of nurturing children a wife’s only affair as they preoccupied themselves with more important matters like governance. In that case, the chief having many wives would have simply opted to ignore the child’s cries by taking refuge in one of the other wives’ houses. However, he chose to hang around in a concerned manner. Later on, we are told that the father’s affection for the girl was an open secret.

Akoko’s brothers too loved her and acted protectively towards her. At this point, the author is doing away with discrimination of children along gender lines. The chief’s support and value for his daughter instilled in her a comparatively rare sense of self worth that later in life saw her perform exemplarily as a chief’s wife and later as a change agent when she embraces Christianity and formal education.

Chief Owuor Kembo is also portrayed favourably as a man who observes tradition and a great King. A man of style, ‘Nyadhi,’ who respects his in-laws and a man who defies negative traditions if such tradition would require that he makes decisions that are
likely to harm his family. He is constructed as being principled and not easily swayed by
the current but remains steadfast in his decisions.

In *The River and the Source*, Owuor Kembo is presented as a rare kind of man
who takes keen interest in the welfare of his family. He is exemplary and honorable. He
is also a man of means who works hard and is wealthy. He, thus, does not find it difficult
to pay thirty heads of cattle as bride price for his wife, Akoko. He is a man of controlled
temper and was not ‘a contentious man’ (38). No wonder his wife missed him long after
his death. The narrator says that ‘she missed her husband, chief Owuor Kembo, and his
level headed approach to life in general and sticky problems in particular (124).

Obura Kembo comes out as a young man who is dutiful and respectful of his
parents. He is also presented as being adventurous as he sets out to go learn the ways of
the white man against his parents’ wishes. Owang Sino, Nyabera’s younger brother, too
is presented as a good steady lad with a level head and a lot of personal strength. He
cared for his parents and was hell bent on pacifying them following his brother’s
disappearance and the ensuing death. He unfortunately died prematurely from choking.

Oloo, Akoko’s brother, is portrayed as one who cares for his sister, Akoko. He
takes his sister back and acts protectively of her after she was battered and bruised by
life. He gave her a shoulder to lean on. Okumu, Nyabera’s husband, too was a gentleman
who lived with his wife peacefully. The DO and DC are, equally, represented as people
who dispense justice. They did not rule in favour of the chief, Otieno, when he had
disinherited his sister in – law, but accorded Akoko justice.

Owuor, Akoko’s grandson, is presented as a steady and determined learner, good
at mathematics and obedient to his grandmother and aunt. As a young man, he is mature
enough to console her aunt, Maria, when she is suffering from the guilt of having backslid from her new faith. He “dreamt of a life expended in service” (118), and manages to do just that. He later grows to be a successful and admirable priest. He who had never really known his father, or the joys of a father - son relationship, dreamt of being the spiritual father of many. He is devoted to his call to be a priest and perseveres through the priesthood training. He does it so well that he even gets an opportunity to travel to Rome: in those days not a mean feat indeed. He ended up doing his work so well, making “himself available to any troubled soul whatever the hour; but he was a happy man and became beloved of the people as his stocky figure in its familiar black cassock went in and out among them”(147-148).

Mark Anthony Sigu, Elizabeth’s suitor, is portrayed as a restrained person, well - mannered, cultured and one who upholds customs. He knows that it is only proper to pay a visit to a girl’s parents before living with her, and he precisely does that. He conducts himself in such an admirable manner that eventually wins him the confidence of the girl he so desperately wants to marry and that of her entire family. His character must have been truly outstanding to have quickly won the heart of Akoko, considering her discerning nature. He is a devoted family man who overcomes a false start in his marriage: had an extra marital affair. However, he is remorseful for his actions and resolves to put his family life straight and never looks back thereafter. Mark is also well educated by the standards of his time, pre-colonial Kenya; he also makes effort and furthers his studies and progresses professionally to a managerial position. He handles his parental duties remarkably and manages to bring up an admirable family conforming to
the adage: a man’s success is judged from the kind of family he brings up not the amount of money he makes.

Father Tony, like Father Peter before him, is presented as a person devoted to his calling. Tommy Muhambe, Vera’s boyfriend is termed a nice, polite and hard working young man who had been ‘good, faithful and loyal to his girl friend Vera. A rare man indeed!

