

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMALE SELF AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN
SELECTED KENYAN WOMEN'S WRITINGS**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any other university:

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to the four pillars in my life: The Almighty God, my parents, my husband and our children.

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to investigate development of the female self and national identity in selected Kenyan women's writings. The interrogation of the numerous female identities that are the concern of this study focuses on patriarchy, disease, ethnicity and violence as forces that interfere with women's sense of selfhood, belonging to, and claiming the nation. The writings under discussion produce meaning within feminist and postcolonial literary discourses. Thus, feminist and postcolonial theoretical approaches are used as the tools for analyses of development of female self and national identity in patriarchal and modern societies. In both cases, women's self-identity is to a large extent denied. Even though they appropriate gender roles, often, women question the subjective place that patriarchal order assigns and perpetuates in regard to women. In the contemporary society, disease subjugates women even though they are affirmed as part of the nation while violence leads to helplessness and pessimism and hence the need for agency towards women's progressive social change. The question of the female self and national identity is also addressed with regard to ethnicity, sexuality, gender, social and political classes. The findings are that ethnic, sexual, gender, social and political affiliations suppress the development of the female self.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The question of identity is ever evolving especially to the extent it plays on gender matters. In order to re-examine contemporary female identities, there is need to interrogate women's self as expressed in women's writings. The need to perceive one's self is a central part of female experience in patriarchal and contemporary societies. Women writers not only seek to portray issues that affect women out of necessity of survival, but also out of their desire to understand and link women to a past which continues to shape the female experience in the present as represented in women's emerging literary trends. Women's writings are created from many social changes and frustrations that women encounter throughout their lives. Postcolonial Kenyan notions of selfhood and nationhood represent problematic issues with regard to gender, patriarchy, disease, ethnicity and violence.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to closely analyse women writers' representations of female identities in selected women's writings with the aim of demonstrating that there are issues that burden women in Kenya today. The study introduces and explores issues in regard to the question of what affects women's selfhood and nationhood and seek to challenge notions about patriarchy, disease, ethnicity and violence. Even though women's positions are not acknowledged especially in patriarchal order since women are defined by men, women more than men are central in the chores of the family unit. Women writers endeavour to recreate the image of women as they see them. They view the contribution of women as significant to society and seek to challenge historical, cultural and mythic barriers in a bid to represent them in proper perspectives.

This study is pegged to the notion that women's writings, though viewed as peripheral in as far as nationhood is concerned, often narrate issues related to both selfhood and nationhood. The central concern of this study is to investigate the centrality of women in national issues by evaluating women's writings. Evaluating how the specific experiences that affect women as women and as postcolonial Kenyan citizens help women to realise their divergent identities. This is in recognition of women as the 'other' voices, unheard voices whose selfhood in the nation has inadequately been voiced in national matters.

The focus is on the interrogation of the female self in patriarchal and postcolonial societies whereby women are subjugated and allocated subservient roles that define women in relation to men. In both cases, women try to fit into gender roles before they begin to question their subjective place and start clamouring for change to foster their new identities. Women's self-identity is interrogated with regard to feminists' and women's writings perceptions of the 'self' and 'other.' The integration of the self and the nation as configured through contemporary visions of female identity is an exploration focusing on female characters represented as symbolic of the lives of Kenyan women. The women's writings that are singled out for discussion provide an enabling environment to conceptualise identity and the relationship between an individual and the nation.

Recognising new women's writings, this study views writing as the site of complex negotiation of self and national identity in Kenya from the late 20th to 21st Century. The argument in this study is that the female self in contemporary Kenya needs to be historicised in terms of the self and the postcolonial nation. The female self acquires prominence in this study as a mode of feminist and postcolonial interrogation which seeks to examine how women's writings foster women's selfhood in relation to the postcolonial nation. The dialectic relationship between the

construction of selfhood and nationhood on the one hand and literature on the other, amounts to articulation of a national and self-ideology. The contention of this research is that women in literature and women as producers of literary texts reflect the heterogeneity of women's experiences in the postcolonial era. The semi-autobiographical and fictional writings selected for this study are expected to bring out a significant engagement of women in national issues.

The self designates a person's need to be independent, to become self-conscious or even self (re)conceptualised in an effort to realise selfhood and nationhood in the socio-cultural and socio-political spheres. The concern of this study is the literary representation of the lives of female characters within the context of the social life of the Kenyan nation in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo*, and *Place of Destiny*; Florence Mbayi's *A Journey Within*; Moraa Gitaa's *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold*; Wanjiru Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit*; Muthoni Garland's *Tracking the Scent of My Mother*, and *Halfway Between Nairobi and Dundori*; and Wambui Githiora's *Wanjira*.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This study investigates how identity is conceptualised in the relationship between the individual and her/his homeland or nation. The sexual category that forms the basis of this study is the female whose identity, like its male counterpart, is considered to be dependent on the nation and is crucial in the construction of the self. It is crucial because the self evolves partially as influenced by the nation and hence the self, as inwardly imagined and outwardly projected through various engagements in national happenings, requires to be investigated. Doing so would aid in understanding how women discover selfhood alongside nationhood with regard to patriarchy, disease, ethnicity and violence as experiences which give rise to the female self and national identity. The analysis of representations of female identities from women writers' view

point is an area of scholarly research which ought to be done on women's writings. This study, therefore, interrogates how contemporary women's writings recast the Kenyan nation alongside the multiple identities that women assume and the roles they perform at the individual, private, public and national levels. It explores the relationship between the self and the nation.

1.3 Objectives

- (i) To examine female writers (re)conceptualisation of the female self.
- (ii) To analyse representations of women's subjectivity and its effect on the female self and national identity in postcolonial.
- (iii) To evaluate the socio-cultural and socio-political problematical question of the female self and national identity within the framework of the postcolonial Kenyan nation.
- (iv) To interrogate women writers' perspectives on the effect of socio-political surroundings on the development of the female self and national identity.

1.4 Hypotheses

- (i) Female writers establish the female self-identity in relation to a series of differences between the 'self' and 'other'.
- (ii) Contemporary women's writings provide space to (re)define new identities for the female self.
- (iii) Literature provides space to contextualise the link between the self and the nation.
- (v) Women writers view self and socio-political surroundings as inextricably linked to the development of the female identity and national identity.

1.5 Justification for the Study

A person's sense of self seeks to answer the questions: Who am I? Where do I belong? Answers to such questions, though simply summed up as positive or negative make self-identity a complex interrogation since self-identify assumes relevance with the here and now as well as with who and what one is likely to become in the future. The development of self is an important index in the process of identity formation. Issues of how the nation shapes selfhood are germane in contemporary Kenya as a nation grappling with post colonialism where identities are unpredictable. There are no studies that have formally addressed how the nation shapes women's self- hood in a full length scholarly discussion. It is important to understand how identity relates to the nation and to emergent literary trends, given that identity is always understood relationally.

The women writers selected for this study have textualised an implicit relationship between narration of the female self and the nation. The writers have attempted to question the problematic female self-identity within the frame work of the postcolonial nation and have pegged identity in relation to women and nationalism. Conceiving the nation through contemporary women writings in Kenya from the late 20th C to-date is aimed at projecting the national construction of selfhood and nationhood as a dialectic process, one always in the formation. There is need, therefore, to investigate the implications of this ideological relationship so as to gain contemporary insights into women's struggles in performing nationhood. Women's writings are read as a process through which a sense of interdependence of the female self and the nation is realised. Thus the effect of the postcolonial nation on the development of female self and national identity ought to be interrogated.

1.6 Literature Review

The three key elements that are the concern of this thesis are: selfhood and female identity, national identity, and writings by Kenyan female writers. The literature reviewed in this section is aimed at identifying the identity gap in knowledge that this study sets out to fill and the theoretical approaches that have used towards that end.

In as far as selfhood and female identity are concerned, Kenyan women writers have articulated women's search for self-identity in an environment characterised by transition and new socio-political realities that define female self-identity. Among these writers are Carolyn Adalla in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* (1993), Marjorie Macgoye in *Chira* (1997), *Coming to Birth* (1996) and *The Present Moment* (1997), and Muthoni Likimani in *Passbook Number F.47927* (1998), *What Does a Man Want* (1974) and *Fighting Without Ceasing* (2005).

Alex Nelungo Wanjala has examined women's identity in Marjorie Macgoye's *Coming to Birth*. His focus is "how the gendered subaltern has been presented in Kenyan literature" (1). Wanjala illustrates how the author presents the figure of the gendered subaltern in Kenya. Chakravorty Gayatri Spivak maintains that "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow" (32). The subaltern in this case refers to women as a social group excluded from the Kenyan nation. In this study, the presentation of women as a group outside the hegemonic male power structure is examined. In addition, the study also interrogated how women's writings provide a flexible environment within which the subaltern can be accommodated in the national realm of the nation.

Literary works that are predominantly sociological and semi-autobiographical in nature explore women's search for identity in a bid to accord women multiple voices and experiences. According to Jennifer Muchiri, female autobiographical works are a tool for women's self-

exploration since they “address the concept of growth by taking the form of a journey. This movement affords auto biographers a sense of discovery of their identity” (28). The present study hopes to further explore women’s self-identity from semi-autobiographical and fictional literary works by underpinning the relational nature of the female self and national identity.

Women’s selfhood refers to women’s overall perceptions of their individuality, egocentricism, abilities, behaviour and personality. In addressing the question of selfhood, there is need to review various perceptions of the female self with the first reference being made to the patriarchal order. According to Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, patriarchal notions silence women’s voices, distort their lives, and treat that which concerns them as peripheral such that “to be a woman is [is] in some respect not to exist at all” (765). With the patriarchal repression that has consigned women’s agency in Kenya to the periphery of social life, there is need to recognise and accord women voices, and to present their lives and experiences objectively.

In their search for identity, women express essential accounts of their experiences especially the ones that have had a brunt on the most instantaneous and enduring areas of their lives as women and citizens. Their aim is to question ideas and attitudes that put them at the margin of the mainstream, forcing them to rethink their self-identity. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar observe that “for all literary artists, of course, self-definition necessarily precedes self-assertion: the creative ‘I AM’ cannot be uttered if the ‘I’ knows not what it is. But for the female artist the essential process of self-definition is complicated by all those patriarchal definitions that intervene between her and herself” (812). The need for women’s realisation of themselves is underscored as a project aimed at making women capable of perceiving their personality so that they can assert their own self-identity. Only then can they say, ‘I AM’ as a particular category of

people with a right to be who they are and to put up a challenge to be allowed their rightful social space in Kenya. The use of the pronoun 'I' is an important discousal leap towards autonomy.

The search for independence becomes relevant in the interrogation of the narrative conception of the self that makes the idea of the self and identity intelligible without concealing the difference between women and men and without shielding the self from socio-cultural and socio-political relations. This is necessary because a woman is:

not only excluded from culture (whose emblem might well be the pen) but she also becomes herself an embodiment of just those extremes of mysterious and intransigent otherness which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing. (Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar 814)

Representation of women's search for identity becomes a tool for enhancement of the denied autonomy that is represented by the pen. This implies that the woman is viewed within a prototype of both 'self' and 'other' in the expression of personal autonomy, and hence woman's search for self-identity mediates between the self and the other.

Notions of self/other binary oppositions make postcolonial theoretical criticism a relevant tool of analysis with regard to development of the female selves and national identity. Postcolonial theory is concerned with identity formation and construction in regard to marginalised groups. In a colonial state the Africans are other than the whites while in a patriarchal society women are other than the men. Thus, post colonialism is applicable in the interrogation of women's experiences in a society such as Kenya where a woman is generally viewed as relative to man, and without autonomy. She is therefore differentiated with reference to man; but man is autonomous and hence referred to without any reference to woman. He is the 'self' while she is the 'other' According to Sally Scholz, the main aim of 'Simone Beauvoir [']

The Second Sex is to explore the question 'why women are the second sex' (1). In other words, why are women the 'other'? In 'The Second Sex,' Beauvoir further argues that women throughout history have been defined as the 'other' sex, an 'abnormality' from the 'normal' male sex. Thus 'the self is the self in relation to that which is other' (Scholz 2). Rather than view this condition as something to be transcended, Beauvoir claims its advantage in that it provokes women to disapprove the norms, principles and practices that patriarchy imposes on them.

This study, therefore, proceeded on the premise that women struggle to achieve selfhood and identity to make themselves visible within the social and political power structure that governs gender power relations in the patriarchal order. Peter Wasamba castigates the patriarchal order which supports the subjectivity of women. He says, 'Patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological differences between men and women to ensure that men always have the dominant roles while women contend with subordinate ones' (17-18). This argument underscores the need for women to transcend patriarchal gendered perspectives which perpetuate female subjectivity and exclusion from national issues. The women's writings selected for this study indict patriarchal order. An investigation of the development of the female self in this thesis sets out to criticise patriarchal gendered perspectives that undermine women. By so doing, the woman's self-perspective has been brought on board to address women's identity with regard to performance of nationhood and thereby consign agency to women.

In her analysis of Carolyne Adalla's *Confessions of an Aids Victim* and Marjorie Macgoye's *Chira*, Marie Kruger observes that:

feminist and cultural studies' postcolonial and postmodern theory have become increasingly concerned with narrative and the formation of individual and cultural identities' [this forms an explanation of] the growing interest in the study of narrative, in

particular the individual lives, [that] proceeds from the premise that the self [í] is essentially constructed by or through the narrativeí . (2)

In so doing, women writers assign agency to women's identity in the nation. Kruger also states that:

The title of Carolyn Adalla's epistolary novel, *Confessions of an Aids Victim*, already intertwines the process of narration, of confessing a life story, with the rather problematic identity of 'victim,' an existence often associated with a lack of social and narrative agency.(2)

This points to the need to provide advocacy to issues that affect women in Kenyan society. This study is not only concerned with selfhood and female identity but also women's place in the postcolonial nation. This is because the nation is deemed to have an influence on the development of women's identity. Narration of women's selfhood and identity, therefore, plays a central role in defining women's national identity with regard to the interconnection of women's personal lives with the nation's history. The study also views women as significant in the definition of the Kenyan nation and argues that the interconnectedness between women and national history cannot be ignored.

Women's identity and self-expression is a concern that women writers are preoccupied with. Nevertheless, there are notions that men's writings still dominate the literary production. This prompts Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie to ask, "Are African women voiceless or do we fail to look for voices where we may find them, in the sites and forms which these voices are uttered?" (139). The implication here is that women's voices have to be sought from women's writings that are feminist in nature.

Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter* describes women's experiences in Senegal. The author gives her female protagonists voices towards accomplishment of self-awareness. The descriptions of female characters' self-determination and fulfilment constructed in *So Long a Letter* through Aissatou and Ramatoulaye portray gender inequality. The two female protagonists in Ba's epistolary novel refuse to be defeated by repressive aspects of tradition and they fight gender oppression. Ba constructs female characters who respond differently to marriage problems.

Through narrative voice, Ba assigns women voices to speak and become visible for instance Aissatou. Once she is fed up with her husband's marriage of a second wife, Aissatou stripes herself of his love, name, "clothed in [her] dignity, the only worthy garment" (Ba 32), she goes her way. Through Aissatou, Ba demonstrates women's determination to overcome the obstacles that confront them. Ramatoulaye who is older than Aissatou remains in her marriage when her husband takes a second wife. She remains "faithful to the love of [her] youth" (Ba 56). Ramatoulaye is abandoned by her husband, but even though she is disillusioned and unable to exert full control over her life and experiences pain after she is deserted, she tries to lead a meaningful life and refuses to entertain other men into her life.

In an interview in 1980, Ba is cited by Nfah-Abbenyi saying that "There is a cry everywhere, everywhere in the world a woman's cry is being uttered. The cry may be different but there is still a certain unity" (8-9). The cries point at the various forms of suffering that women of all walks of life experience due to oppression, subjugation and disempowerment experienced by the women in Senegal. The same fate affects women in Kenya as portrayed in the texts interrogated in this study. Thus, women are unable to become the epitomes of fulfilled female selves. The selected women writers and their writings examined in this study just like

Mariama Baø *So Long a Letter*, provide a medium through which women are able to ventilate their outlooks on patriarchy.

Buchi Emecheta in *The Joys of Motherhood* explores how women suffer in patriarchal societies in which their identities are acknowledged only in terms of their motherhood roles. Through her female protagonist, Nnu Ego, Emecheta depicts how women strive to achieve their socially constructed role as mother. In this novel, Emecheta opposes forms of gender oppression even though she respects African womenø identities and roles mothers. She questions mandatory motherhood whereby a womanø selfhood is challenged in the event that she fails to get children. The authors aim is to uphold patriarchal traditions which are of value to women and reject those which work to the disadvantage of women. Emecheta relates Nnu Egoø story by drawing attention to some of the basic tenets of patriarchal in Nigeria where women are denied independent lives of their own in order to serve men. In her two marriages, Nnu Ego is bound by societal expectations to bear many children since womanhood in her society is defined through procreation. Consequently, women are not only forced to find their identity through their roles as mothers, but they are also identified in relation to men, as wives, mothers and daughters.

Just like Emecheta, some of the women writers considered in this study for instance Margaret Ogola in *The River and the Source*, venerate the African woman as a mother but questions compulsory motherhood and the traditional preference of sons.

Florence Mbayaø *A Journey Within* which I critique here is also studied in this thesis. The novel portrays womenø contribution in the development of their selfhood and nationhood. Mbaya demonstrates the changing roles of the African woman through the protagonist, Monika who makes efforts to actualise herself and contribute to the growth of the nation. She is portrayed as

performing both teaching and co-curricular activities with distinction at a time when she is expecting her first child.

The theories of criticism used in this study, feminism and postcolonial theory, interrogate women's experiences in feminist and postcolonial circles. The highlight is on women's experiences and the marginal space allocated to them. This study has also used gynocriticism. One may wonder why African feminism is not used as a tool of analysis in this study even though it concerns itself with women's experiences just like gynocriticism and postcolonial theory. It is worth noting that African feminism recognises that there are some inequalities in contemporary African societies and colonialism also induced others. Colonialism, in the words of Ashis Nandy is "a world view which believes in the absolute superiority of the human over the nonhuman and the subhuman, the masculine over the feminine" (11). The colonizers subjugate men and as a result, men become defensive and aggressive in an effort to assert themselves. As a result of emasculation, men marginalised women in political nationalist activities. Apparently, the concerns that African Feminism raises are better addressed by using feminism and postcolonial theoretical approaches.

African feminism just like gynocriticism is a theoretical approach that seeks to advocate and enhance women's emancipation in a society dominated by patriarchy. However, unlike gynocriticism which is a definite concept that is specifically defined, African feminism is not a definite concept that can be exclusively defined. Consequently, African feminism has not been singled out as an appropriate theoretical tool for use in this study. Emecheta says she is an African feminist with small -f. She is cited by Nfah- Abbenyi as saying:

I write about little happenings of everyday life. Being a woman, and African born, I see things through African Woman's eyes. I chronicle the little happenings in the life of the

African woman I know. I did not know that by so doing I was going to be called a feminist. But if I am now a feminist then I am an African feminist with a small f. (7)

Emecheta said this during the 1986 Stockholm Second African Writers' Conference. She presents women's writings as best placed to portray women's experiences and hence labels herself as an African feminist with a small 'f'. This attests to the fact that African women writers have their own varied definitions of African Feminism despite the fact that it is shaped by women's experiences of inequality and the need to foster equality.

Gynocriticism is, therefore, deemed as an important tool of analysis as a field of feminist activity that is concerned with the various issues that affect women. Furthermore, gynocriticism as a concept can clearly be defined and acknowledges the agency and potential of women all over the world. Gynocriticism adequately addresses issues to do with women in patriarchal and postmodern era where women have become increasingly aware of themselves and their need to challenge their subordinate place to foster selfhood as well as nationhood.

(Re)writing and (re)claiming women's place in the nation is considered to be relevant to the intersection of female and national identity. In discussing the question of nationhood, there is a need to bring on board various perceptions of the nation since its ideological construct is variously conceived. According to Eric Hobsbawm, the nation "belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent period. It is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial states, the 'nation-state'" (9-10). Hobsbawm notes further that "The 'national question' is situated at the point of intersection of politics, technology and social transformation" (10). This view points at the dialectic relationship between a nation and the various functions performed by the people living in that nation.

The idea of the nation as a communion of people is also highlighted by Ernest Renan who views the nation as:

í a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the presentí consent, the desire to live together. The will to perpetuate the value of the heritage one has received in an undivided form. (1)

The imagination of the nation is bound with the imagination of the past, the memorisation and the remembrances of the nation's origins.

For Anderson, the nation exists in the imagination and although people may be living in one nation, they may not know one another õyet in the minds of each lives the image of their communionö (6). Despite the contradictions that may exist, the nation has to foster unity with the kinship, the past, and the perceived common destiny being mobilised for this purpose. Hobsbawm characterises the nation as a political unit which consists õof citizens whose collective sovereignty constituted them a state which [is] their political expressionö (18-19). Whichever definition one may choose to adopt, they all highlight the interconnectedness of the nation and the people living in that nation and thereby introduce the idea of nationalism.

Identifying the limitations of women in engaging in nationalism, it is necessary to incorporate lived experiences of women in feminism and nationalism. Elleke Boehmer points out that õwomen's life-narratives have been regarded as subsidiary to defining national mythsö (255). The implication is that women as a category and their writings have been disregarded in national issues. This is despite the notion that women's writings õexplore the intricate interconnection of personal lives with the nation's official history. They demonstrate how women occupy intersecting spacesö (Boehmer 255). However, nationalism has been a predominantly male

project, contrary to the factual position that women participate in the fight for freedom. Muthoni Likimani's *Passbook Number F.47927* highlights female participation in Kenya's liberation struggle and hence distinguishes women freedom fighters as nationalists.

The concern that this study takes up is the construction of meaning in respect of women and nationalism in Kenya in the Twenty First Century. Recognising feminism as a fighting tool to restore and reaffirm women's inherent right to participate in national matters, this study envisions women's progressive engagement in nation building. Furthermore, it underlines women's participation in the self-determination of the nation in the midst of specific dilemmas that Kenyan women face due to exclusionary nationalism.

Conversely, nationalism also assumes a collective identity and hence can be viewed as an imagined community of many. Nationalism involves a strong identification of individuals or groups with the political entity referred to as the nation. Women's writings also point to both individual and collective identity. There is individual and collective interest among women writers due to their shared female identity. However, they also share a common identity with men as members of a nation but the subjective position which they at times assume is a source of women's subjectivity. Nevertheless, everybody in the nation has a right to nationhood and to express and exercise their national identity. Thus, the identification of people living in the nation with the national culture is socially constructed.

Nationalism emphasises collective identity, unity and expression of a singular or shared national culture. However, gender relations stress separatism as a drawback towards wholesome national identity. Anne McClintock in *Women and Nationalism: More of the Same* observes

that nationalism and liberation have not done much to liberate women. She points out that:

í nowhere has a nationalist revolution brought a full feminist revolution in its train ...women's concerns are at best paid lip service, at worst greeted with hilarity. Nowhere has feminism in its own right been allowed to be more than the maidservant to nationalism. (5)

The women's writings selected for this study characterise a desire to transform women's exclusion from nationalism to acceptance through feminist (re)construction. Feminism as a fictional project aims at enabling women writers to find their own voices and their writings form the basis of intervention in the literary world to facilitate (re)construction. Restoration of women's voices is possible since their writings are characterised by a desire to transform women's exclusion into acceptance.

Women's narratives in this study are viewed as vehicles of the imaginary construction of new nations in which the female self plays a formative role. Homi Bhabha observes that:

Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in myths of time and only fully realise their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation - or narration might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from these traditionsí that the nation emerges as a powerful historical ideaí . (1)

It is the contention of this study that women's writings narrate both the nation and the self as they consciously champion the female self and nationhood. However, there could be a contradiction between the language of those who write about the nation and the lives of those who live in the nation. This contradiction is what Bhabha characterises as:

í an ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation. It is an ambivalence that emerges from the growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of the

origins of nation as a sign of the 'modernity' of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality. (1)

Nevertheless, the dynamism involved in the development of the female self and national identity remains ready to absorb the varied and ambivalent women's narrative discourses that (re)formulate the nation. The contention of this study is that women's writings explore the female self-identity formation process from the perspective of women's narratives particularly conceived from a perception informed by the notion of selfhood and nationhood. Thus, one cannot afford to ignore women's voice in the narrative of the nation because women's writings sharply underscore the female self-perspective on national issues.

In *The Present Moment*, Macgoye metaphorically depicts women characters in 'The Refuge' a missionary's run home for the elderly as a form of an imagined community which stands for the Kenyan nation. Roger Kurtz underscores this when he says, 'Nationhood and national identity are central to the novel' (148). By presenting even the lived life as though it were a story, narrative style helps both the reader and the critic to make sense of jumbled life experiences. This study endeavours to interrogate contemporary women narratives to ascertain whether or not the anxieties of post colonialism have been manifested in the (re)construction of the female self and national identity.

Muthoni Likimani is another Kenyan writer whose fiction reflects women's identity. Oscar Maina in 'The Treatment of the Theme of Identity in the Works of Muthoni Likimani' observes that Likimani deals with 'patriarchal and colonial oppression as predominant experiences' (11). Likimani's social vision of a community struggling to change oppressive patriarchal structures that contribute to women's subjectivity is a move towards recognising women's selfhood and nationhood. In his analysis, Maina emphasises women's assertion of their

identity that enables them to chart their way forward in the Kenyan nation. My purpose in the current study is to discuss identity in reference to the interconnectedness of the female self and the nation as portrayed by select Kenyan women writers.

The writers selected for this study have taken up the burden of representing women as they struggle to negotiate for identity in postcolonial Kenya. This study seeks to establish how the various writers give or deny voice to the female characters. This is by exploring the extent to which writers are suggesting that the nation limits or allows female self-expression and fulfilment of their potential as women and as Kenyan citizens from the late 20th Century to-date. Women's writings acquire preference in this study as the residence of the female self. The literary representation of women depicts them struggling to find space so as to exercise self in their lives. Self-identity is constructed through the images and meanings assigned to the 'self' and the 'other' in women's writings. By so doing they produce meaning within the dialectic representation of a woman's personality in the country where she lives. Kenyan women writers have assumed agency roles both in personal and national issues.

With regard to Kenyan women's writings, Lucy Maina observes that the writer provides a situation where the reader works to unravel the realities that a woman writer posits in her works. This is in an attempt to render literary production credible to contemporary readers and critics. Maina's focus is on the social vision portrayed from a woman's perspective in Rebecca Njau's novels *Ripples in the Pool* and *The Sacred Seed*. This study intends to move beyond Maina's study by interrogating varied contemporary women writings in Kenya from the late 20th Century to-date. Furthermore, perpetuate discussion on the social vision defining women in matters related to their lives in the nation. The female writers who are part of the present study locate the social vision in the context female writings that are concerned with restoring agency to women.

The study highlights women writers as significant, in a discussion of the dialectic between the development of the female self and nationhood, and thereby provide new insights through new visions and new voices (Toril Moi 85). This study wishes to find out what notions the selected Kenyan women writers bring to bear on self and national ideologies.

In *The River and the Source*, Margaret Ogola also pursues women's self-identity in the Kenyan nation. Ruth Flora Atsango in "The Journey Motif in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*" lays ground for her analysis by noting that Ogola is a woman writer who makes debut in the literary world that has been a male domain to create awareness about the injustice and oppression that attends women; and also champions the development of women's redefinition and reconstruction in the social order. Atsango gives emphasis to Ogola as a woman writing self in an ambivalent relation to the nation. The present study wishes to further investigate how gendered roles for women within the home and the family unit are part of national discourse. In addition, the study establishes how sexual category influences women's (re) construction of the female self and national identity in Ogola's three novels: *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo* and *Place of Destiny*.

Women writers' representation of the female self and national identity in this study cross-examined Florence Mbaya's *A Journey Within*, Moraa Gita's *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold*, Wanjiru Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit*, Muthoni Garland's novella, *Tracking the Scent of My Mother*, *Halfway between Nairobi and Dundori* and Wambui Githiora's *Wanjira*.

Florence Mbaya's *A Journey Within*, narrates a love story centred on a young woman, Monika. Monika redeems a man, Mulandi, by making him understand and come to terms with the error of irresponsible sexual exploits with a younger woman, Helen. Although Monika respects him as a prospective lover/husband, she persuades him to accept Helen and her children as she

charts her life forward with a young man as a prospective lover, husband and father of her unborn child. By assigning agency to young women, Mbaya decolonises the future of women in the postcolonial nation and therefore figuratively commissions them to exercise selfhood and nationhood responsibly.

Moraa Gitaa's *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* presents the challenges facing women as victims of moral dilemmas facing Kenya in the 21st Century. She explores how HIV/AIDS affects the realisation of the female self and nationhood. In "Re-writing Gender in Times of HIV/AIDS: Moraa Gitaa's *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold*" Peter Muindu acknowledges Gitaa as an author who has reversed the trend of presenting HIV/AIDS as a painful reality by demythologising the illness, and by providing un-biased, down-to-earth facts about it. Her holistic conception of the illness dismantles punitive metaphors directed towards the infected that end up degrading the infected and the affected in the society. Gitaa places the protagonist in this narrative on a pedestal as she constructs an imaginary AIDS-free state with a woman playing agency role. This type of characterisation can be seen as Gitaa's way of articulating a future founded on the dialectical relationship between the female self and Kenyan nation.

Wanjiru Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit* addresses violence against women as a national ill that interferes with women's realisations of selfhood. The protagonist, Regina, is traumatised by a rape incident as judicial justice is denied her since the culprit and his father, who is a prominent judge, ensure that the case is unheard. Waithaka attempts to write the female self thereby giving the women a narrative which is bound up with the questions of the self and the nation. The performative function she enlists of narrating the female self and nationhood makes this novel (re) formulate and reflect sexual violence against women.

Muthoni Garland's novella, *Tracking the Scent of My Mother*, highlights abuse of women and the personal, social and economic ramifications of sexual violence, which diminish and debilitate the female self and thereby adversely affect women's status in the nation. The protagonist, Scholastica, loses her mother under mysterious circumstances. She is abused incestuously by her father and finds herself alive in a world of continuous abuse and murder as she continues the search for her mother. Her story advances the female's search for self and national identity in the midst of gender violence; and the silence on intimate issues of sex, sexuality and sexual violence are voiced as challenges facing the female in her search for nationhood. *Halfway between Nairobi and Dundori* champions a woman's search for selfhood in the nation and explores the dire need for the self to find expression in the nation.

Wambui Githiora's *Wanjira* focuses on women's quest for self and national identity. Focusing on some political problems that have engulfed Kenya at particular, but different times, women are depicted as at a loss in their search for self and national identity. Githiora's narrative offers insights into the female selves certain national moments. She highlights causes and effects of that period which influence the predicament of the female self in a turbulent state which is in the grip of interethnic tensions. Githiora narrates the story of a woman trapped in a dilemma who has to survive in the interval between the self and the nation.

The literature reviewed in this section reveals that substantive studies have been done on Kenyan women writings. However, there is a dearth of studies in respect to the articulation of the female self and national identity particularly in regard to contemporary women's writings in Kenya. The study of selected women writers is aimed at filling this knowledge gap.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study relies on feminist and postcolonial theories of criticism which are deemed relevant in the analysis of the women's national agency and identity. Recasting the question of identity is a necessary step towards understanding practices of feminism and postcolonial literature in regard to the construction of the female's selfhood and nationhood in Kenyan women's writings.

Feminist analyses of women's agency acknowledge traditional feminine social contributions and provide accounts of how women's writings construct meaningful identities in the postcolonial context. The feminist theoretical approach that is used in this study is gynocriticism whose concerns are interrogating literature written by women and the experiences of women in the society. The term 'gynocriticism' is used to define the process for analysis of women's writings with regard to the study of the female experience. This specification of what feminist criticism entails is the focus of this study as a mode of interpreting women's writings. Gynocriticism, Showalter observes in *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness*, is:

the intellectual trajectory of feminist criticism is a study of women writings; an analysis of the construction and representation of gender within literary discourse. As it has evolved, then, feminist criticism has demanded not just the recognition of women's writings, but a radical rethinking of the conceptual literary study. (179-180)

This study sought to make a case for (re)thinking selfhood and nationhood as part and parcel of the word 'woman' as a category formulated along the construction of the nation.

Gynocriticism also focuses on the woman as a writer since it examines how womanhood

shapes creative expression. On gynocritics, Raman Selden observes:

This [is a] field of feminist activity. It deals with distinctive themes, structures and genres of women writings; the nature of the female creativity and female language and the historical problem facing women as writers. (521)

Thus, women's writings have to (re)articulate the female self in relation to their socialised everyday conception of the self and the nation. They use narrative literary style that aims at reflecting and capturing the quality of thought in women's writing. Thus, women writings are fostered as acts marked by women seizing the opportunity to speak.

Grounding the development of the female self and national identity on gynocritics allows critical appreciation of the selected works in this study to lean on some critical pillar in as far as women's literary articulations on selfhood and nationhood are concerned. Patrocínio Schweickart observes that:

the shift from 'feminist critique' to 'gynocritics' - from emphasis on woman as a reader to emphasis on woman as a writer, has put us in the position of developing a feminist criticism that is 'genuinely' women-centred, independent, and intellectually coherent. (123-124)

The concern of this study is the women's writings that enable women to leap to a new vantage point and redefine women's writing as distinctive literary discourse, writing on both the self and the nation. Gynocriticism, therefore, becomes relevant in this study which underscores the female writer and her commitment as specified by Molará Ogundipe- Leslie, 'to describe reality from a woman's perspective' (5). Gynocriticism views all women's writing as marked by gender; women writers articulate gendered experiences even as they articulate selfhood and nationhood and hence gynocriticism locates women writing inevitably in feminist criticism.

As a result, women's writings are a double voiced discourse which embodies the female self and national identity, and speaks inside women's writings and feminist criticism. The use of gynocriticism in this study reflects the consequences of the construction of the female selfhood and nationhood for the kinds of intervention feminist and women's writings formulate and hence argue that feminism theoretical criticism is constitutive. Thus, the theory enables me to point out how a feminist critique of women writings becomes essential to the particular nature of the female selfhood portrayed in Kenya from late 20th Century to-date.

This study also employs elements of postcolonial literary theory which address identity, gender, and ethnicity as challenges of developing a postcolonial national identity. Postcolonial literary theory becomes an end in itself in the critique specifically aimed at critical reading practices in regard to defining female participation in national activities. Postcolonial criticism is also a relevant entry in the criticism of the writings selected for this study which were written between 1994 and 2008 by women who are born and bred in Kenya. The literature interrogated in this study is Kenyan and raises issues that are central to the postcolonial Kenyan nation. Furthermore, as Neil Lazarus points out, "today's postcolonial studies [occupy] a position of legitimacy and even prestige, not only within the Euro-American academy, but also in universities in many countries of [the]formerly [colonised] world" (1). As a criticism, he states that, "postcolonial" is a fighting term, a theoretical weapon, which "intervene[s]" in existing debates and "resist[s]" certain political and philosophical constructions" (4). Postcolonial literary theory is therefore deemed as relevant in the analysis of the female self-portrayal in the postcolonial nation through women's writings.

Postcolonial literary theory has its roots in historical developments of a nation or a people especially in the formally colonised parts of the world. According to Benita Parry, "postcolonial"

can indicate a historical transition, an achieved epoch' (65). As a theory, postcolonial concerns itself with the 'other.' The 'other' in a colonial sense refers to the colonised people who are 'other' than the whites, and 'other' than the past from which the colonised have been alienated. The parallel of the 'other' in a patriarchal order is the woman since man is viewed as the 'self' while woman is the 'other.' This predicament of the woman as the 'other' is underscored by K. Ruthven, who notes, 'that the consequences are always deleterious to women. The reason for this is that the self treats the other as either a supplement or a threat' (41-42). This argument highlights a postcolonial criticism which attempts to show gender contestations through binary oppositions of 'self' and 'other.'

A postcolonial feminist perspective in this study defines the position of women in the postcolonial nation both as the self and the other. Postcolonial theory is used to reflect on the female experiences and consequences of re-negotiating a new identity. This becomes a project of postcolonial feminists to indicate relational identity in Kenyan women's writings and attempt to answer the following questions:

Who speaks for (or in the voice of) the postcolonial feminist? Who listens and why?

What is the content of postcolonial feminist work? When and where does postcolonial feminist work take place? Finally, what are the likely future directions of feminist work within postcolonial literary studies? (Deepika Bahri 203)

These questions have their answers in the representation of women by Kenyan women writers.

Postcolonial representation of, and by, women acquires significance in this study as a theoretical ground from which to articulate for nationhood without objectifying the woman and hopefully help women to find meaning in their own experiences. The postcolonial feminist aspires to establish 'identity as relational and historical rather than essential or fixed, even as it

attempts to retain gender as a meaningful category of analysis (Bahri 203). In other words, the postcolonial feminist has to give preference to analysis of women's writings in view of renegotiating the representation of, and by, women in postcolonial Kenya. The feminist has, according to Reina Lewis and Mills Sarah, to:

[exert] pressure on mainstream postcolonial theory in its constant reiteration of the necessity to consider gender studies. The current concern with colonial masculinity and indeed post-colonial masculinities for example is a direct result of feminist interventions in mainstream postcolonial theory. (2)

This study interrogates Kenyan women writers in a bid evaluate a postcolonial feminist view of the development of the female self and the national identity and to provide a critique on the female self participating in the creation and operation of the postcolonial nation. This is necessary in a bid to empower women writers since "those with the power to represent and describe others clearly control how those others will be seen. The power of representation as an ideological tool has traditionally rendered it a contested terrain" (Bahri 206). The aim of the postcolonial feminist project is therefore to find a voice for the "other" to enable the feminist to (re)examine, (re)assess and (re)assert that which concerns female as a sexual category.

Female selfhood and nationhood, therefore, need to be understood through women writings in postcolonial Kenya since "in [the] postcolonial phase" the condition of women has become a more urgent issue than ever. Gender issues are thus inseparable from the project of postcolonial criticism (Bahri 201). Using feminism and postcolonial theories of criticism, the relationship between the female and the postcolonial nation is adequately constructed since the women's writings selected for this study have been influenced by issues affecting postcolonial Kenya. Feminist postcolonial approaches, therefore, are relevant in this study to "insert feminist

concern into conceptions of 'post colonialism' (Lewis et al 3). This is necessary since a woman's attempt at self-definition always starts with her gender.

Feminist literary theories support feminist scholarly practices inscribed in gender and power relations which the postcolonial feminist critic encounters, resists or supports. This study, therefore, uses postcolonial theory in the analysis of Kenyan Women's writings. The women writers selected for this study form part of modern Kenyan literary tradition and contribute to contemporary consciousness of selfhood and nationhood. The selected women's writings are, therefore, analysed using postcolonial theory since the writers address the problems affecting women in a postcolonial environment.

These theories, feminism and post colonialism complement each other in this study. Postcolonial feminism assumes a central stage in the postcolonial state to contest the discourses of the 'other' to constitute the discourse of the self and the nation. The selected women's writings for this study encompass the theorisation of the female identity in the nation thereby marking an opening of the new spaces for creative and critical discourses that respond to precise female circumstances in Kenya. Analysis of women writings in Kenya, therefore, becomes a response to contemporary postcolonial feminist approach to the female self and nationhood and points toward multiple perspectives that distinguish women's literature.

Florence Stratton observes that both postcolonial and feminist writings engage from 'a marginalised position with dominant culture' (9). Postcolonial writing speaks back to imperial culture while feminist writing deals with patriarchal culture. An investigation of the postcolonial identity formation of the Kenyan women needs to be done in the postcolonial context and the subsequent image of the woman as the 'other'. The postcolonial feminist concern, therefore, is to examine the long lasting effects of colonialism in the postcolonial setting which is inextricably

bound up with gendered realities of the Kenyan woman. By so doing, the postcolonial feminist will create room for women (Stratton 57) in African literature by subverting perspectives that marginalise women. The space that Stratton envisages for women writers and their fellow women is allocated through literary representations of female characters.

A central concern of this study is what feminism and women's writings articulate in respect to the female self and national identity. Textual analysis of the women's writings selected for this study is relevant in analysing variables of the female self and nationhood. The two exert an influence over the textual content and meaning in regard to intentions and implications of both feminism and women's authorship.

1.8 Methodology

This study has used feminism and postcolonial theoretical criticisms. Feminist theoretical approaches, gynocriticism and African feminism have been used to identify gender power relations issues and explore women's position as characterised by otherness and seek to correct that by according self to women in the course of narration. Women's writings in this study are recognised as female voices in contemporary African literature which have established female presence in the previously male-dominated literary discourse.

Women's voices are constructed in narrative discourse. Within feminist theoretical criticism voice is important since there is need to interrogate the narrative voice. Narrative voice takes the form of authorial, personal and communal. The authorial voice grants authority in the fictional world. Authorial voice makes direct statements as the clear criterion of power. A power that the women writer writing female experiences convincingly demonstrates was denied to women. Personal narrative voice is the fictional voice. Everything is seen subjectively

through the eyes of the -I.ø The personal narrative voice allows marginalised and disempowered groups for example women to reclaim their voices.

According to Lloyd Brown, òthe women writers of Africa are the other voices, unheard voices rarely discussed and seldom accorded space in the repetitive anthologies and predictably male-oriented studies in this fieldö (3). The implication is that women writers have to lay claim to personal narrative through narration of womenø stories whereby women are portrayed as the oppressed gender category. The women writers aim is to create their own and their female characters sphere of conceived existence. They, therefore, remove themselves as well as their female protagonists from the marginalised position to which the dominant patriarchal society has relegated them. Women writers and their writings provide space to interrogate how voices of female writers affect female construction and how necessary change in perception, construction and application of theory can be accommodated through narration. In this study, the writings under study bear the voice of the African woman which is socially constructed with regard to African womanø experience.