In *The River and the Source*, the author creates a picture of Aoro as being swift, bright, confident and adventurous. He and Tony excel well in school unlike their twin brothers who are not as endowed academically. Aoro “was determined to get distinctions in Chemistry, Biology, and possibly physics and Maths” (196). Which he managed by attaining a perfect aggregate of six points; one of the best in the country. Aoro, furthers his education at the medical school and ends up as a proficient surgeon who “was much sought after for his unquestionable skill” (*I Swear by Apollo* 29). He is an admirable husband, an excellent father, a caring uncle, wonderful brother and obedient son. To some extent Wandia his wife outshines him but he is portrayed as a man of impeccable character.

Igana Mago, in *Place of Destiny*, is favourably presented as a child who has a false start in life. As a boy born to a teenage single mother, he ends up as a street child following his mother’s death. He is rescued and supported in a children’s home, where he overcomes his childhood problems turning into a prestigious professional – a medic. He does his work so remarkably and earns the admiration of Amor Lore whose daughter he ends up marrying. He is philanthropic and assists the less fortunate in society by setting
up a home for HIV infected children. Mago Igana is portrayed as irreproachable, intelligent, an understanding person and a responsible family man.

In *I Swear by Apollo*, Johnny is also portrayed as being focused with an exuberant personality, intelligent almost a genius for he not only undertakes medicine but is able to train as a pilot as well. He ends up as a hard working professional, patriotic, a man of integrity and above all a respectable husband and father. Agan Limbe, on the other hand, is portrayed positively as a boy who makes a girl pregnant but does not deny responsibility. He tries to look for this girl but is kept away by the girl’s harsh father. As a married adult, he is delighted to be united to the girl’s son and incorporates him into his family.

On the other hand, in *The River and the Source* the female character is presented as enigmatic, having extraordinary abilities as is exemplified in the character of Akoko. Right from the start, as a child, Akoko performs astoundingly when she is able to challenge her older siblings thereby marking out her territory. As a widow, she single handedly protects her family from torment by Otieno Kembo, her brother- in- law. She seeks redress from ‘Sirikal’ when the latter try to disinherit her and her only surviving toddler grand son who was to become chief upon attaining maturity. She is presented as a woman of many firsts through her actions and those of her lineage. She embraces both Christianity and formal education indirectly through her daughter, Nyabera, and grandson, Obura. This occurs when Obura eventually becomes a priest having forfeited chiefdom back at home. Elizabeth equally overcomes all odds against her to become an accomplished professional teacher. These two attain the said feats because of the support of their grandmother, Akoko. Akoko is presented as a strong character. She is beautiful,
outspoken, hardworking, principled, focused and organized. Nyabera, her only surviving child, is presented as being beautiful, and industrious although without a very strong personality. She is mature and respects her poor husband irrespective of her mother’s wealth. She comes across as a girl or woman full of wisdom.

Elizabeth Awiti is presented as a charming child with strong character. In her college days she is presented as a girl who observes chastity and is careful while with men. She remains focused and ends up an accomplished teacher as well as a wonderful mother with seven children that she properly takes care of.

In The River and the Source and I Swear by Apollo, Wandia is constructed quite acceptably as a mother, daughter, and wife. She succeeds in the world of family and that of academia. Her character is so exemplary that she manages a remarkable relationship with her mother-in-law. Her close relationship with Elizabeth baffles even Aoro, her husband, who wonders aloud why the two women who were “naturally” meant to be enemies, with him as the bone of contention with each one of them seeking to earn his approval over the other, do not behave as such. Her love for her mother-in-law is so intense that she is overwhelmed by her demise and ends up fainting during Elizabeth’s burial and later crying so profusely after her death. Long after she has been buried, Wandia keeps paying homage to Elizabeth at her grave.

The relationship between Wandia and her mother in–law is no mean feat and one that only she manages in the three texts. Wandia also becomes a wonderful foster mother to her husband’s niece and nephew after the passing on of their mother, Becky. She must have been marvelous to the children to have worn the heart of Alicia who rewards her by naming her daughter Wandia. In Africa, it is an honourable thing to be named especially
when one is still alive. She does quite well professionally by eventually acquiring a PhD in medicine. Wandia’s mother too is presented as a very hard working woman who successfully raises her children single-handedly after her husband’s demise.

Vera in *The River and the Source* is portrayed as likeable, brilliant and a leader at her school. As a young adult, she is quite reasonable and responsible to the extent that she sees nothing wrong in asking her father to allow her an opportunity to go to the movies with a boyfriend - Tommy Muhambe. This, she does to her siblings’ consternation. They look at her admirably, terming her a “champion sister!” (194). Vera is presented as independent minded. She defies society’s prescribed way of life by forfeiting marriage to end up as an Opus Dei. She is generally presented as mature, responsible and successful career woman.

In *I Swear by Apollo*, Sybil John’s wife is portrayed as a very strong character. She single handedly raises her siblings following their father’s death and their mother’s ensuing state of apathy. As an adult, she is paired up with a wounded man from a broken relationship – John. She works hard to help organize his life and eventually re-unites him with his African children. When John receives a letter from Africa informing him of the children’s whereabouts, he appears at lose of what to do and turns to her for advice. She tells him, “you will have to go and see the children, if you can call them that” (100). This conversation makes the turning point for John as he begins the treacherous journey of trying to connect with his African children. He meets them, experiences teething problems with his son, Johnny, who at first rejects him to his face. The latter, however, thaws after his father gives his side of the story regarding his parting with the mother. They establish a working father-son relationship courtesy of Sybil.
In *Place of Destiny*, Magu Igana’s mother, Rigia is presented as a young girl who succumbs to the demands of a love affair early in her life and ends up suffering for it. As a teenage mother, she is compelled to drop out of school and later take on odd jobs to take care of her son. It is while she is working as a prostitute that her dead body is discovered in some hotel room probably having been murdered by one of her clients.

Rigia is portrayed positively despite having engaged in sexual activities while young. Rigia is portrayed positively for various reasons: one, she never contemplated terminating her unwanted pregnancy despite the knowledge of her father’s no-nonsense attitude toward such matters. Secondly, she endures immense hardships that include selling groceries that involved strapping her child on her back as she went to the market to get her stock and dodging ruthless city council ‘askaris’. She only quits this business when it proved dangerous for the child. This was after the ‘askaris’ had brusquely pushed her into a lorry with little consideration about the child on her back: an act that almost had the child injured.

Rigia sacrifices education, among other things, to secure her child’s well being. Her son’s success somehow placates her suffering. She loved the boy and did not blame him for her misfortunes. Her love for him is what saw the boy through life’s hardships enabling him to turn out as he did – a child with stability and focus on what he wants in future.

4.4 Weak Male and Female Characters

The study deploys the term ‘weak’ to refer to limitations of human beings as determined by nature and nurture. In her quest to portray her characters as authentic, Ogola has created male and female characters that are weak, acknowledging that society
comprises human beings with “their own individual weaknesses” (Oloo 8). Her portrayal of weak male and female characters serves to thwart the notion that only one sex has weak characters. The message being that there are weak male characters as well as weak female characters in society. One such male character is Otieno Kembo in The River and the Source. Otieno Kembo is the quintessence of negative in-laws and the very opposite of his brother, Owour Kembo. He exists to show the undesired traits in men and the narrator says as much, “He is a bad person whose sole role in the text is to highlight the goodness of the good ones” (86).

Otieno Kembo is a wicked person, a glutton for both women and wealth. He is lazy and wants to reap where he does not sow. He is so indecent as to want to deprive his brother’s widow of her inheritance yet he feels that despite all his idiocy, his brother’s wife should still respect him. He acts insolently towards Akoko, insulting her as a “she wolf”. He begrudges her for no good reason. He acts callously towards her after her husband’s death adding her more misery instead of helping her cope with the loss of her man. The narrator brings these facts to our attention when she says:

Otieno Kembo took over the Chiefs stool with glee and sat on it with heavy arrogance. He appropriated his brother’s wealth and tried to grab his widow’s personal wealth as well. He married two new wives almost in a breath and his excesses were surpassed only by his folly. (66)

To show the extent of his greed, Akoko describes Otieno as a person “ruled by his stomach and directed by his loins” (86). In Akoko’s disdain for Otieno, Ogola’s argument is that men should first work hard so as to earn respect from women; that
men should not expect to earn respect from women by merely having the “right biological tools”.