Gynocriticism highlights what makes a literary discourse part of a distinct literary convention of womenø writings. The assumption is that women have distinct experiences, which require different analytical tools. These two theoretical approaches are preoccupied with understanding how womenø writings express and shape womenø experiences. They also challenge womenø invisibility towards acceptability which is necessary for realisation of selfhood and effective participation in national issues. Refusing to be relegated to the position of a congenial òotherø who endorses her own subjugation, these feminist theoretical methods assert womenø self-expression reinvigorates a sense of fulfilled female self in contemporary Kenya. Gynocriticism also seeks to uncover and expose patriarchal underlying tensions within the

women writings interrogated in this study. This is in an effort to reclaim women's voices lost in patriarchy, due to censorship of women's authorship and silencing of women.

Postcolonial theoretical criticism has been used since the women's writings under study are produced in Kenya which was formerly a British colony. Postcolonial theoretical approach is concerned with the fate of the Africans as marginalised individuals within the interactions of the colonial set up and gender power relations. Notions of self/other binary oppositions form the basis of identity formation within the colonial and feminist history, a phenomenon that postcolonial and feminism theories challenge to foster women's selfhood and nationhood.

This study is a close reading of selected Kenyan women's writings which borrow extensively and intensively from feminism and postcolonial theories. The texts selected for this study articulate national agency and identity in regard to the changing roles of women in the society. Besides close reading, textual reading has been used to offer a critical appreciation of the texts and to interrogate the connotations of the language used explicitly and implicitly in the selected texts.

The study also uses comparison with emphasis put on parallels between, as well as differences among, the selected authors' and other literary writers' ways of describing similar issues on female self and nationhood. Literary aspects of analysis include characterisation, themes, setting and style. Characterisation is addressed through dialogic analysis of ideological impulses between selfhood and nationhood while narrative discourse analysis has been used for analysis of themes, setting and style have been done through narrative discourse analysis.

Themes are examined in the context of women, their postcolonial opinions and responses to nationalism. In addition, setting, for instance, home, workplace, urban and countryside was considered to ascertain to what extent the context, in which female characters enact, influences

women actions and choices. Furthermore, elements of style are analysed to assess the scope of the language used in the texts in the creation of reality or fiction.

1.9 Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on select Kenyan women writers singled out for a critique of the development of the self and national identity. The texts under study capture portrayals of women characters performing various roles in the Kenyan nation from the late 20th C to-date. The scope of the study is Kenyan women writers whose texts delineate new forms of the female self enacting both selfhood and nationhood. The latitude of the study is nine literary texts, seven novels and two novellas by Kenyan women writers: Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo*, and *Place Destiny*; Florence Mbayi's *A Journey Within*; Moraa Gita's *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold*; Wanjiru Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit*; Muthoni Garland's *Tracking the Scent of My Mother* and *Halfway between Nairobi and Dundori*; and Wambui Githiora's *Wanjira*.

It is worth noting that the study is limited to purposively select Kenyan women writers and therefore Kenyan male writers have not been interrogated. These texts are deliberately selected because as Cixous points out:

Great care must be taken in working on feminine writing not to get trapped by names: to be signed with a woman's name doesn't necessarily make a piece of writing feminine. It could quite well be masculine writing, and conversely the fact that a piece of writing is signed with a man's name does not in itself exclude femininity. It's rare, but you can sometimes find femininity in writings signed by men: It does happen. (cited in Moi 108)

The implication is that women's writings are not considered feminine merely because the author is female, but by the fact that the authors have narrated women's experiences. The feminist

agenda in these narratives is underscored by the portrayal of thematic concerns that describe issues that touch on women.

The women writers selected for this study are relatively new whose works were written between 1994 and 2008. Gender inequality has been a peripheral concern in Kenya and hence the need to create awareness of the implications of complementary existence between women and men, equal rights to resources and participation of women in the family, socio-cultural and social political formation of the nation. This study has interrogated gender oppression, violence, discrimination, disease, ethnicity and patriarchy as expressions of gender inequality that interfere with the development of women.

1.10 Chapter Outline

Chapter one consists of a brief introduction to the study, which includes the statement of the problem, objectives, hypotheses, justification of the study, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, and the scope and limitation of the study.

In chapter two, conceptualisation and reconceptualisation of the female self is examined in patriarchal and contemporary societies in *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo* and *A Journey Within*.

Chapter three deals with terminal diseases and how they affect the development of the female self in Kenya. This chapter has also investigated whether the diseased self can be affirmed as part of the existing nation in *Place of Destiny* and *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold*.

Chapter four explores the problematisation of the question of the female self and national identity is also addressed. Womanhood and new findings about the interactions of ethnicity, sexuality, gender and social class in women's lives are discussed. The books studied in this chapter are *Wanjira* and *Halfway between Nairobi and Dundori*.

Chapter five focuses on forms of violence against women that lead to a sense of helplessness and pessimism that characterises such women. In addition, literary representation assumes agency towards women's progressive social change. The books that will be studied in this chapter are *Wanjira*, *The Unbroken Spirit* and *Tracking the Scent of My Mother*.

Chapter six is a summary, findings and recommendations of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO
(RE) CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE FEMALE SELF IN POSTCOLONIAL
KENYA

2.1 Introduction

The female self is used in this study to designate women's need to be independent, to become self-conscious, even self (re)conceptualised in their effort to realise both their selfhood and nationhood in the socio-cultural and socio-political sphere. This chapter discusses the background against which the concept of the female self acquires relevance or irrelevance in writings by select Kenyan women's works. Ogola upholds women's writings as best placed to interrogate the female self because the writers ð [are] female. [They] understand better what a woman is, because [they] have grown up being [women. They] don't know much about men so [they] can't write as much about them as [they] could with womenö (cited in Gitaa x). Thus, the project of women's writings, just like feminists' is to reconceptualise female selfhood.

Self in this study refers to self-identity, self-definition and self-assertion. These are aspects which are tied to the numerous identities which women assume in the nation, each of which is tied to social, economic and political structures in the nation. The nation, on the other hand, is a real, imagined and idealistic geographical space occupied by people who live collectively as a society. The identity of an individual becomes manifest in the role(s) that a person plays in respect to a particular position which enables her/him to realise self-definition. Thus, the development of the concept of the self in women enables them to point out who they are to themselves and to others even though the self keeps changing depending on situational influences. This is because views of self are gained by direct experience with the environment and also from references made to self by other people. Consequently, the core of an identity

becomes the labelling of the self as inhabiting a role and incorporating that role into the self meaning and expectations associated with the role and its presentation.

Before discussing (re)conceptualisation of the female self, there is need to define the terms conceptualisation, reconceptualization, and the female self. Conceptualisation is derived from the adjective 'conceptual' which is a derivative of the noun 'concept'. Conceptualisation refers to the way of perceiving something. Reconceptualization means changing certain perception. The term 'female' involves the biological aspect which differentiates woman from man while self refers to the identity or the individuality of the female characters depicted in the three works which are considered in this chapter. Reference to self in this research work is geared towards answering the question 'Who am I?' The response to this inquiry is sought from the representation of female characters in Florence Mbayao's *A Journey Within* and Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*, and *I Swear by Apollo*.

These novels challenge the patriarchal tradition that delineates women as the other and the writers use their writings in turn to re-image the place of women in contemporary Kenya. Initiating dialogue, they point at the patriarchal conceptualisation of woman as the 'other' and make reconceptualization of woman as the 'self' possible. This study aims at looking at the interconnectedness of the female self and national culture; examining insights that women writers bring on the literary table of literature and to outline the writers' contribution to both conceptualisation and reconceptualization of the female identity.

Francoise Lionnet in *Autobiographical Voices* observes that women's voices are 'always present everywhere but rarely heard, let alone recorded, women's voices have not been a dominant mode of expression or legitimate and acceptable alternative' (xi). By constructing the self through narration, the story of the female self enters into a dominant mode of expression

whereby the concept of knowing the female depends on how the self is constructed as a relative reality that is comprehensible. This depends on feelings of individuality that are understood through the binary opposition of 'I' and 'not I'. The answer to the question 'Who am I?' is mainly sought from the genre of autobiography since it is regarded as the meta-genre for various modes of self-description.

However, self-representation that takes the form of self-description or self-expression is also available in fictional writings. The conception of self is dominant in feminist and women literary representations where men are perceived as a hindrance to knowledge of the female and hence the endeavour to describe or express the response of women to the changing ideas about the female identity. By so doing, women ascend the ladder of consciousness through self-awareness and self-reflection as they focus on the events that affect them internally and externally.

In a patriarchal order, the self is comprehended in the binary opposition of 'self/other' and the notion of the female self is either peripheral or totally denied. The female self's conceptualisation in the patriarchal tradition gains relevance in the discussion of the woman as the 'other' since the male is given the attributes of 'self'. The feminist agenda is to alter the existing gender power relations between men and women that for instance, structure the family, community, education, economics, sexuality, and political systems. The reconceptualised self is sought from women's acts of writing that refute relegation of women as the other. Refutation of otherness aims at the transformation of women in the terms of conceptions of their abilities, values and personality. Before appropriating the question of the (re)conceptualised self, there is need to revisit how women are conceptualised in the patriarchal order.

Patriarchy conceptualises 'self' as the male, 'other' as the female. This casting of the image of the woman as the man's other overlooks women's selfhood and agency. Women's identity as self or other is a debate that is current in Kenya today where gender trouble is prevalent. The predicament of the woman as the 'other' is underscored by Ruthven who posits that reference to women as the 'other' has harmful results because 'if woman is conceived of as a supplement to man, she becomes the receptacle either of what he doesn't want (weakness) or what he cannot have' (41-42). This proposition highlights a feminist critical outlook which attempts to figure out the conceptualisation of selfhood through binary oppositions of male/female and self/other. Feminist views of women capture images of the self/other binary opposition that constitute a patriarchal order through gender power relations. In feminist circles, one cannot (re)conceptualise self without thinking of the other since the woman is viewed in relation to man and vice versa.

The female writer's perspective aims at according self to the female through reconceptualization and hence the feminist theoretical approach that enhances an understanding of women as self without objectifying women as the other or portraying them as the same as men. The concern here is to interrogate how women writers view fellow women in their own narratives as they find meaning in their own experiences in the nation. The authors are perceived as articulating the female characters' relationship to the environment in which they perform nationhood and call for the need to analyse the ways in which women's narratives deconstruct or reinforce existing perceptions of the female self.

The individual experiences of the women writers considered in this chapter are taken as exemplifying the general situation in Kenya. Investigation of the reconceptualization of the female self in the postcolonial Kenyan nation is geared towards establishing the dialectical

relationship between women's self and national identity. Interrogating the female self fifty years after Kenya's independence acquires relevance as an area that integrates women into the realm of the nation. To achieve a national sphere from where women can enact selfhood and nationhood, conceptualisation of women as the other has to be challenged in a bid to reconstruct their self-identity in relation to a series of differences between 'self' and 'other' and complementary relationship between men and women. In so doing, women could achieve a national sphere from where they can enact selfhood and nationhood.

In appropriating the female character's selfhood, the category of the self becomes important in the reconceptualization of the female self since the implications of gender in regard to self/other consciously beget the female gendered self through narration. Through narrative discourse, 'her story' in the words of Wladimir Kryszynski 'reveals the self [evolving] around such structures as consciousness, identity confessions, inwardness, sincerity, self-revelation, quest for identity' (121). The terms consciousness, identity confessions, inwardness, sincerity, self-revelation and quest for identity gain relevance in the women writings discussed in this chapter and their detailed exposition is aimed at examining female identity issues.

An examination of the reconceptualization of female self prompts the following question: Is it the self from a feminist point of view or women writers' representation? Both the feminist self and the women writers' depiction of female self are relevant premises to interrogate the female quest for self, self-realisation and self-assertion in the nation. Feminist self is sought from feminist ideas about self/other while representational voice is investigated from women's acts of writing. However, it is not the prerogative of women writers alone to (re)conceptualise the female self. Male writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, have made inroads in engendering the postcolonial

female identity. The focus and interest of this study is to explore what women writers think about both the traditional and the modern women.

Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* depicts female's search for self in pre-colonial and colonial milieu while *I Swear by Apollo* and Florence Mbaya's *A Journey Within* are postcolonial manifestations of a woman writer's portrayal of the challenges facing women as they chart their lives as individuals in the Kenyan nation.

2.2 Historicising Women in the Historical Realm of Kenya: A Case of Margaret

Ogola and Florence Mbaya

The River and the Source can be considered as an outline of the (re)conceptualisation of women from the pre-colonial period, through the colonial era, to the postcolonial milieu. Tom Odhiambo points out in "Writing Alternative Womanhood in Kenya in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*," that:

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

A discussion of the female characters in *The River and the Source* focuses on the (re)conceptualisation of the female self in a world that is principally feminine and women characters are portrayed as agents of change through the various roles that they actively play in motherhood, work and professional responsibilities.

The examination of the main female characters in this text, Akoko, Nyabera, Elizabeth, Rebecca, Veronica and Wandia is aimed at investigating the kind of self that Ogola advances in regard to the question of who am I in as far as women are concerned in Kenya in the 20th and 21st Century. The examination of Akoko forms the background against which all the other female characters in *The River and the Source* are (re)conceptualised since she is the founding mother of the various generations that these women represent.

Akoko's identity is negated at the time of her birth. When her father, Chief Odero Gogni, hears his new born child yelling for the first time, he says, "another rock for my sling" (9). In his wisdom, he supposes that the new born baby is a boy but he is surprised when the child turns out to be a girl. According to Robert Baker notes that "the most important thing to know about a person in our society is his sex" (cited in Johan Lyall Aitken 9). Is it a boy or a girl? The concern for sex category serves as a condition for differentiation between male and female. When the chief learns that the baby is a girl, he says that "a home without daughters is like a spring without source" (9). Although this simile portrays Akoko's symbolic position as the "other" whom the community is dependent on for its perpetuation, her birth is treated as incidental. It is for this reason that in "Writing Alternative Womanhood in Kenya in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*" Odhiambo notes that Akoko is "appreciated in retrospect as a turnabout given that nature has defied human expectation" (240). Recognising the girl child after reconsideration endorses the female as the "other."

Helene Cixous in "The laugh of Medusa" underscores women's acceptance of themselves as the other in men and hence the need to accord the other a voice through which the self in women can be realised. Women resist exclusion and their consistent quest for inclusion keeps the other that is assigned to them alive. In *The River and the Source*, Ogola (re)conceptualises the

female self making women visible as part and parcel of Kenyan/Luo history. The author uses Akoko whom she represents as lacking in any inhibitions towards self-realisation to historicise women in the society. Diane Elam observes that:

To [historicise] is first to discover the woman where there had only been men, to see [the] woman in history, and recognise a fundamental experience which unites women, the experience of being *the other*. Such a reading obviously is no longer wholly within the discourse which produces history as man's truth, no longer accepts that history has only to do with men *í* for where once history revealed the truth of man's identity as a finite being, revealed man's fate, now history reveals the truth of women's lives, the fate of being a woman, of being *the Other*. The closed circle of recognition is still inscribed, for all women are women in the same way, and this discovery of identity is predicated on whole series of exclusions *í*. (37)

The implication here is that women's writings express women's self-definition and assertion of their identity as human beings while at the same time castigating the fate women have suffered under patriarchy. Despite the subjective space accorded to women in the postcolonial Kenyan nation, Ogola expresses their collective will as Kenyan citizens.

Akoko makes an effort to stand out in relation to men in a bid to transcend the subjectivity of patriarchal tradition in the community and thereby becomes the prototype in the interrogation of the development of the female self and national identity. The loss of her husband and two sons, Obura and Owang, is devastating. Obura dies while fighting for the British government in the Second World War while Owang is choked by food. The deaths of the three make a significant contribution towards Akoko's reconceptualization as a woman. She refuses to be inherited by her husband's brother as is the custom and desists from perceiving herself as desperate because of the

loss of her sons. She shows strength of character and develops an independent identity as a woman and trudges on. The suffering she endures as a result of the deaths is not as a result of her own making, for she is not evil, does not deny food to anyone and generously participates in sacrifice and libation. As a woman leading an upright life, Akoko has a virtuous female self that is not deterred by the limitations of community life.

Even though the author presents Akoko as a short person, she makes up for her lack of height with brightness and a determination that becomes the hallmark of her entire life. Akoko accepts herself and the members of her family appreciate her. According to Cixous in *“The Newly Born Woman”* she is, therefore, depicted as *“loving to be other, another without its necessarily going the route of abasing what is same, and herself”* (353). In other words, Akoko gains recognition as the concrete other and strives to define herself. This is seen when at ten months, she utters the words *“sí . òdwaro mara”*, which means *“want mine!”* This ability, Odhiambo notes, *“is an initiative set by Akoko in the text as she struggles to find a social niche and establish a personal identity in her immediate community from childhood through adulthood [and] (pre) determines and fore-grounds future similar efforts by other women”* (239). Ogola (re)conceptualises Akoko’s female self in the society and propagates female agency.

Ogola refrains from perpetuating otherness by subscribing to gender roles. Instead, she uses Akoko to contest the authority that traditions use to subjugate women by rejecting the existing social codes that subdue women as the other. Through that process she constructs equitable social relations. Leslie points out that women are not merely biological beings, *“contrary to what [most people] think, [woman] is more than a biological aperture”* (5). Ogola submerges the biological aspects of women that fail to foster female selfhood. The metaphorical reference to a son, as a rock as enshrined, in this community suggests that this is a patriarchal

society that assigns roles on the basis of gender. This practice is reversed by Akoko's granddaughter years later when she refers to Akoko as the 'steady rock of [their] lives' (135). Her daughter and granddaughter try to emulate her.

Ogola uses the pre-colonial patriarchal nation to position the female self's responses to the socio-political demands of change and transition. She conceptualises Akoko as a model of the female self and a foundation of the progressive development in the postcolonial nation. In this thesis, a feminist perspective is sought from Kenyan women's writings published in the post colony. Women writers provide the site for the search of the female selves as represented in literary discourse while analyses of women's writings facilitates dialogue on, and shape critical thinking with regard to women. Cixous in 'The Laugh of Medusa' affirms the femininity of what women script when she points out that there is a relationship between women's writing and women's body: 'more body, hence more writing' (353). That is to say that women's writings become the source of whatever imagery they may want to paint of themselves. The female body, therefore, ceases to be the centre for the search of the female self-identity since it is fostered through women's writings. Virginia Woolf, cited in David Lodge, echoes Cixous's views on the femininity of women's writings. She observes that 'a woman's writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine' (311). The femininity of Ogola's writing becomes apparent from the skills she assigns Akoko to enable her to survive in a household full of men; although she is puny, she is physically fearless. She also has a child's instinct that senses her father's affection for her which is unusual in this community that has already invented a tradition of recognising women.

According to Hobsbawm, tradition refers to 'a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain

values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the pastö (1). The patriarchal order assigns the male child a special space in the community as the iconography of the family: a son means continuity while a daughter marries in some other clan. Tradition in this community is invented when the chief metaphorically refers to his daughter as a ðriverø He, therefore, assigns the girl child the symbolic role of providing continuity just like the boy child. The chief, remarkably, though away from the normal, introduces a variance in the traditions of this community.

Akoko is presented as the embodiment of practices that require to be subverted when they are no longer ðfettered by practical useö (Hobsbawm et al 4), and hence, the need for ðinventionö of tradition whereby women play a major role in the community as we witness in the demise of Akokoø husband and sons. She enjoys affection not only from her father, but also her brothers who defend her against any girl or boy who dares to annoy Akoko. The author uses her special place in the self/other binary opposition to depict the male folk in this community as being at the forefront in the (re)conceptualisation of the female self. Thus, women perform selfhood and nationhood by ascribing to particular aspects of familial roles.

Through familial notions such as bearing children, women are integrated into the discourse of the nation and assigned roles within it. Under such circumstances, patriarchal notions are viewed as benevolent. Postcolonial feminism and women writers use family national discourses to construct female self agency and to write womenø selfhood and nationhood. By so doing, the nation is gendered, and womenø writings foster gendered national construction to include themselves in the national canon from which they have often been excluded. By so doing, women are able to challenge their established place in the postcolonial nation as the other. Ogola assumes the responsibility of assigning agency to the female self by conferring on the women

characters in her novel a prestigious status in the patriarchal nation. For instance, Akoko refuses to be inherited as a widow as is the practice in this community. She also leaves her matrimonial home when living there becomes unbearable, to live with her brother, Oloo, who takes her into his house against the expectations of the traditional Luo society.

In a bid to deal with the question of nationhood, Ogola constructs and portrays Akoko as a Luo and also a Kenyan national subject, patriarchal ideology notwithstanding. She creates the character of Akoko to personify women's struggle for national space from where they can advocate for a more equitable society. Thus, Ogola does not subscribe to patriarchal ideology that perceives woman as 'the embodiment of Africa', one of the enabling tropes of 'postcolonial male domination' (Stratton 172). She, therefore, falls short of portraying women as passive and voiceless, a representation that serves to '[rationalise] and therefore perpetuate inequality between the sexes' (Stratton 172).

Ogola uses the convention of marriage to highlight the status of women in the patriarchal society. Through marriage, women acquire relevance in their association with men through sex or marriage. Akoko is married off even though her family asks for a prohibitive bride price, thirty head of cattle that could be enough to marry three wives in her community. However, her suitor, Chief Owuor Kembo, considers that the bride price is not too much for Akoko, for he has set his heart on marrying her. Her being given out in marriage uplifts rather than debases her, and therefore, she enters into a dialogical relationship with the life of her husband's community to chart her selfhood. For Akoko, matrimony does not reduce her to 'an object of exchange along basically androcentric and patriarchal lines' (Dorothy Leland 3). The symbolic pact of marriage becomes an order of exchange in which object imagery is inundated when Akoko

challenges traditional practices which expect a woman to compensate for the bride price paid for her by bearing many children.

Akoko exonerates women from unfair treatment by posing a rhetorical question: "now who in this assembly can tell me how to create a child within my womb? Is that not the premise of Were, god of the eye of the rising sun" (38). Her interrogation of the assumption that married women must conceive and give birth, forms a challenge as well as a subversion of the status quo and hence through this dialogue, Ogola depicts women as intelligent in their rejection of the existing social codes which limit a woman's role in the nation to procreation. In so doing, she reconstructs a new society where women's quest for recognition as distinguished selves cannot be ignored.

Furthermore, the author paints motherhood as a state in which women achieve fulfilment by depicting the heightened jubilation that accompanies Akoko's birth of a son, Obura Kembo. Ogola uses the biological role of a woman to embody the traditional family unit as synonymous with a nation. The dialectical relationship of self and other portrays maternity as the only social power open to women in the patriarchal symbolic order. Odhiambo points out that *The River and the Source* is a "narrative of a nation that is symbolically constituted at the family level" (3). The family is portrayed as the prototype of an imagined community, and it occupies a central place in the (re)conceptualisation of the female self. Akoko's domestic space is used to reconstruct the place of women in the postcolonial nation, in which women can take advantage of the space assigned to them in the domestic sphere to curve a new identity for women that is more equitable, socially.

Akoko's husband upholds monogamy although it is scorned upon by the traditional society. Her in-laws accuse Akoko of bewitching him and this prompts her to go back to her

father's home. Akoko's departure from her matrimonial home gains significance as a woman's assertion of self-identity and marks the evolution of women's self-esteem. She challenges cultural and familial elements that seek to propagate her oppression. She therefore manifests consciousness in regard to the women in patriarchal ideology.

This is despite the threat to get a beating from Otieno, her husband's brother who wants to subjugate her. The threat to subdue Akoko physically points at the self/other binary opposition that is symbolic of the high-handedness that men in patriarchal tradition exercise over women. Unfortunately for Otieno, he retreats when Akoko asserts her identity by daring him to beat her up and thus the symbolic significance of the dare to physical confrontation that women have to take courage and challenge men who threaten to subjugate them. Symbolically, Otieno's withdrawal marks a reversal of gender roles that depict man as courageous and woman as cowardly. Ogola seems to suggest that undeserving males enjoy privileged positions in a patriarchal society by exploiting the subjective position of the female.

Ogola uses the conceptual self/other dichotomy which accounts for warring between genders to construct a male/female relationship that is complementary. The support that Akoko receives from her husband facilitates her achievement of an independent and fulfilled self. She is therefore, able to fight back at a society that seeks to subjugate her and castigates the notion of a woman as the other whose self is denied in order to perpetuate female submission. She rebels against such acquiescence when she defies Otieno Kembo's authority over her wealth and she moves to Kisumu to report his misdoings. By so doing, she castigates cultural norms that inhibit her positive development and therefore struggles against the patriarchal society to find space through which she can exercise agency in her own life.

Ogola projects the ideals of womanhood as the intelligent self who cannot afford to be stupid. She recognises men as heads of families, but in their absence women perform their roles fairly well. With the death of her husband, Akoko refuses to be inherited as is the tradition and thereby reverses a practice that subjugates women by insinuating that a woman cannot manage without a man beside her. In her desperation as a widow, she finds ways of dealing with maltreatment from her brother-in-law, who robs her of her wealth. The struggle between the two is heightened by the self/other binary opposition since Akoko as a woman is pitted against a man who has little or no regard for women. As the war for wealth and power reaches bitter proportions, she realises it is time to clearly draw the battle lines between male and female. Through authorial intrusion, Ogola depicts the magnitude of the injustice when she says that Akoko feels "the weight of injustice that women have felt since time immemorial in her male dominated world. Even a half-wit like her brother-in-law could rob her of her hard earned wealth" (66). Ogola personally reacts to women's subjectivity and points at the need for women to assert themselves in the community.

Being a woman, a widow and without a son, Akoko feels greatly disadvantaged and makes up her mind to enlist the help of the government. By so doing, she rebels against a tradition that treats women as "very low ... mere objects" systematically excluded from the political, the economic, the judicial and even the discourse of the community (Stratton 25). Akoko's bid to enlist the support of the colonial government in the fight between her and her brother-in-law marks the beginning of the restoration of her humanity and dignity. She seeks to participate in the realm of the community as a woman exhibiting extra-ordinary traits right at birth which designates her as occupying a special role and place in the postcolonial nation.

Tom Odhiambo in "Interrogating History and Restoring Agency to Women in *The River*

and the Source by Margaret Ogola underscores Ogola's vision for women to resist patriarchy as follows: "women in the text struggle to find space through which to exercise agency in their lives" patriarchy inscribes stereotypes on females in the society "limits the progress of women in life" (52). Nevertheless, he adds, women in their wisdom make the best out of patriarchy so that "whilst seemingly submissive and subservient, women still subvert domination of their lives by men" (80). This means women have always struggled to be autonomous and have assumed the role of self-motivating agents of the female self. Akoko becomes the epitome of the autonomy that women in Kenya endeavour to embrace.

Within the nation as an imagined community, roles for women are set and controlled by men as depicted in *The River and the Source*. Ogola's writing aims at women's inclusion in the life of the community to create agency for the female selfhood and nationhood. She castigates irresponsible male supremacy that pits Akoko against her brother-in-law who finds it natural to subjugate women in terms of the functions and roles assigned to them. When she is subjugated, Akoko seeks justice and her action provokes a reflection, raises awareness, challenges male blindfold on women's selfhood and thus provides agency for women to be dignified in the family unit, working environment and social relationships.

When Akoko realises that the traditional Luo society is unable to protect her from the abuse from her in-laws, she petitions the District Officer. She points out that she is a widow and that she does not have sons having lost one of her sons who accidentally choke to death and the other during the Second World War. As a result, her brother-in-law has grabbed her wealth since there is no adult male in her household, who can protect her. All she has is a grandson, who is too young to put up any fight in her support. The participation of Africans in the Second World War is merely in support of the white people and hence her allusion to the death of her son in the white

man's battlefield is meant to outline the sacrifice she and her family have made to the colonial government. She appeals to the colonial government to support her by ensuring that she is accorded the respect that is rightfully hers as a human being, by doing whatever is in the government's power to dismantle the discriminative self/other binary opposition.

Akoko's search for intervention is like an inner quest for liberation of self, a project she takes up on herself to realise an esteemed female self in a community that does not respect women. She refuses to be economically exploited by her brother-in-law merely because she is a woman. McClintock in "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of Colonialism" expresses surprise that "women who are symbolically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation ... are denied any direct relation to national agency" (354). This suggests that gender power relations are problematic in the postcolonial nation. Through Akoko, Ogburn accords women selfhood; they cease from being the "other" and rise above patriarchal subjectivity.

Problematic gender power relations take centre stage in Ogburn's narrative discourse at a complementary level. Anderson hints at the limitations that exist in a nation when she points out that "the nation is imagined as limited" – no nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind" (7). Just as a nation is limited by borders, mankind is limited by notions of gender. Similarly, the gendered identity of an imagined community imposes borders between human beings through the binary logic of self/other. Ogburn creates a singularly courageous and wise woman in Akoko who faces the white man unflinchingly and tells him her story about the greed and arrogance of her husband's brother.

The relationship between Akoko and her brother-in-law is suggestive of a postcolonial discourse as it points at the bond between master and slave. Akoko courageously seeks redress from a colonial government official who is also a representative of the colonial masters. Her

ability to challenge the status quo prepares us for the liberation wars that Africans wage against their colonial masters in a bid to free themselves from the whites who treat them as the other. It is a jubilant Akoko who witnesses the arrival of a contingent of police, who come to the village to forcibly remove the Chief, Otieno Kembo, from leadership. He is also made to return the wealth that he has grabbed from her and a council of elders is imposed to rule the village until the rightful heir comes of age. Ogola uses the warring activities between Akoko and Otieno to (re) conceptualise the female self in the postcolonial nation. Her victory over him is not only beneficial to herself and her family, but also opens “another world and the possibility of a different wayö (85). Ogola envisages change that will favour national identity and the development of the female self in the postcolonial nation.

In *The Promised Land*, Grace Ogot observes that marriage is a ðform of imprisonmentö (46) but Ogola appears to reverse this position to (re)conceptualise Akoko who leaves her husband’s clan to dwell in the house of her brother, Oloo, with all the property she has salvaged from her brother-in-law. Oloo condones her action even though it reduces her to living with uncertainty for she fears that before long his wives might start making insinuations about her. However, Akoko does not ðallow herself to descend to bitterness for yesterday is not today and today is not tomorrow. Each day rises from the hands of Were and brings with it whatever it willö (86). She envisages positive change and thus resigns herself to the will of God, who multiplies her herd making her wealthy.

In defining concepts of ðdifferenceö and ðothernessö in postcolonial Kenyan nation, Ogola positions women in the historical context in a way that fosters the (re)conceptualisation of women. Thus, she portrays revolutionary consciousness as a means of (re)conceptualising selfhood and nationhood through Akoko. The author integrates Akoko into Kenya’s national

history by using the literary space to link her to the dam, *yap Obanda*. The dam bears this name up to this day and it is located at Sakwa near Ndwarra village. Akoko and her contribution to her community becomes a legacy as she earns herself respect as a legendary figure among the Luo. She is a woman whose humility, prudence, diligence and commitment propel her to be part of their oral history. Narration underscores Ogola's recognition that woman marks a point of difference and asserts her identity to bear witness to the potential she has in the postcolonial nation.

In her continuous search for identity, Akoko embraces Christianity and moves from her brother's home to live among strangers at Aluor mission. Her ability to curve a virtuous disposition draws the attention of the catechist as a mature, diligent woman who is dependable and therefore, he starts seeking advice from her on matters pertaining to the church. The catechist, on his own initiative, builds a house for Akoko near the church. Her magnanimous self allows her grandson, Owour, to become a priest even though she entertains hopes that one day he will be a chief, marry and sire many children to continue the lineage of Owour Kembo. Perhaps she considers that she also has a granddaughter, Elizabeth, contrary to Luo traditions, can also have children to perpetuate the lineage just as Owour. Elizabeth as a modern Christian woman is expected to carry her grandfather's lineage, contrary to Luo traditions.

Akoko is influenced by the nation at its various historical times and takes up various roles through her experiences in the nation and emerges as one who is an embodiment of the nation's historical setting. Through her, Ogola portrays various discursive articulations of female identity that challenge or foreground a positive model of the female self. She is contrasted with her daughter, Nyabera who, though decisive and independent minded, is emotionally weak, sceptical and superstitious.

Akoko is portrayed as a woman for all seasons due to her wisdom as a woman who has clarity of vision and thus one cannot say she fits in that, this or any other Century. The author seems to suggest that given an opportunity in a different era, Akoko could be ða great intellectual, a pioneer and a leader of humanityö (133). Akoko turns out to be a (re) conceptualised female self full of knowledge. She does not, therefore, muddle in the confusion of the self/other patriarchal notions. As a female writer, Ogola seems to aim at pricking the consciousness of women to enable them to challenge aspects of traditional society that are harmful to them. However, the battle lines among genders are not drawn on the combat self/other. Instead, there is complementarity between men and women. The relationship between Akoko and her husband attests to this. Akoko considers him an extraordinary man who gives her monumental courage that influences her right from the beginning of her life in marriage.

Ogola tries to restore humanity and dignity even in the patriarchal context through Akoko's husband who transforms Akoko by bestowing confidence in her. She is not inhibited by her mother-in-law or brother-in-law. She appropriates her role as a woman without allowing anybody to subjugate her. For instance, when her husband dies, she refuses to be inherited by his brother, Otieno. When it becomes too difficult for her to live with her in-laws, she leaves her matrimonial home to live with her brother, Oloo. When it is apparent to her that traditionally she will remain a stranger, although she lives with her brother, she does not hesitate to join the new religion. Her search for a fulfilled self becomes her guiding factor and she stops at nothing to achieve it. This ðgo-getterø attitude in Akoko points at the need for women to traverse the nation if need be and achieve what is humanly possible.

Ogola's representation of Akoko appears designed to subvert the damaging representations of gender by patriarchal tradition. Ogola handles the contradictions between

patriarchal delineation of women and other features of women's subjugation, as symbolically mediated through lived experiences and endows Akoko with a female self that is knowledgeable, providing her with an opportunity to transcend patriarchal symbolic order. She discovers and fights facets that interfere with the full self-realisation of the female self.

Akoko's death, introduces another angle to the (re)conceptualisation of the female self. She is not buried in her husband's ancestral home, as tradition would demand, instead, she is buried at the church ground. In life and in death, Akoko breaks from a tradition that subjugates women. She rejects confinement to the domestic world that is debilitating. She assumes responsibility for herself, leaves her matrimonial home, body and spirit, never to return. There is therefore no need to return her body. While alive, Akoko refuses to be helplessly trapped in her husband's ancestral home because her female self does not enjoy any rest after her husband's death. She, therefore, goes back to her father's home, where she is received by her brother who nurtures her and her children's children. Through her, Ogola points at the inevitable (re)conceptualisation of the female self. Despite the challenges of a woman's life in the nation, the female self should not give up, for no matter how hard things may be in the present, the future should be more promising.

Women writers assign their female characters a sense of fulfilled self as we see in Ogola's portrayal of Akoko. Ogola also assigns agency to women's issues in Kenya through Akoko's daughter Nyabera by intertwining story telling with women's role in the society. Akoko tells her grandchildren stories of the heroes of old and the history of the Luo while Nyabera tells them the stories of baby Jesus. Both of them are composers and disseminators of oral traditions, a gesture that symbolically incorporates the female perspective in the community as well as in the Kenyan nation.

Nyabera's mother plays the role of an omnipotent, omnipresent mothering figure who bestows love and nourishment to Nyabera as she brings her up amidst personal crisis and social dilemmas, which Nyabera also experiences in different ways. Through Nyabera, Ogola makes a positive statement on the centrality of the woman to the life of the society through nurturing, a responsibility that women are charged with. She is industrious like her mother, with a charming personality. In a self/other binary opposition, Ogola depicts Nyabera as better than her brother, Obura, in riddles and storytelling and thus suggests integration of women into the social realm of the society.

Unlike her mother, Nyabera does not come to terms with the transient nature of life. Ogola underscores the lack of permanence in this world and therefore uses death to point out the inevitability of change. Nyabera's emotional distress in the face of mortality of her brother, Obura, does not undermine her strength. Instead, her analytical mind comes to the surface to impress on the reader the pain that comes with unrealised dreams due to either physical or spiritual death. Through internal monologue she poses a rhetorical question, "What use was this life if one could be snuffed out like a poorly lit fire, never getting a chance to blaze into a flame?" (58). The disillusionment that comes with death is analogous to the patriarchal society's denial of women's progressive development of their female self and national identity. In so doing, their full potential is not allowed to blossom. However, women in the postcolonial nation learn that this denial only brings "a little disharmony, a barely visible break in the continuity of the weave of life" (59). Nyabera's self is challenged to transcend obstacles that subjugate women.

Nevertheless, Akoko nurtures her to maturity and marries her off to Okumu, whom she accepts even though he is poor. Women's solidarity is seen when her mother helps her to settle down in marriage comfortably by giving her a sizeable herd of cattle, sheep and goats. However,

her denied motherhood of many children makes her downcast, depressed; she rarely goes out of her home and hardly eats. In her bitterness, Nyabera reprimands *Were* for giving her children only to strike them dead at the threshold of life. Only one child, Awiti, is spared but before long Nyabera loses her husband. Unlike her mother, she is inherited by her husband's cousin, Ogoma, who already has another wife. She hopes to raise more children with him through the institution of *tero*, a kind of half marriage that though unfulfilling, provides supportive environment to produce children. Ogoma is reprimanded by the council of elders for paying attention to Nyabera at the expense of his first wife. This prompts Nyabera to abandon both the marriage and a tradition that treats her as the other.

Underscoring the nation's dialectic relationship with the self, Ogola redefines concepts of difference and otherness as she outlines the community in *The River and the Source* that "exists both inside and outside the values espoused by modernity and tradition" (Gikandi 79). Nyabera is portrayed as an individual, a subject who is unified, and a rational self who is the source of cultural, social and religious meaning in the future of the Kenyan nation. Her experiences are rooted in both traditional and Christian realms as she struggles to forge a hybrid female self. Ogola uses the textual world to develop a sense of self and national identity and thereby reconstructs Nyabera as a woman in postcolonial nation who represents "the new imagined community of the nation" caught between the threat of repressed traditions and the truncated identities created by colonial modernity" (Gikandi 75). Ogola integrates Nyabera into the modern national discourse and reorganises her submerged self when it is apparent that she is not likely to enjoy the comfort of a husband and many children.

Consequently, Nyabera makes up her mind to cut herself off from the traditional life of her people by seeking another different life through Christianity. Her mother, Akoko also refuses

to be, as Odhiambo points out in *Writing Alternative Womanhood* a woman who lives a life that:

is eternally tied to that of the man in her life, even when that particular man is dead. Faced with the possibility of leading a life that consigns her to a lonely home simply because a woman is tied to her husband in life as well as in death. (240-241)

Akoko deserts her matrimonial home and Nyabera does the same. By so doing Nyabera identifies herself with her mother. The relationship between mothers and daughters is a common motif in women's writing and is especially significant to the concept of collective identity that mothers and daughters share. It is no wonder then that Nyabera emulates her mother as her model of existence. As far as she is concerned, Akoko is a good mother, whom she reveres since she is compassionate and intuitive and therefore Nyabera feels encouraged to desert her matrimonial home in search of her self-definition which the patriarchal institution attempts to curtail.

Nyabera considers the fact that she has no son as a blessing in disguise. If she has a son, tradition obliges her to have him firmly rooted in his people from whom he inherits land and thus becomes inextricable. Since she only has a daughter, it is different for she can wander the world with her and no one would demand that she takes her back to where she belongs, her father's community. In regard to Nyabera's search for peace to calm her troubled spirit and body, Odhiambo notes in *Writing Alternative Womanhood* that "She finds an alternative to her dreary existence as a widow. She breaks free of the prescribed domesticity" (241). She embraces Christianity and moves to Aluor Catholic Mission. Through her, Ogola sets on a (re)conceptualisation of the female self through Christian religious beliefs. The contention that the new religion eases pain and bitterness drives Nyabera to embrace Christianity. Her mother,

Akoko, encourages her. Akoko hopes to salvage whatever is remaining of her daughter's female self and thereby prevent her spirit from withering.

Akoko, just like her daughter, has a flexible self which she philosophically expresses saying, "If you are walking along and you find your path leading nowhere, then it is only wise to try some other path" (95). This statement implies that there is really nothing wrong with Nyabera abandoning tradition in her search of a more fulfilling life. It is no wonder then that Nyabera and Akoko leave both their marital and parental homes and settle in Aluor mission to learn about Jesus Christ. Their search for identity becomes apparent in the yearning in their mind about the new religion and they seek more knowledge about it. Nyabera is baptised and joins the Catholic Church, partakes Holy Communion and "becomes a branch, finally grafted to a tree" (99-100). Ogola uses this Biblical allusion to express the satisfaction that comes with acquiring a sense of belonging. Nyabera is filled with hope and thus reclaimed from the threshold of despair.

However, she finds the church's law on marriage which advocates one man one wife difficult to keep. She feels disheartened in her Christian faith because the church is not likely to compromise on this doctrine yet she certainly knows that no one among her people is likely to marry her, a widow, as a first and only wife. Her perceptive self does not deceive her and thus her earnest longing for children is likely to be quenched only in a traditional marriage set up which conflicts with her new faith. The conflicting role of culture in the situation of contact with Christianity marks the evolution of identity crisis in Nyabera. She experiences a sense of otherness as she attempts to rationalise her new identity and the prospect of getting more children. She reckons that "children [are] consolation, laughter and security. Children [are] everything" (100). Her strong conviction about the need to get more children creates a sense of apprehension. Thus Akoko is worried that Nyabera's adoption of Christianity will make it difficult for her to

get children. It is worth noting that Christianity does not provide a solution to Nyabera's problems. She experiences identity crisis while trying to settle down in the new faith.

The satisfaction that comes with the birth of many children is elusive to Nyabera and her mother, Akoko. The traditional formula of fulfilment that comes with bearing many children undermines their womanhood. With the void that comes with longing for motherhood, Nyabera abandons Christianity in search of a man who can give her marital comfort and children. Thus, Christianity fails to fill motherhood gap and hence when she gets wind of the death of Ogoma's wife, she swiftly moves to forge a legitimate union with him. Her action fills her with premonition. She feels her soul trembling on the edge of the abyss of fear of the future or longing for a part which could never be retrieved (110). The emptiness that Akoko experiences in regard to her daughter's plight in motherhood haunts her. Ogola points out that, "there is no pain like the knowledge that the child suffers and cannot be helped" (114). Akoko's inability to help Nyabera gnaws at her heart.

As fate would have it, Nyabera succeeds in getting a child with Ogoma, but he neglects her as he courts another girl to make her his second wife. With the death of their child, Nyabera is devastated since her marriage fails again. She goes back to Aluor mission, a sad beaten up woman. There is nothing in the traditional milieu that suits her and she becomes a shadow of herself, unable to progress in the traditional family setting. She frees herself from her attachment to a man to realise her selfhood and for a second time seeks refuge in the church. Akoko's wisdom is seen when she consoles her daughter and helps her to regain her spirit. Nyabera repents before God and with time her wounded heart heals. This comes after forgiving herself, an essential step in forging self-acceptance.

A new name comes with a new identity. Nyabera's baptismal name, Maria, bequeaths a (re)conceptualised female self in the realm of the mystical. She becomes restless when away from the mission. Perhaps it is for this reason that she convinces her mother who at the moment is living with her brother, Oloo, after she abandons her matrimonial home, to go with her to Aluor mission. She readily accepts to accompany her daughter since living with her brother is like being in exile where she is not likely to wholly belong. She moves to Aluor mission in search of a more fulfilled self in an environment where everybody is welcome, without anybody bothering which clan one comes from. Akoko's decision makes Oloo unhappy for he enjoys having his sister around although his wives do not like it. The migration of both Akoko and Nyabera to Aluor mission becomes an act of faith. In reference to this epic journey to Kisumu, Ogola uses Biblical allusion. She says, "Like children of Israel, they left the flesh-pots of Egypt for uncertainties of Canaan" (104). Their life at Yimbo is more comfortable than the one at the mission, but both mother and daughter fail to find fulfilment both at their maternal and matrimonial homes. Their quest for self-identity therefore inspires their movement and settlement in a lonely place.

While at the mission, Nyabera nurtures her only daughter, Elizabeth. However, her turbulent self threatens to interfere with the development of her daughter when she refuses to allow Elizabeth to join a Teachers' Training Institute for fear of losing her. Nyabera's worries are retrogressive. It takes the intelligence of Akoko to challenge and convince her to allow Elizabeth to pursue a career in teaching. Nyabera's possessive self threatens to hinder the positive development of the female self in the nation. It is surprising that her mother, Akoko, is insight full and flexible to realise what is at stake for Elizabeth. Akoko admonishes Nyabera for selfishness that borders on childishness. In an outburst of controlled anger, Akoko, admonishes Nyabera since her attitude is not in keeping with the (re)conceptualisation of women. Ogola uses Akoko to

point out that the female self can only gain relevance in the contemporary society through meaningful change that may not come easily and hence the need for personal sacrifice. The zone of female comfort in the patriarchal order is a deterrent as far as the development of the female selfhood and nationhood is concerned. Women require all that it takes to realise their potential.

Due to her wisdom or lack of it, Nyabera obstructs, instead of perpetuating her daughter's self-development. Akoko blames her for lack of understanding and counsels her to place Elizabeth's fate in God's hands. She considers divine intervention necessary at this particular time for the world is changing and Elizabeth is about to acquire what will make a difference in her life. Her grandmother's insightful self is able to fathom that there are changes that have come with Christianity and education. She is not a fool to see the need to prepare oneself for any eventualities that come with change. Since at the moment neither she nor her daughter can go to school, she castigates Nyabera for not allowing Elizabeth the advantage of becoming a career woman, to be relevant to the impending changes in the postcolonial Kenyan nation. The author introduces a binary opposition between persons of the same gender. She uses mother and daughter to depict the difference that exists between human beings, be they men or women.

Ogola submerges the self/other notions among men or women by depicting the differences between Akoko and Nyabera through the eyes of Elizabeth who says that her though kind hearted and quite strong cannot be like Akoko, her grandmother, who is a woman of iron. Elizabeth reckons that she is not as strong as her grandmother but wishes to be like her. It is against this background that Elizabeth's re-conceptualisation is grounded in that both her mother and grandmother influence her development.

Through Elizabeth who is emotional, sensitive, understanding, brave, enduring and accommodating, Ogola re-conceptualises women through formal education and Christianity.

Unlike her mother and grandmother, she is identified with her Christian name as a mark of change and new identity. She is enrolled for formal schooling even though it is not easy since the traditional setting does not uphold girls' education. Ogola posits, 'if it was hard for a boy to get an education it was well near impossible for a girl. The purpose of female existence was marriage and child bearing and by the same token to bring wealth to her family with the bride price' (120). Ogola (re)conceptualises the female self by affording Elizabeth a chance to be educated although it is unacceptable in this community.

Ogola (re)conceptualises the female self and national identity against a background of self/other. The 'self' feels threatened by the 'other'. However, the 'other' is not deterred by the fears of patriarchal society that is bent on subjugating the female self. The patriarchal society treats Elizabeth who is an educated woman as an object of curiosity for it is difficult to appreciate her because she is not married although she is twenty-two years of age. The society's expectations are that she should till the land, rear children like other women her age. Instead, Elizabeth is a career woman earning a salary of fifty shillings a month. However, Ogola points out that 'the power of money in this new world [is] beginning to sink into people's mentality' (132). Therefore, her financial empowerment becomes a source of envy from her clansmen and women even though they taunt her at every turn. It is worth noting that Elizabeth's schooling gives her economic empowerment.

At the training institution, the self/other relationship comes to the fore as the male students try to enter into relationships with the female students. Those who fail to comply are scorned for instance Elizabeth who is referred to 'as 'the nun,' 'virgin Mary' and 'church mouse' or other insulting names' (127). These insults point at the new identity that Elizabeth carves for herself as

a woman who is principled. Her failure to conform makes both men and women shun her but this does not distract her from her search for realisation and assertion of her identity as a woman.

Their behaviour neither influences Elizabeth into having irresponsible unions with boys nor prevents her from falling in love with the love of her life, Mark Antony Oloo Sigu, whom she marries later. The marriage between Elizabeth and Mark is acceptable to both families. Unlike the traditional marriage where the bride-price is of utmost importance, no exorbitant bride-price is asked for Elizabeth, who is given away after a token of a bull, two cows and ten goats is delivered to her mother. The issue of bride-price is outlined to mark the difference between the traditional society that asks for excessive dowry as a requirement for sealing marital relations and the modern society that asks for a token as a seal of marriage and thereby depicts the new identity of women as dignified members of the society who are not given out in marriage in a bid to extort wealth.

As if to pave way for Elizabeth to foster and exercise her self-identity in the and national, her grandmother passes on as soon as she concludes the formalities of her granddaughter's marriage. Akoko is convinced that her granddaughter will carry on her work. She dies a fulfilled, happy self. While Nyabera receives the death of her mother with calm, Elizabeth finds it difficult since she loves her grandmother so much. Elizabeth's inability to accept the finality of death places her in a state of confusion and bewilderment; she almost breaks her engagement to Mark Antony, for she does not understand how she will continue to live without her grandmother.

Ogola, through Elizabeth, (re)conceptualises a female self away from tradition and patriarchal prescription. Elizabeth opts for a Christian marriage instead of a traditional one like her mother and grandmother. She settles in her marriage, but she loses her first child inadvertently through self-medication prescribed by her husband, Mark. Both are so naive that they do not

realise that Elizabeth is experiencing sickness due to pregnancy. After the first pregnancy, it takes her more than three years to conceive again. As expected in the traditional set up, her mother-in-law demands an explanation for she is suspicious that Elizabeth's failure to get children could be as a result of abortions she might have procured before her marriage. However, contrary to her expectations, Mark defends his wife. He tells his mother in no uncertain terms that she has to leave him and his wife alone. In the traditional society, the mother is expected to influence her son's decisions in regard to his wife. Mark objects to this. He puts his mother on the next bus to her village home to ensure she does not interfere with his marriage. Mark is a modern man who plays an important role in the (re)conceptualisation of the female self since he realises that making a baby depends as much on the male as on the female, hence the folly of blaming the female alone.

Elizabeth marries a supportive man. Just like her mother and grandmother, Elizabeth becomes a responsible wife set on making her marriage work. She has lived with her mother and grandmother, who are widows, and has observed that they are determined to hold the family together. Her identification with both of them gives her a sense of confidence in the way she handles her family and hence keeps quiet even though she gets wind of her husband's extra-marital activities. As a mark of her mature disposition she observes that, "the first cardinal rule of marriage, not everything has to be blurted out" (160). Elizabeth is a modern woman facing the challenges of infidelity, but she does not confront him. Her husband, as if to redeem himself from any form of further estrangement from his wife, devotes himself to the marriage to the extent of doing things for Elizabeth that men who have a low opinion of women would not do.

Focusing on motherhood, Ogola upholds mother/child relationship both in traditional and modern setting. When Elizabeth's mother is taken ill and eventually dies she experiences feelings

that are not akin to her. The bond that exists between mother and child is finally severed and Elizabeth is devastated. Ogola underscores motherhood/childcare as more than just biological experiences. According to her, motherhood entails personal sacrifice to ensure the well-being of the children. When Nyabera passes on with her only daughter at her bed side, the feelings that cloud Elizabeth's mind result from the fact that she is now an orphan, her forty-three years of age notwithstanding. It is no wonder then that Elizabeth feels a gap inside herself. She feels she owes her mother the care given to the old and ailing. Her feelings of doubt make her female self-experience failure. Her contention is that she should have been seeing her mother more often. She feels guilty, a reaction that is unjustified since hardly two months pass without Elizabeth visiting her mother. Besides, she has made a great sacrifice of giving up two of her children to live with her mother. The long silences, the irrational self-accusation that Elizabeth experiences only point to the strong bond that exists between mother and child. We are not surprised, therefore, when she spends a night with her mother at Maseno hospital even though the latter is in a coma.

However, death, as far as Ogola is concerned, marks, on the one hand, the end, while on the other hand, a beginning. Elizabeth's feelings of desertion and loneliness following the death of her mother hamper the development of her female self and national identity temporarily. Ogola underscores continuity by taking us back to the source of the river, Akoko, the first daughter of Chief Odera Gogni. Ogola points out that this river at some point trickles to a mere rivulet just about to dry up, but in the person of Elizabeth, Akoko's grandchild, who bears seven children, the river is gathering momentum.

Elizabeth becomes a link between colonial and postcolonial Kenya through her children, Rebecca (Becky) and Veronica (Vera) who are fraternal. In the course of narration, it is clear that they represent different value systems. Rebecca who is fondly referred to as Becky is easy going

without any inhibitions towards the opposite sex, but she is selfish and harbours intense hatred for her sister, Vera. She fails to appreciate Vera who forfeits joining a national school to be with her sister whom she passionately loves, but Becky accuses Vera of being jealous and that she only joined Becky's school to spy on her. Worse still, she brands Vera a witch. This name-calling and lack of appreciation shows that the two sisters have personalities that are incompatible. Becky does not also get along with her younger sister, Maria, whom she views as a rival competing for her parents' attention. Her parents are not blind to Becky's pre-occupation with herself and hence their fears about what will become of her.

Becky's pouting, preening and extreme selfishness influence both her life as a child and as a grown up. She attains a Second Division at 'O' level and resolves not to continue with post-secondary education to look for a job. She longs for freedom, but her parents fear that their beautiful daughter is going to be taken advantage of by men. They force her to go back to school and due to the fear of disobeying her father she joins 'A' level to study History, Literature and Geography. She manages a marginal pass, only one principal, and quietly disappears from home to go and stay with some friends Nairobi in her endeavour to become an air-hostess.

In Becky, Ogunola conceptualises a hostile female self's quest for happiness and fulfilment in the 21st Century. However, we are filled with apprehension as to whether she will succeed in life since her success can only come if she manages to shift attention from her subjective self to others. Only then can she notice how other people care about her and thus help her to (re)conceptualise an objective self. Unfortunately, she covets Vera whom she purports as possesses everything – guts, drive, ambition and brains (206). She thinks that all that is good and beautiful is found in her sister and wishes to be equal to her. This indicates that her physical

beauty does not give her satisfaction. Her relocation Nairobi is in search of a fulfilled life and she succeeds in getting a job at the Kenya Airways.

Becky's happy-go-lucky personality makes it apparent that she is too preoccupied with herself and loves "good things of life - comfort, expensive clothes, and good looking men" (204). It is no wonder then that she is living in an expensive looking block of flats, an indication that she is making or has a lot of money: her flat, from the carpet to the pictures on the wall are suggestive of wealth. Despite the affluent life style that Becky leads, there is an underlying sense of void. She seeks out a white man, John, to be her boyfriend, but that does not also give her satisfaction. She is hesitant to take him to her parents' home because she fears reprisal from her parents and this puts her in an awkward situation. It takes Vera's encouragement to take him home to seek her parents' blessing. She impresses on Becky that there is need to do so for their parents are objective in the manner they view things. If they say no, it is because they care for her. She obliges and takes him home. The parents bless her marriage across racial boundaries as a pointer that they have accepted the changes that characterise the postcolonial society.

The impending marriage between Becky and John calls for a critical look at inter-racial marriages. The two are likely to be ostracised by the African as well as the white man's communities and experience the loneliness that characterises mixed marriages. While it is clear that John has all the good motives to enter marriage with Becky, we are suspicious of her reasons. Brandishing a repellent female self that cares only for what matters to her, we notice she really has no resolve as to why she wants to marry him. His commitment to the marriage is seen in that he does not want to be taken as a white man who takes advantage of an innocent African girl. He wants to get married properly and have children, who would be prepared to cope with their

double heritage. Unfortunately, the marriage does not work because Becky is unfaithful and when John discovers that she is having an affair she divorces him.

In the postcolonial nation, the female self is empowered economically but this does not automatically translate into happiness for some women. Although Becky is rich, she is unhappy and her promiscuous life complicates the situation since her children know about it and they feel disappointed and neglected. For instance, Alicia, her daughter, at one time voices her desire to leave home and live with her aunt, Vera. Her mother does not approve of such arrangement. She is also reluctant to send the children to stay with their grandmother. Furthermore, they cannot stay with their father since he left without trace after the divorce. Unlike, Akoko, Nyabera and Elizabeth who consistently play their motherhood roles with distinction, Becky fails to nurture her children.

Once Becky divorces her husband, she throws all caution to the wind and openly engages in sexual relations with men without caring whether people would know about her loose morals including her own children. By so doing, Becky assumes a deplorable sense of identity that affects her children for instance, Johnny, her son, who hardly talks while Alicia acts as if her mother does not exist. Before long, their mother contracts HIV. Having contracted the disease at a time when there was no medication, her condition quickly progresses to AIDS and she eventually succumbs to death. Her brother, Aoro, adopts her children.

Becky leaves a hefty insurance and a large estate for her children. Ogola paints her as a wealthy woman who at the time of her death has ãa string of maisonettes, two bungalows in Spring Valley and actually owned a block of offices and shops in Westlandsö (265). The guardians of her children will only provide a home for them. One cannot but admire the way she handles her estate at the time of her death. She makes things easier for her relatives for everything

is clearly documented in a way that makes it easy to know what she has in her estate and also her debts.

Contrary to her family's expectations, Becky elicits a responsible self before she dies. Becky appoints a firm of trustees to run her affairs on behalf of her children and their benefit. She also appoints Vera as the guardian of her children and allows the family members who would be staying with the children to draw sufficient money to provide a comfortable life for them. Despite the incompatibility between her and her sister, Becky believes that Vera can make an excellent mother for her children as she points out in her will.

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

The author portrays Vera as completely the opposite of Becky in order to serve her narrative purpose of depicting women as different at the private and public levels. Vera, the pet name that Veronica comes to be fondly referred by, is smaller than Becky as a child but more vociferous. She does not like being held by adults. The adults avoid her because they are afraid of her big flashing eyes which are restless and tempestuous. However, she is capable of loving

passionately, has a serious mind and turns out to be a brilliant girl. Although she is not as beautiful as Becky, she has an arresting face and graceful body. The strength of her personality can neither be ignored nor taken for granted. Despite her brilliance and force of personality, she is open, friendly and ready to assist. She loves Becky so dearly that she refuses to go to a better, national school in order to attend the same school with her sister. Her parents are disappointed by her decision, but they realise that she is the sort of person to make success of her life wherever she happens to be (165). Their assessment is apt for Vera succeeds in her education up to the university level. We are also not surprised when she becomes a school Captain, a position which is usually reserved for boys. Her rise to leadership makes her father happy and he does not muse at the reverse of the patriarchal roles assigned along gender lines.

In a bid to develop and realise her identity, Vera makes informed decisions about her sister, Becky, and her love for her does not cloud her judgment anymore. She regrets the sacrifice she makes earlier in life to be with her sister in the same school at her own expense. She resolves to make up for what she misses when she forfeits her chance at the national school to be with Becky. Her present desire is to go as far away as possible from her. She passes well at O and joins a national school for her A levels to take Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. She passes highly and decides to pursue electrical engineering at the university. Ogola gives us a detailed account of Vera's educational pursuit to show how education changes the identity of women in the postcolonial era.

At the university, Vera receives many offers of friendship from the boys at the campus, but turns them all down. Her sense of maturity, dependability and moral dispensation is seen when she remains faithful to her boyfriend, Tommy Muhambe who keeps her company on Saturdays and eventually proposes to marry to her. The proposal for marriage finds her

unprepared and her mind is filled by unanswered questions and secret longings. She fails to make a coherent response to Tommy's proposal. When she eventually responds, she says she cannot marry just then because she feels unfinished, as if she is not completely formed and hence needs time to grow. She is indecisive and uncertain. Surprisingly, she advises him to date other girls, a phenomenon that astonishes lover while her refusal to enter marriage points to her future search for fulfilment outside the prescribed patriarchal notions of womanhood and marriage.

The choices Vera makes later in life are a confirmation of her quest for a new identity which seeks fulfilment in the Christian religion. While she boasts of a busy schedule, for her course is quite demanding, she does not miss the celebration of Mass on Sunday even though she wonders what it is she really believes in. This implies that she is undergoing an identity crisis and hence her education and faith in God fall short of making her a fulfilled person for she experiences a spiritual void in her heart that affects her identity. Mary Anne Ngugi, her roommate, notices Vera's spiritual emptiness and points out that although Vera habitually goes for Mass she is not religious and thereby invites her for a recollection session, where she is expected to 'turn out the external and turn into the inner [her], to see how that neglected part of [her] is doing' (217). This invitation forms the background against which Vera begins to forge her identity with regard to her spiritual well-being even though she agrees to go merely to please her roommate.

It is while at the 'recollection' that Vera feels the peaceful stillness of the place enter her soul as the priest challenges her for practicing casual religion which negatively impacts on her identity. For the first time, she hears about work as a means of spiritual fulfilment. It means that if one is not a nun or a recluse to offer prayer to God all the time, one can use work to draw closer to God. Vera feels famished for this kind of enlightenment and goes for it with fervour and

dedication as she endeavours to depict work as a form of prayer which would treat her spiritual barrenness and thereby realise a fulfilled self.

Vera's formation of identity is closely linked to her joining the Catholic Prelature of Opus Dei. Ogola describes the activities that Vera involves herself in when she eventually joins the organisation as a non-marrying member. She dedicates her life and her work to God fully and does not turn back and thereby realises an identity that makes her happy, loving and caring, a personality that endears her to her brother's wife, Wandia Mugo. Although they possess different types of personalities, they both have realised their identities and are able to embrace their differences and similarities without adopting a confrontational stance.

Ogola uses Vera and Wandia's friendship to highlight the collective support that exists between women despite their diverse personalities. Perhaps that is why as the guardian of Becky's children, Vera confidently allows Wandia to stay with them and does not take offence when Wandia expresses her lack of faith in God even though Vera tries to convince her about the need to believe in God. The only time that Wandia comes close to trusting God is when she desperately prays for her son, Daniel, who is suffering from Down syndrome. The discovery that her son is suffering from leukaemia makes Wandia extremely worried. She abandons her agnostic demeanour, visits the church specifically to bargain with God to heal her son. Her action points to the notion that God's power transcends medical knowledge and that the role of a doctor is to protect, rather than, give life.

The Opus Dei faith not only helps Vera to form her identity but to also realise and assert her identity as seen from the way she reacts to Wandia's yearning for divine intervention in Daniel's illness. As far as Vera is concerned, people can run away from God but they cannot forget him, a premise that is informed by her deep insight about God that marks her self-

actualisation. Consequently, she now lives her faith, has time for everybody, exercises open mindedness and believes each person is free to choose whatever they want.

This kind of disposition endears Vera to her brother's wife, Wandia, a Kikuyu who marries to a Luo. Marriage between these two ethnic groups is unusual as highlighted in Wambui Githiora's *Wanjira* where she interrogates interethnic marriages by posing the following questions "Who do you think would allow you to marry a Luo, of all people? What is wrong with you?"(31). The interrogation of marriage between a Luo and a Kikuyu points at the self/other binary opposition. The Kikuyu and the Luo people are pitted against each other not only in social life but also in the struggle for the leadership as we shall see in chapter four of this thesis.

Perhaps that is why Ogola is eager to carve a Kenyan nation that is cohesive by introducing inter-ethnic marriage in her narration. Odhiambo, in "Interrogating History and Restoring Agency to Women in *The River and the Source* by Margaret Ogola" states that Ogola "attempts to 'imagine' both a Luo nation and Kenyan nation....The Kenyan nation a contested terrain with competing ethnic groups always striving to transcend its limits" (69). Ogola depicts mixed marriage between Wandia and Aoro as the prototype of postcolonial Kenya which often experiences warring between ethnic groups. Her attempt to rewrite the Kenyan nation in the 20th and 21st Century portrays her as a woman who is part and parcel of the Kenyan history and attempts to paint a positive image of Kenya.

Ogola uses inter-ethnic marriage to (re)conceptualise Wandia's female self. In her narration, Ogola links Wandia to Akoko, the matriarch of Aoro Sigu's family. Elizabeth sees Akoko in Wandia, her daughter-in-law, even though she is a Kikuyu. She is likened to Akoko who views life as if it were "a river, flowing from eternity into eternity" (279). Aoro points out that his wife is fascinated by his grandmother and asks endless questions about her. He insinuates

that Wandia wills herself to take over Akoko's spirit. Ogola uses Wandia to show a woman who instinctively understands the true destiny of a woman to live life to the full and to fight to the end (286). That is the kind of life that Akoko champions for women and Wandia positions herself to carry on this important task.

Wandia and Aoro Sigu meet at the university when studying medicine. She is bright and beats him in class to his utter disappointment. In his disbelief, he not only appreciates her as an intellectual but also as a woman, another human being. The author uses formal education to highlight equal provision of opportunities for males and females; and also to show the exceptional interpersonal relations between people from various ethnic groups. The relationship between Wandia and Sigu is unique because they come from ethnic groups that are culturally different and have long standing political hostilities which are detailed in chapter four of this study. Falling in love and possible marriage between them would be symbolic of ethnic tolerance in Kenya in 20th and 21st centuries.

The relationship between Wandia and Sigu is likely to raise eyebrows because she is a Kikuyu while he is a Luo. The Kikuyu refer to the West, where Sigu comes from, as *iruguru*, a word that, although an innocuous description of the westerly direction, acquires derogative tribal connotations in postcolonial Kenya. It means people who are other than the Kikuyu. Wandia seeks her mother's opinion on inter-ethnic marriage. The mother tells her that mixed marriages are hard, for marriage is not always a bed of roses. Sometimes, she points out, it is necessary to talk to a man in a language that he understands thoroughly. Her mother views language as the only obstacle to inter-ethnic marriages otherwise she has no problem with marrying her off to a man from *iruguru*.

Wandia gets practical advice which satisfies her quest to settle down with Aoro. She is therefore infuriated with her elder sister, Esther, who insinuates that marrying a man from another ethnic group may not be workable. Wandia tells her sister that the union between her and Aoro will work because he is a Kenyan. She takes a philosophical stance to educate her sister on the need to transcend tribal boundaries. In spite of this, Esther points out that the basic differences of language between them will make Wandia become a stranger to her in-laws. This falls on deaf ears for she is optimistic that Aoro's people are going to do whatever is humanly possible to accommodate her as one of their own.

The seriousness of the two lovers is seen when Aoro visits Wandia's family. He feels quite at home. Consequently, he organises for her to visit his parents. His parents receive her well, although they worry over the stereotypes they have heard about the greed for money among the Kikuyu. His father tries to dissuade him from marrying Wandia, arguing that she could be like the rest of the Kikuyu people. This insinuation annoys Aoro who retorts that he has chosen Wandia and he loves her and he is not able to transfer that feeling from one girl to another. Ogola uses Aoro to (re)conceptualise the female self in the Kenyan nation away from tribal lines. As far as he is concerned, Wandia is not just another woman, another Kikuyu, and therefore attempts to dismantle the 'otherness' notions that his father, Mark Sigu, assigns to Wandia while at the same time questioning and challenging ethnic stereotypes that undermine common humanity. Language difference, therefore, becomes an excuse rather than a reason. Furthermore, Aoro informs his father that her mother has not asked for exorbitant bride price, instead she wishes that the two live in peace.

Unlike Mark, his wife Elizabeth takes in Wandia easily and thinks her son is a lucky man. As far as she is concerned, Aoro has chosen well. This female solidarity across different ethnic

backgrounds defines the cordial relationship that the two forge from the beginning. Elizabeth is able to respect difference without falling victim of ethnic stereotypes that divide Kenyans and hence her support for Wandia maps out positive articulations of identity. She also reframes identity issues in postcolonial Kenya by weaving a narrative of ethnic tolerance and thereby suggesting the possibility of interethnic co-existence among the various ethnic groups in Kenya without objectifying a particular ethnic group.

While other people in the narrative worry about the impending mixed marriage between her and Aoro, Wandia wonders whether their marriage will survive the onslaught of medicine which is a very busy career. This concern about her impending marriage shows she is rational and reflective. Ogola uses her medical career as a springboard for Wandia's self (re)conceptualisation. To grasp the full impact of Wandia's identity, Ogola highlights Wandia's medical career which starts as a childhood dream. While her mother views medicine as an occupation for men and would like her daughter to be a teacher, Wandia endeavours to be a doctor. Her aspiration is not just to treat sick people, but to also be a lecturer at the medical school if only to fulfil her mother's wish of becoming a teacher.

Wandia's career in medicine becomes an obsession that defines her identity such that "everything else [pales] into insignificance before her great ambitions" (244). Her strength of character comes out strongly when she takes up a medical discipline that is quite challenging: "She [wants] to study pathology – one of the toughest, most demanding disciplines in medicine; to become a lecturer at the medical school and thus become a teacher" (244 – 245). Wandia's determination to actualise her potential in the medical field is further seen in her desire to "specialise in haematology – diseases of the blood [fascinate] her" (245). Her commitment and hard work bears fruit when she finally joins the university as a lecturer after her postgraduate

degree in pathology and thus realises her childhood dream to be a doctor, and her mother's wish for her to be a teacher. This sense of fulfilment in her search of self-identity defines her fulfilled self.

Wandia and her mother-in-law become good friends. It is no wonder then that they often retreat to the kitchen to bond as the only place they are not likely to be disturbed by the rest of the family members. This complementary relationship supports Wandia's quest for education. When she earns a scholarship to study in America for a year, Elizabeth encourages her to leave her five children behind with their father. That surprises her, but her mother-in-law rationalises the move saying, 'you see if you don't go, it's something that will haunt you - a lost chance is very hard to live with. We will all chip in to give him a hand with the children'. Just organise your affairs and go do what you have to do (277). Such consideration and support, more so from a mother-in-law, is quite disarming for Wandia. It is not surprising that her heart is broken by the death of her mother-in-law whom she has come to regard her as a dear friend.

Ogola uses Wandia to reveal her faith in the female's performance of selfhood as professionals in careers such as medicine in Kenya in the 21st Century. The support that Wandia receives from both men and women helps her to rise to the position of the Chairperson of the Department of Pathology, at the University of Nairobi. She also becomes a professor, the first Kenyan woman to attain such a position in medicine. She appreciates her husband without whose encouragement, she acknowledges, she may have faltered and even give up her postgraduate studies. She owes her good marriage, lovely children and professional satisfaction to his support and hence Ogola underscores the complementary nature of gender relations that should be the norm socially, culturally and politically.

Wandia does not only realise her selfhood in her medical career but also in the social realm as a respected member of the Sigu family and by extension the Kenyan society. The Sigu family has confidence in her and allows her to stay with Becky's children, Alicia and Johnny, whom she readily takes into her house and cares for them as if they were her own children. Her mature sense of identity is seen when she voices their dissatisfaction with their father's decision to keep them off from them even after their mother's death. Wielding selflessness, she advises Johnny against changing his name from Johnny Courtney to Johnny Sigu because by so doing he would be negating his European identity. She advises him to maintain both identities, African and European and appeals to him to be more understanding, cultivate his own selfhood, and avoid closing the door that defines his dual identity unnecessarily. She is a non-racist who is conscious that Becky's children belong to two worlds and they should have the best of each. She therefore does not understand why Becky failed to see the necessity to give her children African names as well and advises Johnny to take the name Sigu as a middle name rather than drop his European name.

An examination of *The River and the Source* shows Ogo's determination to subvert the patriarchal ideology that constrains and disempowers women. She represents certain female characters in this text as fulfilled in their womanhood since they resist gender prescriptions that subjugate women. She therefore portrays both cultural and political emancipatory possibility for women to regain control over their destiny within the framework of prevailing culture and tradition. Awareness of the gendered cultural context within which Akoko and the other female characters in the text live in enables them to challenge traditional customs that are at the core of the construction of the female subjectivity. Within the patriarchal institution, women are socialised as passive, silent and bearers of children.

Ogola reconceptualises women as conscious subjects, and in a revolutionary shift, assigns them voices to speak out and also the right to be heard in the postcolonial milieu. By so doing, Ogola revises and rearticulates womanhood in a bid to underpin women as distinguished members in the society by dismantling aspects of patriarchy that constrain and disempower women. For Ogola, narrative discourse provides an opportunity to destabilise the male controlling gaze through Akoko who defiantly subverts the male iconography when she leaves her marital home never to return. In her marital home, she experiences deprivations when her husband's brother tries to lay claim on her body, when he attempts to inherit her, and her wealth. She rebuffs any attributes that seek to define her in terms of the objectifying gaze of her husband's brother. Akoko's determination to fight against a tradition that denies her womanhood earns her the position of the prototype of the other female characters in the novel. Thus, Ogola produces a narrative of the postcolonial Kenya that is characterised by complementary gender relations.

Ogola's *I Swear by Apollo* shows how female identity crises can be exploited to (re) conceptualise the female self and national identity in the postcolonial nation. According to Selden, the concern of the feminist as well as women writers is to ensure that "The female principle [will] remain outside male definitions of self" (519). Selden's argument affirms that Ogola is alive to notions of differences that exist between male and female since the woman is perceived and cast in the image of the man's other. Nevertheless, Ogola uses writing to correct the perception that all problems of women are caused by men. It is Becky who deals the first blow to her daughter's female self since she does not provide a good female model for her daughter. She neither shows love nor provides the emotional support that Alicia requires from a mother.

Ogola historicises women in the contemporary Kenyan nation in *I Swear by Apollo*. It is worth noting that the main concerns in this novel are issues that directly affect the female

characters and hence matters that do not bear on the (re)conceptualisation of women are given minimal attention. The story of women which Ogola carries into to the contemporary Kenyan nation can be viewed as an engagement in the (re)conceptualisation of the female self. She ventures into exploring a new sense of national identity by assigning women intrinsic value(s) in the postcolonial nation. The narrative is weaved around the grandchildren of Elizabeth and Mark Sigu, Alicia and Johnny.

The novel revolves around women's lives touching on aspects of life that offer a wider (re) conceptualisation of women as agents of their status in Kenya. Some of the female characters in this text do not only share historical memories but also adopt the ever changing attitudes towards them such as acquiring education and taking up various careers, continually restructuring them. They therefore assist other female characters to develop female selves shaped by consistent change depending on their perceptions and opinions. The author manages to conceive different identities of women in this narrative and their experiences are reweoven through live experiences that the various female characters in this book assume in their relation with Alicia. This is because the female characters' role in this particular narrative contributes to the development of Alicia.

Alicia, daughter of Becky Sigu and John Courtney experiences identity crises. While she lives, Becky refuses to conform to the image of 'otherness' that in most cases women subscribe to. Theoretical analysis of Ogola's *I Swear by Apollo* attracts feminist criticism in the sense that through Becky, the author deconstructs women's subjectivity even though this has detrimental effects on Becky's children. Feminist discussion of the self provides a critique of the role played by views of otherness in the lives of women in African literature as portrayed in the 'mother

Africa's trope. Florence Stratton highlights the trope's deep rootedness in male literary convention that enhances female subjectivity. She says:

The embodiment of Africa in the figure of a woman, one of the most enabling tropes of 'postcolonial' male domination as well as of colonialism; the portrayal of women as passive and voiceless, images that serve to rationalise and therefore perpetuate inequality between the sexes and the romanticisation and idealisation of motherhood, as a means of masking women's subordination in society. (172)

Stratton paints the picture of an African woman in bondage, one who needs to be liberated. The kind of liberation that Ogburn bestows on Becky is destructive not only on her life but also the lives of her children.

In Negritude and nationalist discourse women are assigned the role of biological reproduction of the nation. Thus, motherhood in the patriarchal ideology is merely an institution, a role that women are expected to perform in their passivity and voicelessness. However, there is need for women to experience motherhood as a role that calls for skill and knowledge so that they can nurture their children to become distinguished members of the nation. Becky totally disregards her motherhood duties in her eagerness to be equal to men, and we read how she neglects her children and also divorces her husband who tries to fill the gap in the parenting of their two children.

Becky's family is very disappointed with their daughter's demeanour and the collapse of her marriage even though her father surmises that 'in all honesty one could never have expected too much from that girl' (119). He, therefore, does not blame John for the failure of the marriage since Becky lives 'somewhere so far from the surface of her being that she [is] completely untouched by the pain of evil' (120) as she entertains several men in her life. While everyone

expects him to divorce her, his strength fails him for he wonders "How do [I] divorce a little girl for hurting [me]?" (121). Becky works out all the divorce technicalities and just informs him that it is done, and that she has full custody of the children. Thus, Ogoala's attempt to demystify the self/other logic as well as the negritude notions of the African woman as passive mother figure especially the idyllic image of the African woman, crumbles in the character of Becky who does not play the role of the mother to her children adequately.

Although John finds fault with Becky he does not place himself in the realm of the angels and thus makes a hard choice to continue living with her. Even though she is promiscuity, he does not consider divorcing her. To him, she is "a little girl" (121) hurting him. It is no wonder that John maintains silence and stays away from his children even after her death not because he is a bad man, but due to intense pain at the betrayal and the embarrassment of being cuckolded.

Like her mother, Alicia is beautiful. Her father gasps when he sees her after a long time, "Oh my God, it is Becky all over again" (104). The only difference is that she is reserved and withdrawn. Ogoala describes her as a woman who is obviously accessible but unknowable. Such characteristics define her female self and are attributable to her interracial and unstable family background. She is a child of a mixed marriage between a Kenyan and a Canadian national. The marriage does not work due to her mother's promiscuous life which is blamed on her astonishing beauty, exaggerated sexuality, pre-occupation with her ego and an unadulterated love of self. After the divorce, John goes back to Canada while Becky starts bringing her multiple lovers to their residence.

When John meets Sybil, he hopes to know her and love her even more than he had loved Becky and perhaps live long enough so that at the end of her life he can tell her "truly you were my other self, my very self, only better than my mere self" (63). This is because Becky hurts John

badly and he doubts whether or not he is capable of loving another woman. His marriage to Sybil cures this deep seated doubt for she nurses him in a bid to help him have his life back and he eventually tells her that, to love a woman like you is to be alive, which is what I am and want to be, so that in loving you I may finally realise who I am' (164). Through John and Sybil, Ogola fosters complementarity in relationships between men and women which is an eye opener for John who agrees to go back to Africa to visit his children on the advice and encouragement from Sybil.

John's reunion with Alicia marks the beginning of the latter's (re)conceptualisation as she readily and happily receives her father. It is apparent, therefore, that motherly care for Alicia and her brother was lacking for while their mother lived, she was insensitive to their needs. With the disappearance of her father and death of her mother, Alicia, who suffers a traumatised childhood, adopts a defence mechanism to help her cope with what Ogola refers to as the plight of the soul 'in this vale of tears' (10). Wandia comes to Alicia's rescue and helps her to overcome the identity crisis she suffers and thus Ogola uses gendered roles for women within the home and family unit to integrate women into the society.

Ogola depicts women as being at the core of the family and the backbone of the society. This explains why she uses Wandia and Vera to help Alicia to (re)conceptualise her female self because in a way they provide the stable family unit for Alicia which she lacked. Vera becomes her guardian when her mother dies while Wandia is prized as a superb mother of not only her children, but also Becky's children. Wandia's strength of character remains intact even in the event of the death of her child, Danny, whom she fails to mourn properly because she is resigned to the inevitability of his death. She realises, albeit too late, that mourning when bereaved is normal and reckons that 'God himself makes mourning [an obligation] if one is to be comforted,

be healed, perhaps my greatest fault is my utter sense of self sufficiency. I act as if nothing can shake me; I am always in control, always in chargeö (141). This is the kind of woman who helps to reclaim Alicia from a broken family and fragmented identity. She helps Alicia to heal psychological wounds which nonetheless leave deep scars. Vera also plays an important role in the (re) conceptualisation of Alicia's female self. Although her religious obligations make her withdraw from public life to concentrate on her private life, she endows Alicia with moral meaning and integrity as the mother substitute.

Alicia experiences identity crises in relation to the opposite sex. As far as she is concerned entangling herself with men will damage her female self and she does not want to take the risk. She treasures her life such that although she sometimes feels too scared to live, she however [does] not want to die. There [is] some meaningful thing or person to whom she [can] commit herself and thus find self-actualisation and peace. She [longs] for peaceö (13-14). This quotation points at a shattered self that rationalises life in order to (re)conceptualise a tranquil female self. Alicia's identity crisis is further compounded by the rejection she experiences in relation to her surviving parent, John, who plays a major role in inflicting otherness in her life when he abandons her after the divorce even though she begs him not to leave her.

Ogola demonstrates through Alicia that a woman's denied self should be subverted so that the woman can realise her selfhood as a subject of enunciation so that she can use the pronoun -Iö in reference to herself. In other words, the author attempts to invoke the semiotic as well as the symbolic articulation of self. According to Noelle McAfee:

The semiotic includes both the subject's drives and articulationí The symbolic is the mode of signifying in which speaking beings attempt to express meaning with as little ambiguity as possible...the two modes are not completely separate: we use symbolic

modes of signifying to state position, but this position can be destabilised or unsettled by semiotic drives and articulations. (17)

McAfee underscores the need for feminist counter-imagery of women as having fulfilled selfhood to offset culturally entrenched, patriarchal images of woman as having fragmented selfhood because they are the other than men in the society. The semiotic dimension of language, which is characterised by figurative language, points to intelligible utterances which rely on semantic conventions to figuratively subvert Alicia's denied selfhood.

Wandia understands that Alicia's self is a dynamic interplay between the feminine semiotic and the masculine symbolic and therefore goes out of her way to ensure that Alicia realises her self. She writes to Alicia's father yet again to remind him of his responsibility to his children. She categorically asks him to come for his children or to ask someone to send his death certificate. The point that Wandia is making here is that as long as he lives, John cannot afford to abdicate his responsibility to his children. Wandia feels that it has taken him too long to come and see his children even though "marrying across racial lines [tends] to put one's personal integrity in question" (101). Wandia is sarcastic about marriage across racial boundaries, regardless of whether the relationship is based on genuine love or not.

Alicia tries to use both symbolic and semiotic language at the time of her parents' divorce when she begs her father not to leave. She considers him to be her only parent because her mother failed to provide childhood care to Alicia while she was alive. Maria Elena Valdes points out that, "when Kristeva links symbolic language to masculinity and semiotic language to femininity she argues that both aspects of language are open to all individuals irrespective of their biological sex" (176). Language, both semantic and symbolic, is used to foster Alicia's selfhood. Her mother is too pre-occupied with herself to pay any attention to her "once the basics

such as being born [are] overö (106). Ogola uses Becky and Wandia to bring out two types of motherhood: Becky's is merely an institution while Wandia's is an experience. She has six children to the amazement of friends and neighbours alike.

Through Wandia, Ogola blends patriarchal institution with modernity by depicting children as valuable, especially so, to a modern career woman, a doctor who gets six children by design, not by default. Producing many children in the earlier times was common unlike in the modern society. Wandia purposes to have children and brings them up to the best of her ability, even Danny who suffers from Down's syndrome. Otherwise, as a medical doctor, she would have aborted some if she so wished, not because doctors are expected to abort, but because the profession provided her with expert knowledge to carry out the act, or at least to know the full benefits, if any, and consequences. Through authorial intrusion abortion is castigated thus: "But what do you give an aborted child in exchange for its life, or could death be considered a gift?" (38).