In the depiction of the relationship between Otieno Kembo and Akoko, Ogola speaks against the age old tradition where society looks on as once materially endowed widows are frustrated upon the deaths of their husbands. Ray and Stitcher observe that even in modern society “there are reports of kinsmen not only claiming all resources of the deceased, including household effects, but even goods and income that widows have obtained through their own earnings” (72). This observation resonates with Ogola’s depiction of Otieno’s treatment of Akoko.

In the same league of weak characters, is Magu senior in Place of Destiny. He is the only male presented as very bad in the text; he is portrayed as the devil incarnate. He mistreats his family, causing them untold suffering. He sends away his son’s wife and throws his daughter out of his home following a teenage pregnancy. His high handedness in the running of his family affairs drives his other daughter to hate him so much that she refuses to name him as dictated by the Kikuyu custom. However, at the end of the text, he has realized his mistakes for he can now stand chiding from his wife. Magu Igana, the old man, eventually admits that he had caused suffering to many. He, however, turns a new leaf when he wholly accepts Rigia’s son and makes him his heir, a sign of change of heart.

As for Magu Junior, he is portrayed as being so docile that he cannot defend himself against his father. His wife, finding the father overbearing when he interferes with their family affairs, abuses Magu as being a fool for not challenging the unfair treatment meted on him by the old man. She consequently walks out on him. Magu
Junior is impotent and therefore suffers the indignity of being unable to bear children. To obtain temporary relief from his misery, he resorts to smoking, a fact that sees him contract cancer. He lives an unhappy and unfulfilled life and is a living dead man.

Female characters that are portrayed as weak include Magu senior’s wife. Mrs. Magu is portrayed as too docile to protect her children from their father’s cruelty. She is subservient to the extent of allowing her daughter to walk out of their home having been fed up by the torment from the father without her mother raising a finger. Her subservience is responsible for her daughter’s death and the unhappiness of the other children. This is derided. Her presence serves to show the author’s loathing of subservience in women. The author’s statement seems to be that a good woman should fight for her rights and those of her children. Like her husband, Magu Senior’s wife also changes in the end and is able to talk back at him. She too is liberated in the end hence fair representation is achieved.

In *The River and the Source*, another weak female character is Owang Sino’s wife who is presented negatively. She abandoned her son, Owuor, after her husband’s death. She moved on to remarry and never got to look for her child even after he had become an adult. In some traditional African societies if a man marries a woman with a child-sired by a different man, he always considers that child a stranger and does not accept him as his. For that reason most women usually leave male children in their paternal homes if they move away to join a different man (other than the child’s father) in marriage. These kinds of traditions are discriminatory of the male child as they deny them maternal love crucial for their growth and development. Ogola denounces such practices.
In *The River and the Source*, just like Owuor's mother, Becky too is presented as such a weakling. Although she is extraordinarily beautiful, she is also very egotistic and not very clever at school. She does not work hard at school and fails to pass her A-level examinations. News that their brother was very sick and had been rushed to hospital does not move her for “few things bored her as much as sickness, suffering and death” (171). Becky is depicted unfavourably as unreasonable and rebellious to the extent of contemplating marriage without the courtesy of informing her parents until her sister, Vera, convinces her otherwise. In her marriage, she becomes promiscuous and this behaviour puts her at logger heads with her husband. She sues for divorce which she obtains and later ends up sleeping around with men with the children’s full knowledge. This negatively affects the children. She abuses Vera when she tries to intervene at least for the children’s sake. Her lifestyle sees her contract HIV/AIDS. She eventually dies.

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.

On the other hand, Sybil’s mother in *I Swear by Apollo* is presented as a weak character without a strong will and who exists under the protection of her husband to the degree that when he dies, she breaks down and is unable to effectively manage her home. Her inert state jerks her young daughter, Sybil, to take charge of the family as
the mother wallowed in her mystery. We see a case of reversed roles as the daughter begins taking care of the mother to the point of finding her a job and to some degree even finding her another man. Sybil’s mother once again drowns in her new relationship and neglects her children, leaving them to fend for themselves. The resultant situation is that the two boys become truants. These are, however, rescued by their responsible sister who ensures they take their studies seriously.

The author’s depiction of Sybil’s mother in *I Swear by Apollo* is similar to that of Owuor’s mother in *The River and the Source*. Both women although continents apart display undesirable traits of being weak as parents and requiring the protection of men to flourish. Their response to their husbands’ deaths is potentially dangerous to their children who are left without the much crucial mother’s attention. In being so weak and consequently abdicating their parental responsibilities, the two pass the buck to other people causing them much strain as they fend for the abandoned children. In the case of Obura, it is Akoko, an old grandmother, who takes care of him with the help of her daughter Maria while Sybil is catapulted into a child parent as she cares for her other siblings. This representation is a critique of female characters that refuse to exploit their potential believing that theirs is a life beside men or no life at all. Ogola’s argument is that men are indeed very useful to women but that in their absence, life must still be lived to the full potential.

4. 5 Open Biases against Men

In the representation of both male and female characters, there are instances where the author seems to openly favour and elevate female characters who had otherwise been subdued even in their presentation in literature over the male ones
probably out of the spirit of sisterhood. Oloo is categorical that “Ogola gives all her female characters priority over the male ones” (8). She further points out that the author eliminates men in *The River and the Source* as they just keep dying to pave way for the women (5). That kind of presentation seems to send a wrong message that men and women cannot co-exist; that women cannot excel in the presence of men and that the men have to be excluded for women to be seen to perform: a position the researcher argues against. Ogola has always somehow incapacitated male children and not female ones.

In *The River and the Source*, and *I Swear by Apollo* the author relegates Danny to a very strenuous life where he experiences untold suffering until his death. Wandia and Aoro have several children to add to their two adopted ones. Danny, a boy, is born with Downe’s Syndrome and later contacts leukemia. Because of these conditions, he has challenges in his class work as well; “most of his grades however consisted of D’s an E’s” (*The River and the Source* 273). He suffers a lot of ailments because of his condition and has to be hospitalised every so often. His body wastes from the ravaging effects of disease that see his hair fall off on big patches. He leads his entire life depending on his parents. His is a rather painful life given the suffering he undergoes in the name of treatment. He succumbs to his ailments. It is important to point out that despite all his problems, Danny is presented as a hero who stoically bares his maladies. It is said of him that he never used to complain but always afforded a smile. The author uses the character of Danny to urge humanity to embrace courage in the face of adversity for adversity is part of humanity and people need to learn how to cope instead of allowing themselves to be weighed down by misfortunes.
In the construction of the Danny character, the author chooses the couple’s first child and a boy at that to be deformed and later die. Lisa, his twin sister, on the other hand, is beautiful and almost a genius at school. It is said that her parents worked hard in dissuading her teachers from having her jump classes owing to her brilliance at school. One can, therefore, not fail to ask why it is that Danny is the one born with Down’s Syndrome and not Lisa. This is unfair representation for the author chooses to make the boy child weak and sickly eventually eliminating him altogether.

In *I Swear by Apollo*, John Courtney, Sybyl Stanley’s husband, is portrayed as a wounded man from a past relationship; a man with emotional burdens that make it difficult for him to lead a free life. He is a great contrast of his wife, Sybil, who seems focused, knowing exactly what she wants out of life and consequently pursuing it while locking out all possible distraction. It seems John depends on Sybyl to organise his life; to tell him that he should go to Africa and see his children. He comes out as somebody with a weak personality and easily weighed down by circumstances.

John ought to still have remained strong enough and be present in his children’s early years of development after the end of his marriage to Becky as opposed to giving up altogether and taking refuge in his home country, Canada, temporarily and unsuccessfully locking out the African chapter of his life. His son, Johnny, therefore justifiably develops strong feelings of resentment towards him for abandoning them as children; making life quite unbearable for the two siblings. Even as a child, Johnny is convinced that nothing warranted the kind of treatment they received from their dad. According to Johnny, no amount of hurt from Becky justified his (John’s) handling of his children. Johnny, while
facing up to his father and expressing resentment and rejection, does not hesitate to ask him these difficult questions:

Where were you all the years when uncle and auntie here sat with me late while I finished my home-work? Where were you while they worried themselves sick whether I would turn out okay? Where were you while the other kids taunted me, calling me whitey, and I could have polished my face with black shoe polish? Where the hell were you! (118)

Through the depiction of John, as a father, the author reiterates her conviction that parents ought to be in the lives of their children unless they are truly dead and interred. For as Johnny laments above, nothing torments children like living a life without knowing the whereabouts of their parents especially when the latter are fully aware of the children’s existence. These feelings of rejection by parents mete untold suffering marked by deep psychological wounds to the children. To abate this, parents should heed the call and participate in the lives of their children.