Downs syndrome is a rare sickness which comes with a set of symptoms and hence the difficulties involved in treating it. The author uses this illness to underpin the sanctity of life which Wandia's experience of motherhood guards to the disgust of her husband who thinks it is not right for her to treat Danny, the drooling idiot "as if he were a perfectly normal child equal in every way to his perfect siblings" (31). The author perhaps brings in the diseased circumstances of Danny to chastise Becky for her negligence of two perfectly normal children. The question she is posing to the reader is: would Becky have allowed an abnormal child to live if she found it

difficult to nurture normal children? Drawing the contrast between male and female in parenting, Ogola posits:

if being a father is so deeply significant how absolutely elemental is motherhood, not just the biological act, but the deep meaning and connection and essence of carrying a living being within you, nurturing its body and spirit. (126)

Becky lives in a world of her own, absconding her duties as a mother and fails to experience motherhood. Her daughter is denied motherly love which finds expression in Wandia whom Alicia hopes to emulate when her turn for parenting comes. She thinks, "if I ever have children, I pray that I will be half as good a mother to them as she has been to me" (115). In Wandia, Alicia's dejected self finds solace.

While Alicia is overexcited with her father's presence, Johnny refuses to accept him into his life. Alicia challenges him telling him that "dad's error will [pale] into insignificance when compared with the suffering [he] will cause" (113) by rejecting his father. Alicia, unlike Johnny has a receptive and enlightened self. She points out to her brother that closing out his father from his life would only cause him more heartache. Alicia takes advantage of her father's return, in the words of Valdes, "to assert [her] specificity as [woman]" (175). The implication is that Alicia is determined to use whatever means available to her to reclaim her dejected self. Although her father's absence from her life is unbearable (and we would excuse her if she becomes callous and hostile to him for deserting her), she opens her heart to him; she forgives him for his neglect without any qualms.

Wandia plays a major role in Alicia's search for identity. She offers the much required love, affection, understanding and parenthood that Alicia lacks. Perhaps it is because of Wandia's influence on Alicia that she becomes "an absolutely lovely person" (161) even though she is

“very delicate, almost fragile” (161). Her father attributes Alicia’s fragmented self to her start in life which is considered to be “a bit tight” (161). The dejection that she feels, whether imagined or real, affects her adulthood. Alicia develops a restrained self, which her father hopes is only momentary. She has an “inner radiance which is still fighting to come through” (162) but it seems that with time, she would realise her real self and blossom. Her choice of a career in music points at this possibility.

Alicia’s reference to her mother’s death ignites in John nostalgic feelings towards Becky. His love for her is intense, almost consuming. He is not the only male in this novel who loves a woman deeply. Aoro Sigu loves Wandia immensely and he is “involved with her in exactly the same way a drowning man is involved with the sea inextricably” He [feels] very strongly that his very definition of himself as a man [is] somehow bound up with the way she perceives him” (33). His love for Wandia is complete but not blind like the one John bestows on Becky. As a gesture of his deep love and respect for her, he names their house after her: Villa Wandia. In both love and marriage, Aoro and Wandia play complementary roles to each other unlike John and Becky.

John’s love for Becky is a kind of obsession which he fails to outgrow. He loves her deeply and blindly and does not appear ready to abandon her whatever the circumstances. He is, therefore, deeply hurt when his eyes finally open to see the deception in his life. Nevertheless, Becky’s beauty and innocence does not deceive her father who does not expect much from her. He is, therefore, not intrigued by his daughter’s conduct and subsequent failure of her marriage. Unlike John, Becky’s father realises that his daughter lacks depth. He observes, that all she has is “on the surface only, í something twisted within her, which [is] rather terrible considering her angelic face” (119). John’s obsession with Becky obscures his intellect and hence his

disappointment at the discovery of her lecherous life inhibits him from voluntarily coming back to Kenya. Her conduct nearly deals him a mortal blow. His love for her is intense, almost consuming. In light of her fate, John blames himself for failing to reclaim her from herself. He observes, rather belatedly: "Is this perhaps the reason she turned so violently against me? Was I perhaps the only person who could have saved her, by first knowing her and then helping her escape from herself? Was this anger which almost destroyed us all" (163). We are rather surprised that John feels a failure for, as far as he is concerned, he did not save Becky from her destructive self.

John feels obliged to rescue Becky, but it is rather late in the day for he takes time to realise she lives somewhere so far from the surface of her being that she is completely unscathed by the pain of evil. In other words, she is not sensitive to other people's feelings especially her husband. Instead of blaming Becky for her violence and failure to nurture her husband and children, John exonerates her against the reader's expectation. His ability to desist from apportioning blame to Becky marks him out as a man who can be very supportive to a woman not only to help her to define herself, but also to assert their selfhood. Wandia venerates John as a good man who has received a near mortal blow from Becky and forgives him for his part in neglecting Alicia and Johnny.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the project of women writers re-conceptualising female selfhood is a feminist project too. Moira Monteith echoes this notion when she says that, "feminist criticism like a solar oven has proved to be the mirror that focuses literature and concentrates its signifying energy" (3). Ogola uses literary power to (re)conceptualise Alicia's female self through her love for Brett. Alicia meets Brett, her step-mother's brother, while on a visit to Canada to see her father. Even though Alicia would like to imagine that she is not

interested in him, she becomes emotionally involved, begins to pay attention to her looks, and develops a strong desire to dress attractively. However, due to her restrained and confused self she fails to reciprocate when Brett, who is deeply in love with her, asks her out for a drink she refuses. As her confusion rages, the author uses oxymoron to heighten her plight. She wishes to forget him while at the same time longs to see and be with him as both of them hope that an opportunity can present itself for them to make a home.

Due to the rejection in her early life, Alicia suffers from inferiority complex. It does not therefore come as a surprise to us when she withdraws into herself and rationalises her behaviour saying that Brett is used to more sophisticated ladies and therefore would have no time for her. For the feminist as well as the woman writer, the self is the centre of autonomous agency, but Alicia's self fails to take action and she refuses to respond to Brett's pursuit. She, therefore, locks him out and he takes the advice from Sybil to leave Alicia alone for fear that a continued search may be counteractive: he might lose her forever and perhaps damage her as well.

To cope with this disarming situation, Alicia adopts defence mechanism to guard herself against show of love emotions towards Brett. Her fears stem from her mixed background and her feeling that she is timid and devoid of confidence. Furthermore, she is afraid of giving herself to him just in case he hurts her. It is this uncertainty that makes Alicia weak and lacking in strength to consciously involve herself in a love relationship with Brett. Her step-mother, Sybil, understands her behaviour. As far as she is concerned, Alicia is a 'poor fearful child with a woman's beautiful body and a child's night-time terrors' (197). Sybil tries to help her out of this unfortunate situation by giving her advice on lessons about life. She advises, 'One cannot postpone life or avoid it altogether. If you do you die anyway. And to die from un-lived life is an unforgivable sin' (198). She cautions Alicia against the folly of failing to live her life to the full.

Sybil knows too well that Brett has awakened the woman in Alicia and thus provides an opportunity for Alicia's (re)conceptualisation. She hopes that with time her awakened womanhood will respond to Brett's love when she discovers that they chart life together as husband and wife. In addition, she will realise that she and Brett are one and the same thing and marriage between them would be inevitable. Sybil foreshadows things to come and prepares us for what happens later in the narrative.

Through suspense, Ogola introduces a sense of foreboding by making it almost impossible for Alicia to reach out to Brett when she finally comes to terms with her female self. Brett resigns from Toronto University to take up a job in Switzerland. Unfortunately, he leaves no address. It becomes impossible to contact him to the utter disappointment of Alicia. However, there is nothing that she can do to alleviate the suffering and she is, therefore, left to experience the "the pain of becoming a woman" (199) alone. She resorts to self-incrimination: "I am a fool and I have always been one, she [says] viciously to herself" (20). She regrets her failure to take up a golden opportunity that comes to her by acting in an unintelligent manner due to her immature self. Alicia's unstable background, her narrow and self-centred way of dealing with situations makes her to lose Brett, a man desperately hopes would have married her. To cope with the loss she experiences in relation to Brett, she adjusts her outlook to life to accommodate other people in her love-life.

When she goes to back to Africa, Alicia displays a distracted self, but she refrains from opening up to anybody. Although she goes back to her work and studies with dedication, the spirit that previously animates her life is lacking. She is shattered. As if to punish herself and also Brett, she enters into a relationship with Napoleon, a man old enough to be her father. She resorts to this kind of behaviour to exorcise Brett from her mind. The feeling that she is never going to

have him pushes her to resolve that it really does not matter who she marries. Ogola uses sardonic humour in reference to the love relationship between the two when she suggests that even Alicia herself is amused when she introduces her prospective husband. She almost laughs out loud at the prospect of what she is doing. Wandia and her husband are worried at her behaviour.

Using women's collective responsibility to salvage the female self, Sybil contacts her brother as a matter of urgency and he takes the next flight to Nairobi to save Alicia from her impending marriage to Napoleon. Brett's act of grace redeems Alicia's fragmented self allowing her to realise a fulfilled female self. Her marriage comes as a relief to Wandia and Aoro because it opens an avenue for their niece to enjoy a new fulfilled self. It is therefore not surprising to us that Alicia names her first child Wandia in appreciation of the role her step-aunt/foster mother has played in helping her to achieve a positive identity.

The fuss that Napoleon makes, demanding to have his bride even though it means paying a higher bride-price, reminds us of the traditional practice of paying bride-price for women in marriage. Through authorial intrusion, Napoleon is informed that the "family stopped selling women many generations ago" (234). Ogola wants to point out that there is more to a marriage than bride-price which has lost its historical-cultural value in Kenya today. Women cease to be objects on display at the market for sale to the highest bidder. Marriage calls for mutual understanding between two people. The author writes:

Marriage is a fusion of two people and that love is not necessarily something you feel despite the romantic literature around. There are some things which are transcendental. Marriage is one of them and that is why human beings attempt it again and again, despite all odds. (237)

Marriage is envisaged as an honourable institution both in the traditional and contemporary way of life. This explains why Ogola exploits the family unit to project her vision about the complementary roles that men and women play in the perpetuation of the life of a community. When Brett marries Alicia she ceases to be the mother for in Brett she gains self-definition, esteem and is finally empowered to assert her female selfhood and nationhood. She achieves a fulfilled self that (re)conceptualises her female self.

However, Ogola suspends Alicia's bid to assert her selfhood and nationhood as soon as she is married and therefore fails to allow the reader to share Alicia's fulfilled moments as a mother and a career woman. Ogola portrays her marriage as if it is the height of achievement. We are left wondering whether she eventually completes her postgraduate course in music and goes into practice.

An interrogation of Florence Mbayi's *A Journey Within* moves Alicia's story from where Ogola suspends it. To provide a window to show how young women like Alicia perform nationhood, Mbayi throws some light on the challenges facing young women in their endeavour to take up careers in Kenya today. Mbayi just like Ogola historicises her-story the story of women in contemporary Kenya. Her-story acquires prominence as a mode of the (re)conceptualisation of women's selfhood and seeks to examine how women's writings foster women's identity in relation to the contemporary nation. The semi-autobiographical nature of *A Journey Within* perhaps moves Alicia's story and fleshes out a significant engagement of women in national issues in the 21st Century. Through the main character, Monika, this her-story portrays the struggles facing young women in their effort to chart selfhood and nationhood in Kenya in the 21st Century.

Monika holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and is living with her sister Miriam while searching for employment. An interpretation of Mbaya's narrative gives insight into the character of Monika and her ways of coping with her changing circumstances. Living in a community full of school drop-outs and unemployed persons, her level of education makes her feel estranged. In order to fit in she opts to pass off as an 'O' level school-leaver. The author describes her as 'Quiet and with a pleasant disposition, she [has] that aura of confidence about her that [is] very admirable' (3). This explains her ability to cultivate a sense of belonging, for her adornment of amiable, flexible temperament enables her to fit into her sister's community. She identifies with the others 'in as far as she [is] unemployed, and like them she [scans] through new and old newspapers for those popular 'Situations Vacant-Situations Wanted' columns day in day out, rather hopelessly' (3). Although she remains alien to the people in sister's community, she participates their singing without grasping the meaning, listens to their gossip without contributing and joins in their laughter without understanding their jokes.

Focusing on the text, my aim is to consider novelistic (re)conceptualisation of the female self in the context of enacting both selfhood and nationhood. In addition, the text is an enabling site for the reader and the critic to grasp another dimension of women's realities in the postcolonial Kenya: self-determination and self-fulfilment in the nation. Monika is the narrating 'I' in the novel whose narration takes a first person narrative mode. The 'I' speaks on behalf of the collective 'we' and frames a multiplicity of potential responses to the central question of the female footing in Kenya. The focus of the story is on the identity of the modern educated postcolonial woman that is expected to create a new paradigm for female representation.

Through writing, Mbaya engages in an act of writing about women's selfhood and the interaction between women and national identity. She presents women in Kenya today as having

self-identity problems since their 'self' is conceptualised in the image of the 'other'. There is no regard to the self as fundamental to the question of self and national identity in respect to women's self-agency. Renan underpins the dialectic relationship between the individuals living in a nation and the nation itself when he points out: 'to have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present: to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more—these are the essential conditions for being a people' (1). Essentially, the nation and its individuals have many things in common, some of which are forgotten in the self/other dichotomy.

Renan's proposition is that people, including woman, should share in the past and present glories of Kenya. Women have to be unified with the nation by participating in Kenya's national activities. In this regard, Mbaya historicises the female self in the postcolonial nation in her writing. Furthermore, she reinforces the female in the nation and emancipates her from patriarchal notions which undermine her selfhood. (Re)conceptualisation of the female self in Kenya, therefore, assumes a dialectical mode that unites both the woman and the nation she lives in. This dialectic relationship is expected to harness any differences and ambivalences between the female self and the nation and hence subvert the inhibitions on the woman. Mbaya (re)conceptualises Monika's development of nationhood as an on-going process from her life at the university to the time she takes up a teaching job. Her experiences in Kenya influence her self-identity and she also influences what is happening in Kenya. By so doing, she transforms herself as well as Kenya and indicts women's otherness.

Monika is positioned as a subject of articulation meant to evoke a universal protagonist. This is because she is the only female character who is developed fully in this text. The other female characters facilitate her growth and hence they are brought on board so long as they

interact with her to aid her in the (re)conceptualisation of her female self. Through Monika, Mbaya portrays the interconnectedness of an individual and the nation as Monika searches for self and national identity. Her development is influenced by her education and her perception of the environment she is living in, both rural and urban. She enacts selfhood as she performs her duties in the nation, a phenomenon that helps us to determine her place as either the self or the other in postcolonial Kenya.

Despite the problems that come with urban economic problems, Monika develops an honest self. She refuses to succumb to fraud when she goes to the city of Nairobi to buy clothing materials for her sister, Miriam. The shop attendant's conspiratorial voice tells her that she can pay twenty shillings per meter without a receipt or pay thirty and get a receipt for the clothing materials. She opts for the latter. She is further exposed to the harsh realities of postcolonial Kenya when she comes across street children who struggle to get basic necessities such as food. Mbaya uses her to castigate a society that is unable to provide for basic needs when Monika forgoes her lunch and gives it to the street children. Her encounter with the less fortunate leaves her feeling exposed and vulnerable since she is forced to become part of those hungry, sad, painful, begging faces (8). She becomes aware of their dusty, dirty, smelly bodies and experiences an acute wave of emptiness, hopelessness and an unexplained sense of shame (8). The divide between the rich and the poor opens her eyes to the economic realities of Kenya which is characterised by a poor economy and joblessness.

Mbaya interrogates the self-portrait of women in the form of a personal narrative. She uses this mode to create a female heroine while at the same time exploiting the journey motif which enables her to craft a novel of transformation from patriarchy to a more gender complementary society. This is necessary if women and men are to enjoy more cordial relations

in contemporary Kenya. Representation of Monika's quest for self-identity as a journey points at the heroine's progression from one aspect of her life to another in a hierarchal manner. Mbaya points out that "Born and bred in the village, Monika's first year at the university had been a journey through a maze" (9). She struggles to find selfhood, self-realisation and independence in a nation where patriarchy inhibits women's ability to chart selfhood. This situation raises the need to reflect on female self national identity. Mbaya seems to have a fundamental interest in critically reflecting upon a patriarchal society and extend the space allocated to women through education. Education becomes necessary to ensure that her protagonist does not succumb to the limitations imposed on her gender by notions of the other. Otherness leads to women's loss of selfhood due to the contradictions and challenges found in the postcolonial nation.

Life at the university presents Monika with unexpected freedom since there are "no bells for summons and no rules for guidance" (9). Monika's experiences while at the university are symbolic of a journey towards self-discovery. For instance, she treasures the "glory of being an intellectual" [attends] radical students' meetings during which Karl Marx, Fidel Castro, and Mao [are presented as] the true heroes of anticipated and vaguely defined social change" (9). Monika's vision for the betterment of the society as informed by Marxist ideological crusaders, Karl Max, Fidel Castro and Mao, portrays her as progressive minded.

The protagonist's involvement in students' politics points to her quest for social-political identity. There is something more than just being at the university and she endeavours to be at the core of major students' activities. However, she is sensible such that she reduces her time for participation in students' politics to create more time for her studies. During her third year, she makes the library "her refuge and hide out. Tutorial papers that she [has] worked on hastily the previous year [are] laboriously analysed for personal upgrade" (9-10). The implication is that she

knows that the getting a degree will change her fortune in the society even though life presents her with a new compounded meaning upon graduation; she finds it difficult to get a job and hence she momentarily feels the dejection that characterises unfulfilled wishes.

The challenges that come with unemployment threaten to submerge Monika's selfhood and nationhood. This scenario arises despite the fact that she has adequate education which should normally assign her transformative power to shape her personal and national identity. Her hope to get a job from the Public Service Commission in her area of study is not realised when she is offered a teaching job by the Teacher's Service Commission. Monika gets a job that is other than the one she is looking for. It is against this background that I have investigated the (re)conceptualisation of Monika's self.

Wielding a deep-seated concern for a young woman, the author creates a female protagonist whose space in Kenya is not limited by the notions of otherness either as a female or as a career woman. Monika resists notions of otherness that can work towards loss of selfhood through contradictions and challenges found in Kenya where unemployment is rampant. The author contrasts the reality and expectations of the society when she says, 'a university graduate, nobody [expects] her to search for a job, because the assumption [is] that she [is] guaranteed one' (4). Education is expected to apportion certain privileges for example, job opportunities since a graduate epitomised power and wealth and was therefore cut above everyone else' (4). A lingering question is whether Monika gets a job to escape the poverty that comes with unemployment.

Monika's failure to get a job in the field of her training inhibits her future prospects, but her flexible will influences her to take up teaching. Her rationality compels her to accept the offer despite the discouragement from friends. By so doing, she embarks on a journey to change her

jobless status as well as acquire a new identity as an employee. Her education becomes a tool that enables her to perform national duties as a teacher in the country side. Thus, she responds positively to the contradictions of the postcolonial nation and integrates herself into the nation by assuming national roles and obligations of a productive citizen. Mbaya uses her to embark on national activism of the female self which is necessary since women are not self-sufficient outside of the nation. The society provides education and thereby promotes certain skills and values that help women to realise particular freedoms.

Monika cannot afford to extricate herself from the national-social context. Elleke Boehmer views women's writings as "occupying an enabling position, from which to articulate selfhood [and nationhood]" (220). Boehmer further observes that women's writings, because of the "fascinating ways in which their writing addressed, redressed, and distressed the historical legacy of compounded oppression and survival...[have] become almost emblematic of postcolonial writing as a category" (220). In *A Journey Within* Mbaya uses her writing to articulate the history of Monika's struggle and survival within Kenya even though stories about women are viewed as lesser in describing national mythologies.

Mbaya articulates Monika's selfhood and nationhood as a moment of struggle and survival that dismantles notions of women being on the periphery in as far as nationhood is concerned. Mbaya portrays women's centrality in the nation by bringing to the fore Monika's specific experiences as a woman and as a postcolonial citizen. In so doing, Mbaya addresses the realisation of Monika's nationhood alongside selfhood and asserts her distinct actuality. This is seen when Monika takes up teaching as a job in the country side. The rural environment in which Mbaya positions Monika as she searches for self-identity is quite a challenge because the people neither speak her mother tongue nor Kiswahili. Furthermore, she has to use paraffin instead of gas

while cooking. The emphasis that Mbaya puts on the rural location of the school is meant to show the sacrifice that Monika has to make in the search for self and national identity.

Initially, her appointment as a teacher at Kostas Secondary School in Murwet region surprises her because she has a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in Government and Geography. Her immediate reaction is, "I simply can't teach" (24). The voice embodied in the text corresponds to a cohesive sense of self identity. Mbaya portrays how women can be independent so that the "I" realises selfhood by claiming an esteemed self that participates in national activities. Creating the dilemma that comes with the offer for employment, Mbaya challenges Monika to make a decision in the interval between the self and the nation. She embarks on a journey to Kostas Secondary School. Symbolically, this is the beginning of Monika's quest for an independent self as a woman endowed with education and is about to start disseminating knowledge.

The author paints education as vital in the (re) conceptualisation of the female self. It becomes, in the words of Nelson Mandela, "a great engine of personal development. It is through education that a daughter of a peasant can become a doctor" (194). Education gives Monika an opportunity to transcend the confinement of the home and power to explore and enact nationhood. Through her, Mbaya underlines education as a main factor in a woman's reconceptualization and affirmation in the society. It enables the female self to acquire confidence and assert her worth.

Mbaya uses Monika's education to write women's lives onto the national space. This is contrary to the women roles and function in patriarchal society where their status is generally tied to the domestic area. Her personal quest for identity exposes her to the vestiges of teaching as a career. Her quest is both at the individual and national level. She takes up her teaching responsibilities and fully commits herself to do her best as a secondary school teacher. Mbaya

assigns her qualities of independence, ambition and professional drive which enable her to perform exceptionally well in teaching. Although her situation is extremely difficult at the beginning, self-determination enables her to achieve the best out of a career she is not trained or prepared for. This is amidst caution from fellow teachers. For instance, Mr. and Mrs. Katangi advise her, "this is no place for a young lady" (57). Despite the suggestions of the difficulties she is likely to experience in teaching, she is not cowed even though the deputy headmaster does not make it any easier for her. He immediately appoints her a class teacher and therefore she has to take up the responsibility of collecting fees when school opens.

A contemporary history of women that purports to tell the truth about the historical progress of the changing determination of women acquires prominence in Kenya in the 21st Century. Narrating what women have been, are, or will be is important in as far as the female self and national identity is concerned. Monika's quest for self and national development propels her to take up teaching and co-curricular activities in a remote rural area with distinction. She becomes the patron of the drama club in the school and also takes charge of the library. She assumes her teaching and co-curricular duties with accomplishment to the extent of achieving a rare opportunity of presenting her club for the national drama festivals. Her school gets the "best new entry" award.

Through Monika, Mbaya provides a captivating model of a nation in transition and the achievements of women in a changing society. She underscores Monika's self-esteem and pride in being honoured as an outstanding teacher and patron of drama club. Consequently, *A Journey Within* can be read as a feminist rewriting of her story that is:

not the recounting of the great deeds performed by women but the exposure of the often silent and hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces in

the organisation of most societies. With this approach women's history critically confronts the politics of existing histories and inevitably begins the rewriting of history. (Scott cited in Elam 38)

Monika is depicted as playing a central role in contemporary Kenya being a woman notwithstanding. Her commitment and dexterity in a bid to achieve a more autonomous identity and self-fulfilment is met with approval by both Max, a fellow teacher and Mulandi, the headmaster of Kostas Secondary School. She succeeds in (re)conceptualising herself by negotiating a space accessible to the educated women in the nation through teaching and co-curricular activities.

Mbaya contrasts Monika with Stella who is an orphan living with her uncle and aunt. Although they treat her as their daughter, she always feels a stranger and longs for her parents even though she did not know them. These feelings of inadequacy show that Stella's female self experiences non-fulfilment. The contrast between Stella and Monika is also highlighted in the different ways in which they respond to love relationships. Monika is depicted as possessing a mature disposition, therefore, capable of making rational life decisions while Stella is portrayed as emotional and lacking the capacity to make mature decisions. This explains why she does not have lasting relationships with the opposite sex. She confirms her restlessness when she says, 'I just cannot cope with emotional affections. I find them stifling' (17). With this kind of attitude it surprises Monika to learn of Stella's impending marriage to a divorced man, with children. Her mature self sees through such folly and advises Stella against marrying a man she hardly knows. She draws Stella's attention to the fact that marriage demands commitment and it is not easy to retract without suffering the consequences of a failed marriage. Furthermore, Monika quips 'owe

both need to face real life (45). The two are no longer students on campus but citizens who need to take full responsibility of what they do.

Despite the advice given, Stella marries a divorcee and from the union, gets a baby boy. She blames her decision on the emptiness she feels following the death of her grandmother, who played a major role in bringing her up. Although her uncle is supportive, Daniel, Stella's boyfriend exploits her feelings of inadequacy as an orphan and she agrees to live with him without any hesitation. He is separated from his wife and he is taking care of their two daughters. However, the relationship does not fill Stella's void. She regrets her decision and wishes she had taken more time for no sooner does she move in than she realises that his children do not like her; that their mother comes to visit them and she does not know what may happen to her if Daniel makes up with his estranged wife. She is confused by the new responsibilities as a wife, mother and stepmother.

Mbaya exploits the differences between Stella and Monika to show the effect of the family background on the development of the female self. Monika has a stable family while Stella has an unstable one just like Alicia in Margaret Ogola's *I Swear by Apollo*. Stella entangles herself in a marriage to a divorced man only to realise, albeit too late, that walking out of the relationship is not the best solution at the moment. Her resolve is to take care of her son, the girls from her husband's first marriage and her job for a year or two before deciding what is best for her. She has to bear in mind that it is not always that things work out right from the beginning. Monika points out that although the marriage is causing her problems, there is no assurance that walking out of the marriage will bring her happiness. She challenges Stella to be patient.

The advice that Monika gives Stella is put to test when Mulandi intensely falls in love with her due to her elegance, simplicity, confidence and intelligence. To him, she is the epitome

of all he wants in a woman and hence views love as bearing no boundaries and challenges her rational response that "love as an emotion may not have limits, but we set them depending on what the society can allow, and depending on the environment and circumstances in which we find ourselves" (83). Monika turns him down on the grounds of work ethics, a response that shows her mature dispensation in handling love emotions in a logical manner, perhaps due to her sense of fore-boding that Mr. Mulandi may be trying to take advantage of a vulnerable young woman in a harsh rural environment.

The reader is tempted to view Stella as naïve for getting married without much thought, but her sense of maturity comes to the fore when she resolves to take up the responsibilities of a wife, a mother, a step-mother as well as her career instead of leaving her marital home. Her maturity is also seen when she warns Monika against having a relationship with Mulandi who is a senior bachelor. As far as she is concerned, she is suspicious of such men and hence Monika should avoid them. In spite of the affection that Monika has for Mulandi, Stella advises Monika to take Max who is young. Stella's immature self is underlined when in the same breath she tries to match make Monika and William. Monika tells Stella that she is not ready to have another man in her life.

Although her love life at that moment is complicated, Monika handles it in a mature manner even though Stella advises her to rethink about Mulandi. Monika contemplates on the question, "What motivates marriage?" (113). Letting us into the realm of her private consciousness, Monika relates in her mind cases of unfulfilling marriages including that of her own mother in that she experiences sadness when she is deserted by her husband for failing to bear him a son; her sister, Miriam, who is always used sexually and abandoned by men who promise her marriage; her friend Stella who is already showing signs of unhappiness; her

colleague Mwendwa who is suffering from something related to his marriage and Mr. and Mrs. Katangi who appear miles apart; and Mulandi who is unhappy in his marriage for he cheats himself that his heart belongs to Monika. Mwendwa confides in Monika that his marriage failed because of his inability to have children with his wife. To salvage the marriage, she used love potions which poisoned Mwendwa and on discovery of the wife's act he divorced her. The thought of another woman does not, therefore, cross his mind and he feels relieved when he shares his experience with Monika who tries to redeem him by telling him to reach out to other people instead of keeping to himself.

Monika seems to be disillusioned with marriage. As far as she is concerned, people are either putting on a show of being happy or making endless sacrifices. The contention that there are problems encroaching marriages in Kenya is a pointer to the need for women to reflect before tying nuptials. The contemporary Kenyan woman requires all it takes to make her married life successful. Unlike Ogola who succeeds in making the family unit archetypal of an imagined community, Mbaya seems to be struggling to position it in the postcolonial Kenya. This is attributable to the changing values and modes of life that portray marriage as an institution that is difficult to perpetuate. Although the desire to belong, have someone, something, someplace and children to call one's own still drives marriage, the author seems to suggest that it has become increasingly unsustainable and hence the many failed marriages in society today. She points out that there is something deeper that keeps a marriage intact than mere declaration of love. Although love is supposed to be a pre-requisite to a union between man and woman for constant companionship, where children are born and bred, it is not synonymous to a marriage that works. Mbaya seems to be cautioning women to reflect seriously on marriage as a sacred institution in which family unions develop with shared ideals and happiness.

For members of the teaching staff at Kostas Secondary School the brewing of love between Monika and Mulandi is an open secret. Mulandi's deceiving innocence almost succeeds in winning Monika's heart, luring Monika into marriage, but Mrs. Katangi confides in Monika that Mulandi is a married man. Mulandi is painted as unscrupulous and already entangled with Helen, a former school girl who is now the mother of his two daughters yet he does not feel obliged to marry her. He, therefore, keeps their relationship secret, but its repercussions continue to haunt him even as Monika reflects on the harm done to Helen's personal life. Helen does not complete her education for Mulandi impregnates her and to save his face, he invites her to live with him in an informal union without seriously considering marriage.

Monika is perturbed by Mulandi's attitude and his sexual exploitation of the woman is not lost on her. Mbaya uses Monika to redefine the power relations between genders such that she strives to run away from any eventualities that could make her intrude on the sphere of another woman. Monika exhibits gender solidarity. This is exemplified by her refusal to marry Mulandi. By so doing, she attempts to establish her selfhood in public sphere as she strives to correct sexist views about women in the workplace by displaying a positive, dynamic image of women.

Mulandi is shocked by the realisation that Monika knows about his past. He blames the past for haunting his current life and dismisses Helen and her children saying, "She isn't really a wife. Just some girl I met. I made a mistake and she became pregnant. I have no intention of marrying her because I don't love her. I never loved her" (126). His emphatic denial of Helen points at the influence of patriarchy in the society where there have been attempts to silence women and to treat that which concerns them as peripheral. However, Helen interferes with Mulandi's plan to marry Monika. Peripheral treatment of women's issues is highlighted by Paulina Palmer who observes that "women's supposedly 'personal' problems" stem from a

collective oppression originating in the imbalance of power between the sexesö (43). In this respect, we see Helen subordinated to the male power when Mulandi exploits and oppresses her by pushing her to the periphery. As a result she drops out of school. Even when she bears him two children he reckons that she is not good enough for marriage.

Monika realises that Mulandi's love for her goes beyond the boundaries of human affection and as a result she opts it to give him a chance to resume his life with Helen and their two children. Her action opens a new interpretive edge around marriage and the family unit. She convinces Mulandi to put his personal life in order if he does not want to lose respect for himself in a society that still regards familial responsibility as an obligation rather than a choice based on individual whims. Furthermore, she points out to him that 'running away from a problem by trying to fill [his] life with [her] or any other woman doesn't help. [He owes] it to Helen to do something positive for her and redeem [himself] in the processö (129). Her keenness to help a fellow woman is really an act of grace. She wants him to let Helen and the children come and stay with him and also make arrangements to enrol Helen for the end of high school examinations as a private candidate. Monika uses Mulandi's relationship with Helen and the children to help him rise to a new beginning; to change the predicament of Helen and her two children as she takes up the identity of both wife and mother. On the other hand, Monika's fragmenting self is (re)waved into a confident self all over again. Monika's endeavour to salvage Helen points at sisterhood and thus her action demonstrates the collective responsibility that women share.

Mbaya seems to portray women in postcolonial Kenya as having more freedom to negotiate their identities and personal autonomy unlike in *The River and the Source*. The author indicts careless men like Mulandi who impregnate young women but refuse to marry them or care for child. Monika becomes the voice for the voiceless woman, Helen, who is assigned the

characteristics of a woman who cannot speak. Nevertheless, her silence speaks since she becomes an appendage to Mulandi's life and affects his choice of a woman. Her silence becomes more than speech when Monika impresses on the headmaster that he has to take her as his wife. The silence imposed on Helen is oppressive and determines her destiny. Through her, the precarious place women occupy in Kenya today comes to the surface.

Orientation towards an autonomous self pushes Monika to voice the ills perpetuated against women by men. Through her, Mbaya (re)conceptualises women's identity by constructing a more satisfactory account of the self that is compatible with respect for women. Monika's decision to withdraw from her relationship with Mulandi in favour of a young man, Max Kisura, shows that she is sensible. By so doing, she embarks on the journey towards self-knowledge, develops a new sense of independence and establishes a strong relationship with Max paving way for Helen and her children to reclaim Mulandi.

Highlighting the dialectic relationship between the postcolonial nation and the experiences of women as the backdrop against which female self is (re)conceptualised, the author makes Monika appreciate herself in the self/other binary opposition. Her awareness echoes Cixous's claim in "The Newly Born Woman" that, "the other that is confided to her, that visits her, that she can love as other" (353) is the backdrop against which women become aware of themselves. Mbaya portrays Monika as a woman who accepts herself as a woman and adopts an assertive disposition which binds her personal experience with the postcolonial nation. She also projects women living in the nation as sharing in experiences which make their sense of self dialectical with the nation.

Thus, women's quest for identity gains expression in what they associate with in the postcolonial nation. This is evident in Monika's steadfast and zealous determination to embark on

self-discovery, a process that make her realise the need to find out what teaching as a career entails, the co-curricular activities involved, and the need to have a serious love relationship. The teaching job comes to her in a more straight forward manner, but she finds it difficult to distinguish her other thoughts from the feelings of love. She realises the need to reconcile her jumbled approach to both Mulandi and Max. She settles for the latter and her gesture redeems both men: Mulandi takes in his wife and children while Max finds meaning in his life. Max discloses to Monika his desperate predicament and contemplation of suicide following the demise of his entire family.

Drawing the attention of the reader to the journey motif which is the concern of her narrative, Mbaya ends her novel on a poetic note:

It had been a journey of sorts for Monika; a journey of challenges, heartaches, but best of all a journey of hope. There was hope for the staff and students of Kostas Secondary school, and the community at large. The future was set to brighten, breaking through the mirages and the dust- strewn environs and the distant horizons of Kostas in particular, and Murwet as a whole. Regrets she had none. (186)

The past tense that the author uses in this text denotes a search backwards in time to discover the evolution of Monika's identity. The questions raised and answered about Monika are: Who am I? How have I become who I am? What may I become in future? These questions are answered since Monika's story is presented in the past, present and future tense and sense. Her past is captured through acquisition of education; the present through social relations, teaching and co-curricular activities at Kostas Secondary School. All these endeavours legitimise Monika's future as a new social subject, one who is eager to be a female (re)conceptualised as a coherent version

of the nation, who has a place in the nation as a career woman, a wife and a mother. As a result, she is able to perform various roles in both private and public spheres.

A Journey Within recounts Monika's experiences in her endeavour to perform both selfhood and nationhood. The narrative gains relevance in begetting self to a young woman, Monika. She doubles as the narrator of the self and the narrated self and gains confidence, self-respect, exposure and understanding. Mbaya uses education to (re)conceptualise the female self. She portrays the educated woman as being enabled by education to make the right decisions in the nation. Even when they fail, they are able to recollect themselves as in the case of Stella. She does this in recognition of education as enabling individuals to enhance development of the female self and national identity. Mbaya represents the quest for identity as changing in the postcolonial nation through what can be described as the story of the woman only, to record the female protagonist's experience. Mbaya constructs the woman away from the patriarchal order that constrains women. Thus, *A Journey Within* becomes a test of women's attempt to curve spaces within the national discourses of nationhood and selfhood in Kenya. The novel is an insight into the ways in which women in Kenya have (re) conceptualised themselves as modern subjects of the nation and has made use of the ambiguous employment status created by modernisation.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed perceptions of the 'self' and 'other' in *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo* and *A Journey Within*. It is worth pointing out that *I Swear by Apollo* is interrogated as a sequel of *The River and the Source*. The main concern has been the development of female characters whose narration runs through the two books. This has been done only with reference to a few activities that these female characters have been involved.

In this chapter, patriarchal society is depicted as assigning men privileged status while women are subjugated and allocated subservient roles. Even though the authors portray women as fitting into prescribed gender roles before they start questioning their subjective place, they categorically point out that woman is a different gender category from men and hence her experiences are different. Lionnet observes that "the self and the other can never interact as peers or equals; the self must always undergo sublation into the other, whose transcendent qualities will always be coded as the 'positive' versions of those with which the self is endowed" (67). The implication is that equality between men and women may not be achieved easily, but there can be reliance between men and women for the betterment of humanity.

Analysis of *The River and the Source*, *I swear by Apollo* and *A Journey Within* in this chapter reveals insights about the interdependence of men and women such that the female self does not have to become the other or lose itself in the other's essence. There is, therefore, the possibility of transformation of women in an environment that reduces the tension that characterises gender relations. Ogola and Mbaya have particularly taken advantage of literary textual representation to show possibilities for women to resist patriarchy and contemporary modes that deny women their identity. Their writings set off the process of changing the notions on women in a bid to empower them.

The writers' concerns appear to be retrieval of the repressed dimension of the female self as evidenced by their selection of characters; characterisation and narrative strategies to demonstrate the choices women are presented with in the self/other binary opposition. The writers do not assign their female characters masculine roles in their bid to claim or reclaim their identity. Instead, their representation emphasises the femininity of the female protagonists as they assert themselves both as women and inhabitants of the nation. By so doing, the authors create

narratives of inclusion of women in the postcolonial Kenya. The texts studied here portray the repressive circumstances that women live in and suggest the possibility of change through notions of self-consciousness on the part of women. In so doing, the women writers studied in this chapter, explicitly and implicitly explore the conceptualisation and reconceptualization of the female self.

The question "Who am I?" seems to be the preoccupation of these novels. The protagonists' growth take the form of a journey. The title of the novel, *A Journey Within*, is symbolic of the movement that affords the protagonist, Monika, a sense of discovery of her identity. The question of self-identity is not only asked but also answered through self-description and self-expression. In a bid to depict the reality of women through textual representation, the author adopts an autobiographical mode to try and beget self to Monika the protagonist. Mbaya's narrative discourse is aimed at serving a specific purpose in the female self discourse: subversion of patriarchy in favour of restoring women's selfhood by according voice to the female self. Thus, her narrative becomes a pernicious myth in the history of patriarchal gender relations which are promulgated in literature. The question of women points at the need to place women in the historical context of the nation since in the patriarchal order, men hardly make reference to women in decision making for they are not treated as respectful members of the society.

CHAPTER THREE

REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN'S SUBJECTIVITY AND ITS EFFECT ON THE FEMALE SELF AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POSTCOLONIAL

3.1 Subjectivity and Disease

Through literary intervention, the women writers considered in the previous chapter provide agency for women by portraying literature as a reflection of life. Through literature the world in which women try to change themselves and female writer's perspective on the development of the female self and national identity is depicted. Literary representation forms a reliable reflection on women's experience in the nation as they try to make sense of their past and present lives. This chapter explores women's identity in a bid to investigate female characters' encounter with diseases; and how disease affects the development of their identity in the Kenyan nation. Analysis of women's experiences with terminal diseases is important because it highlights how disease, just like the contestations of self and other, subjugates women.

The identity of the diseased female character forms the background against which a discussion of selfhood arises with a view that identity is a form of consciousness that is dialectical. The books I considered in this chapter are Margaret Ogola's *Place of Destiny* which deals with the question of cancer and Moraa Gita's *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* which narrates with HIV/AIDS. Studying these two texts is aimed at finding out what characteristics the female self might adopt in the face of disease.

Before embarking on discussion of disease as depicted in these two novels, there is need to give an overview of disease and its implication on the diseased. By writing about people suffering from cancer and HIV/AIDS the narratives in the two novels challenge those who are not sick to empathise with the sick. They expose the experiences of the sick as they make efforts to

recover their selves from the marginalisation that comes with sickness. Through literary representation, the diseased self whose identity is violated by illness, accepts and claims that identity despite the fragmented identity occasioned by the diseased. The prerogative of narration is given to ailing literary characters to expose particular illnesses that outline the development of the female self in narratives of disease. The self, constructed in these narratives, is a self that is different from the earlier one through narrative discourse which is a privileged means of initiating a dialogue to include the voices of those who are sick into the mainstream of the society. The relationship between the self and the narrative therefore embodies a process that re-conceptualises the self that is under threat due to sickness.

Place of Destiny and *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* are narratives that serve as examples of dialogical literary representations of sickness and its consequences for the society. These texts are performed stories of sickness narrated to hypothesise the self. The effect of this narration is that the self is formulated or reformulated in an effort to revamp a self that bears a new identity defined by disease. Consequently, the relationship between the self and the narrative demonstrates a continuous dialectical process that is meant to be therapeutic and emancipatory in as far as the self is concerned. The authors assign the protagonists specific meaning with regard to disease within the narrative discourse and paint the protagonists' experiences as they identify with their sicknesses. Identity presupposes self acknowledgment on the part of the subject depending on their belief in who they are and hence identity becomes relational in the event of illness; binary oppositions between health and sickness come into play. A loss of self is implicit in the conceptualisation of these two diseases and hence the experience of being diseased is distressing. The diseases in a way assault the self of the ailing person to the extent of negating it. However,

caregivers endeavour to help disease-ridden people in a bid to alleviate suffering and restore their personality.

To document the loss of the self that comes with cancer and HIV/AIDS, Ogola and Gitaa represent the subjectivity of the female protagonists focusing on the perspective of individuals diagnosed with these ailments. The authors make an effort to reframe and redefine these diseases in order to repair the unintended assault on the self by these diseases. Under the veil of disease, these women writers also expose the lives and the thinking of the victims in as far as their feelings, their expressions and outward appearances are concerned. However, the subjective experience of the victims is incomprehensible, indescribable and therefore accessible only through literary representation, which the authors portray, through fictionalised victims as imagined projection of disease and subjectivity.