The message brought through the life and character of John is that life is truly a treacherous journey full of rivers and valleys and sometimes when one is lucky one comes across alternating smooth undulating plains that must be crossed to reach one’s destiny. Thus, it is important for human beings to adequately arm themselves with this kind of knowledge as opposed to expecting life to be a straight line because it will never be. Humanity must reckon that “suffering is inherent in the paradox of human existence” (Place of Destiny 21). Human beings must, therefore, face strenuous and consequently trying moments of their lives valiantly and perform their God given responsibilities like
parenting determinedly for nothing less is demanded of them. Accordingly, John having failed this crucial life test comes through as a weak character expecting life to pamper him.

In portraying John as a weak character, the author makes him refer to himself as an idiot after realizing how thoughtful and caring his wife was by being the first one to suggest that he goes to meet his children. He ponders: “I’ve been an idiot, but I want you to know that I love you very much and I don’t deserve you at all” (100-101). The researcher questions why John did not deserve the kind of woman, that is, Sybil and feel this is a bit unfair to present the man as being emotionally weak even vacillating.

Of the three texts studied, *Place of Destiny* seems to have favoured men more than the other two. This could be explained as a change in authorial intention by the author as she moves towards being more sensitive to the plight of men. As it were, authorial intentions do change. Although the main character, a woman, is presented as emotionally strong, financially steady, well organised with brains, she is also presented as not being very physically attractive. Compared to her spouse, Mwaghera, who is physically attractive and an accomplished scholar, the man although portrayed as highly responsible is also weak and existing in his wife’s shadow. This is evidenced by the fact that Amor, despite being very ill and on the verge of her demise is still courageous to face her predicament more than Mwaghera to the extent that she continues to encourage him to accept her condition and imminent death. Mwaghera finds this situation unbearable and on several occasions breaks down by weeping in the presence of his sick wife. On the other hand, Amor is very strong in facing her plight that she even broaches the idea of Mwaghera remarrying after her death.
Comparatively, this representation portrays the man as spineless to the degree that the wife must plan for his life before her death. The implication being that the man is unable to organize his affairs and therefore the ailing wife must help him do so before her demise. Now, while it is in order for the man to express his feelings of distress, one wonders whether it was right to do so in the presence of the sick partner and whether seeing him devastated would not discourage the patient who was otherwise handling her situation positively. It would have been prudent for him to break down before anyone else other than the wife. In Mwaghera’s character, men are portrayed as lacking inner strength and therefore easily weighed down by situations.

The author gives Amor and Mwaghera four children with only one being male and even this male comes in together with another as a twin. Unfortunately, the author makes the boy physically handicapped with cerebral palsy and has to move about with a limp while his twin sister comes out perfect. The other two children are girls who perform well at school. One of the older girls, Malaika, is portrayed as being overly conscious of herself to the extent that she fails to notice her mother’s ailment.

Another glaring unfairness in the representation of male characters is that of the Amor’s as well as Mwaghera’s brothers. Amor’s just as the Mwaghera’s brothers never made it in life. On the other hand, their female siblings seem to outdo the males and emerge as very useful people in the society. As a female, Amor ends up as a well-schooled human resource professional running her own business and her sister, Lera, though not equally educated seemed to make a decent living from farming and running small-scale business as opposed to their brothers. One dies at about thirty and the other
is an almost useless drunk who cannot sustain a marriage and who passes the buck of raising children to his mother.

In *The River and the Source*, as professionals, both men and women excel in their respective fields. Mark does well as a manager at his firm and Elizabeth excels as a primary school teacher. Wandia is a professor, while Aoro is a first class surgeon. Both Father Peter and Anthony do exceptionally well as men of the cloth. Nevertheless, the women seem to outdo the men, somehow. Why, for example, must Wandia get the equivalent of a PhD in Medicine and not Aoro.