The idea of subjectivity of an individual due to sickness becomes problematic within the social and cultural context that shapes consciousness. Under such circumstances, the individual gets into a dialectical relationship with the imagined community and hence the interconnectedness of Kenya with the histories of cancer and HIV/AIDS. The construction of subjectivity in postcolonial Kenya is closely linked to the meaning apportioned to these diseases, their histories and narrative discourses. Consequently, subjectivity acquires a dialectic relationship between the diseased individual and the nation whereby an individual's sickness and repercussions of illness on gender and sexuality are articulated. The question as to why women writers narrate stories on illness also arise: could it be that as part of the community living in Kenya their stories about illness show the struggle that people suffering from cancer and HIV/AIDS undergo? The writers relate a reflection of Kenyans' struggle to grapple with what it is like to suffer from either or both of these diseases.

The novels discussed in this chapter comprise of discourse on subjectivity in which sickness is the focus. The articulation and exploitation of illness becomes a representation of disease and decay embodied by sickness and hence the notions of the self and subject. The formation of the self is linked to representation of disease and thus the self becomes the premeditated subject as either the subject or the object.

The subject in illness discourse is synonymous with the perceiving self, I , while the perceived self is equated to I as an object. The I as an object comes to the fore through a person's reflection about herself/himself. Thus, the I is accessed in retrospect as a subject portrays the self's experience, which is apparently an experience that embodies illness in the body. The use of I as a narrative style makes the first person discourse acquire the I agency that recognises the protagonists as members of the postcolonial Kenyan nation.

By writing about disease, Ogola and Gitaa demystify the fantasies (bewitched, cursed, punishment) surrounding cancer and HIV/AIDS diseases and try to portray the diseases as they are, not as a curse or a punishment or anything to be embarrassed about since both are manageable in the 21st Century. The similarities in these texts come to the fore in their representation of diseases which are characterised by metaphorical reference, which adds rather than removes the suffering of those who are sick. McClintock in *Imperial Leather* observes that "biological images of disease and pestilence [form] a complex hierarchy of social metaphors" (46). The biological images serve to institutionalise fear of these diseases by evoking terror and dread and thereby add agency to the issues of illness and gender power relations. For instance, AIDS is perceived as "a metaphor for contamination and mutation. Cancer ... as metaphor for what is feared or deplored" (Susan Sontag 155). The metaphors criticise and condemn those

affected by these diseases and hence cancer patients who live on after treatment receive labels as "survivor", "cured", "cancer-free," and "living with cancer."

The labels for HIV/AIDS, just like those of cancer, are militant: "HIV positive," "full blown AIDS," and "living with HIV/AIDS." The metaphors used add to the suffering of the patients and at times inhibit them from seeking proper treatment. Although different metaphors are used to describe each of these diseases, they are similar because they are both invasive and bring about evasion and segregation. Nevertheless, Sontag notes that:

it is highly desirable for a specific dreaded illness to come to seem ordinary. Even the disease most fraught with meaning can be just an illness. It has happened with leprosy...it is bound to happen with AIDS [cancer], when the illness is much better understood and, above all, treatable. (181)

The argument here is that with time these diseases will be treatable and will no longer be a threat to the society just like leprosy.

Michel Foucault in "Discipline and Punish" highlights the exclusion of the leper from the society as a "form of the great confinement" – the image of a leper, cut off from all human contact, and underlies projects of exclusion" (196). Those who presented with leprosy before it was understood faced rejection and were separated from those who had not contracted the disease. When an unknown disease presents itself in a community, mystery attends the disease and castigatory metaphors are used in reference to it due to fear that paves way for stigmatisation. The "diseases insofar as they [acquire] meaning, [are] collective calamities, and judgements on a community. Only injuries and disabilities, not diseases, [are] thought of as individually merited" (Sontag 133). Interrogation of cancer and HIV/ AIDS in contemporary Kenya acquires meaning in the context of both the individual and the nation. These diseases' ability to disgrace and

disempower individuals and a nation as a whole signify a kind of punishment and hence the fear that not only affects those who are sick but also the nation. These diseases ravage the body of the sick individual transforming it as well as changing the nation from a healthy to a diseased one.

Perception of cancer and HIV/AIDS as epidemics afflicting a society such as Kenya is captured in the words of Sontag who observes that:

plagues are invariably regarded as judgements on society, and the metaphoric inflation of AIDS [or cancer] into such a judgement...to be described as punishments not just of individuals but of a group....Interpreting any catastrophic epidemic as a sign of moral laxity...(142)

Illness is therefore seen as a moral judgement on a society that is manifested through individuals.

Contraction of either of these diseases is therefore understood as a punishment and hence the extraordinary potency and efficacy of the plague metaphor: it allows a disease to be regarded both as something incurred by vulnerable others and as (potentially) everyone's disease (Sontag 152). The tendency to lay emphasis on disease as a menace to everybody no doubt instils fear and intolerance and hence the need to defuse discrimination and trim down stigma since eventually, disease directly or indirectly affects people living in a nation. Mary DeShazer observes that "militaristic and demonising metaphors work to stigmatise people living with cancer [and HIV/AIDS]" (12). A holistic notion to illness is therefore, indispensable to creation of normative social behaviour that is necessary in dismantling punitive descriptions of the diseased. This is because "the effect of the military imagery on thinking about sickness and health is far from inconsequential. It over mobilises, it over describes, and it powerfully contributes to the excommunicating and stigmatising of the ill" (Sontag 182). Both Sontag and DeShazer maintain that labels assigned to cancer and HIV/AIDS point to the difficulties that define these

diseases. The tags denote discrimination of the sick persons from those who are healthy and thereby the situation of the sufferers becomes more complicated.

3.2 Women's Subjectivity in the Face of Cancer

Margaret Ogola's, *Place of Destiny* focuses on the female self and national identity with regard to women's experiences with cancer. The representation of cancer illuminates women's writing about disease in fiction. The discourse becomes relevant to women who are actually living with cancer and those who may be diagnosed with it. The examination of illness makes a difference to people in the real world who have notions of being God-forsaken as victims of the disease. Furthermore, the secrecy and shame that cancer elicits is demythologised in literary representation.

Ogola's writing and interrogation attempt to cultivate acceptance and the need for improved medical care. Even though cancer as the identity of a patient is included in obituaries and eulogies, the larger community in Kenya still regards it as a curse or a punishment. Ogola's preoccupation with the place of the sick in Kenya takes shape as an attempt to explore subjectivity of both the individual and the nation in the midst of illness. The novel is also an examination of the female protagonist, Amor, whose desire is to live a personal private life in the fold of the family despite the challenge of social responsibility to her nation.

Female subjectivity in an environment riddled with cancer is explored in *Place of Destiny*. In exploring the protagonist's subjective position, the novel juxtaposes the conflicting discourse of being healthy and performing tasks of building one's nation on the one hand and being sick and dependent on others for support and care on the other. The protagonist's subjectivity is also explored with regard to womanhood, motherhood and religious faith through Amor Lore Mwachera, the heroine in Ogola's narrative. Amor cuts a figure of an empowered and

transformed female self. She is a successful business woman, enjoys unconditional support from her husband, Mwagera Mrema, and hence her independent disposition as a responsible wife and a loving mother to her children. The writer uses her to pay tribute to the positive development of the female self in the postcolonial nation. By so doing, she recognises women's progress in 21st Century Kenya.

By entering the realm of disease, Ogola, who is a medical doctor, walks into familiar territory as she contextualises cancer as a terminal illness. It seems that her principle here is to break the silence about cancer in Kenya in order to retrace its boundaries. Ogola's narrative, perhaps, provides the opportunity to use her own experience to write about cancer. Her goal appears to develop a theory of [her] life; an explanatory narrative that makes [her] life appear coherent and meaningful (James Olney 12-13). Ogola's *Place of Destiny* is a diary that truly exposes the author's thoughts on cancer based on personal experience. The implication is that she notes down important aspects of her life in a reflective manner and moves through a series of moments in time, but lacks dramatic movement towards a climax. Thus, *Place of Destiny* is more of an autobiographical novel that makes use of diary material. An autobiography is:

...the highest and most instructive form in which the understanding of life confronts us.

Here is the outward, phenomenal course of a life which forms the basis for understanding what has produced it within a certain environment. The [woman] who understands it is the same who [creates] it. (Olney, Blurb)

The narrative could have served the writer's own intention as she recreates her knowledge and experience about her own observable, unique struggle with cancer, and also other individuals whose lives are affected by the disease.

Ogola gives an insider's view as an authority in cancer illness since she is a medical doctor and has observed that on being diagnosed with cancer, patients experience suffering. Her purpose is to present a phase of her life in patient's struggle with the disease. The text, just as an autobiography, plays a therapeutic role since Ogola writes a story of the protagonist's life through instances of living with cancer. The story is about the self and thus the dominant voice is the first person narration -I- which she uses to depict the on goings of the protagonist's encounter with the cancer of the liver.

The emerging question is why Ogola chooses to narrate cancer as an illness and perhaps Muchiri provides an explanation since she sees autobiographical narratives as:

í therapeutic both for readers and people suffering from traumatic memories and readers. Speaking or writing about trauma becomes a process through which narrators find words to give voice to that which they could not express previously, and the process can be, though not necessarily, cathartic. Since readers of such...identify with the stories and the writers' painful experiences, the writers' acts of remembering often have a therapeutic effect on the readers too. The stories afford readers an opportunity to look back and relate to their own experiences. (46)

Pain is a central source of memory and it aids the author in rendering a traumatic memory into a literary discourse. Ogola's writing takes the form of a memoir which is a type of autobiographical writing that captures, in an emotional way, meaning about one's past in retrospect. The concern of a memoir is mainly to highlight particular aspects rather than portraying all details of a person's life. *Place of Destiny* captures only the meaningful moments of the protagonist's life, in retrospect. Ogola is concerned with the emotional aspects of Amor and therefore depicts exceptional phases of crisis in her life.

Amor is portrayed in her moments of success before she is brought down by cancer. Her name is a Luo word for 'I am happy,' while in French it means 'love.' In Spanish the word means 'my love.' Her name, therefore, contradicts the catastrophic experience which the author explores as a shattering encounter by assuming the position of a memoirist as she renders the diseased self's account of suffering and uneventful death. The protagonist's dilemma when she is diagnosed with cancer of the liver gains relevance as Ogola explores Amor's denial and acceptance of the reality of being sick. The personal and subjective realities surrounding Amor's ailment define the meaning of her life even though cancer in most cases does not hurt until it reaches an advanced stage. However, its treatment is associated with pain and sometimes hastens death and hence her cynicism about treatment of cancer.

Literature has a social function and Ogola uses it to perform the role of a teacher by providing a critical perspective on cancer as a disease afflicting Amor. She educates the reader on the meaning of being ill and offers a systematic denial and acceptance of being diseased as she portrays Amor exercising great control over her emotions in the face of illness in the social and personal sphere. Chinua Achebe is cited in Cora Agatucci as portraying literature as:

í enabling us to encounter in the safe, manageable dimensions of make-believe, the very same threats to integrity that may assail the psyche in real life; and at the same time providing through the self-discovery which it imparts a veritable weapon for coping with these threats whether they are found within our problematic and incoherent selves or in the world around us. (cited in Cora Agatucci 1)

Place of Destiny validates Achebe's claim since Ogola's documentation of cancer appears as a testimonial of the problems that assail human beings. Her writing is a solemn corroboration as to the truth of the debilitating aspect of cancer as an illness. She offers a testament that is well thought out and truthful for we consider the fact that Ogola is a medical doctor.

When people contract diseases that seem too horrible to imagine, sometimes they are hesitant to speak of their personal experiences. Ogola uses literary space to speak and write about the trauma that comes with cancer, an experience that culminates into a personal struggle. She narrates Amor's painful memories in an effort to make people understand and also accept cancer as a terminal illness. She writes Amor's personal narrative in a bid to engrave cancer and demonstrate the reality facing cancer patients as overwhelming. James Young observes that:

Writers and readers of...narrative have long insisted that it literally deliver[s] documentary evidence of specific events, that it [does], not to stand for destruction, or merely point toward it, but that it be received as testimonial proof of the events it embodies. For many compelling reasons to [explore] í the figurative reference to literary works as "documents of an age."(403-404)

The implication of this citation is that facts are not relevant by themselves, but require meaning to be attached to them through literary representation.

Consequently, *Place of Destiny* is a performative dialogue taking place simultaneously in the private and public spheres of life. The significance of performative dialogue is that it gives the narrative a particular mode of subjectivity that exposes who the protagonist is. Subjectivity is centred on the awareness of her illness, her moral responsibility while identity is constructed within the narrative representation as subjectivity through the subject positions she takes as she

internalises a diseased form of identity through what Judith Butler refers to as 'performativity'

(xiv). Sophie Macharia observes that:

If gender is, according to Butler, 'a performance' and therefore, it is what you do at a particular time, rather than a universal who you are, it is possible to add that biological difference between men and women accounts for the smaller part of the actual difference. In other words, Butler involves subjectivity and agency. The 'doing' in this 'performativity' assumes some measure of agency. The concept 'who are you' again invokes passivity, an identification by 'others.' Only therefore through agency can the subject assume self-identification. (129)

Amor's identity in face of disease can be understood 'as a process of 'becoming' rather than being' (Macharia 129). In the course of the narrative Amor assumes a diseased identity and she performs modes of subjectivity as experiences of her ailing state and thus illness becomes part of her lived subjectivity.

The plot of *Place of Destiny* is developed on the basis of the synopsis of the diseased female self, Amor, who involuntarily integrates the intense physical and the psychic realities of the illness; unconsciously adopts a traumatised self that cuts herself from the rest of the people living in the nation. The nuclear family bears the emotional challenges of supporting the terminally sick member. DeShazer observes that 'women's literary representation of cancer [provides] the focus of fractured borders, which offers the first comprehensive critical analysis of contemporary writing about cancer' (1). The text raises the question of women's subjectivity as far as the development of the diseased female self is concerned. Ogola portrays cancer as a disease affecting Amor; details ways that Amor and other cancer patients suffer and also their dying bodies in fiction in order to show the ravaging nature of the ailment.

The narrative therefore acquires significance as a dialectic representation of the individual and the nation; the identity of the self is influenced by illness both at the individual and national level. *Place of Destiny* contributes to the understanding of fictional cancer text as seen through a woman's perspective as Ogola chronicles Amor's struggle with the cancer of the liver. The author takes it upon herself to represent Amor's subjective experience with cancer by providing a potentially exploitative gaze on how the illness affects women's place in the nation. She foregrounds Amor's cancerous body, glorifies her dying heroine, and in effect writes about the cordial relationship between the cancer patient and her supporters from the family.

More often than not, women are depicted as prone to cancers: breast, ovarian, cervical, liver and throat amongst others. The female body is therefore positioned as the 'other' facing challenges to reclaim the ailing body. Cancer ailment attracts punitive notions because of the assumption that those affected failed to attend cancer diagnosis clinics early enough to have the disease diagnosed early. Nevertheless, the conventions of treating the disease make it lethal and shameful.

Place of Destiny depicts the female identity as violated by the cancer of the liver. However, even when Amor faces the searing realities of this disease, she presents herself as alright to her nuclear family to initially protect them from the trauma of knowing that she is sick and about to die. Her cancerous body suffers subjectivity in the face of the illness as her female self is (re)conceptualised as progressively weakened by the illness. Although no part of her body is lost through amputation her liver becomes dysfunctional and it is as good as severed from the rest of the body. When a woman loses parts of her body it becomes difficult to accept her new self as a cancer patient, who must anticipate a life of anxiety over possible demise or recurrence

of the illness. It becomes apparent that as the patient lives with cancer, her self is not reinvented to cope with the shock.

Ogola's narrative is a semi-autobiographic representation of Amor's struggle with the cancer of the liver. The narrating *I* technique provides the eyewitness narrative point of view while the pronoun *I* signifies the protagonist making personal pronouncements about her personal biography to bear upon the utterances. Ogola's presentation of *I* as a character that is relevant to the *me* as the speaker in the here and now becomes significant because:

...first person narratives of illness are the performative re-creation of a self that [is] in jeopardy due to effects of the illness...tell illness narratives precisely in order to become the effects of their (performed) stories, and one effect of any autobiographical work is to posit the self that must have been the cause of that work but which the work has served to (re)formulate. (Arthur Frank 2)

Amor assumes the role of the narrator and tells the story of her sickness in her own voice and thereby becomes a narrator as well as the prime character who participates while at the same time behaving as an onlooker in as far as relating of the events in the narrative are concerned. Thus, the first person narrative voice plays an important part in the readers' and critics' appreciation of the text since the narrator allows both of them to access a personal view of the victim's thoughts and feelings, and they experience closeness to the casualty.

Given the confessional mode that infuses *Place of Destiny* it is not surprising that the *I* narrator creates the self that she claims as her own, a self that she imputes to a performed character. This is despite the fact that it is difficult to represent trauma in fiction since it shatters the self and makes representation almost impossible. Nevertheless, victims testify about their continuing life in spite of illness, and even imminent death. Muchiri points out that, "Experience

is another important feature of the autobiography because the form involves narrating and interpreting one's experiences through retrospection and introspection (30). By so doing, the first person narrator allows the readers to fully understand the implications of illness and identity in as far as feeling and experiencing are concerned. The novel as an autobiographical narrative bears testimony to the author's and also the protagonist's experiences. The story is told in an attempt to describe and appreciate self. This self appears through the experiences that writers portray and the way in which they express them.

In the narrative the protagonist tries to claim self through narration and the self that is claimed is dialogical. *Place of Destiny* can be considered as a dialogue occasioned by illness to communicate Amor's identity that is ruined, but she claims that identity by telling a story about her illness and who she is and can become in spite of the illness. Ogola, as a contemporary writer, shows interest in the processes of articulating pain through life narrative by embracing semi-autobiographical fictional representation as a genre that can achieve the aim of self-representation without putting herself in the position of scrutiny by readers and critics. This is because representation of one's life as a story is difficult and hence Ogola creates a protagonist in the character of Amor to narrate the pain and trauma that come with cancer as an illness whereby treatment to salvage a victim's shattered identity fails.

Nevertheless, Ogola refers to life before and after illness metaphorically when she says that "the most glorious sunset is yet a herald of night, but of night is born the bright host of the heavens" (16). This is because Ogola views life as a spectacle to behold both by the living and the dying. Although the protagonist suffers from advanced cancer, she refuses to take it as humiliating. Therefore, in the words of Sontag, she gathers "whatever courage can lie at the core of this experience" (cited in DeShazer 11). She maintains emotional strength by day and at night

for she accepts her fractured self and ultimately assumes a positive disposition. The author projects Amor's "night-side of life" (Sontag cited in DeShazer 11).

Although Amor puts up a strong face, the disease makes her retreat into herself as she undergoes a process of psychological and spiritual recollection of her life. The diagnosis curtails her fulfilled female self as she relinquishes the status of her well-being that becomes ensnared by the illness. From a medical perspective, this disease is viewed as consuming, debasing, sinister, unspeakable and grotesque. Amor is a middle aged career woman who faces the reality of this death causing ailment. She is diagnosed with the cancer of the liver, *hepatocellular carcinoma*, as it is known in medical science, when it is at an advanced stage. It dawns on Amor that she is on the verge of death and consequently that there are more urgent matters that she needs to sort out:

But today is not really a day for thinking about ambitious dream and business matters, and this for the simple reason that I [have] to deal with the pressing problem of my imminent demise. Today is a day therefore that I just want to be. To taste with all my senses, the joy of simply being alive. (17)

Diagnosis appears to be a breakthrough in women's cancer narratives, but it inflicts both physical and psychological wounds since cancer as verdict on one's health shocks the protagonist. The novel turns out to be a representation of people's struggle with cancer and the liability that comes with the ailment in women's narratives. Ogola portrays women as bearing the blame for failing to get tested and diagnosed before the cancer advances. The guilt that comes with the failure and the consequences of imminent death, coupled with the militant reference to those who live on as survivors, creates a grotesque image of the disease. The writer reconfigures an activist paradigm of managing cancer in a semi-autobiographical narrative form, which becomes a performative

action in the quest for self and national identity. As a result, *Place of Destiny* becomes a personal narrative focusing on an individual's diagnosis, treatment and death.

With the diagnosis, Amor is filled with disbelief, despair, fear and anxiety in quick succession, but she keeps smiling rather than crying her life away by taking a nostalgic reminiscence of her progressive female self. She holds a Master's degree in Business Administration and a postgraduate Diploma in Human Psychology. In addition, she gives credence to her female self for becoming a successful business woman. This, she concedes, is as a result of being 'a woman and it is by thinking as a woman that [she] ... [builds], from the ground up, one of the most reputable and successful businesses ...' (17). This authorial intrusion is aimed at carving a place for the female self in postcolonial Kenya.

Ogola, rather than expose the protagonist to the male gaze by focussing on her beauty, portrays her as brilliant, endowed with brains which give her an edge over her business associates. Her employee, Sompesha Lanoi, applauds her managerial skills. Lanoi recognises the independent self-propelled female self that characterises her employer. She points out that she holds her in awe as her 'mentor, a guide, an act to study and imitate. I find myself trying to walk like her - that is regal and confident; talk like her - in a deceptively gentle murmur behind which is pure steel, I even try to look at things the way I think she would' (40). She emulates Amor and thus grows into a respectable, independent, and self-propelled individual.

Amor is a financially independent woman, who against all odds, overcomes social and gender constraints to achieve financial autonomy and hence an autonomous female self. She plays the role of mentoring other female characters like Lanoi whose 'shapeless mass of hopes and desires... [take] a particular life-changing direction' (35) with the help of Amor. As a result, she

earns respect in the eyes of her employee as:

a woman with an eagle's eye for mediocrity and slackness which she generally deals with summarily. Yet she is quick to give praise, and to be trusted by her is the highest accolade to any employee – she knows how to listen to others and to take into account intelligent suggestion and not be threatened by other people's abilities. (35)

Amor is therefore a positive symbol and an embodiment of the woman in Kenya in the 21st Century. However, like all other human beings, she faces challenges in life. She contends that she faces all life's problems sometimes with courage, but often with a degree of fear. That way she makes her life a worthwhile venture, a personal escapade and a cause for celebration and appreciation. The contentment she relishes as a fulfilled woman results in calmness of mind even with the shattering news of her impending death. She therefore does not rage with impotent fury or dissolve into ineffective self-pity. She accepts the subjectivity that comes with a terminal disease, plans and makes the best out of the few months that she is expected to live.

When Amor is diagnosed with the cancer of the liver, she agonises at the prospects of leading a painful life before the actual death:

I'm forty-nine years old and if I'm lucky I might celebrate my [fiftieth] birthday - that is if I manage to stay alive for the next five months. If I do, I must certainly be in severe pain by then. Pain is a tricky thing and I must admit I'm afraid of the possibility of prolonged uncontrollable agony. (20)

Amor appreciates medical professionals for their endeavour to do everything, if only to prolong a sick person's life. Unfortunately, such concern is extended only to those who can afford to pay for expensive treatment. She, therefore, castigates a nation that ignores the

plight of diseased poor by allowing them to die with little or no intervention. Such negligence is the bane of most women suffering from various forms of cancer today.

Once diagnosed with particular cancers, death is considered inevitable and nothing much can be done to ameliorate the suffering that comes with the nature of this disease. Amor rubbishes the suggestion that women live longer to be at least seventy or eighty years. She is disillusioned that she is not one of these lucky women who will die at an advanced age. She recoils into her fate, ōI erroneously expected to be one of them - that I would have plenty of time to synthesise a philosophy of life, and therefore of death - and thus resolve the two faces of the coinage of lifeö (21). She feels bitter that with sickness, her life is altered and hence too short for her to accomplish all her heart's desires. Such feelings characterise patients when they are faced with the threat of death.

With the knowledge that she has cancer of the liver, she is ōfor the first time assailed with true uneaseö (25). The diagnosis comes with denial and trauma. She is suffering from an unmanageable ailment that is ōextensive and invasiveí In short, a death sentence in the face of which, [she] for once, [has] no wordsö (25-26). Cancer prescribes an unavoidable demise and she wakes up to the necessity of preparing herself for the spiritual journey she is about to embark on. She does not consider herself a staunch Christian like her husband, siblings and parents. She deviates from this beaten path to become more or less agnostic. This is in disregard of her husband's Catholic faith so that while he and their children devote time to go for mass, her creed is basically hard work as an extension of goodness to humanity. Even in illness, she adopts a busy routine of work to distance herself from what is actually going on and to hide her sorrow. She finds relief in toil even though cancer makes it hard for her to work for long hours.

The protagonist is presented as considerate. She conceals the truth about the extent of her illness to shield her family members from pain as she appreciates the cordial relationship she cultivates with her husband. This comes from the realisation that they cannot change each other's personalities. She points out that it is really a waste of time for couples to try to recreate each other's image. In a speech "The Dignity of the African Woman", Ogburn underscores the need for cease fire between genders. She says "Conflict between men and women is therefore unnecessary because a woman brings an equal and powerful complementarity to the common human condition" (1). She submerges the self/other paradigm.

Amor and Mwangi, or, Gherry, as she prefers to call him, stop staging war against each other. They both make "the startling discovery that the other somewhere down the line [has] somehow become the very kind of person we [like] best to be with" (29). It is to her best self/other that she discloses the devastating news of her terminal ailment with difficult and regret: "I'm sick Gherry. What else can I say when my body is about to betray our fondest plans for the future?" (30). She bemoans her fate in that sickness interferes with the entire family and the confines of home and children no longer give her the consolation she had previously enjoyed.

The social-cultural identity constructed along gender lines expects a mother to find solace in her husband and children when the world outside collapses and her future falls apart in such an event as this cancer illness. Unfortunately, disillusionment sets in and life loses its flavour with the advent of the terminal illness. Thus, sickness submerges Amor's self even though she is an independent woman who enjoys financial independence. Her appropriate use of hard work as a tool to chart her selfhood in the nation is threatened by cancer which is not only advanced, but inoperable.

The disease is represented as the *other* in relation to other diseases since its presentation causes destruction of the body. The body becomes cancerous when the cells resort to self-annihilation. The body is rendered incapable of reconstruction and hence Amor's body fights her from inside and she is too weak to wage war. The disease demolishes her self and inevitably makes her accept death for *other's* little that can be done, nothing really, unless [she] [wants] to submit [herself] to all kinds of experimental therapies (31). DeShazer points out that:

í medicalised bodies generally experience invasive treatment and only possible or partial recovery; the women who inhabit these bodies and/or present them in literature struggle with issues of appropriation and agency in the face of medical intervention that can be traumatic whether lifesaving or useless. (13)

The resignation with which she accepts her fate is a pointer to the elusive nature of the treatment of cancer. She is referred for palliative care at the hospice where a care giver listens without judging her as Amor's diseased self fights with the ailing body. To say that the couple is disappointed by the referral to the sanatorium for analgesic care is an understatement.

Ogola assigns her protagonist the place of an omniscient narrator to underscore the subject's impaired feelings:

I can see that Gherry is deeply wounded. He says nothing on the way home. I am bereft and I decide to go to bed though it is only late morning. After two hours of trying to marshal my thoughts - which scamper around like a bunch of unruly goats ó I decide that the best place for me is the structured environment of my office. I am not in any great pain yet and I am really no worse off than I was a week ago despite the biopsy. The office is where I am now, communicating with the doves and reviewing my life. (31-32)

The retrospective stance that Amor takes in reference to her illness is autobiographical in nature. Ogola contrasts the present and the past circumstances to help us understand the pain of the diseased female self's realisation that the candle of her life in the nation is about to be blown off.

The prospect of extending performative economic role is curtailed by ailment since Amor is unable to deal with the situation at hand in [her] usual organised way (32). She tries to rationalise her predicament, "But...what is so usual about finding out that you have only a few months to live - four at most six? An un-quieting voice from within affirms that it is indeed usual. People die every day and however much I don't want to face the fact; I too am 'people' (32). Amor accepts the inevitability of death for all humanity and she is no exception and hence prepares for her demise by drawing a new will. This is a courageous step taken by Amor in respect of her impending demise for through inference she allows the feelings of bravery to overwhelm her as she becomes impatient for her death. She says, "I taste the finality of oblivion. And the great temptation to not wait. To somehow hasten things up. Things that are so final should be over quickly, I think with dark desolation. Why wait?" (32-33). Amor's obvious challenge from death makes her to develop a new identity; she understands her vulnerability to terminal illness.

With the imminence of death, she develops a shattered self that heightens her feelings of loss of identity. As far as she is concerned, life is no longer worth living since it is compromised by sickness and hence she entertains the temptation to commit suicide to end her agony. Suicidal feelings come to Amor as a result of the void she feels in her new identity as one in an abyss of worthlessness. The bleakness that comes over her in the face of death undermines her courage and she almost forgets that her husband, children and employees whom she loves, and love her too, who require taking lessons in life and growing as they journey with [her] one last time (33).

The self/other binary opposition affects cancer patients once they become other than themselves and hence the tendency for Amor to think only about herself as she condemns her body to non-existence.

However, the self soon realises that the other is as important as the self in the journey she is making to the grave. Amor's self also realises that the remaining four or six months are useful for her to make future plans for her company; to tie up loose ends and to also draw her final will. The traumatic experience that comes with the inevitability of death gives her transformational power over her illness and she tries to accomplish what is possible during the remaining part of her life. The protagonist makes time to visit the hospice whose motto is how to put life into the remaining days of the diseased self. Amor's experience at the hospice makes her appreciate the destiny of all human beings and is "much shaken by the inescapable fact of our common mortality" (68). It becomes apparent that death comes for us all, irrespective of who we are. However, it is still incomprehensible that only a few weeks before, death and dying were the last things she would have thought of. She rationalises that although we share out our problems so as to ease our pain, there is need to confront our problems privately. She negates the popular saying that pain shared is halved. Instead, she observes that pain from an illness can never be collective. The diseased self has to endure the pain alone.

Amor considers the hospice a "place of destiny" where those afflicted with cancer get an opportunity for preparation to die gracefully. Her first visit to the hospice makes her feel "like coming face to face with stark fate, with destiny disrobed. Out in the streets, destiny is dressed up neatly with a made-up inscrutable face. Here, destiny is the person seated next to you - knee to knee. Your shadowy terrors come to life" (68). The hospice is a place for alleviating pain where those afflicted by malignancy internalise their fate and accept death as unavoidable. Spiritual

preparedness becomes necessary for uneventful death. Amor spends time reading inspirational and meditative books in order to deal with her fears of death. She reckons that by going to the hospice she enjoys an epic journey of self-discovery. She now devotes half an hour to prayer in order to subject to the infinite God and to draw strength to keep afloat. She turns to religion to prepare herself for a peaceful demise. Through authorial intrusion, Ogola tries to influence her readers and critics to her view that Catholic faith is holistic and aptly prepares the dying. She advances religious belief as relevant to serve Amor in her present circumstances. Thus, those staring death in the face do not feel that their death is as a result of unmitigated evil which human beings suffer.

If the number of cancer patients that visit the hospice is anything to go by, cancer is on an exponential increase. Amor meets other patients attending palliative care, for instance, Mwikali who is suffering from recurrent bone cancer and Timo Adagalla, who has one kidney having lost the other to cancer. Mwikali's mother wants to seek a second opinion on her daughter's status, while Timo's mother is overwhelmed by the prospect of bringing him to the hospice. The caregiver observes that the suffering Timo is undergoing is nowhere near the soul searching agony that his parents are undergoing (72-73). Ogola emphasises the kind of trauma that comes with cancer not only to the afflicted, but also to their relatives. It is difficult for patients, relatives and care givers since the experience of cancer illness tears through the narrative fabric of their lives. In a way, healthy relatives and friends of the ailing also require mechanisms of alleviating pain.

Ogola narrates an account of cancer not only for the protagonist but also other patients in a bid to make the narrative more inclusive and therapeutic. Including the voices of other cancer patients without assimilating their voices into hers helps Amor to corroborate her illness narrative. As she tells us about her individual experience with sickness she struggles for meaning

not only in her case but also for others living with cancer. Moreover, she tells us how difficult it is for patients, relatives and care givers since they also experience pain in the fabric of their lives.

Analgesic care becomes necessary to the diseased female self's search for tenderness and love amidst the struggle to keep depression at bay. The endeavour to safeguard life even in bleak circumstances is evident through the care giver, who is expected to calm down the diseased person to ensure that they do not resort to self-pity. The care giver hence becomes an agent for the diseased to impute in them a sense of self. The "no one cares about me anymore syndrome" (75) is not allowed to become true. Counselling becomes part and parcel of a soothing process aimed at relieving the afflicted of a cluttered conscience so that they are able to sojourn to their death light heartedly. This preparation incorporates religion which is expected to ease the pain of the dying person. This insight helps us to understand why people get converted on their death-beds; it is a culmination of trying to understand and have enlightenment about the real goodness of the human self. In a way the narrative can be read as an aid in counselling too in that narratives of illness make meaning of experiences of people living at risk, in prognosis and in pain, make reflections about cancer as an illness and structure and order their thoughts about illness and death.

Mwagera's belief in either traditional or modern religion is tested. He confesses that the effects of his wife's sickness on him make him move from "disbelief, to fury, to gut wrenching misery" (85). He does not understand how God, who establishes the order that governs the universe, can allow malignant mutation of cells to eat away his wife's liver without preventing this kind of thing. In his moment of despair, he challenges and doubts God's power. He nevertheless realises his selfishness since he does not raise a finger when catastrophe strikes others. He only gets concerned when he is directly affected. Battered by this sporadic disease,

Amor hopes to find solace at home in the company of her husband and children. She adopts a new lifestyle, stops burying herself at her place of work to being at home where the bruised spirit returns for healing (41). Home becomes symbolic of a recuperative place where Amor receives support from her family.

The author uses fiction to glorify a dying heroine by rewriting the heterosexual romance plot to privilege idealised love between a cancer patient and her female supporters... (DeShazer 6). Amor appreciates that with her husband they have managed to create a life that is mutually enriching and an environment favourable to personal growth (43). The thought of dying and leaving her husband behind is frenzied with pity for him and thus illness becomes symbolic of the obstacles that hamper continued happiness between Amor and her husband. She enjoys complementary support from her marriage partner who allows her to realise her potential without feeling endangered or excluded. Consequently, she is at a loss and wildly declares to herself: 'I can't leave him' (43). Her declaration marks her stubborn refusal to succumb to death and desperately clings to life as she pleads with God to spare her life for she knows that her death will have an impact not only on her husband but also on her children and the company which she runs.

Ogola depicts Amor as a normal human being who, in the face of her impending death, loses her rational female self and wonders how her twins, her husband and the rest of her children will manage without her. As a wife and mother, she is traumatised by the notion of dying and leaving her nuclear family without her love and care as a result of the dislocation caused by illness and imminent death. She is more worried about her family rather than herself because she is a selfless person and on the other hand knows only too well the role a woman plays in a home, as the backbone of the family unit.

Illness and death are experiences that are enormously difficult to put in words and it is not a surprise that cancer discourse uses metaphor. Given the pervasiveness of metaphor in cancer narratives, it is important to examine how Ogola uses metaphorical language in her struggle for meaning that appears to be essential in cancer. The lived experience of suffering, uncertainty and fear of dying is expressed using indirect language to reveal the author's orientation towards body and self, illness, life and death. Some of the metaphors are constructive and therapeutic while others are destructive and traumatising, but all of them are useful for conceptualising cancer.

Ulrich Teucher observes that illness is "obviously, [an] experience that is enormously difficult to put into a language: how should the lived experience of suffering, uncertainty, and fear of dying be expressed?" (73). In other words, it is difficult to find words and even metaphors to describe illness in a narrative since disease is an experience that tears through the narrative fabric of a person's life. It is for this reason that illness narratives acquire interest from readers and critics for they tell us more about an individual and attributes of health, illness, and mortality as people struggle for meaning when living with a life-threatening illness. Ogola metaphorically describes cancer by alluding to war: "each organism has within itself the principle of self-destruction" (31). This metaphor describes the outcome of Amor's illness, destruction, that is likened to a warring situation and hence the implication that cancer is an enemy and the treasonous body is accused of betrayal by instigating self damage. The imagery of war within the body system is moving and gives voice to the anger that Amor feels since her body has become divisive as the illness turns chronic.

For those who are healthy, cancer metaphors "may provide a momentary window out into the disorder and fear of life with cancer; for those who have cancer, these metaphors are the only windows that open from enveloping chaos into a space of apparent order" (Teucher 74).

Metaphors of illness and death are useful to both the diseased and the healthy in as far as the fear that comes with cancer is concerned. Amor's diseased self is enacted in the form of retrospective narration. As the narrator and also the character in the narrative, Amor makes use of language that enables us to make sense of, evaluate, and give voice to her experience with cancer.

Ogola, through authorial intrusion points out that once a person develops cancer, death is inevitable and metaphorically refers to death as a journey: 'dying is a journey, one needs to be lightly clad to undertake' (77). The metaphor of a journey shows experiences that a sick person goes through as having therapeutic effects. Journey is used to conceptualise the uncertainty of the experience of living in situations of crisis. Teucher points out that in 'a crisis, metaphor functions primarily to stabilise ourselves in uncertainty and change and to distance us from fearful chaos... one of the most terrifying epitomes of the unknown: it is disorderly, unpredictable, and resists our attempts to impose order on its progression' (6). The notion of a journey provides a means of distancing oneself from a terrifying experience such that the journey metaphor appropriates the terror of the unknown in terms of known magnitudes. In so doing, the metaphor reinterprets the unknown in terms of the known, and it helps to dissolve panic momentarily, making existence more bearable.

Ogola incorporates the journey metaphor to 'conceptualise the chaos and uncertainty of the experience... It suggests an imaginative scope and open-endedness that is therapeutic to some, but in its uncertainty disturbing to others' (Teucher 5). The notion of a journey instils in Amor the need for preparedness for a journey she is unsure of, which nevertheless is unavoidable. However, Amor's journey is different from that made by a majority of human beings for she boasts a satisfying lifestyle. Unfortunately, illness invades her body as death threatens to create a boundary between her and the non-self since death is the final destiny for those who sojourn in

the earthly life. The fear of death drains her speech. Nevertheless she comes to terms with the inescapability of death and the continuity of life once she dies.

The title of the book, *Place of Destiny* is the main metaphor of cancer illness. Amor alludes to destiny early in the text when she posits that she has to deal with the pressing problem of [her] imminent demise (17). Faced with illness and possibility of death, cancer takes over her present life as her hope for survival is shattered and her fear escalates. This sense of an impending apocalypse, the spectre of her being vanquished by a life threatening disease, shows the primal fears among the sick and the healthy and precipitates the recognition that Amor is human like all of us. The tragic irony in *Place of Destiny* is the awareness that Amor and other cancer patients at the hospice will die as a result of cancer illness. The metaphorical reference to the hospice as a place of destiny evokes pity and fear even though it makes those who are sick to develop a sense of an impending disaster.

As stated earlier, Ogola uses her medical background to make the apt observation that "there is no pain reliever for heartbreak" (45). This is a metaphorical reference to medication and is meant to impute both in the patient and the healthy persons that psychological pain caused by the advent of cancer is difficult to lessen. As a consequence, Amor has to endure as much pain as those who love and cherish her and nothing can be done about it. To try and appease her troubled mind, Amor and Gherry go for a last holiday together to Lake Elementaita. She chooses this recreational site to renew her spirit, make peace with herself and the world she is about to leave and with God. With the notion of her body disintegrating within, she endeavours to take care of her spiritual life. She is being split open from inside, a process which she cannot stop because her self is part of that process. Ogola presents religion as inextricable from a wounded spirit's search for the meaning of life. She uses rhetorical questions to show the centrality of religion among

people of all walks of life. She asks "Why is religious sentiment the most pervasive reality and motive of almost all cultures?" (51). She depicts religion as offering spiritual enlightenment in the search for true understanding and realisation of one's personal nirvana.

Amor loses her personal self to both illness and impending death. She is subjugated by disease but that does not prevent her from reflecting on the implications of the terminal nature of her ailment. It is upon her reflection that she suddenly starts trusting in God. She owns up that she has only started thinking about God because of her mortality that appears obvious. Her belief in God serves as a confirmation to her that human beings owe their existence to Him and this conviction lightens the burden in her heart: "where before only a constructive sadness could be found" (97), there is now peaceful, realistic resolve. This is seen when she expresses hope that Gherry remarries upon her demise but he fails to come to terms with his wife's down to earth logic that once she dies he will not be bound to her.

In her subjugated status, Amor is reflective and assumes a new identity that is informed by the fact that life is dynamic and will not stop when she dies. Her strength of character in the midst of anxiety about her impending death is realised when she persuades her husband to remarry so that he can have a wife who can continue to perform wifely duties for him when she dies. By extension, with her demise, Amor also hopes that in the new wife, her children will have a step-mother to lean on for love and support. She exhibits agency to push her husband towards accepting to remarry by asking him to do what would appear abnormal for many in order to make the event of his remarrying honourable.

Amor's story becomes recursive and self-reflective since the narrative performance makes a claim that the narrative itself validates when long after her death, Gherry remarries even though initially the thought of retrying his hand in romance and marriage terrifies him. Mwaghera

acknowledges that he is happy in his marriage to Amor and wishes to be content with that happiness rather than remarry and possibly be unhappy. He fears that another marriage might not work. He observes that:

most relationships appear to be blend of tolerance and despair, where even affectionate friendship between married couples is rare - let alone a love deep enough and strong enough to consider the welfare of the other person paramount, even as one lies dying.
(137-138)

Gherry has a grim picture of the marriage institution devoid of affection and thus, he fears remarrying. As far as he is concerned, there is no need of having a marriage that lacks happiness.