4.6 Conclusion

In the analysis of the representation of male and female characters, the researcher concludes that both male and female characters are presented in a favourable light. However, to some degree, men are subordinate to women as they seem to exist in their shadows. The main characters in two of the three novels are female. These are Akoko and Elizabeth in *The River and the Source* and Amor in *Place of Destiny*. It is only in *I Swear by Apollo* that Johnny, a male character, features as a protagonist beside Wandia. The author has created men and women of desirable and undesirable characteristics in equal measure. Hence the researcher’s position: there has been balanced representation of the sexes.

The concluding chapter focuses on a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study set out to investigate the representation of male characters in Ogola’s three novels. This chapter examines whether the study accomplished its three major objectives. The two theories employed by the researcher were very useful as they made it possible to interrogate the novels. The deconstruction theory was especially useful in enabling the researcher to examine the texts from a different perspective. The theory that borders on the seemingly forgotten aspects of a work of art had the researcher focusing on the male character that had hither been taken for granted by earlier critical works on Ogola. This in turn helped the researcher bring to fore the hidden treasures in the works. The reader response theory, in complementing the deconstruction theory, encouraged and enabled the researcher to adopt an unconventional interpretation of the texts since the theory thrives on multiplicity of meaning. Through the two theories, the researcher has been able to portray Ogola’s texts as narratives about men.

The study’s first objective was to identify the types of male characters in the three selected novels. A close reading and consequent analysis of the texts reveal that the male characters’ could be classified into two: those who subscribe to traditional and subsequently repressive male socialization and those who triumph over the chains of patriarchy and uphold emancipated masculinity.

Male characters who succumb to the chains of repressive masculinity, it has been revealed, are in a rat race competing for the ‘laurels of masculinity’ while trying to outdo one another in fulfilling set standards of masculinity as dictated to them by society.
These, therefore, value mannerisms such as male chauvinism and subsequent objectification of women. These are sexually amorous. They pursue wealth unscrupulously; practise selfishness and disregard other people's feelings; are aggressive and have a propensity to crime. They are 'total' men who shun display of emotions and are averse to emotional attachment in relationships.

As husbands, they maintain a servant – master relationship with their wives. They are also domineering and in control - making all the major decisions pertaining to the running of their homes. As parents, they are unlikable and do not display tenderness and love towards their children. Additionally, these abdicate their responsibility towards their children by leaving them in the hands of their women. These men can, therefore, be dismissed as being “absent” fathers for they limit their responsibility towards their children to material provision. They also “know it all” and do not seek advice, especially from women. This category of men is disempowered as it harbours feelings of inadequacy and is ashamed of itself for having failed to perform to the prescribed standards of masculinity. This is the case because the prescribed standards of masculinity are unrealistic and, therefore, unattainable.

The dilemma of being unable to perform to expectation has left men who subscribe to traditional masculinity in constant frustration that puts them at risk of suffering from coronary ailments owing to the pressure exerted upon them by society. These men then resort to unhealthy habits such as drinking and smoking as coping mechanisms in facing the various life challenges. They are, as a result, at risk of dying young. The study recommends awareness creation to society in general to re - evaluate its
stand on male sex roles as these are a burden to men and a slow but sure killer of the men.

On the other hand, the analyses have established the existence of a different crop of men who practise and uphold liberated masculinity. The study argues that men have not been fairly represented in literary works; that contrary to perception, indeed there are men who defy conventional masculinity standards and chart an alternative course to masculinity.

The study argues that Ogola’s portrayal of men who shun traditional masculinity is indeed appreciation of these otherwise unsung heroes. It is recognition of exemplary responsibility shouldered by these men who give security, direction and care to their families with the aim of cheering them on to keep up with the excellent job. The study has ascertained that there are men who do not live with their wives like “cats and dogs” but instead, live with them in an environment of peace, love and tranquillity. These, together with their spouses, treasure their marriages, treating their partners as equal in terms of decision-making. They enjoy mutual understanding and receive love. They equally lavish their spouses with the same love.