The diseased self in Amor finds it difficult to accept that a number of things are going to take place in her absence: crossing over to the following year, the marriage of her daughters, and induction of her son into her business. Moreover, she is not going to experience both middle and old age with her husband. Nevertheless, Amor rationalises that the best thing she can do is to accept her fate for as far as she is concerned, "accepting" is an inevitable and inescapable point of departure" (58). But her fighting self refuses to resignedly deal with her predicament. She decides to seek a second opinion on her ailment. In her hallucination, it becomes apparent that she wishes that her illness is treatable. Ogola invokes the spirits of the dead to superstitiously show the dialectic relationship between the living and the dead. The spirit of Amor's dead mother appear to Amor and against her expectations assures her that "not everything has medicine, some things make you better" (59). Metaphorically, the implication is that where medicine fails death cures by providing mortal beings with the relief from their excruciating pain. Teucher points out that for sick people "the desire in illness for a conclusive ending, for a closure, while quite

common in contemporary culture, is rarely realized in cancer narratives (74). Thus, it is obvious that Amor is likely to die from cancer.

Ogola projects death as metaphorical healing. It dawns on Amor that the demise of her diseased self is not a 'maybe' (60) case; she is on her final sojourn on earth. She psychologically accepts her uneventful death and pities her husband who is still in a state of denial. For those afflicted with terminal diseases 'time measures only the ravage of change. Without change to measure, time is of itself, nothing' (65). As the illness progresses, she urgently wishes to iron out things even with the almighty God. Taking the role of the omniscient narrator she tells us that her husband is 'angry with everybody, God and [herself] included' (65). Despite this annoyance that plunders both husband and wife, Amor realises the need to let their children know. She rationalises this saying, it is for this reason that she is not comatose or hooked up to all kinds of machines. She considers that the 'measurable time span' (65) God gives her before her demise is meant to allow her to tell her children about her illness and the impending death.

Amor would rather tell them than have them hear it from strangers. She, therefore, asks her daughters, Imani who is a teacher, and Malaika, who is studying at the university, to come home. 'As a hen gathers her chicks,' (93) so does Amor get together her family members to disclose to them that she is living with cancer of the liver. She assures them that when she dies their father and their extended family are going to take care of them. Her diseased self takes courage to inform her children about her impending death. She promises to always be with them in the spirit, for a mother cannot afford to desert her children whether she is alive or dead. She invokes superstitious beliefs to prepare them to come to terms with her uneventful death.

The consequence of Amor's illness is a reality even though her loved ones are far from accepting that she will be gone in a little while. To help them release her from their emotions so

that she can sojourn in peace, she consoles them and impresses on them that she values them most. It is for this reason that she assembles them to keep them informed so that her death does not become a catastrophe, but ãa loving leave-taking that will be remembered and treasured - a source of strength in times of trouble ö (95). She does not present death as a tragedy that will leave her family öfeeling diminished and guiltyö (95); she insists that ödying is an important part of lifeö (95). Through the act of narration, Ogola attempts to demystify death.

Although Amor is not a staunch Christian, she enlists God's support when death becomes inevitable. She points out, öIf God is allowing me to die now,í it is because it is the best possible time for me. Since I have cancer [,] then cancer is the best way for meö (95). However, this notion of death neither convinces her husband nor her children for instance Pala who is furious with God for causing the death of his mother and innocent little children. His fury is contrasted with his mother's calm resignation to God's will. She concedes that she is ãalso devastated by this illness - hanging on to preserve myself from emotional disintegrationö (96). Her composure comes with a lot of emotional restraint. Her husband and the children are drawn into the battle for life. Mwaghera is at a loss as to what he can do now that it is apparent his wife, the mother of his children, is going to be alive only for a few more days. He appeals to his children to rise to this unfortunate truth and help her through her illness and eventually her demise. He observes, öWe as a family must try our best to stick together and help your mother through thisö (97). He asks Imani to stay instead of going back to Kambi ya Mbogo where she works as a teacher. She consents even though her mother protests that she is not very sick. She advises her daughter to get a part-time teaching job rather than just sit in the house waiting for her mother to die.

The visit to the hospice is metaphorically referred to as "The Anthem of the Brave" (102). Those who are suffering from cancer require courage and support to come to terms with their illness. To accord her ailing mother the support she requires, Imani quits her teaching job and accompanies her mother to the hospice to access palliative care. She observes that at the hospice, "one can cut the soul-pain... with a knife. "Nobody speaks" (102). The imagery of a knife cutting metaphorically underpins the intense ache that both the sick and those accompanying them experience. This is attributable to the fear that comes with approaching loss of life. Ogola observes that "the greatest gift of all is life. All things are possible when one has it or but nothing, not even the most mundane, is really possible once life [is] taken away" (108). Amor's life is shortened by cancer and she accepts her appointed destiny. She prepares for death as she receives spiritual direction from Father Isidore Gaya. She considers it bearable to "die surrounded by the consolations and gladness of faith, family and familiar surroundings" (117). She prays that she may have the calm and fortitude that she needs as she comes closer to the chasm she must cross.

Amor has had a successful life and she has already made a mark on her life, her family and the nation at large. It is no wonder that Ogola describes Amor's unbeaten life metaphorically, "Some lives are like a good book, or great music or rising to a crescendo of creative strength, and then dying off or not with a whimper but with a burst of light" (98). Ogola projects Amor as the prototype of a fulfilled female self. This kind of self is hard to come by in a patriarchal order. Her great achievement is emphasised by her ability to absolutely belong to herself in the sense that she is the mistress of her thought and action. She manages to be close to her ideal self and hence "essentially just herself" (151). Amor is a fortunate female who has realised herself in a society that treats women as the "other". Unfortunately, occurrence of a complex disease afflicting women relegates them to a non-sequential space and denies them the power to continue enacting

both selfhood and nationhood. Her life echoes Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "A Psalm of Life." The poet alludes to the fact that great people have everlasting and worthwhile marks in the world:

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time

The poem highlights the temporal nature of earthly life. The idea of posterity is equated to "footprints on the sands of time." The author castigates people who make no mark in their lives. The lack of permanence of footprints on the sand notwithstanding, a person at the time of demise ought to leave a record for others to emulate and thus perpetuate their names or deeds.

With the progression of her ailment, Amor gathers courage to disclose her ailment to her employees as she wisely makes apt plans for the organisation to go on with slight involvement of her family. The only person she hopes to introduce into the company and possibly groom as a future director is her fourteen year old son, Hawi Mwaghera. To give him time to grow and to ensure that the company remains stable, she asks her employees to buy shares into the company and manage it. In addition, she begs them to allow Hawi to run the company when he comes of age if they find him worthy. She proceeds to appoint Ithoth Kella the Managing Director. The omniscient narrator informs us that Kella is not married because he is secretly in love with Amor, a woman he profoundly admires and respects.

The protagonist also appreciates Lanoi as a young woman and appeals to her to stay and continue making the company grow. She takes advantage of her privileged position as an employer and an elder sister to match make Kella and Lanoi for, as far as she is concerned, she

has to "help two blind people see the obvious" (101). Her contention is that they are made for each other, but fail to realise this and unite in marriage. Although Kella is brilliant, Lanoi reckons that if she is to marry she is going to expect more than a good brain. She thinks of the age difference between her and Kella, he is at least forty years old while she is just twenty-seven. He on the other hand readily welcomes the idea. Ogola makes Amor open the eyes of both Lanoi and Kella. She plays an important role in helping the two to perform selfhood and nationhood, possibly as man and wife. In her speech on the "The Dignity of the African Woman," Ogola points out that "the woman is the heart of the family, and the family is the cornerstone of society" (1). The decision to sensitise the two for a possible marriage points at Ogola's favourite theme, the family unit, which appears not only in this novel but also in *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo*. In *Place of Destiny*, the image of the family as the model of social order gains further reference and importance.

When Amor is on the brink of death she becomes a mere shadow of her former self. Imani's sensitive self propels her to concentrate on giving her mother home care when her condition deteriorates. The diseased self affects the lives of everyone in the family. The young ones in this family, Hawi and Pala, abandon their carefree joys of childhood in the face of this crisis. Malaika is particularly affected. "Ever one for fun," Imani observes, "I have not heard her crack a joke since this whole thing began to unfold.... Gone also is the super confidence and joy of life that had hitherto marked her life" (134). This sad scenario also affects Imani who feels desolate that her mother is dying. Imani's love relationship with Igana Mago fails to cushion her against the pain she feels at the thought of her mother's imminent death. However, she clearly understands what her father is going through. She says, "now that I myself am in love I can quite understand how he feels about being separated from the woman he loves" (133). We are not

surprised that he watches over his diseased wife all day and night. He is exhausted, rarely gets any rest at all for his life comes tumbling down with her terminal sickness. He appreciates the life he has shared with her as a moment of unmerited beauty.

The Mwagherasø married life is characterised by passion, joy, gladness, and abounds with love. He confirms the extraordinary space Amor occupies in his heart when he says that the only place he feels confident and "absolute potentate is within the realm of her heart" (136). His tribulation at the prospect of losing her is tantamount to losing his other self. Their relationship underpins the need for liaison between men and women. Ogola points out in "The Dignity of the African Woman" that "the woman is a powerhouse of creativity, development and peace. Conflict between men and women is therefore unnecessary because a woman brings an equal and powerful complementarity to the common human condition" (1). Ogola accords women a central role in the nation. They are no longer spectators but enactors of nationhood. The oneness and respect that binds Mwaghera and his wife submerges the self/other binary opposition and she occupies the innermost part of his heart as an equal partner. He reciprocates by showering her with love, affection, tenderness and absolute gentleness. He is available to "share her moments of pain or sorrow or defeat; to listen to her when she [needs] to talk" (135). He, therefore, succeeds in assisting her to transcend female subjugation, but cancer subjugates her more immensely than the patriarchal order from which she has been salvaged.

The imagery of the sun is introduced as an analogy of the life of a human being. As the day begins, the author observes, "it burns its way up, clothed in fiery gold and flaming scarlet; likewise does the day die clothed in solemn crimson splendour. Both are beautiful and timely" (140). She uses the imagery of the rising and setting sun to describe the life of a human being which starts at birth and ends at death. The author would like us to believe that there is beauty

that shrouds life and death. As Amor's bereavement draws near, her female self experiences no fear or tension and hence her demise becomes a "moving majestic experience" (140). Her subjugated body adorns a spiritual self and hence death heralds her triumphant entry into heaven's glory. Through the protagonist, the writer challenges human beings for exhibiting "utter folly and blindness of pride" (140) and failing to consider life as transient. Through this authorial intrusion, Ogola suggests that people's subjectivity in the event of terminal diseases makes them turn to religion, regardless of whether they are men or women, in a bid to prepare for their transition from the mortal to the immortal.

The Church is the forum where people with terminal illnesses sometimes turn to for spiritual and psychological sustenance. Amor appreciates the church as the only forum where sick people sometimes turn to for spiritual and psychological nourishment in the face of errant, absent or abusive spouses, cultural discrimination and social deprivation that is prevalent in the society. Amor's grateful self amazes the priest. As he takes her through the dying path, he also learns to be thankful without taking anything for granted. He is impressed by her unusual self and he notes, "In her life and now in dying, I can see that hidden in this very ordinary woman [is]... a very extraordinary person" (144).

Amor dies when she has already attained a Master's degree, and also owns a big business enterprise. With the achievements she has made, Amor's name is bound to live on not only because of the inscription the family is going to erect on her grave, but because of the legacy she leaves behind. Through her, Ogola refigures and validates female identity in an attempt to project the new gender roles that women play in Kenya today. This is because, "Upon her death, Amor is deceased, but not vanished" (154). She is a great person who leaves a score in life. The author strives towards gender equality and abolition of differences between men and women by

constituting a female character who works to upset and make gender differences problematic in order to conceptualise and reconceptualise female self-identity. Amor, as a mirror of otherness, functions in the text as a counter-force to gender disparity that reduces differences and inculcates sameness which gives her a prestigious position in the narrative. The author gives Amor a voice that makes her inclusive in the Kenyan postcolonial nation as the whole *‘other’* which is tantamount to realisation of her female self.

As is expected of a Catholic faithful, Amor receives the anointing of the sick sacrament. She experiences a moment of grace as she devotes her frail self to prayer. In a poetic mode she prays, *‘May my living be a time for loving. May my loving be a gift for the living. May my passing be a moment of grace’* (145). This touching and relevant prayer to the living is an epitome of Amor’s momentous journey back to her maker. However, her optimism about her imminent death is but a vestige of Amor’s real self because cancer makes her lose her real self, making her *‘unbecome’*. The author describes *‘death as an absence, the departure of a force’* (150). When death strikes, the essence of what moves a person to live, to act, to love, to dream dreams is negated. The absence that comes with negation of an individual’s life brings a sense of sadness. More so, grief is intensified by feelings of failure if an individual does not leave a mark, while still alive. On the contrary, Amor has had a progressive life. Her husband wishes her deceased soul well as he considers her *‘departed but not lost’* (154). He underscores her usefulness in bereavement.

Apparently, Amor does not want people to make a blot on her life when she is dead by placing a grave-stone on her grave. She would rather they plant a tree. Her death and burial bring to *‘mind the severity and pathos of human life’* (154). The phenomenon of death becomes elusive even to her husband who is a staunch believer in the Catholic faith that views passing

away as a transition from earthly to heavenly life. Ogola, just as in her speech on "The Dignity of the African woman", designates her heroine "with the capacity to transmit life which is the most precious gift that anybody can give or receive. Without life, no other good is possible" (1). She elevates the protagonist to an icon that bestows life not only to herself, her husband and family, but to the entire nation as an entrepreneur.

The finality of death dawns on Mwagera as he tries to explain departure from earthly life as a form of fragmentation to which all human life becomes part and parcel of. He therefore concludes that "to live is to be in strife with time. Time comes and we die and return to the fragmented molecular stage" (153-4). This happens to be the destiny of all human beings at one time or another. However, what is lost in the body is achieved in the spirit and hence "one hopes in the spirit - a singular, non-fragmentable, life giving - yet now departed and unreachable" (154). These happenings make sense to the human mind by an act of faith in a deity.

Mwagera's family experiences the sorrow that comes with the death of a loved one. As if to tear himself from the very environment that torments him, when he gets a job in South Africa, Mwagera places the twins, Pala and Hawi, under the care of his eldest daughter, Imani, and her husband. He departs without a "backward glance" (160). This kind of behaviour is self-seeking because he does not make time to visit his children. However, his sense of loss becomes a vacuum and he wanders around un-consoled. Through him the author captures the fate of widowers:

Yet time is the panacea for all pain, and however numb one is, a day comes when one begins to notice little things and things not so little. The sunshine on a beautiful day and the simple joy of being alive. The aptness of a line of thought and the appreciation of a truth once apprehended. The true admiration of another and the delight of being admired

in return. And the beautiful sound of a woman's laughter, the tenderness of her upturned neck when she looks up at you ó eyes filled with laughter. (198-199)

This poetic reference to the new life after the death of Amor underlines the void that Mwagera experiences. This becomes apparent in the sad look he adorns from the time she dies. The pain that comes with the death of a wife opens his eyes to the realisation that he took life for granted when she was alive.

The loss of a mother prompts Pala to rationalise that sorrow is the one and most common denominator of human existenceö (158). Through him, Ogola indicts the foolishness of people who discriminate against others on the grounds of race, ethnicity or nationhood. As far as she is concerned, disease is the unavoidable phenomenon that imposes boundaries and limitations on human beings. All other peripheral boundary markers are unnecessary for life is short and transient and hence the need to make the best out of it. Pala realises the need to transcend his current predicament. He rationalises the dynamism of life even in bereavement. He braves himself for transformation since his life at this moment and time requires change management. He endeavours to manage the changes thrown unceremoniously to his life following the demise of his mother.

On the other hand, Hawi appreciates the little things that bring greatest joy to a child such as the warmth affectionately given freely by a mother. For Malaika, life is no longer the same. She feels disoriented by the departure of her mother. She reflects on the reasons for being thus upset only to discover she is a self-centred person who cannot imagine life without leaning on her mother. While her mother lives, she takes everything for granted due to her youthful blindness. Her mother's uneventful death makes her feel ölike being...in the solar plexus - the pain is such a shock to the system that [she] cannot even cry outö (167). The

serious effect of Amorø's death on Malaika is meant to castigate people who are self-centred and dependent on others. Her comfort zone is shaken and she is at a loss not because of her concern for her mother, but for her carefree self. Malaika is forced to grow up suddenly when her mother dies.

Imaniø's selfless nature enables her to quickly come to terms with the demise of her mother. The void that she feels is filled by her desire to know who she truly is. Imani finds her answer in the love of her life, Igana Mago who marries her and she develops a satisfied self despite his bleak background. He was the son of a sixteen year girl, Warigia, who fell pregnant in teenage. Her father sent her away from home to rid his family of the scandal. Ogola denounces Warigiaø's father by making reference to Mathew 21:32, "For this reason, the prostitutes enter the kingdom of heaven before you" (page). He is immoral and "it [is] common knowledge that he [has] several mistresses... and [is] responsible for marital well-being (sic) of several school girls of not more or less his daughterø's age" (10). Warigia is bitter about her fatherø's treatment because of pregnancy. The father is quick to see the speck in his daughterø's eye rather than the log in his own. As far as he is concerned, she is guilty while he is blameless. The writer singles out this girl, Warigia, as symbolic of women who are not likely to find space in a nation that fails to nurture. She has no prospects of completing her education because nobody including her own mother is ready to take care of her baby so that she can go on with her education.

Living with her aunt who uses her as a maid, Warigia is exploited, getting a mere third of what the previous house girls earned. Furthermore, her auntø's husband tries to assault her sexually. She leaves her auntø's place and goes to Nairobi where she becomes a hawker, but stops the business when she is arrested and bundled into a City Council lorry and nearly

rolls over her baby strapped on her back. For the sake of her son, she opts for a safer method of earning a living. She inadvertently resorts to prostitution:

At first [hates] it. After a night's work, she [scrubs] herself to the point of excoriation to try and remove the smell and the ugliness of it all. Then she [learns] to numb her mind against it and finally she [becomes] immune to it. She [feels] nothing while her body [goes] through whatever [is] demanded of it. (15)

Warigia makes a difficult choice to support her son. At the back of her mind she just [knows] that her son [is] meant to make great things happen. And would flinch at nothing to make this dream a reality (15). She refuses to succumb to a diminished self hoping to realise her full self in her son, Igana Mago.

Unfortunately, Warigia is killed by one of her clients, but her son grows against all odds to become a distinguished doctor at the hospice treating cancer patients including Imani's mother. In her speech "The Dignity of the African Woman" Ogola points out that "each individual is [unrepeatable] and valuable by virtue of simply being conceived human, ... true justice should be for each human being, visible and invisible, young and old, disabled and able, to enjoy fully their right to life" (1). What amazes Imani is that Mago's rough start in life as a street boy does not prevent him from being an enthusiastic person. She considers herself lucky and is proud to be his companion in life.

Ogola portrays the tribulations that come with cancer as a terminal illness. Although the female self succeeds in marriage, education and career to achieve a high economic status, her fulfilled female self is subjugated by disease. Women's fiction on disease paint the female self as adorning a body that gradually transforms into an unbearable shell that eventually succumbs to death. Ogola critically evaluates the female self's position in the face of illness and projects

cancer as an issue that concerns women and the nation as well. Her hope is that diagnosis comes early for at such a stage cancer is treatable and can give women as well as men a new lease of life. Late diagnosis seals the fate of Amor for nothing can be done to reverse the disease. Thus, the narrative emerges as a photographic memoir that chronicles a woman's death from cancer through representation that is more of a public biography rather than a private one.

Ogola's performative narrative employs an explicit, broken body in prose to depict cancer as a transgressed site of social meaning that interferes with the development of the female self and national identity. Thus, representation of cancer enhances rather than diminishes female subjectivity. She objectifies the cancer gaze to appropriate women's ill and disabled body in 21st Century Kenya as a factor that needs to be given due attention in terms of diagnosis and medical care in a bid to rethink the female self and national identity.

3.3 HIV/AIDS and Female Subjectivity

Just like Ogola, Moraa Gitaa represents disease in fiction without negating the identity of the diseased female self in *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold*. Thus, HIV, just like cancer, increases rather than reduces female subjectivity. Gitaa narrates HIV/AIDS, an illness that is often perceived as different from other diseases because it is in most cases sexually transmitted and it is viral in nature. Sontag makes the following observation:

Until recently, most of the infections recognised as viral [are] ones like rabies and influenza that have very rapid effects. But the category of slow-acting viral infections is growing... evidence continues to accumulate for a viral cause of some human cancers.

(156)

The manifestation of HIV/AIDS as a sluggish viral disease therefore marks it out as an unusual disease, a transforming experience and therefore, it attracts a history. Jeffrey Weeks categorises

HIV/AIDS as a "deeply historicised phenomenon" (142) and points at the possibility of representing the disease in multiple modes: science and social-cultural manifestations.

Because of its complexity, HIV/AIDS is represented in different narratives and hence it is onerous of the author to choose her/his own manner of representation. Gitaa chooses a narrative approach that she seems to believe is different from others used by Kenyan authors to handle the disease. She even incorporates a scientific exploration of the disease by making reference to CD4 counts. A person is referred as HIV positive if the T-lymphocyte (CD4+) cells are either totally destroyed or are less in the blood. Increase in CD4 cell count indicates a restoration of immunity and opportunistic infections are minimised. Lavina's CD4+T cell count increase and her doctor concludes that she has no strain of HIV. Consequently, Gitaa's perspective seems to be that the sickness is reversible.

Sontag articulates the need to reverse the perception of HIV/AIDS by calling upon people to desist from using militant metaphors. Her contention is:

No. It is not desirable for medicine, any more than for war, to be "total." Neither is the crisis created by AIDS a "total" anything. We are not being invaded. The body is not a battlefield. The ill are neither unavoidable casualties nor enemy. We medicine society are not authorised to fight back by any means whatever...about that metaphor, the military one, I would say,... give it back to the war-makers. (183)

Gitaa's representation of HIV/AIDS deviates from the common trodden path whereby the disease is regarded as battling against the body.

Female and male authors in Kenya have written about HIV/AIDS: Catherine Adalla's *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* (1993); Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *Chira* (1997); Meja Mwangi's *The Last Plague* (2000); and Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* (1994). These

texts do not have a strong appeal to young readers as Gitaa's novel perhaps because she weaves her narrative within a romantic plot. In addition, *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* is a narrative that presents a radical change in the history of HIV/AIDS, because the author reverses the usual notion that the disease is incurable.

Thus, Gitaa's new emerging narrative, I suppose, is the expression of a radically changed form of consciousness, should not awareness of that break, and the necessary forgetting of the older consciousness, create its own narrative?ö (Anderson xiv). Seen from this perspective, *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* is superior to other narratives on HIV/AIDS because it instils hope in the patients by proposing a cure, while the other narratives seal the fate of the victims through death. It is no wonder then that *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* appears as the new appropriate narrative of HIV/AIDS.

Gitaa makes sex, sexuality and romance in 21st Century Kenya explicit unlike other authors of HIV/AIDS narratives. Gitaa proposes sexuality as a primary signifier in her narrative in which the AIDS pandemic is affecting young girls's sexual lives. She writes her narrative using a language that is familiar to romance readers. Perhaps other writers fail to represent the disease explicitly because it still elicits secrecy and shame. Gitaa's endeavour is to voice the silence that comes with infection.

The reluctance to name HIV/AIDS, for instance in Oludhe Macgoye's *Chira*, points at the socio-cultural, individual meaning and consequences that the disease is linked with by Kenyans: stigma and alienation from relatives and friends. The term *chira* which means wasting disease in the Luo language is used to describe HIV/AIDS. Thus, horror and despair characterise those living with the disease and hence the temptation to accord it silence. Macgoye refrains from naming the wasting disease in *Chira* as HIV/AIDS since the text itself is the structuring

metaphor for the novelö (Kurtz 189). The title is denotative, referring to taboo and the penalty of breaking it.

The principal metaphor by which HIV/AIDS is referred to or understood in Kenya is the 'plague' Meja Mwangi's novel, *The Last Plague* adopts an apocalyptic character of the pandemic. He depicts a nation nearing social and physical collapse for nobody seems able to confront the disease. Sontag in 'AIDS and Its Metaphors' observes that HIV/AIDS is the most 'demonized disease in society' (1). She points out that 'the metaphors that we associate with disease contribute not only to stigmatising the disease, but also stigmatising those who are ill' (i). The illness itself is horrendous and hence adding metaphors to it makes it more detrimental to the sufferers. The question is whether or not it is possible to represent disease without resorting to metaphors. In most cases, authors resort to metaphors when representing diseases and any other phenomenon that is considered appalling.

Stigmatisation often characterises those living with HIV/AIDS for the patients are perceived as having contracted the illness through their own fault. Representation in *Chira* is, therefore, associated with transgression: 'it is sin that causes the wasting disease' (Macgoye 49). Macgoye just like Ogola depicts HIV and AIDS as a manifestation of evil associating the disease with promiscuity, a notion that is debatable since sex is only one of the ways through which people contract the disease. HIV/AIDS can be contracted through blood transfusion and from mother to child during birth. Ogola's HIV and AIDS victim Becky contracts the disease and this affects her identity negatively due to lack of medication since by the time she contracts the disease anti-retroviral drugs are not available. Ogola uses Becky to address the burning issues of the contemporary Kenya as she equates Becky to evil, a woman who uses her beauty for seductive purposes and thus conjures up the capacity for destruction.

Ogola paints Becky as sexually loose and hence stigmatises her in her diseased condition by depicting the disease as a bush fire that is spreading very fast because people have not changed their sexual behaviour and attitudes. As far as Ogola is concerned, behavioural change is expected to curb the ailment in the absence of medication and thus we understand the pathos behind the image that she casts of Becky on her death bed. She presents a grotesque version of Becky as follows:

The lovely eyes were dimmed, the beautiful face was a death's head mask, the mouth excoriated to the quick, the limbs wasted and the skin was covered with unsightly blemishes. She would talk to no one and confided to none the fear and despair she must have felt; she sent every one away with bitter words. (265)

The description of Becky by Ogola on her death bed lacks a human face because HIV/AIDS notwithstanding, any other chronic disease that could have infringed on Becky's body could have severely affected her as well. Thus, the picture Ogola paints of those suffering from HIV/AIDS is in itself discriminative and it is no wonder that Becky becomes bitter in her diseased condition. Sontag observes that "retiring the military metaphors from the discussion will contribute to productive discourse on AIDS and help those who have contracted the illness" (1). Gitaa does not make belligerent reference to HIV/AIDS and thus she gives the disease a human face as the protagonist tries to come to terms with her illness. It is worth noting that the author explores the denial and difficulties facing those likely to contract HIV/AIDS since they are torn between keeping away and showing kindness to those who are already sick.

The growing interest in the study of narrative particularly the study of individual lives is highlighted by Ruth Finnegan's premise that "the self is essentially constructed by or through narrative, ... by the stories we tell ourselves or that others tell about us" (4). Writing becomes a

concrete medium to articulate human experience as lived in an effort to make people understand pandemic diseases. Thus, narrative about illness has implications for as Kruger observes, "Any verbal expression of identity already intertwines narrative and identity by representing an individual subjectivity, a life story" (Kruger 110). *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold*, therefore, examines the impact of HIV/AIDS on the individual and the nation.

Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold also tackles concerns raised by Kruger, in "Narrative in time of Aids." She asks:

Is the radical new experience of AIDS likely to prompt changes for the story of a diseased and often [stigmatised] identity? Are new ways of telling unavoidable considering this terminal assault on the self? Can the diseased self be affirmed as part of the existing communities? (109)

In some ways, Gitaa's fiction seems to respond to Kruger's concerns by writing a narrative that reverses the stigma attending those who contract the disease. She deliberately creates a female character who is sexually immoral. By so doing, she demythologises the belief that girls who get infected are innocent, since more often than not society blames men as the perpetrators of immorality. Lavina, the heroine in Gitaa's narrative, is created to serve the author's purpose. This is also evident from the third person narrative technique used by the author, which makes Lavina the object of utterance. In other words, the narrator is speaking about Lavina who is also a character in the story and hence gives agency to HIV/AIDS narration.

Gitaa uses narrative discourse to create normative social behaviour by dismantling punitive metaphors directed towards those who are infected. Thus, *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* begets a HIV/AIDS narrative that becomes corrective in as far as narratives of HIV/AIDS circulating in the community at the time of its writing for example, Catherine

Adalla's *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* (1993); Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *Chira* (1997); Meja Mwangi's *The Last Plague* (2000); and Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* (1994), are concerned. The author, therefore, attempts to carve a spectacular place for Lavina in the nation as her condition changes from HIV negative to HIV positive before reversing to HIV negative. By so doing, Gitaa portrays HIV/AIDS as no longer one of the most terrifying illnesses. She imposes order on its progression by providing a structure for a narrative where the victim, Lavina, survives.

Thus, Gitaa subsumes all uncertainties and setbacks that confront HIV/AIDS. Expounding on narrative voices in regard to narrative techniques used by writers, Mieke Bal points out that those narratives are:

í [defined] according to the -voice of the narrator, -first person or ÷ third person novels...To what does the distinction between first-person and third-person novels correspond?...as soon as there is a language, there is a speaker who utters it; as soon as those linguistic utterances constitute a narrative text, there is a narrator, a narrating subject. As soon as there are images that represent figures doing things, there is a form of narration going on. From the grammatical point of view, this narrating subject is always a -first person.. the narrator can narrate about someone else, a -he or -she who might incidentally happen to be a narrator as well. (20-21)

The argument here is that first person narrator narrates about ðlö while the third person narrates about -he or -she and he or -she can be a narrator. The point is that a narrator tells about others, himself or herself. A narrator who is also a character in the narrative is personified and hence the story gains an element of narrative rhetoric of truth. This is seen when the third person narrator recounts facts about Lavina and thereby attempts to write

Lavina's autobiography albeit in a different voice, third person, instead of using the usual autobiographical voice, first-person narration.

Through the third person narrative voice, Gitaa accords gender power relations a new dimension in view of sex and sexuality in the advent of HIV/AIDS. When Lavina meets Rawal, an Asian, who is forty years of age, unmarried, and living alone in an apartment, she questions why he does not live with his family like other Asians. Ann-Marie, a close friend of hers warns her to be careful with such a man, but Lavina ignores. She blames her current HIV positive plight on her voluptuousness. Belated feelings of guilt, regret, shame and self-objection explain the sense of defeat that comes with infection. This is because her perception is that she can do nothing to reverse her sero status. Using the past tense, the omniscient narrator points out that she is "certainly not part of the jetting crowd when she [meets] Rawal, but he [changes] that. It [begins] as one big lie after another and then... suddenly [finds] herself in too deep to get out" (28). Lavina is suspicious of Rawal, but instead of persistently questioning him to find out the truth, she gives him the benefit of doubt and as a result, he changes her because she is blind to reason due to the monetary gains she receives from him.

The narration of the events that define Lavina as a HIV patient implicate her as leading a careless sexual life, despite the threat of contracting HIV. The tension between Lavina and the society she is living in is heightened by her failure to conform to the society's code of behaviour which expects her to practise safe sex through abstinence or use of condoms. Thus, the novel reverses the trend and blames women for contracting HIV/AIDS and the author turns judge and prosecutor as is evidenced by the confession her protagonist makes about the circumstances under which she contracts the disease. Gitaa's aim is to sensitise woman to insist on safe sex. Consequently, the fictitious representation of sexuality

becomes, in the words of Foucault as cited in *Imperial Leather*, a 'causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere...' (McClintock 7). Gitaa integrates HIV/AIDS in the story of sex and sexuality which is the site for manifestation and rationalisation of power relations between men and women.

The development of discourse on illness is based on reviewing and re-assessing the self in an effort to help the diseased to experience psychological healing. The author underscores the need for Lavina to rid her mind of the haunting nightmares about the prospects of the illness. Retrospection about her relationship with Rawal is geared towards self indictment. The author uses the past tense to distance the diseased female self from the pain that comes with contracting the disease. Her decision to quit the relationship is not based on moral grounds, but anger for allowing herself to be used. The writer indicts her for her inability to take caution in the era of HIV and AIDS and raises a moral question as far as sexual behaviour is concerned.

Lynne and Ann-Marie, Lavina's friends, listen as she tells them how Rawal pampers her with various credit cards, two cars and buys and registers in her name an apartment as a birthday present. These generous gifts blind her and she allows herself to be used without any reflection so that when he suggests that they stop using condoms she does not hesitate. She decries her morally degenerate stance that allows Rawal to 'hand [her] a death certificate...' (195). Lavina equates the disease to a death sentence. This suggests that fear overwhelms those who contract the disease because it is not curable even though there are medications that prolong life.

Lavina works as a laboratory technician where she is involved in testing HIV/AIDS. Ironically, despite her involvement in testing and counselling, she is not extra careful in her

sexual life. HIV/AIDS just like other diseases makes demands on people to test, to isolate the ill and those suspected of being ill and transmitting illness, and to erect barriers against real or imaginary contamination...ö (Sontag 168). The author uses Lavina to underline the danger surrounding the epidemic and to sensitise the youth about lack of prudence in their sexuality. Lavina's claim that Rawal is on a "destructive trail" (195) and hence deliberately infects her confirms the author's scheme to present girls as villains in their contraction of HIV/AIDS.

Gitaa portrays Lavina as senseless for failing to be wary of a man of questionable background. With her stable economic status (she sculpts during her free time) we expect her to be happy, but "the sign of gender and the mark of AIDS map social, moral and physical inferiority onto [her] female body" ö (Kruger 111). The writer implicates Lavina in the tension that attends her relations with Rawal. Her illness enables us to build on the questions of gender and sexual relationships as (re)conceptualised in postcolonial Kenya.

The nation becomes the backdrop against which HIV/AIDS unfolds in Lavina's life. She is the focal point for the narrative's moral and physical disintegration of both the private and public life of the nation. The intensity of the effect of this disease on her life is captured in the words:

...my life [comes] to a standstill. What [is] functioning in my body [is] only the beating of the heart and the flowing of the blood....In subsequent days denial [sets] in. It [is] like a blow to my solar plexus. From then on, every aspect of my life [takes] a downhill turn....
(197-198)

Before she contracts the disease, Lavina enjoys a fulfilled self but she loses it as soon as she is diagnosed as HIV positive. She, therefore, adorns a fragmented diseased self. She thinks of a way

of making Rawal accountable by suing him. Unfortunately, this is an exercise in futility for at the moment there is no law that makes wanton spread and infection of other people with HIV illegal. The heroine blames herself for an error of judgment, while at the same time linking casual and unprotected sex with danger in the epoch of HIV/AIDS. Lavina becomes other than those prudently dealing with their sexuality; other than those who are not infected with HIV virus.

The author uses her female protagonist to suggest that the spread of HIV/AIDS is due to immorality in Kenya. She presents the Kenyan youth as hyperactive in their sexuality; bemoans the deficient morals and the pervasiveness of sexual excess among people living in Kenya. Just like Gitaa, Carolyne Adalla in *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* uses narrative to grieve over the effects of HIV/AIDS in Kenya. Through her protagonist, Catherine Njeri, she posits:

Mine is a human tragedy. Let me also add that it is in particular, the tragedy of youth and women in Africa who risk being exposed to the virus daily. Mine is not a selfish lament or cry for my shortened life and obliterated future. It is a cry for the masses that fall victim yearly, and a cry for those among us who stick to high risk behaviour. It is a cry of a nation which [is] defeated at war. (4)

The Æ narrator who is also the protagonist in this narrative signifies that the HIV/AIDS is a reality; a dilemma facing human beings. Perhaps Kenyan authors use hyperbolic reference of the disease with the hope that people will read HIV/AIDS narratives and as a result change their sexual behaviour so that they can protect themselves from infection.

The female protagonist in *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* contracts HIV and receives judgment as a villain. Her father rejects her and makes sure that his family does not interact with her. He ostracizes her because of her HIV status even though he is not justified to do so because his behaviour is punitive and discriminatory. Furthermore, he excommunicates her

from his family. Eventually, Lavina and her mother can only communicate secretly with each other. We are not surprised that Lavina experiences the dishonour that comes with HIV infection. Her diseased female self is plagued by her current condition, betrayal by her lover, ostracisation by her family and stigmatisation from friends. Sontag notes that "detaching guilt and shame from perspectives on this disease" (1) can be a major breakthrough. It is possible that sick people in a society die because of stigmatisation rather than the effects of the disease. Nevertheless, Gitaa dwells on the consequences of unfettered intimacy in the time of HIV/AIDS: desperation and suicidal tendencies but she reclaims her protagonist in a bid to reduce down stigma and discrimination.

On learning of her HIV positive status, Lavina takes leave and moves to Malindi where a close friend of hers, Lynne, and her husband, Tim Munge, the mayor of the town, welcome her in their residence. Lavina moves from Mombasa, a familiar territory, to Malindi, an unfamiliar one, in search of a place where she can experience peace without the anxiety occasioned by her new HIV positive identity. While in Mombasa, Lavina is "haunted by her predicament....[feels] desperately lonely" (2) hence her decision to escape from the town "to get away from all those knowing glances being cast at her" (2) and to avoid stigmatisation.

Lavina's attempt to seek direction and hope through counselling sessions does little to foster a peaceful coexistence with her HIV positive identity since both friends and foes point fingers at her. As a consequent, she contemplates suicide while visiting a psychiatrist, but the doctor comes back into the room before she attempts to jump from the eighth floor. Suicidal notions show that she is at the end of her retrospective assessment of her diseased female self. Longing for death is characterised by depths of despair in her diseased condition as she

experiences a sense of loss, guilt and deep feelings of betrayal from a society that attributes her HIV positive status to apparent decadent behaviour.

Coming face to face with the stigma that HIV/AIDS patients suffer prompts Lavina's movement from Mombasa where she is a subject of intimation and rumours from her fellow Africans who even try to avoid her. She is devastated and overwhelmed by the predicament of her HIV positive status. The omniscient narrator tells us that "She [feels] haunted by her predicament, which [is] turning out to be as oppressive as the humid coastal heat" (2). The author uses the imagery of humidity and heat to underpin Lavina's experience of intense emotions of horror, disgrace, and the fury engulfing her.

In Malindi, Lavina manages to conceal her identity for it is only the Munges who know her status and, therefore, charts her life by wearing a social mask, a facade. Everything about her becomes a farce, superficial and artificial as she tries to hide the pain tearing through to live with her new HIV positive status. The coastal archipelago provides her with the peace and solitude which are "bliss for her aching heart, a soothing balm for her hurting soul" (1) but before long she internalises desperation and contemplates suicide. Under such circumstances, she sees "the sea as a way of escape from her desperate dilemma" (1-2). The mental suffering that Lavina faces and her wish to die equates HIV/AIDS with death even though HIV/AIDS does not automatically lead to death in the contemporary society where medication is available and those infected lead normal lives.

Lavina's resoluteness to end her life is reduced by the wish to live. She says, "Is this what victims of circumstance who want to commit suicide feel at the last minute of life? This urge of wanting to live yet they are too far gone?" (2-3). The transient nature of life makes her to rescind her decision and hence embraces an identity that is ready to live in spite of the HIV positive

status. In the midst of stigmatisation and devastation, Gitaa turns around the heroine's plight by instilling hope in a hopeless situation through Lavina's new found love. The story is weaved in a dialogical relationship with the story of postcolonial Kenya where HIV/AIDS is prevalent. Furthermore, the geographical setting also influences the events in this narrative discourse. As Odhiambo observes, "Lavina's love affair is not just about interracial relationship; it is a commentary on how foreigners have and continue to change (negatively or positively) the character of the community at the coast of Kenya..." (*East African Standard Newspaper*. Nairobi: March 29, 2009). His statement alludes to the encounter between Africa and Europe, which is perceived as a disaster by many African authors, for instance, Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*.

Lavina is nearly destroyed when she contracts HIV. Giorgio, a European, extends to her a rare gesture of humanity by not only rescuing her from drowning, but also falls in love with her and thereby both of them initiate an interracial relationship. The ease with which both Lavina and Giorgio relate across racial lines shows that meaningful interaction is possible when people recognise their common humanity regardless of race.

Using a female personal narrative that is both semi-autobiographical and fictional, Gitaa's narrative partially outlines Lavina's life story with an air of authenticity that makes the narrative sound real. This is necessary because autobiographical writing gives way to self-assessment and self exposure which Gitaa exploits to construct meaning for individuals infected with the disease. She integrates the diseased female self subjectivity into a meaningful national narrative with Lavina and Giorgio as the central characters. Their romance forms part of the current literary tradition on HIV/AIDS in postcolonial Kenya. Kruger observes that both *Confessions of an AIDS Victim* and *Chira* depict "AIDS in postcolonial Kenya as a painful social experience that blurs

and shifts cultural values until the search for a new normative and narrative community becomes inevitable (108). *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* encodes the pain that people are subjected to on learning about their HIV/AIDS status.

Gitaa focuses on racial dialectics by projecting a love relationship that opens avenues for Lavina's moral and physical salvation. Therefore, the author reverses notions of disastrous intimacy that tends to define the encounter between Africans and Europeans in much of postcolonial literature. This becomes apparent in the juxtaposition of love and death that is metaphorically caused by HIV/AIDS, a diseased condition that the author uses to mediate Lavina's shift from death to the safety of love showered on her by Giorgio. John Peck observes that the journey of romance travels into "dangerous and violent places, including the dark world of the mind" (118). The romantic journey that Lavina traverses with Rawal is adventurous before she realised that he had infected her with the HIV virus. The realisation captures the tension between love and reality for it is through intimacy that Lavina contracts disease and hence the metaphorical bedevilling of romance as unsafe and vicious in the representation of HIV/AIDS.

However, the author reconceptualises romance as safe. This perspective of regarding the power of love beyond racial lines highlights the value of love and romance in daily life. Catherine Muhoma in her analysis of David Karanja's *The Girl was Mine* examines how the novel uses "romance" within the context of Kenya's everyday life (1). She explores men and masculinity as "a project of levelling the playing field of romantic fiction" (1). Unlike Muhoma, *Gitaa* does not portray men fighting for the love of a woman. She provides the ironic background against which interrogation of relations between women and men redefine HIV/AIDS in Kenya. Thus, it is paradoxical that Lavina contracts HIV infection from a man she perceives to be in love

with her and by the same fate, albeit ironically, receives a lifeline through another man whom she considers as genuinely in love with her.

The author locates the story in Malindi town, a preferred location for Italians where love relations between Africans and Italians are common. Gitaa uses an Italian, Giorgio, to change Lavina's life positively. His former girlfriend, Gabriella, views the love affair between the two as dishonest and castigates Lavina saying, "If you think that by sleeping with Giorgio he'll ask you to marry him and then he'll end up financing your business, you're wrong Madam sculptress" (111). These notions of immorality and economic exploitation inform interracial relationships whereby African women are viewed as morally loose and only have sex with European men for material gain. The confirmation of the prejudice governing interracial love relationships becomes apparent when Gabriella accuses Lavina of sleeping with Giorgio in order to get him to marry her for her own economic benefit. The implication that she is nothing more than a gold-digger, a little more than a prostitute, shocks, galls and hurts Lavina.

The author re-creates Lavina as a person of integrity who is not making a desperate move to win over Giorgio's love because of his wealth. If anything, the fact that Giorgio is a rich man bothers her, "Why did she always have the misfortune of getting entangled with tycoons of all sorts?" (28). The author poses this rhetorical question to portray Lavina as different from other African women. Her reflection on the implication of the love affair with Giorgio worries her for it is bound to attract criticism as a romantic encounter where she is merely interested in his riches. She considers this as unfortunate on her part since she is not after his money. However, a glimpse at her previous love relationship with Rawal, in a way, fails to convince us that money is not really a factor in her love life. We are, therefore, initially tempted to see her as a prostitute, as being no different from other African women who have love relations with European men merely

for economic achievements. Nevertheless, her concern that Giorgio is a tycoon, a condition that might jeopardise her love for him, makes us retract our harsh judgement on her moral record.

Apparently, it is Giorgio who is pursuing her and he appears desperate for her love. He vows to get her come what may: 'I'm going to find you Princess...I'm going to find you my African mermaid, [are] the thoughts going round and round Giorgio's head as he [watches Lavina]... fleeing...looking like an African goddess...' (11). His remarks place the usual marks of femininity, passivity, beauty and availability on the male gaze. Gitaa resorts to male stereotypes by focusing on the female protagonist's beauty: 'That body! That physique!...Had Greeks been thinking of such bodies when they named the goddess of the sea Neptune?' (6). Metaphorical reference to her as a 'goddess' and a heavenly body, 'Neptune,' with dazzling beauty, makes her appear exceptionally beautiful and her body becomes of central interest to Giorgio.

At first, Lavina lacks esteem and mistrusts Giorgio. Thus, she holds back her strong feelings of love and information on her sero status. Certainly, he is convinced there is something holding her back from him. He tries to pursue her for revelation and almost gives up. He becomes critical of her stance saying, 'it does not matter how safe or comfortable you make it, a cage is still a cage, a gilt-edged or not...it is time you moved out of it. Out of your comfort zone. Leave the past behind Lavina' (98). The author's aim is to demystify and revise HIV/AIDS perception, possibly change responses to its preoccupations as disaster associated with a death sentence. One reads authorial intrusion in Giorgio's words as Gitaa tries to negate stigmatisation in a society that empathises with the infected.

The articulation of the question of identity in the era of HIV/AIDS impacts on Lavina to either deny her diseased condition and hence continue suffering mentally or accept it and chart her life in the best circumstances available for her; release herself from the 'prison' that her HIV

status has confined her to. Despite the encouragement to lock up her sorrowful past in favour of the emancipation Giorgio offers to bring into her life, Lavina exercises caution. Her experience in love affairs taught her to do so, making Giorgio fail in his proposition. As far as she is concerned, telling the truth about her deep feelings of love for him is not the problem; the issue is admitting responsibility of her HIV positive status. She, therefore, opts to metaphorically remain caged than court freedom which is likely to entangle her bid for freedom.

Lavina's quest for identity makes her go through a self-reflexive exercise in regard to her current condition. Gitaa uses biblical allusion to emphasise the quest for female self and nation identity in spite of one's HIV and AIDS status. The title of the text, *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold*, is borrowed from Proverbs 17:3 which in the New International Version (NIV) Bible reads "The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the heart" (Kenneth Barker et al 1982). Silver and gold are refined to remove impurities while people's thoughts are polished up by the Lord. Even though there is really nothing Biblical in the plot, Gitaa intertwines the account with the problematic identity of the protagonist through Biblical allusion. She asserts the need for refinement of character in this age of HIV/AIDS through suggestion that confession is a precursor to the openness that ought to govern love relations. It is no wonder that Gitaa works:

to produce self-knowledge in line with authoritative discourses of truth. The individual is authenticated by the discourse of truth [she is] able or obliged to pronounce concerning [herself]. The truthful confession [is therefore] inscribed at the heart of the procedures of individualization by power. (Sabine Lucia Muller 131)

Confession in this narrative, therefore, functions as a way of making the heroine reflect on her HIV status through introspection.

Lavina's traumatic experience assumes immediacy and might that bind her and the writer, the reader and the text. This is because Lavina's contemplation to expose her HIV positive status marks the end of the suspense that the author is using to engage the reader in a mental dialogue as to whether or not Lavina is going to pluck the courage and confide in Giorgio. Thus, the act of confession accords both the protagonist and the reader a relief from the pent up feelings that the author manages to build to the climax not only in Lavina, but also in the reader. Gitaa creates an intersection between the discourse of truth and the subjectivity of the protagonist by highlighting the turmoil that hits her because of her HIV positive condition that almost destroys her frame of mind. She longs for death, but her incidental encounter with Giorgio, and the sudden love affair that develops between them makes her remember her favourite verse, Proverbs 17:3. Proverbs 17:3 which in the New International Version (NIV) Bible reads "The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the heart" (Kenneth Barker et al 1982). She wonders whether God is testing her and watching to see whether she will tell him about her sero condition.

The question of not confessing one's HIV/AIDS status therefore links the disease to the dangers of public exposure of an individual's infection, which may alienate the infected individual. Those infected with HIV are viewed as the "other" who endanger the health of the nation with defilement and consequently, Lavina's very thought of confession provokes a lot of questions: "Did she want to be silver or refined gold? Was this her private hell? A sort of perdition? Dare she let herself stay in the furnace? Would God come to her aid as He had for the Hebrew lads from Israel, Daniel" (97). Taking Lavina through a soul searching experience, the omniscient narrator poses rhetorical questions using the third person narrative to break the barrier that characterises lack of ease in communicating HIV and AIDS, which is perceived as a taboo subject, even in fiction. In distancing the infected person, the subject of HIV/AIDS becomes tacit

such that even though she wishes to confess her positive status, the power within her almost fails her. However, her quest for love and identity propels her to delve into her own psyche and amass the will and desire to reconstruct her individual self.

By incorporating the confessional mode Gitaa adopts narration as a literary device to negotiate an individual's dilemma in confronting HIV and AIDs in contemporary Kenya. She succeeds in using an ambivalent approach to narrate both the female self and the nation by naming the disease unlike Macgoye in *Chira*. She highlights the implications of literary representation of disease as she re-writes HIV/AIDS discourse to underscore the protagonist's determination to set right what is construed as wrong so as to overcome guilt and shame. Lavina acknowledges her diseased condition by making a confession, "I'm...so afraid [is] what she [means] to say, but couldn't. Instead she [says] it! It just slipped out! Head bent, she said: 'G. [Giorgio] I'm HIV positive.' She [whispers] softly yet urgently in a trembling voice" (99). Her confession is an affirmation of her diseased condition and in the process she achieves self-discovery. The first narrative voice "I" in her confession refers to her individual suffering from illness as an archetype of the other people living with HIV.

Lavina is dealing directly with a personal instance of infection with HIV, guilt and the dilemma of revealing her status to a loved one. Through confession, the metaphor of silence about the AIDS pandemic is reversed. Gitaa employs first person narrative in Lavina's confession to link her personal history with the broader social history of the disease. By so doing, she unearths the debilitating effects of disease on the person whose body it inhabits. The revelation engages the reader and the critic in her journey to self-realisation in a love relationship with a foreigner, who is to bear the burden of loving an infected person. Kruger observes that, "Confessing a life story implies the presence of an addressee, to whom an act of delinquency, of social

transgression, can be revealed, and hence invites...its possibility for semiprivate disclosureö (110). Her confession entails culpability and blameworthiness since it is evident she transgresses moral and social codes of behaviour and hence her preparedness to accept stigmatisation or marginalisation. Nevertheless, confession becomes necessary for Lavina to tell a story of experience in an effort to set the record straight as far as Giorgio is concerned.

The contradiction that comes with the confession of HIV positive persons is underlined by Kruger who observes: öBut victimhood inserts a contradictory moment into the confessional narrative: the confessor usually perpetrates a transgressive act while the victim is the recipient of discriminatory social behaviourö (110). Lavina's confession confirms her as a transgressor, while Giorgio becomes the recipient of the incongruous behaviour associated with those suffering from HIV/AIDS. Her confession in a way amounts to a declaration of guilt and an emotional appeal for atonement from Giorgio. He is ensnared in a web to either condemn or forgive her.

Using description, the author highlights the tension in Lavina's mind after confessing her HIV positive status: öThere [is] a deadly silence She [couches] her breath and her whole body [tenses] waiting for his response to her earth óshattering revelation. Or so she [thinks]. You [can hear] a pin drop if it [isn't] for the sound of the lapping waters from the beach belowö (99). Giorgio's response to her revelation shows he is shocked: öHis hand which [is] lifting her hair and lightly massaging her neck and nape, [stills] ... it [is] momentary shockí ö (99). Lavina's admission of her diseased condition puts him off balance for a moment before his passionate love for her comes out strongly so that öin the space of a heartbeat heí [regains] his composure, for he [continues] massaging her neck, and [lifting] her head so he [can] look into her eyes, his [are] ever so gentle...ö (99). The assurance that comes with his love for her is underscored by the words, öLavina. I'd never deliberately hurt youö (99). The implication that he is ready to protect

and care for her creates room in Lavina's heart to trust him as an extraordinary man whose love is exceptional in that he does not withdraw because of her HIV status.

Instead of denouncing her, Giorgio reiterates his love for Lavina and thereby identifies with her suffering, making her ascend to a privileged position in the society, which a HIV victim can hardly realise due to marginalisation and discrimination. Gitaa represents HIV/AIDS as a metaphor for 21st Century Kenya struggling against poverty and disease. HIV/AIDS is just one of the many diseases that are afflicting people in the midst of various types of cancers, diabetes, high blood pressure, pneumonia and tuberculosis. This list is not exhaustive for these are but a few of the many diseases affecting Kenyans. Thus, representation of illness is symbolic not only of an individual's body as sick, but a manifestation of the ill nation that threatens the collective well-being of the people living in it. Gitaa uses HIV/AIDS to underscore the need for Kenyans to rethink how they treat those who contract HIV and AIDS. She uses Giorgio and Lavina as a model case of concern and novelty in response to the epidemic, cajoling Kenyans to desist from the indifference and deliberate neglect that in most cases attend those infected with HIV and AIDS.

By revealing her HIV status to her supportive lover, Lavina breathes life into her shattered female self and thus reclaims her self. This is a culmination of her "secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration" (Fanon 169). Thus, she acquires a fulfilled identity that emerges in the interplay of confession and acceptance. Consequently, admission of her HIV status affords her "own means, a certain number of operations on [her] own [body], on [her] own [soul], on [her] own thoughts, on [her] own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform [herself], modify [herself], and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity..." (Muller 135). The implication is that Lavina

subverts the stigma imposed on her to assert her worthiness and protect herself against stigma and rejection not only by Giorgio but by the society. As a consequence, Lavina achieves Giorgio's recognition of her value, her beauty and his love for her even though she is infected with HIV. His gesture towards her becomes a performative process of helping her to acquire a positive identity. Through romantic discourse, the author represents a dialectical relationship between the individual and the nation in an effort to illuminate the complexity of the diseased female self and nationhood.

Lavina reveals to Giorgio that her self is diseased and thereby reconceptualises herself in a process in which a pre-constituted self is not revealed; instead the very practice of self-constitution is performed (Muller 135). She uses the confessional mode to make Giorgio appreciate her as a human being and defies the norm by treating an infected person as somebody whose life is of substance and he keeps his promise that he will not deliberately hurt her. Despite his passion for his work as a developer in Mombasa and the environs, he still makes time to be with her.

Marie Kruger underscores the usefulness of confession when she says that, "any verbal expression of identity already intertwines narrative and identity by representing an individual subjectivity, a life story. Narratives are a way of making sense out of seemingly incoherent experiences, and even the lived life is a storied life" (110). *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* outlines Lavina's search for identity through narration of the self that the author intertwines with the construction of HIV/AIDS as a pandemic. Lavina's subjugation to her HIV positive status is highlighted in a narrative account that delves into the challenges she faces as she charts her life in the nation. Her acceptance and disclosure of her status paves way for reducing her pain, fear, shame and anger caused by her diseased condition. Thus, she is able to foster a love

relationship for she gets rid of guilt that is weighing down on her heart. Giorgio offers hope to her excluded and dejected self. He considers her life worth saving and protecting. He makes a difference in her life, while her strong personality and unconquerable spirit also guard her against ultimate despair.

HIV/AIDS is a painful experience that threatens not only Lavina's physical and social identity, but also the entire Kenya for if one is not infected he/she is affected. Through the act of writing, the author allows Lavina to become conscious of her past which comes into play to alter her present. By incorporating the confessional mode, Gitaa accords Lavina an opportunity to testify about her HIV status and thereby gives Giorgio an opening to reconstruct Lavina and the Kenyan nation. The author manages to do this by using interracial discourse, in which both individual and the nation are salvaged by a foreigner. In so doing, the author reclaims Lavina's and Kenya's social identity by writing her traumatised self back into a romantic discourse that alters the conceptualisation of HIV/AIDS as synonymous with death in contemporary Kenya.

Lavina's HIV status does not frighten Giorgio from cultivating a strong relationship that culminates into:

the re-birth, figuratively, of Lavina [Kenya], ... rescued by... Giorgio... the encounter leads to an enduring love between the two ó a black woman driven to the doorsteps of self-annihilation and a white man desirous of a challenge to make the best out of life.

(Odhiambo, 2009)

The anxiety that comes with her illness presents the best test of their friendship, but true love guards the relationship against stigma and alienation. Giorgio reiterates his love for her and

makes her future worth looking forward to. He validates his love for her by contemplating to marry her with the hope that they might turn into a discordant couple.

A declaration of Lavina's HIV positive condition acquires greater urgency for she reverses the culture of silence that dominates the majority of HIV/AIDS discourses. Giorgio's claim of her worthiness although she is infected, makes her voice her concern about what would happen when she gets full blown AIDS for she fears that he might abandon her. His assurance that he is willing to spend 5 million shillings a month on [her] medication and anti-retroviral (127) barely convinces her. Underlying her love with Giorgio is fear that he might desert her and thereby make her relive the pain of failed romance. Even though creating awareness, counselling, and increasing the opportunities for contact with people living with HIV/AIDS is an on-going process in the 21st Century, silence and discrimination still exists.

The encounter between Lavina and Tony attests to this. The two are acquainted with each other for they both work at Giorgio's construction sites. Tony makes Lavina a subject of innuendo and rumours saying 'you left some very nasty rumours circulating back in Mombasa about your immune system' (140). To be infected with HIV/AIDS marks the antithesis of what is said to be good and morally acceptable and hence:

Fear of sexuality is the new, disease-sponsored register of the universe of fear in which everyone now lives....the fear of polluting people that AIDS anxiety inevitably communicates....fear of contaminated blood, sexual fluid is itself the bearer of contamination. These fluids are potentially lethal. (Sontag 161)

Tony resorts to slander and character assassination as he adopts condescending behaviour towards Lavina and becomes callous in a desperate effort to censure her sexuality. His failure to be sympathetic and accommodating to those living with HIV/ AIDS is symbolic of the

superficial nature of those who adopt a stigmatising attitude towards HIV/AIDS victims and leads to systematic negation of the other and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity (Frantz Fanon 200). Through acceptance, the self is protected and the notion of one's worthiness in the nation is affirmed and thus individuals who contract HIV not only reflect on their status privately, but also publicly; and hence the dialectic relationship between the nation and the diseased.

Illness becomes a test of friendship between Tony and Lavina. Her encounter with him makes her feel estranged. In the words of Fanon "the living haunt of contradictions which run the risk of becoming insurmountable" (175). The way Tony treats Lavina makes her pain too great to deal with successfully. The insensitivity of Tony's conduct is glaring with regard to the injuries he inflicts on her through stigmatisation. Although she does not deny her HIV positive status, she becomes desolate. Loneliness creeps in terribly and it becomes a harbinger of death as evidenced by her outburst, "...you don't know the pain that courses through me every day as I think of my life, ebbing away, you don't know half of it, I know I am going to die..." (212). The use of the second person voice succeeds in making the HIV/AIDS narrative interactive. It becomes clear that casting a slur on infected persons more often than not negates their lives.

Affront becomes more dangerous than the infirmity whereby charting their life is cruelly tested and they succumb to the horror of living with the disease. However, this only happens when the persons living with HIV and AIDS accept their marginalised status, a phenomenon that many of them learn to denounce by:

imagining themselves as worthy and opening up spaces for individual action...
[amplifying] their ability to protect themselves against stigma and rejection...

[building] new identities that redefine their positions in society and thus seek the transformation of overall social structure. (Muriungi 132)

This means that HIV and AIDS victims reconceptualise themselves either in reality or imagination so as to reclaim both their individual and national identity.

Tony scorns Lavina for her HIV/AIDS status by insinuating that she is having a relationship with Giorgio because he is a tycoon. His belief that she is playing innocent and thus likely to infect unsuspecting others makes him accuse her of being a latter-day Delilah. This Biblical allusion depicts Lavina as a schemer, a conniving and deceitful woman. Furthermore, he paints her as a prostitute who is 'shamelessly peddling [her] body to the highest bidder...' (140). The inference on her questionable morals and stigma about her HIV positive status upset her, but she makes a confession to Tony that 'the rumours circulating back in Mombasa about [her] immune system!' (140) are true. She categorically tells him 'Well, they aren't rumours, Tony, and for your information, Giorgio loves me all the same' (140). At this juncture, Lavina openly comes face to face with the question of how she is to handle the stigmatisation and marginalisation that face those infected with HIV and AIDS. Her initial reaction is confirmation of her HIV positive status, an indication that she embraces her new identity and provides agency for stigmatised and marginalised people.

It surprises Tony that Giorgio can love Lavina in spite of her HIV status. He makes a ruthless, harsh and vindictive summary of Lavina in an attempt to slander:

I just don't know how anyone can love you, leave alone trusting your motives, behaving as you are, as though you never did a wrong in your life. I don't trust that beautiful face of yours or that equally majestic body. I don't, most especially, trust your morals. I have to

talk to Giorgio and give him a piece of my mind; he must be out of his Italian head for once! (140)

Since HIV/AIDS is in most cases sexually transmitted, intimate relationships are feared as possible sites of infection and hence the moral stigma that attends the disease.

As a consequence, Tony conceptualises Lavina's diseased body as the 'other' and equates it with HIV/AIDS and thus considers any man who knowingly engages in a love relationship with her diseased body as mad. Tony's attitude is symbolic of how HIV/AIDS is perceived and how the contemporary society treats people who are infected.

The HIV/AIDS epidemiology suggests a fearful other disease, other than diabetes, pneumonia and blood pressure because of the fact that moral weakness is deemed to be the cause of its spread. Gitaa makes Lavina's body a discursive site for discourses about HIV/AIDS and the behaviour surrounding sexuality. The linking of sex and danger is not a new phenomenon since Adalla also closely links the disease to sexual immorality. It is no wonder then that Tony perceives Lavina's body as a symbol of moral contamination that endangers those not yet infected.

HIV/AIDS is socially constructed as an illness that poses danger to those who are healthy and hence the discriminatory attempts to exclude those who are sick because of fear that they may contaminate those who are well. The diseased part of the nation becomes visible through the self-righteous stance that those who are healthy adopt in their interaction with those infected with HIV/AIDS. With the advent of HIV/AIDS even healthy people who have any relations with the physically sick suffer exclusion and it becomes a challenge to manage the situation because those who are neither infected nor affected 'hover around like scavenger vultures' (143). The imagery of a vulture points at the predatory nature of the healthy people living in the nation; their

eagerness to negate the identity of those who are sick and those who associate with the sick is an attempt to dissociate themselves from the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The stigma and prejudice surrounding those who are infected is also highlighted by Adalla when she says:

í the scorn with which people treat the AIDS victims ó as though they are suffering from leprosy. All their friends disappear from the scene, and nobody wants to associate [with] the victimí Have you stopped to ask yourself how lonely these people get?...donø [they] pass for human beings deserving love, attention and companyí or have [they] degenerated so much as to drop the human status. (51)

Treating HIV/AIDS victims scornfully and alienating them as outcasts is apparent in Tonyø's insensitive conduct towards Lavina which prompts Giorgio's concern for rethinking of the harmful ways in which persons with HIV/AIDS are treated. He asks, øWhen are your people going to learn and discard this notion about HIV and AIDS? When are you going to stop treating your very own who are infected and affected like they are pariahs and with contempt while at it?ö (143). This is authorial intrusion through which Gitaa indicts the rejection of those suffering from HIV/AIDS as a common occurrence in contemporary Kenya. Giorgio gains credence as one of those people struggling to revise the negative meaning given to HIV/AIDS and individuals infected with the disease.

Representing HIV/AIDS in fiction provides an alternative forum to help people to understand the disease in regard to the multidisciplinary approach of dealing with the illness. Lavina not only relies on modern medicine, but also on substitute treatment as she searches for a cure of this ailment that is more than just a medical condition. It becomes clear that øPlacing [AIDS] entirely in the hands of the medical authorities is the simplest way of asking the world to

commit genocide (Adalla 79). Underpinning the need for relevant medication, Gitaa makes the disease acquire greater impact in socio-cultural and family spheres. When Giorgio visits Lavina's parents to pay the bride price, the entire village gathers at her place to witness the spectacle of a white man wanting to marry a girl who is HIV positive. One of the elders openly asks Giorgio, "my son, what do you intend to do about this AIDS thing troubling our daughter here?" (237). His answer that he is going to spend as much money as may be required to ensure that she is cured points to the fact that conventional medicine for the treatment of HIV/AIDS is expensive and unaffordable for most people in a poor nation like Kenya.

The elders disregard the fact that Giorgio is a rich man and they advise him to "see one Lemayan for some herbs that cure AIDS" (237). Treatment for those infected with HIV/AIDS is a concern not only in the urban, but also in the rural setting. Whereas conventional medicine is gaining preference in the urban areas, people living in the country side resort to herbal medicine which is considered cheap, readily available and highly effective in the treatment of the disease.

Gitaa uses her narrative to shape the dialogical relation between the individual and the nation. The construction and significance of HIV/AIDS in this text assumes a new dimension when Giorgio, though HIV negative accords love and continuity of life to Lavina, who is HIV positive, and thereby shapes the contemporary society's response to those living with the illness. Although she is "other" than those not infected, she realises her selfhood when the relationship culminates in marriage. For Gitaa, the discourse of romance, love and marriage presents her with an opportunity to provide agency for women in Kenya. She appropriates the discourse of romance and employs it to depict changes of attitude towards those infected with HIV. The diseased female self in *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* acquires greater meaning and agency in the 21st Century.

Giorgio's determination to claim Lavina as his marriage partner moves a step further when he visits her family in Kericho. Lavina's father reconciles with his daughter. He blames his shunning of his HIV positive daughter on senility. To him Giorgio is "the liberal *Mzungu* who wants to save [his] girl's life two-fold, taking it that she's HIV positive, and marry her!" (233). The old man assigns Giorgio a messianic position. He views Giorgio as the saviour who intercepts a bullet aimed at his daughter during a bank robbery, and thereby saves her. He now contemplates marrying her even though she is ill. Furthermore, he accords all due respect to her African traditions. Her cousins and uncles myopically view him, a white man, as rich and ask for a hefty bride wealth simply based on "the fact that in real life most intimate relationships are actually pegged on the man's material worth; or else how do we continue to justify the demand for bride-wealth in Africa?" (Odhiambo 2009). Bride price is an old African tradition in which the goods given do not amount to buying and selling since bride wealth is given for compensation for the bride's rearing and as a seal for agreement by which a woman bears children for a man.

Gitaa indicts Lavina's relatives for their short-sightedness: asking for too much money in bride-price merely because their daughter is marrying a white man. In spite of that, Giorgio crowns his bid to accomplish his saviour role by walking Lavina, a HIV positive bride, down the aisle. By so doing, their romance becomes a representation of a new narrative "of everyday life, and a genuine, if not easy, commitment to the democratisation of relationships" (Weeks 244). This is a mark of transformative change that is taking place "in the nooks and crannies of everyday life" (Weeks 244).

Giorgio and Lavina get married in a colourful ceremony and hence step into a beautiful and splendid era of their lives through marriage. The author introduces the iconography of the

family as needing to be retained despite the linking of HIV/AIDS history with sexuality. This becomes necessary because:

When we think of sexuality, we think of a number of things. We think of reproduction, which has traditionally been seen as the main justification of sexual activity...we think of relationships, of which marriage is the socially sanctioned... we think of erotic activities and of fantasy, of intimacy and warmth, of love and pleasure. We relate it to our sense of self and to our collective belongings, to identity, personal and political.

But we also think of sin and danger, violence and disease. (Weeks 163)

Connecting sexuality to diversity of meaning lifts the usual meaning that embeds sexuality to the danger of infection. Marriage is an age long institution which traditionalists and churches that support heterosexual relations still consider as pure and most fulfilling. Lavina and Giorgio hope to cultivate fulfilment in marriage and thus as far as they are concerned McClintock says in *Imperial Leather*, "marriage is a question of mutual, mental, spiritual and erotic fulfilment" (286). The advance of HIV/AIDS threatens the family unit because some people are wary of any sexual relations because they fear contracting the disease. The marriage between Giorgio and Lavina serves as an intervention and hence marriage acquires greater meaning and agency in Kenya in the 21st Century in the midst of the pervasiveness of HIV/AIDS.

The couple looks forward to parenthood in spite of Lavina's HIV status. The couple is careful not to infect Giorgio and also their children. This is obligatory, for as Jeffrey Weeks observes, "We live under the hegemony of epidemic, requiring us to avoid risk" (243). This call to avoid infection is extended not only to the individuals, but also the Kenyan nation. However, there is need to live positively, HIV positive status notwithstanding.

Lavina and Giorgio use combined therapy of modern and herbal medication to alleviate the threat of infection to both father and child. Lavina backtracks from taking modern medicine and settles for alternative medicine which works better than conventional medication. While attending prenatal clinic, the doctor diagnoses her as HIV negative, courtesy of unconventional remedy. He is beside himself with joy as he reports to a fellow doctor: "This patient I've been handling has actually turned negative! She's been on some herbs" (256). This backwards turn to traditional medical practices seeks to legitimise the much-maligned indigenous knowledge. He reckons there is at long last a breakthrough in the treatment of HIV/AIDS, particularly with the birth of their HIV negative twins.

Presenting both modern and herbal medicine as effective in the cure of HIV/AIDS, Gitaa initiates and directs public discussion on the best medical practices to deal with the disease. She uses illness narrative to subvert the ideology of imminent end imposed on those suffering from the disease and thereby reverses the proposition that contracting of HIV/AIDS equals to death. Presenting the disease as curable, Gitaa amplifies the possibility of making people living in the 21st Century to accept HIV/AIDS as any other disease that can be controlled through medication and hence people's perception of the disease as a threat on the society is reversed.

Through romance, love, marriage and parenthood, Gitaa manages to demystify the disease, but she does not offer answers to the questions of how the society can guard itself against the epidemic? Her disposition that people contract HIV/AIDS because of being morally degenerate only explains one way of contracting the disease. There are other modes of infection that are not sexually related for instance contaminated blood and syringes and mother to child infection (peri-natal). Nevertheless, Gitaa, by portraying HIV/AIDS as a disease that is manageable just like diabetes or high blood pressure revolutionises it.

Furthermore, she portrays the possibility of a cure of HIV/AIDS such that it will no longer be a national disaster.

Gitaa proposes the use of condoms as a method to control the spread of HIV/AIDS. The people living in postcolonial Kenya are receptive to the use of condoms even though some religious organisations advocate for abstinence, instead. This is because they consider use of condoms as playing a part in encouraging immoral behaviour both among adolescents and adults. In addition, there are fears that familiarity among sexual partners may encourage them to stop using condoms and hence expose themselves to the possibility of contracting HIV/AIDS.

In *The Last Plague*, Janet Juma, a government health worker advocates the use of condom, a subject regarded as taboo, in the midst of ignorance and denial. Condoms are portrayed as offering hope in a mind-numbing situation in the struggle against spread of the disease. To control the spread of HIV/AIDS Kenyans should rethink gender social relations because gendered power relationships define romance, love, sexuality and marriage. This is because patriarchal social order still impacts on people living in Kenya and excludes a majority of women from making decisions. As a result, their involvement in discussions on issues to do with HIV/ADS is marginal.

Through narration the author fictionalises an identity that transcends the fragmentary female self and acquires a fulfilled self-identity that she gradually inscribes in the course of narration. The fictitious authority that Gitaa assumes depicts the search for an alternative identity as relying on the support given to those infected as part and parcel of postcolonial

Kenya. In *Imperial Leather*, McClintock points out that identity is experienced as communal, dynamic and shifting, rather than fractured, immobile and solitary. The borders of self are permeable and constantly open to historical change (317). Gitaa aims at portraying a new Kenya that is inhabited by people who understand the social and individual trauma surrounding those infected. Her hope is that people will stop to view those infected with HIV/AIDS as other than themselves. The author's contention is that extending love and understanding in addition to medical care will help those infected to regain health and affirmation as part and parcel of the people living in the 21st Century Kenya.

The author uses the power of narration to accord Lavina a new identity that is HIV/AIDS free. Lavina's HIV positive status infection is presented as temporary and thus just like silver and gold, she is purified through treatment that eradicates any traces of the virus in her body. Her pain and suffering authenticates the observation of the omniscient narrator that Lavina and Giorgio [have] indeed been put on the crucible and become refined silver and through the raging furnace to become fine gold (258). They experience a catharsis, a purging of the emotions of guilt and shame. Lavina's experience as the diseased female self is effectively used to designate the writer's ideological position that there is hope for a cure for those women as well as men who are infected.

The metaphorical reference to the suffering of Lavina and Giorgio as a refinery is meant to show that the war against HIV/AIDS stigmatisation and marginalisation is not going to be won easily. Making HIV/AIDS key in her narration, Gitaa reinforces her own perspective on the disease and succeeds in demystifying it. She achieves this by invoking the past and new meaning of HIV/AIDS to (re)conceptualise it in the 21st Century Kenya. Her prophetic words 'I believe that a cure for HIV/AIDS won't elude doctors for too long' (235)

raise hope that with more research there is a possibility of cure. She uses her narrative to shape the dialogical relation between the individual and state as she successfully refigures the HIV/AIDS epidemic and updates it to the 21st Century as curable.

3.4 Disease and National Subjectivity

Inasmuch as dealing with disease is one of the challenges facing 21st Century Kenya, illness narratives inevitably move from portrayal of sickness to the effects of the disease among the general population. Thus, Gitaa and Ogola take up the responsibility to shape the social and the moral values of their society by depicting experiences and responses in regard to HIV/AIDS. Through the use of character and characterisation Gitaa and Ogola sensitise the society on the need for care and support for the less fortunate, especially the poor and the disease. Gitaa points out that Lavina wants to establish a HIV/AIDS foundation to cater for orphans who are in most cases abandoned by their families. On the other hand, Ogola portrays Imani and Igana dealing with the social problems associated with HIV/AIDS pandemic for instance shelter, food and education. Thus, Gitaa and Ogola go beyond the evocation of the disease to allude to the effects of illness on the society at large. Lack of proper medication and unaffordable cost for antiretroviral medication has led to death of parents. They leave behind orphans whose needs for care are not sustainable in terms of food, accommodation and education.

Ogola addresses the emergent social responsibilities towards children orphaned by HIV/AIDS in *Place of Destiny*. Through the protagonist's daughter, Imani Yoga Mwaghera and Igana Mago, a medical doctor, she projects the need to care for the less fortunate. Thus, the social and psychological effects of HIV/AIDS are felt by the entire community. Even those who are not infected with the disease realise what it entails to live in a nation whose people are facing the detrimental effects of HIV/AIDS. Philosophically, Ogola rationalises suffering when she says, òin

a sense suffering is the other hidden face of human conditions, the face that actually humanises us. But suffering that can be alleviated, should beö (130). She concretizes thoughts on the need to offer help when we can and alter what can be altered. She designates postcolonial Kenya as having majority of people wallowing in poverty: beggars, hawkers and street children.

The situation becomes dreary with the advent of HIV/AIDS and Ogola indicts a nation that does little to alleviate the problems affecting the poor in society. This is because it appears unable or unconcerned with the plight of the poor especially in the urban areas where poverty is seen as an assault on ðthe human person in his [her] very humanityö (88). This is the background against which Gitaa, just like Ogola, urges individuals and institutions to care for HIV/AIDS orphans through Igana Mago who has grown up in an orphanage.

To give back to a community that raises him when his mother is killed, Mago sets up a school which hosts children orphaned by AIDS or little children whose parents are too sick to provide for them. Imani teaches at the school where she and Mago play a vital role in alleviating the children's suffering. Although Imani qualifies to take a course at the Faculty of Engineering, she chooses to join the Faculty of Education because her passion is to ðteach children the wonders of science and logic of mathematicsö (81). She consciously takes teaching as a career, despite the notions of poverty that associated with the teaching profession. We are therefore not surprised when she performs charity work at the orphan school both as a teacher and a social worker.

Poverty is portrayed as dehumanising, especially, in the urban population. Ogola observes that ðurban poverty is a public and acutely disturbing phenomenon, an open sewer draining from the side of a humanity which prides itself on the wonders of its science and technological achievementö (88). In the villages, she reckons, life is not as challenging economically as in towns. Imani is exposed to the sad status of the postcolonial urban society where science and

technology has not done much to alleviate the suffering of the poor. She discovers the grey areas in the 21st Century Kenya when Mago takes her to the orphan school. It becomes apparent that the poor are the *‘other’* in the nation; the rich are the *‘self’*. The rich, Ogola notes, do not hesitate to use billions of shillings to protect themselves from real or imagined enemies, but do not see the need to reserve funds for the poor. She views the poor as *‘the dregs of the earth’* (89) who live in slums for instance, Korogocho, Mathare and Kibera while the rich reside in upmarket estates.

Ogola challenges people to support the poor for *‘to do the little that can be done is never a small thing’* (118). This is authorial intrusion that depicts the author’s personal appeal to individuals to come out to alleviate poverty and suffering. While she lived, she set the precedent as a medical director of Cottolengo Hospice for HIV and AIDS orphans. She played a key role in establishing the SOS HIV/AIDS clinic. Through narration, she invites others to be charitable and underscores the need for goodwill in recognition of the fact that it is not enough to give out condoms, it is of paramount importance to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and provide basic education. Her maxim is, *‘Just because you cannot help everybody does not mean you cannot at least help someone’* (128). This is the spirit that Imani enhances as she works at the orphan school.

The school provides basic education for five hundred slum children and boarding facilities for about three hundred mostly orphaned by AIDS. Imani does not become accustomed to the smell in the slums but she reckons that *‘the whole exercise turns out to be salubrious’* (123). She grows to love these unfortunate children for whom she goes an extra mile to guard against sexual abuse. She realises the vulnerability of the slum girls. With the help of other teachers, she turns one of the classrooms into a hostel for girls. The girls have *‘no reasonably safe place to go to, to escape the perverts of molesters at home or in the neighbourhood’* (123). Imani takes it upon

herself to provide mattresses and blankets for them so that she can accommodate them at the school.

The plight of the girl child in the slums is disheartening, a good example being an eight year old girl, Cera. She is repeatedly and habitually abused and molested by her mother's many lovers and has contracted sexually transmitted infections. Imani salvages her from sexual abuse before she contracts HIV/AIDS but she is already traumatised psychologically. Cera becomes a prototype of the other children who have to go through life in a most difficult manner.

Despite her effort, Imani is dissatisfied with the children's living conditions and the fact that many others from the streets cannot be accommodated because she has no space. In her zeal to uplift the social status of as many orphans as possible, she appeals to well-wishers to help her put up a bigger school and a hostel. She prioritises the predicament of the girl child who is more vulnerable in the gender power relations. She fears that lack of support may prompt them to turn to child prostitution. Unlike other people who just grumble about the menace of street children, Imani crusades for funds to help them. She reckons that she cannot enjoy peace while other human beings are suffering. To Imani, street children are not just a pile of homeless boys and girls, but human beings with names. She indicts 21st Century Kenya for failing to adequately address the plight of street children, many of them HIV/AIDS orphans.

Gitaa makes important interventions in the representation and reinterpretation of HIV/AIDS. Gitaa's narrative gains relevance for reversing the tension and the stigma surrounding those infected with HIV/AIDS by introducing the possibility of reversing discrimination in regard to the disease. Her narrative discourse is an exploratory moral quest for identity. It calls for a self-reflection for those who are infected as they attempt to realise self and national identity through self-knowledge and acceptance. She links aesthetic and moral

representation of HIV/AIDS to capture new forms of female self-expression and emancipation from disease. She employs romance to unravel HIV/AIDS as a reality in Kenya. In this sense, her writing becomes part of a painstaking practice that uses romance narrative to portray the predicament of Kenya as a diseased nation and the people living in it.

Gitaa uses a contemporary romance narrative to interrogate authentic social environment in relation to HIV/AIDS and makes important inroads in the representation of actual circumstances of the disease. The writer adopts textual romance as a literary scheme to negotiate the meanings and practices that surround HIV/AIDS in Kenya in an effort to alleviate stigmatisation of people who have HIV/AIDS. In addition she depicts the need to examine alternative modes of treatment besides conventional medication. Furthermore she highlights moral panic about the HIV/AIDS as she renders the narrative through the eyes of an omniscient narrator. In so doing, the author is detached from the narrative account such that the narrative assumes objectivity even when Gitaa is describing intense emotional situations and events. By masking her presence, the writer becomes superficially invisible and thereby inculcates authenticity in her narration.

By distancing herself from the narrative, the author makes an objective representation of illness without influencing the reader's opinion by presenting Amor as a character and the narrating self. This explains the few instances of authorial intrusion in the novel. The writer manages to deal objectively with the negative constructions of disease. In addition, the narrative expresses new meaning to pandemic diseases such that the narrative becomes prescriptive in nature and envisions a nation that overcomes the disaster associated with HIV/AIDS. She depicts the protagonist as an icon of suffering but reimagines her through marriage. This makes Lavina's

body a site for women's contribution to a disease-free nation. Consequently, the female self acquires wholeness and thus Gitaa succeeds in dismantling the fragmented diseased female self.

3.5 Conclusion

The examination of textual representation of both cancer and HIV/AIDS demonstrates the writers' agency for the diseased and provides an insight into the national contexts of these diseases. The realities of these illnesses in 21st Century Kenya as told in the novels under study cannot be ignored. The traumatic nature and subjective aspects of these diseases define the issues surrounding disease especially in regard to diagnosis, control, treatment and affirmation or negation of the diseased self as part of the society. Cancer is viewed as an ailment that is curable if diagnosed early enough and hence victims are blamed for presenting themselves for screening when it is too late. On the other hand, HIV/AIDS is regarded as being transmitted mostly through sexual intercourse and hence attracts moral stigma. In both instances, therefore, individuals are perceived as being responsible for their sickness, a phenomenon that compounds the way the society deals with the victims.

By writing about the lives of the sick at each and every stage of their narration, the writers have succeeded in documenting illnesses that are considered as pestilence in the nation while at the same time explaining the incidence of the diseases from the authors' points of view. The women writers portray dialogic formation of meaning between the diseased and the nation. In so doing, the writers institute agency with regard to disease and make a significant contribution to show the physical and psychological effects of terminal diseases on the female selves. The focus of this chapter has been two major diseases that are shown to curtail the development of the female self-identity even though the diseased individuals are affirmed as important to Kenya and its people. The next chapter interrogates the question of the female self and national identity

within the socio-cultural and socio-political spheres in regard to interactions of patriarchy, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and social class.

CHAPTER FOUR
WRITING THE FEMALE SELF IN (TO) SOCIO-CULTURAL AND
SOCIO-POLITICAL SPHERES

4.1 Introduction

The discussion in this chapter focuses on Wambui Githiora's *Wanjira* and Muthoni Garland's *Halfway between Nairobi and Dundori*. The texts highlight the negative socio-cultural and socio-political environments that make the nation assume diseased characteristics metaphorically within the interactions of ethnicity, sexuality, gender, social and political class. These factors, as demonstrated later in this chapter, disallow women to write themselves into a nation's social and political spheres. The focus of this chapter is on the nation as primarily and fundamentally affecting women's identification in a discussion that depicts consciousness or choice as the criterion of self and national identity. The nation affects women in the midst of the complex and multiple ways in which women define and redefine themselves as members of nation in as far as socio-cultural and socio-political cultures are concerned.

Culture, according to Merriam Webster Learner's Dictionary, refers to beliefs, customs of a particular society while politics refers to activities that relate to influencing the actions of a government. The self inquiry about who a woman is in this chapter further interrogates the development of the female self in women writings. To understand the socio-cultural and socio-political grounds on which the distinction between the two terms is formulated in Githiora's *Wanjira* and Garland's *Halfway between Nairobi and Dundori*.