Men who shun traditional masculinity do not objectify their women but treasure and respect them and, therefore, do not engage in multiple irresponsible sexual relations. These men are the defenders of their spouses to the extent of defying cultural traditions, when these dictate that they hurt the feelings of their spouses. Such was the case with Chief Owuor Kembo, Akoko’s husband, who tenaciously refuses to take on another wife because his wife gave birth rather “slowly”. Such men, the study has shown are worthy companions to their wives, spicing up this treacherous journey that is life.
Focus on men who practise liberated masculinity is a recognition of those men who single-handedly take care of their children after divorce and after they have been widowed; men who take care of their unplanned for children; men who protect their daughters from the jaws of hostile in-laws out to disinherit them; men who spend sleepless nights watching over their newborns as they cry from colic related complications; men who are present to whisper words of encouragement to their battered and bruised sisters; men who lay down their lives to provide for their families in these hard economic times. As fathers, they take on the responsibility of bringing up their children unreservedly. They dedicate their lives to their offspring, not only as providers, but also participate in the nurturing of their children with gusto. They do not hang around bars drinking with friends as their wives juggle household chores together with handling of the children. They arrive home in good time to take the babies off their busy mothers’ hands to the latter’s relief. They will not hesitate to wake up the children, fix their breakfast and walk them to kindergarten as their mothers go shopping. They are not embarrassed to change diapers and taking turns at night with their wives in watching over their newborn. These relate with their children with a lot of understanding, running their homes democratically and nurturing confidence in the lives of their children. They are teachers of their children; leading by example as role models and not adopting the “do as I say and not as I do” stand. As professionals, these men approach their work with diligence and are unpretentious. They are men of integrity.

The study’s second objective was to examine whether Margaret Ogola redefines her male characters. To this end, the analyses have indicated that Ogola has redefined male characters in her works by shunning traditional male socialization where men were
discouraged from displaying emotions such as crying. These, she achieves through the character of Mark in *The River and the Source* when he sheds tears for having succumbed to the temptation of having an illicit relationship outside marriage. In *I Swear by Apollo*, John openly cries before his wife upon receiving information regarding his African children. Mwaghera in *Place of Destiny* cries painfully as he faces his wife’s imminent death following a battle with cancer.

In Ogola’s world, men are not unnecessarily aggressive or always prone to arrogant harassing of those around them. On the contrary, these men remain humble despite their admirable professional and academic achievements. They are not obsessed with acquisition of wealth for they recognize wealth as a useful ingredient in life but not a panacea for all life’s problems. These men thus put humanity before wealth. Men in Ogola’s world are out to destroy the foundations of patriarchy. They instead observe equality with women and respect them for their brains. They do not perceive them as some trophies to be won but fellow human beings that one can constructively engage with.

The third objective was to compare and contrast the portrayal of male and female characters in the works of Ogola. The study has also revealed that Ogola has fairly constructed desirable and undesirable female as well as male characters. On this front, however, we discovered occasions where the author openly favoured female characters. For example, she deliberately eliminates the males from the scenes especially in *The River and the Source* where we experience a string of such deaths. Apart from death, the author also tended to incapacitate the male children while creating above average and sometimes perfect female characters as is the case in *I Swear by Apollo*, where Wandia
and Aoro give birth to twins – a boy and a girl but the boy has a congenital condition – Down’s Syndrome that affects his brain confining him to scoring only Cs and Ds at school while the girl is almost a genius, scoring A’s only. The same stereotyping is evident in *Place of Destiny* where Pala, the only male child to the Mwaghera’s, has a false start as a child with a medical condition, cerebral palsy, that leaves him with a disfigured head and a slight limp. These observations lead to the conclusion that while the men have been given some space and recognition, they are still unfavourably portrayed vis-a-vis women.

5.2 Conclusions

The analyses of Ogola’s representation of male characters in this study demonstrate that the author’s construction of the male character is a departure from the more common portrayal by other authors like Achebe, Ngugi, Kimenye, and Meja Mwangi, to mention only a few, who have stuck to conventional male socialization in their construction of male characters.

5.3 Recommendations

This study limited itself to the representation of male characters in three of Ogola’s novels. The researcher, therefore, recommends a similar study on Ogola’s other literary works. Additionally, a comparative study should be conducted on Ogola’s representation of male characters and the representation of male characters by other female writers across Africa such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta and Grace Ogot. Such studies, it is believed, will enrich the already available criticism on women’s writing.
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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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