An examination of these two women's writings is aimed at trying to fill the gap resulting from the lack of a particularly female position from male writers on nationalist issues with regard to socio-cultural and socio-political spheres that women occupy. Women's opinion on national

issues is evaluated within the interactions of family, politics, socio-economic, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and education. All these factors portray women in complex and multiple ways in the development of their individual and national identity. Boehmer views women's writings as "occupying an enabling position, from which to articulate selfhood [and nationhood]" (220). She also observes that women's writings, because of the "fascinating ways in which their writing addressed, redressed, and distressed the historical legacy of compounded oppression and survival that it has become almost emblematic of postcolonial writing as a category" (220). In other words, women's writings articulate their histories of struggle and survival within the postcolonial nation.

4.2 Female Search for Identity in the Socio-Cultural Environment

This section examines *Wanjira* as a narrative in the quest for identity in socio-cultural and socio-political spheres with education occupying a central role in both. Before embarking on an interrogation of this text, there is need for a brief discussion pointing out the key concerns of the book. *Wanjira* is the title and also the name of the heroine in the narrative who is born in Kenya; a non-voluntary community in which she is nurtured. Wanjira is born in the Kikuyu community as well as into the Kenyan nation involuntarily and she assumes her identity individually and collectively with the other ethnic communities living in Kenya.

The heroine is searching for identity in regard to gender, education and ethnic group as she searches for both self and national identity within the historical context of Kenya. It is worth noting that Githiora uses both diary and journal entries to depict the protagonist's personal and national articulation of the self. These two forms of writing are useful in *Wanjira* because a diary, being a private genre, allows for self-examination and when the information is directed to the public, becomes a mode of self-revelation. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson note that the diary is

As a form of periodic life writing, the diary records daily in accounts and observations of emotional responses; the diarist's voice takes on a recognisable narrative of persona (193). Thus, the diary is useful in the construction of the self by Wanjira who, through diary entries reveals her emotional responses to her experience in the nation. The diary is regarded as different from the journal because the journal tends to be more [of] a public record and thus less intimate than a diary (Smith 193). A diary reveals personal details while a journal on the other hand is a form of writing that records events and occurrences...A chronicle of public record (Smith 196). Githiora uses the journal to make public the nation's experiences. However, the author's reference to italicised and capitalised sections of her narrative as journal entries is confusing because she does not draw a clear line between a diary and a journal. For the purpose of this study, what Wanjira scribbles as a record of her individual experiences at the university is regarded as diary entry, while reflections, reactions to, and observations on certain national experiences are treated as journal entries.

Investigation of the protagonist's socio-cultural sphere begins with her education. When we first meet Wanjira she is preparing to join the university as we learn from her diary entry: *I'll never forget this month's events! September 1976 will always have a special place in my heart. The month I complete two decades on this earth! The month I set out on my own for life as an adult. 1976!! Is the year I will [realise] my life-long dream!* (3). From this diary entry, we learn that in September 1976, Wanjira turned twenty years old, a young adult expected to chart her own life responsibly. The year also has specific meaning in her life since she joins the university to pursue higher education.

The university is depicted as a socio-cultural institution where Wanjira's age mates are coming of age after independence and they are exposed to a number of privileges among them

government scholarship. In addition, university students automatically receive allowances for books, clothing and other living expenses in the form of a subsidised loan popularly referred to as *õboomö*. Wanjira's father observes that the *õgeneration of uhuruö* (3) is coming of age and has to make a difference in the imagined nation, Kenya. He says:

In the olden days young men and women came of age in publicly witnessed and much celebrated circumcision ceremonies, but that was gone, and the completion of secondary school was a modern exit point for the young. Now her generation had reached its point of exit from its early youth and was entering the final preparation stage. But for now the future readers waited patiently to file by the university employees to sign forms to obtain their identity cards. (5)

The author uses past tense in the text cited above as an indication of a search backwards in an effort to discover the evolution of Wanjira as a woman. As one of the children growing up in postcolonial Kenya, Wanjira assumes a new identity that is not prescribed by traditional rituals such as female circumcision.

With the advent of education, initiation as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood is no longer the only way of transiting between ages or generations. Her ability to carve a place for herself in the scholarly world makes Wanjira reflect on education as valuable to a woman:

To be a university woman, to be meeting many new and bright people, to be one of the chosen few, for that was what being at the university really meant. To have all her expenses met, to have a safe and clean place to live in all because she had been blessed with the ability to do her lessons well, because she had been born into a family that could send her to school, and ensure her continued success. (61)

Wanjira is happy with the government for subsidising her university education in addition to offering her a loan for upkeep. The author underscores the fact that education for girls is not an obvious opportunity in Kenya in the 21st Century where majority of people still consider marriage as the best thing that can happen to a woman. Wanjira observes:

Don't you think it is strange that we are being encouraged to study hard, pass our examinations, and help build Kenya, and at the same time being told we will be ugly, and unmarriageable if we do exactly what our parents and teachers want. í Such talks made [her] sad and confused, but she had held to her dream of making it to the campus, and there she was! (9-10)

There is fear that if girls get education, they may not get married. However, Wanjira studies hard in a bid to join the university.

At the university, Wanjira almost records her daily experiences and hence her diary entries provide answers to the following questions: Who is she? How has she become who she is? What may she become in future? These questions are concerned with her life in the past, present and future. The questions of who she is and how she has become who she is, prompt her to make this entry: 'I have become someone else. I no longer [recognise] myself. Things frighten me, and I don't know why. I must do something. I must begin to speak up or else' ö (13). Capturing her experiences and fears as a female student she uses the pronoun 'I' to signify her utterances as a personal claim of who she has become in her studies at the university. Wanjira's portrayal as an omniscient narrator helps us to know what is going on in her mind as evidenced by the following citation:

What, exactly did it mean to be a university woman? Did other women feel intimidated in the tutorials, and what [are] they doing about it? Did anyone else share her reticence to

... speak out, and had they, like she had done earlierí , plucked up all courage and spoken their thoughts out loud, asserting themselves finally? (14)

Her endowment with moral meaning and intellect restores her self-esteem. She reflects on the social meaning of her experience at the university through rhetorical questions which are meant to help her to internalise and make sense of new experiences as a woman at university embarking on a journey of self-discovery.

The company that Wanjira keeps at the university exposes her to a new social life such as visiting nightclubs and five star hotels, but she simply cultivates her independent identity without being influenced by female colleagues. Even though she keeps the company of Wangu, who drinks heavily and can easily pass for a drunkard, she does not take beer and hence Wangu and her boyfriend, Mwangi, consider her as one not ðmaturedö (56) in the ways of the city; one who is still ðgreen and [needs] to begin to taste of the fruit of lifeö (56). This indictment by her friends about her lack of sophistication annoys her and she dismisses the two, especially when Mwangi implies that Wanjira cannot ðlearn everything on campus í [she] must learn from *dunia* [world] as wellö (56). However, no amount of persuasion from the couple succeeds in making Wanjira change her mind although she accepts Wangu as a friend, and envies her ðcalmness, her sense of self, her apparent full satisfaction with her life, her daring ways. But drinking beer?ö58). She does not compromise on her moral stance since she is a self driven woman who carefully guards her life by refraining from bad social habits which are apparently considered normal by other female students.

Wanjira would rather be ridiculed than drink alcohol since she reckons that ða woman [has] to pay extra attention to her own behaviour lest she invites untold problems into her lifeö (58). She views drinking of liquor as corrupting and would rather abstain from a tradition that the

author suggests women enjoy merely because they consider it a privilege to partake in a habit generally out of bounds for women (57). Thus, some women at the university love beer or wine and slowly become addicted to these drinks. The author states that the female students also take birth control pills even though they are not married, an indication that promiscuity also exists at the university. Thus beer combined with sexuality is likely to ensnare female students and the gains made towards their education may not help women to transcend marginalisation.

The protagonist reflects on gender inequality and marginality whereby she observes that in the Faculty of Arts, administrators and lecturers are mainly men. There are only two women lecturers, Dr. Muhoti being one of them, and Wanjira admires her not only for her beauty but also her brains. The Kikuyu word, Muhoti, means one who is capable. At the symbolic level, women are portrayed as intellectually capable of pursuing education and other social activities for instance marriage. Wanjira seems to suggest that marginalisation is not a consequence of women being intellectually poor by making reference to Wahito, a fellow female student in the Faculty of Medicine who is endowed with a powerful analytic mind and a strong personality (10). Wanjira's encounters with Dr. Muhoti, Wahito and Jessie, her roommate, help her to censure the perception that educated women are rough, ugly and unmarriageable (9), a propaganda merely used to discourage women from pursuing education up to university level.

Besides education, marriage also informs the socio-cultural sphere as far as the quest for female's identity is concerned. The author uses Jessie's marriage to Munyua, a graduate of the Faculty of Commerce, to demonstrate that education does not alienate women from marriage. Consequently, university girls are not only marriageable, but also capable of taking up other responsibilities while still pursuing their education, wifehood and all the household tasks that come with motherhood. These include caring for the baby, in-laws and relatives, cooking,

cleaning, and shopping, all of which are activities that educated women usually perform. Jessie and her maidens receive advice from aunt Mugure who expounds on the chores of a wife:

Take care of your husband, children, relatives and your home. Mind your reputation. Always have a good word for your in-laws; treat everyone with respect. Above all conduct yourself with dignity, avoid women who might secretly wish to cause mischief by going after your husband. They are often jealous of the harmony existing between a man and his wife, and often do not even really want him. (25)

Aunt Wagio suggests that they should accord the girl child six ululations instead of the customary four. She says:

Let's say six for the girl child! It was Tata (aunt) Wagio who said this, and everyone, recognizing its significance, raised her voice and produced some of the most beautiful trilling Wanjira had ever heard. Women had now refused to be given the four ululations traditionally given a girl, while a boy got five! They would give their daughters six! (26)

The increase in the number of ululations is hyperbolic and is aimed at reconceptualising women in regard to their changing fortunes in the nation since, with education; they perform more roles in addition to motherhood.

The woman as a social construction is made visible as Githiora explores women's social experience in marriage. She seeks to cast marriage not just as the preserve of the uneducated women by narrating an educated woman's wedding with a lot of details that are attributes of the social, economic, communal, dynamic and shifting nature of womanhood. For instance, aunt Mugure advises Jessie to keep a separate bank account from her husband so that she could have an enabling ground to assert herself through economic empowerment that comes with the woman's achievement through education. Otherwise, she would turn out to be a fool like Wahu,

her cousin, who despite having a career as a primary school teacher could not afford two pairs of shoes let alone other things for herself and her three young children (26). Wahu is suffering because she allows her husband to exploit her economically. She lets him control all her money, a trend that shows that she is still trapped in the patriarchal tradition that her mother tried to free her from by sending her to school. Her mother, Wagio, is so annoyed that she sends aunt Mugure to administer justice on Wahu's husband. Mugure slaps him twice as a punishment for men who disempower women.

Githiora encourages women to counter male exploitation by being militant in order to create, in the words of McClintock in *Imperial Leather*, "the reformed historical family and the national image of national life" (367). Women are not the taciturn, submissive bearers of unfair treatment. When need arises, they revolt by resorting to assertive measures that should not be unnecessarily violent. The advice given to Jessie expresses the need for the contemporary society to change the predominantly subordinated position that women occupy in patriarchy. In spite of belonging to an older generation, aunt Mugure expresses the need for emancipatory measures that would salvage the Kenyan woman from the passivity that imprisons and oppresses her. Jessie who is still blind in her love for Munyua thinks it is impractical, in fact, dishonest not to let her man know virtually everything about her economic status. Justina, her mother's cousin is surprised that Jessie, a woman educated up to the university does not know how to economically relate to a man. She asks her:

Are you telling us that up to now you have not seen what happens to women in this country? Where are your eyes? Is this why we sent you to school? So you could turn into a woman who cannot see things in front of her very own eyes? (27)

These rhetorical questions are aimed at sensitising women especially the educated ones who have a new footing in contemporary Kenya to rethink about themselves. They no longer occupy a subsidiary space in the family, community and nation. Justina is, therefore, disappointed that Jessie, a university female student, has not yet seen the need for women to leap forward and emancipate themselves from patriarchy.

With education, women are expected to acquire autonomy both at home and world of work; to chart a different life from that lived by their parents. As a consequence, marriage ceases to be the only hope for women as pointed out by Njoki, Jessie's sister, who underlines the need for women to embrace education, take up modern careers and use their economic empowerment to improve their parents' lives before entering marriage. Her opinion is shared by her brother, Maina, who advocates for young women to first and foremost fulfil their personal ambition before rushing into marriage because when both wife and husband support a family life is a lot easier for everyone (32). There is need, therefore, for both men and women to participate in the social cultural spheres of the nation at individual and public level. Through song and dance, the author points out that women are capable of acquiring education and marrying later. She makes reference to a Kiswahili song by a musical orchestra, Les Wanyika, which she translates as follows:

Umeonyesha juhudi kubwa o!

Kwa kumaliza masomo yako o!

Bila ya matatizo Pamela o!

Jambo la muhimu

Nakuomba Mama we

Tuende kwa Wazazi nyumbani

Pamela o!(42)

This is translated as:

Pamela my darling, your hard work has borne fruit

You have [honoured] your parents

By completing your schooling

With no problems, dear Pamela

My dear let's now go see your parents

My darling Pamela. (42)

Wanjira seems to be based on Kenya's postcolonial reality where women are advised to acquire education first and marry later. This is the position that women should adopt and the *Githiora* appears to be in touch with local culture, idiom and song. The theme of educated women was a talking point in the early post-colonial period. This song is meant to sensitise women on being educated, a premise that is relevant to the rethinking of women's role in the nation.

Githiora makes reference to the notion that 'highly educated women [are] rough, ugly, and unmarriageable' (9). As far as she is concerned, education does not prevent women from getting suitable marriage partners today. Women are encouraged to 'fulfil [their] ambition[s]. Don't rush into marriage[.] [T]ake your time. And whatever you do be sure you are in a position to support yourselves. Have a course you can depend on' (32). Through authorial intrusion, *Githiora* advances the need for women have to foster individual advancement through the character of *Rakeli* who even contemplates remaining single in order to realise her goals. Her thinking on marriage is transformational as she demonstrates in her dynamic approach to socio-cultural change which is required in the postcolonial nation if women have to entrench themselves in the nation. *Githiora* uses *Rakeli* to voice a feminist perspective in regard to the

traditional marriage canon which she expresses a desire to contest by arguing that marriage is not obligatory. It is therefore unfortunate and a sign of narrow mindedness to define women on the basis of their marital status alone.

Suggesting the need to transform women's images as they search for their identity in an environment where men and women are not the same, Githiora makes reference to Wanjira's fear of the opposite sex and the need to transcend gender limitations. Wanjira is bothered by the condescending attitude of the men in her class, and intimidated by the experience of sharing the same class with them. But a realisation that male students have confidence motivates her to change, leading to a flexibility of identity that is born out of this situation. She begins to cultivate a resilient self, exhibiting the capacity to cross boundaries that previously limited her development. Towards this end, she gathers courage and makes contributions during the tutorials. The entry in her diary, "THE SPELL IS BROKEN!" (14) shows she has broken the fear that is due to the presence of men and therefore helps us to get an answer to the question: what may she become in future? She is a woman capable of asserting herself despite the presence of men. Participation in the tutorials marks a turning point towards her integration into the realm of the socio-culture. Hypothetically, we suppose that she will inhabit a new female territory in the postcolonial nation and play a central role as a woman and a citizen.

The central role that Wanjira tries to play in the imagined Kenyan nation of *Wanjira* is that of detribalising society. She internalises the need to spur a new prospective process of self and national identification through intermarriage. This is because she realises that the socio-cultural sphere in the postcolonial nation is compounded by dominant ethnic elements which stifle cross-ethnic identity. She consciously accepts to be the embodiment of change as she braves the demands of cultural and political changes. Hobsbawm points at the need for flexibility of

identity choices when he writes "People can identify themselves as Jews even though they share neither religion, language, culture, tradition, historical background, blood-group patterns nor an altitude to the Jewish state" (8). This is the challenge posed to Kenyans to identify themselves positively with members of different ethnic groups.

Wanjira does not confine her socio-cultural identity to those who share her indigenous language. She tries to transcend ethnic-cultural boundaries by befriending Luka Owuor, a man from a different ethnic background, the Luo. Githiora uses Wanjira to bring to the fore inter-ethnic marriages while at the same time fostering the question of Wanjira's national identity. Githiora tries to recuperate Wanjira from the imprisoning politics of ethnicity as is evidenced by her decision to love Luo; a searing experience that defines her identity as a Kikuyu and as a Kenyan in a tide of cultural and political challenges. It is against this background that Githiora seems to pose the question: To what extent does ethnic culture affect female self-identity in the nation? By depicting the protagonist as being shaped by both educational and intellectual cultures as far as identity politics is concerned, the narrative becomes germane to explain and make problematic, the concept of the female self and national identity.

Through the romance between Wanjira and Luka, the author revisits the historical Kikuyu-Luo ethnic competition for leadership that often borders on hostility. The height of this hostility is seen when Tom Mboya, a Luo, is assassinated, supposedly by a Kikuyu. There are demonstrations in Nairobi and other parts of the country and the Luos are so bitter that they stone President Kenyatta's motorcade when he makes an attempt to go to Kisumu to make peace with them. They become violent because they define their social political context as alienated by the fact that they are different from the Kikuyu. Thus, they assume the identity of being "other" than

the Kikuyu and make a statement, albeit aggressively to the Kikuyu presidency, that they are important because they, too, are Kenyans.

The killing of Mboya raises ethnic hostility between the Luo and the Kikuyu as pointed out by Githiora who says:

The handsome man was buried, but not before a lot of trouble erupted in the city and in some parts of the country. It was said that his people were so angry that they actually stoned the Old Man! Imagine that! They stoned him as he tried to visit the dead man's town following the funeral, crying, shouting many words. He had to turn back. Imagine that! Mzee himself! That meant, surely there was trouble in the land. (93-94)

Githiora tries to play down the historical differences between the Kikuyu and the Luo Kikuyu by pointing out the similarities between the two lovers: "both their mothers [are] primary school teachers and their fathers [are] government administrators" (67) who have been performing nationhood in different parts of Kenya. In addition, the two lovers share the Catholic faith and are active members of the Young Christian Movement while in secondary school. At the symbolic level, Luka is not just another Luo, but one who is converted to Christianity and upholds the doctrine of common humanity. He tells Wanjira, "I've thought a lot about you since yesterday and I would like to get to know you better if that's alright with you" (66). He does not therefore view Wanjira as coming from a rival ethnic group, the Kikuyu, but rather as a human being whom he would like to know better, love and possibly marry as is evident from the song they both dance to by the Bee Gees:

How deep is your love?

How deep is your love?

I really need to learn

because we're living in a world of fools

breaking us down

when they all should let us be

we belong to you and me

You know the door to my very soul

You're the light in my deepest darkest hour

You're saviour when I fall

I believe in you. (69)

If the song is anything to go by, the two seem to be drawn to each other and there is a likelihood that they are going to have a strong love relationship.

Wanjira's name describes where she is born, by the wayside, as her mother Njahira, is coming from the farm. The circumstances of her birth suggest, symbolically, that she has freedom of choice to take whichever direction she wishes as one who is either going to have a function to play in the making or unmaking of the Kenyan nation; or as one who is going to be included or excluded from the life of the nation. The nature of her birth is evocative of the new identity she assumes right from birth, an identity that embraces others on the path who symbolically, represent the various ethnic groups in Kenya. This explains her readiness to accept Luka as a prospective boyfriend without regard to his ethnic group. As far as she is concerned, Luka is different from other men who want to start a love relationship with her since he conducts himself in a decent manner: *õso polite, so good with wordsõ (69)*. He therefore wins her respect and the love between them turns out to be *õone of the hottest and most controversial romances on campusõ (71)*. Wanjira contemplates marriage to him for she really has no good reason as to why she cannot

marry a man from any part of Kenya if she likes the man. Luka is 'the mythical self one is meant to find in order to feel truly whole' (72) and hence she guards Luka as her true other half.

Njoki, Jessie's sister, shares Wanjira's sentiments when she suggests that she can marry whoever she loves even if he is a Luo, to the surprise of Charity who retorts: 'Who do you think would allow you to marry a Luo, of all people? What is wrong with you?' (31). Rakeli, Njoki's cousin asserts that there is really nothing wrong in a woman marrying whichever man she loves from any part of Kenya or anywhere else, for instance, India. Although she points at the problems that come with inter-ethnic marriages, such as language, she plays down any difficulties by naively underscoring mutual understanding between a man and a woman as the most relevant guide in marriage.

Wanjira tries to make sense of her moral experience by situating herself within the moral code of the nation. The nation provides the environment that is either moral or immoral and the individual is forced to make choices to perpetuate or change practices that are viewed as normal or abnormal. Luka and Wanjira make their choices even though they have a premonition that their ethnic groups might be against the union. For instance, the Luo might think that Wanjira has bewitched Luka to marry her while Luka maybe considered a fool to be trapped by a Kikuyu woman. On the other hand, Wanjira's clansmen are likely to consider her a disgrace not only to herself, but also to the entire family for marrying a man from the west, 'Ruguru'. 'Ruguru' is a Kikuyu word for both the Westerly direction as well as for people from the western region of Kenya. However, Wanjira's concern is whether or not she will have a working inter-ethnic marriage. Such marriages are often not viewed as right. Her relationship with Luka raises doubts and his friends 'privately [fear] the pair might be headed for a catastrophe' they [think] the beautiful couple [is] living outside the rules everyone [knows] and [understands]' (95-96).

However, Luka considers the relationship fine as long as the two are ready to consider themselves Kenyans rather than just Luo and Kikuyu. For the two lovers, celebrating their similarities rather than differences is likely to change the negative ethnic sentiments among Kenyans not only in the present, but also in the future.

Unfortunately, outside forces working against the two derail attempts to create a society where people would view themselves as Kenyans and thereby disregard their ethnic groupings because negative sentiments and practices affect Luka. For instance, Murema, a fellow student leader, is jealous and envious of Luka and wishes that the relationship becomes a catastrophe in the end since the majority of Kenyans, even in the 21st Century, do not recognise inter-ethnic marriages. On the other hand, Wanjira's friends discourage her from pursuing the friendship. For instance, Wangu thinks that Luka may not be serious with Wanjira since he may be after only one thing, sex. Wangu argues that if Wanjira is really considering marriage, she has to "Find someone else. Be realistic! Luka O? Are you crazy?" (99). Wangu is concerned the nation is not ready for inter-ethnic marriages at the moment, maybe in future. The disapproval hurts Wanjira badly, and she feels disappointed that Wangu is conservative, retrogressive, separating rather than unifying the various ethnic groups in Kenya.

Love between Wanjira and Luka is compounded not only by the prevailing tensions between ethnic groups, but also the cultural differences between the Luo and the Kikuyu. The Luo do not practice male circumcision as a rite of passage and hence the taunt Wanjira suffers from fellow students' reference to her as the wife of an uncircumcised man. She laments her fate: But in this Kenya of ours we are supposed to have nothing in common; Because of what? Because I was born in Central, and he was born in Western Province. I am a Kikuyu woman, and he is a Luo man. That is all! You and I know this is Ukabila. Tribalism. Luka and I should never

cross this Ukabila divide. Then Kenya would be safe. Uncomplicated. Free of strife. We should have known it: It should have been hello and goodbye for Kenya's future leaders. (100)

The sarcasm underlying the notion that ethnic groups have to celebrate their differences rather than their similarities for peaceful co-existence unearths short sightedness as far as tribalism is concerned. According to Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *Homecoming*, "To live on the level of race or [ethnic group] is to be less than whole. In order to live, a chick has to break out of the shell shutting it out from the light" (23). The implication is that tribalism is a hindrance to nationalism.

It is worth noting that Githiora does not change the narrative of Kenya's history which portrays the Kikuyu and the Luo as always at logger heads. She merely transforms a sense of what it means to be Kenyan in spite of ethnic differences. The social affiliation between the Luo and Kikuyu becomes Githiora's articulation of internal and external feelings that denote differences; a negation of the possibility of viewing Kenya as an ethnically cohesive nation. She makes an effort to submerge ethnic differences through prospective inter-ethnic marriage between Wanjira and Luka.

The author represents interethnic marriage between the various ethnic groups in Kenya as necessary to forestall mistrust, reduce prejudices and create a social basis for ethnic coexistence. Unfortunately, Wanjira's brother, Kairu, is unhappy with her association with Luka and openly tells her that the relationship is a "mere experimentation" "It's time to come down to earth, Wanjira, find a real boyfriend, and forget this man" (131). Such pronouncements coming from an educated person like Kairu draws fears whether a time will come when Kenyans will boast of the mutual obligation to foster positive ethnicity; when traditions and culture defining different people will become irrelevant in forging a unified nation.

However, Wanjira's mother views the relationship between her daughter and Luka differently and holds no grudge against anyone on account of his or her ethnic background (131). She reckons that, 'We are all God's children, and he put us in various parts of the world to do his work. Why should we all be the same?' (131). Wanjira's mother does not propagate ethnic superiority since she has a positive outlook towards inter-ethnic marriage. There is hope that ethnic groups in Kenya have the ability to embrace one another as a community of brotherhood. Her worry is not about her daughter's association with a man from a different ethnic group. Her fear is that he is influencing Wanjira's involvement in student politics, a move that might deter her from completing her education before the 'mad people in the government interfere' (131). Her desire, therefore, is that Wanjira keeps away from Luka until she completes her university education.

But Wanjira would rather give up everything else, but Luka, whom she readily accepts as her prospective husband and life's companion. She sets the battle lines with both friends and relatives who think that Kenya's different ethnic groups can work together, 'but never, ever, intermarry' (138). While Wanjira's mother has no problem with inter-ethnic marriage, she is concerned that her daughter is too young to marry; to take up the duties as a clan wife since the Luo live collectively. The intended marriage is further complicated by the fact that Luka's mother does not support the prospect of her son marrying from the Kikuyu community. She cries when she learns that her son wants to marry from outside her community, even though her husband convinces her that it is all right since Luka always makes the right decisions. Luka's mother rejection of Wanjira is evident that Kenyans is far from embracing inter-ethnic tolerance because some ethnic groups are not yet ready to end ethnic jingoism. Kenyans merely pay lip service to ending tribalism, *ukabila* by saying, 'Hatutaki Ukabila, Kenya Yetu ni Kenya mpya' . 'We do

not want tribalism. Ours is a new Kenya (106). The birth of the Kenyan nation after independence is not informed by dynamic cross cultural tradition geared towards oneness. Wanjira and Luka can create a Kenyan nation that accommodates all ethnic groups. This is an eventuality that can make Kenyans have no difficulties in encouraging people from various ethnic groups to intermarry.

Nevertheless, interethnic marriage is not the only thing that can unite ethnic groups in Kenya. The people living in the 21st Century 'imagined community' of Kenya, have a duty to appreciate one another in all aspects of life. In any case, as Wangu observes, there is really no difference between a Luo and a Kikuyu and Maasai and Luyha cadaver (113). As a student of physiology and anatomy, she realises that differences are skin deep and hence people living in postcolonial Kenya have more similarities than differences. This becomes apparent when university students demonstrate against the murder of J. M. Kariuki, a Kikuyu politician. Wanjira notes, "So dear journal, I should not love Luka. His people eat fish" (105). There is sarcasm underlying this entry that points to Wanjira's determination to continue with her relationship with Luka. The use of the first person voice in reference to decisions she makes as a woman show her personal endeavour to take responsibility and consequences of her choices. She is determined to confront senseless ethnic bigotry which bedevils national identity by marrying outside her ethnic group.

Unfortunately, the marriage does not happen due to the forceful fate that threatens to destroy their relationship as voiced through Mbaraka Mwinshehe's song:

Hakuna kitu kibaya humu duniani kama shidaí

Haijuií hataí wala - yoyote

Kila siku shida shida haiishi

Mpaka siku ya mwishoí (164)

This when translated means:

Nothing is as terrible in this world as trouble

It knows no special person-

Every day it's trouble, trouble

To the end of one's daysí . (165)

The song is a commentary on the problems that Luka and Wanjira are experiencing. They handle their marriage crisis maturely as they resign themselves to fate that has thrown challenges and obstacles at them and accept that Luka has to go abroad to undertake his postgraduate law studies. Wanjira graduates while he is away and she experiences a heavy emotional loss as she reminisces “*Mwiro wa ngoro ndukinyaga*. The heart's desire is never fulfilledö (170). Her only consolation is in the hope that she might get a scholarship and join Luka to undertake a Master's degree in literature.

Garland, just like Githiora, makes a literary representation that reflects ideological development of women's lives beyond the bounds of domestic propriety. An examination of *Half Way between Nairobi and Dundori* focuses on the ways in which literature either reinforces or undermines subjugation of women in a socio-cultural environment that is inherently discriminative of women. *Halfway between Nairobi and Dundori* has both a rural and urban setting. Dundori stands for countryside while Naivasha is representative of town. The protagonists in the novella are women through whom the researcher explores the development of the female self and national identity as intertwined in the social cultural and social political sphere.

The female characters portrayed in this novella are Gladys, Wanjeri and their mother whom Garland does not give a name but merely refers to her as "mother." In this discussion we will refer to her as Wanjeri's mother. The author uses Wanjeri's mother to conceptualise the traditional woman as imagined by patriarchy, while her daughters represent the reconceptualised female model living in 21st Century Kenya which is still influenced by patriarchy. Wanjeri's mother is a woman in the family structure just like other traditional women who are continually conceived of in national discourse as shadows of their real self. Women are allocated subjective position that they are allocated even though they are expected to perpetuate the nation through procreation of future generations of citizens.

In this novella, gender power relationships assumed by both male and female characters point at patriarchy that influences the identity formation of Wanjeri's mother and her association with her husband. Anzaldua Gloria observes that:

Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality that it communicates. Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through our culture. Culture is made by those in power-men. Males make the rules and laws; women transmit them. (1018)

Just like other women living under patriarchy, Wanjeri's mother is oppressed socially and economically and it is no wonder that she blames her husband for all her problems. She reckons that he is "stingy towards [her], unforgiving of his children, and often [eats] in "unsaved" women's homes" (18). Wanjeri's mother is enduring life with a partner who is not only mean to her but also to her children. Living under patriarchy, she is marginalised and assumes the definition of the "other" because of her difference from her husband's values. This is evident in

the reference to eating in “unsaved” women’s homes against his wife’s expectations, a metaphor meaning that he does not limit his social life as a clergy to those in the household of faith.

Wanjeri’s mother is married to an Anglican cleric at Dundori Parish who has defied the boundaries between the Christians and non-Christians since he yokes himself equally with non-believers. His cynical remark, “*Maundu ni Maritu*” (18-19), which means things are difficult, perhaps explains his behaviour as one who does not have a cordial relationship with his wife. The clergy man’s position is compounded by threats of divorce from his wife who categorically states that “her hair will never turn grey in his house” (26). Her efforts to refuse to confine herself to an unhappy marriage is the contention of many women who contemplate leaving their married lives due to problems. However, more often than not, women endure problems in their marriage even though they keep threatening to quit before their hair turns grey. In the words of Garland, such women use these pronouncements “while all along making sure [they]í avoid the mirror!” (26). They shy away from exiting because they fear what might happen to their children since leaving their children behind under the care of their father is not considered as the best option and neither is moving out of the marriage with them.

Culture determines gender appropriation and Wanjeri’s mother is conceptualised culturally as a woman under patriarchal tradition. She is reconceptualised through religion which gives her a voice and a sense of independence. As a “born again” Christian, she experiences an unusual emotion which activates a feeling of happiness which the author notes is “an elusive animal in [her] home” (19). Thus, Wanjeri and her sister Gladys grow in an unhappy family for it is only after attending and testifying at an evangelical church of every ill that she endures from her husband that she stops “secret [crying]” (15) and she enjoys visits from her religious sisters. It is unfortunate that the constraints in her marriage are apparent even to their children who ask their

father ðwhy mama [cries] so much when she [thinks they aren't] watchingö (15), but he does not respond. Garland takes up the role to change Wanjeri's mother's world by prompting gender equality when she makes Wanjeri's mother adorn a new self when she is described as ðSister in Christö (18). This implies that she is relating to other 'saved' women in a special manner distinct from the way she relates with 'unsaved' women. These women support one another as a group to realise security and positive attitude that is necessary for assertion of self-identity.

Having discussed Wanjeri's mother, we now examine Gladys, her first born child. Gladys is the prototype of a new female model that resists subjugation even in the searing circumstances where she finds herself because of teenage pregnancy. She drops out of school and her father denounces her by sending her away from home. Gladys is born when her mother is only seventeen years old and seems to have no respect for her mother by making reference to her as ðyour motherö (26) in a conversation between her and her sister, Wanjeri. She is the product of an adolescent mother and feels distant as far as her mother is concerned. The two sisters are therefore different although they are born of the same parents. Gladys is ðso flamboyant í so absurdly crude, living largeö (26) while Wanjeri is ðcontent to listen, so interested in polishí . . . barely rippling the surfaceö (26). Gladys lacks positive attributes and thus catches our attention only because she has lots of money and extends a helping hand to her sister when the latter is in financial problems.

Gladys drops out of high school when she is in form three and her father sends her away from home. To support herself and her child she starts selling used clothes and also working as a prostitute. Her role as a prostitute in a way subverts patriarchy and paints a new kind of woman through whom an exploration of the relationship between prostitution, nationalism and interracial relations is made. Gladys is labelled a prostitute not because she is a sex worker, but because she

has deviant sexual behaviour. She uses her body to consolidate her individual and national identity. Gladys assumes becomes very aggressive and reconstructs her identity as the new urban female who is single, but through connivance enlists a white man into a wife/husband relationship. Her courage and determination in the face of the reality of her situation is a desperate move to befriend a Mzungu (white man) so that she can have money and lies to him that she dropped out of school in order to earn money to pay for her siblings' education.

Garland portrays Gladys as a gullible character who allows herself to be used by men as a sexual commodity in exchange for material comfort. Gladys tells Wanjeri:

í what I have, Yo baby, is a degree which has delivered beautiful *Mzungu* to me who gonna buy me a plot right there next to the water and I'm gonna build me a house of stone on it for my Njoroge and Kariuki, and, and, and í .. this one coming í my very own point-five. (36)

The implication is that Gladys considers it great achievement to have a white man and equates this to the academic acquisition of a degree. She resorts to prostitution due to premarital pregnancy, poverty, and the fact that the African traditional family is disintegrating. Even though in her mind she thinks she is exploiting the white man, he is taking advantage of her sexually since they are not legally married.

Garland portrays a positive attitude towards sex in marriage through Wanjeri who contends that she gives in to sex because it matters more to her husband and she is out to build a complementary relationship between herself and her husband. She therefore does not take it kindly when Gladys makes reference to men and sex saying "Men are dogs" They got to have it" (8). This crude and demeaning attitude towards men and sexuality is a radical feminist stance that complicates the gender power relations in 21st Century Kenya.

Through the omniscient narrator, we learn that Gladys is forty four years old, has two grown up children and has aborted three times. At the moment she is expecting a bi-racial baby who she hopes will seal her association with the white man so that he feels obliged to continue supporting her materially. The nature of the city life she is leading is oriented towards material possession and individual interest and hence the moral decadence in a postcolonial nation where ethical values no longer matter to people. Her dependency entirely on the white man reduces her to a mistress who is able to advance her female body albeit negatively for she is more or less a prostitute who uses her sexual bargaining power and sexual services for financial gain. This is because:

[she is not the] picture of the cheerful contented female complacently accepting her lot replaced by that of a woman who is powerfully aware of the unfairness and who longs to be fulfilled in herself, to be a full human being, not merely somebody else's appendage. (Paulina Palmer 39)

The implication in the story of Gladys is that she is an unfortunate female who does not transcend the patriarchal tradition that subjugates women even though she is partly dependent on a new postcolonial female subject who uses her body to acquire material wealth.

Some of the female characters in *Halfway Between Nairobi and Dundori* have feminine consciousness and expose their bodies to the male gaze, for example Gladys who uses her body to get the money she requires. She represents the degradation and hopelessness of the female characters whom Garland depicts as revolving around white men to take care of their whims and sexual needs. Invariably, the women lose out except for the money since they are emotionally

drained and confused in their endeavour to keep their white men. The author writes:

The women have also shortened their names ó Qui, Bui, Noni, Nimu, Shi. Theyøve squeezed themselves into tight jeans or skirts, topped with tops in even more desperate need of stretching. They squint at me like they canø figure out my ethnic group, and then looking away as if realising it doesnø matter. In the same channel O accent as my sister, they exclaim how this one is looking too fly, and what ðmy men-Iø said, and what ðmy men-Iøgonna buy me in London. (45-46)

The use of the shortened names is symbolic of these adult womenø attempt to negate their age and wish to lose their former self identity in favour of a new one that is more fulfilling. It is no wonder then that these women guard their men to ensure that they are not ðstolenø by other women. Thus, ð...as though tendering an altar, every now and then, each woman leaves her friends to hover around her ðmen-Iø whoø standing with the other men...ö (46). Although one may say that the women are exercising control over their sexuality, their behaviour is degenerate in a way by seducing the white men. They behave like sexual perverts. Their effort to have mutual understanding and rapport is infested with fear and anxiety because they cannot think of losing their men.

Female prostitution that Gladys and her fellow women are engaged in is forced on them by financial needs but their images as women who participate in prostitution is not equal with the patriarchal or the modern roles women are expected to play in the nation as women and as citizens. Garland depicts one of the prostitutes, Bui, as one who previously endures physical abuse from her husband before she quits her marriage. The author contrasts her identity as a married woman and a divorced woman who opts out of a sad marriage without considering economic gains. We learn that she works at the flower farm during the day and prostitutes herself

at night. When she is in the fold of marriage, she is Wambui, while divorced she is Bui, but as the omniscient narrator observes, “despite the make-up and abbreviated clothing, Bui is no happier than Wambui” (48). This means that prostitution is really no alternative to marriage because sex as an economic activity stigmatises women and they become victims of the male gaze as men exploit them sexually, and as they exploit men financially.

Gitaa makes it clear that even though prostitutes can be viewed as victimizers of the men whom they hook and take advantage of in their economic well-being, the women themselves become victims by extension since the society views them as evil. Most people have notions that these women are wicked, a view that is upheld in modern and patriarchal societies such that their life in the society is censored. It is for this reason that the author presents them as symbolic of otherness, subjugation being their mark of identity.

To show that societies have both good and bad people, the author contrasts Gladys with her sister Wanjeri. Although she is financially constrained, Wanjeri appears to be more humane and polished unlike Gladys whose only “positive” attribute is plenty of money. Her identity shifts from mother to wife, wife to career woman. Through a flashback we learn that she has been as a teacher before she resigns to support her husband who works in the Naivasha flower farms. Unlike her mother who is trapped in an unhappy marriage, Wanjeri is relatively happy with the support she enjoys from her husband, Murage. She finds this help consoling, for she is not like her mother who is a kind of a martyr in her marriage and has to endure living with a husband who she reckons is the source of her problems, but insists on staying because “One who is silent endures” (18). This notion of a traditional martyred wife is a cause for celebration in the patriarchal tradition, but Wanjeri refuses to be a victim like her mother.

Unlike her mother, Wanjeri is selfless and accepts responsibility for her share of the problems and absolves her husband when she says, "So let me state here and now, Murage is no more to blame than I for our tenuous situation" (19). Wanjeri accepts the challenges of gendered power relations in the face of economic crisis. She and her husband exhibit mutual understanding with either of them being ready to support the other for instance, when Wanjeri miscarries, an experience that makes her inconsolable, Murage assures her that he is "more than fulfilled with [their] one son" (20). Such consolation and understanding gives Wanjeri "a resurgence of affection" (20) and she continues to enjoy true love from her husband who is depicted as caring and understanding. Complementary support between the couple is also evident when Wanjeri leaves her job and a good life in Nairobi in order to support her husband when he loses his job and moves to Naivasha to work in a flower farm. The two keep their marriage vows, for better, for worse.

Wanjeri, unlike Gladys, completes her secondary school education. Unfortunately, she has to rely on Gladys for financial support, which disturbs her a lot. Her predicament irks her most because she is educated, but is forced to depend on Gladys who has not even completed her secondary school education. She reminisces her fate saying, "hard to believe that I was the bright spark of the family, the one who scored high enough marks and to be called to a national high school in Nairobi to board with the daughters of cabinet ministers" (25). The notion that Wanjeri's school mates can speak English as a second language without mother tongue interference indicates that she receives her secondary education in a national school which gives her a reason to be proud of her academic achievements.

Although education is a major underlying factor in the socio-economic progress of a woman in Kenya, Garland refuses to use education potency for positive financial development of

Wanjeri. Despite being educated, many Kenyans are suffering from lack of adequate employment opportunities and many educated men and women remain jobless or take up tasks that are not commensurate with their academic qualifications. For instance, Wanjeri and her husband, Murage, are educated and take lowly paid jobs at the flower farm in Naivasha. Unfortunately, both of them lose their source of livelihood when Murage is sacked and fails to get another job while Wanjeri is affected by the chemicals used at the flower farm. Despite her education, she does not get another job.

Nevertheless, it is ironical that Wanjeri is dependent on Gladys, a school dropout, for financial support. Wanjeri draws a parallel between the way she has to wait on her sister to get financial aid with the way the president of a country waits upon the International Monetary Fund for aid. The parallelism castigates the postcolonial nation for dependency on donor funding while at the same time points at the precarious position of the poor government. Wanjeri, similarly, has to wait on Gladys to get money for house rent which she desperately needs to appease the landlord's agent who is often at her door demanding for rent arrears. It is during such a time that she refuses to respond to the agent's knocking at the door as she and her husband pretend they are not in the house. She resorts to silently abusing the agent, *õNgui! Enugu! Dog and monkey, although to be honest, about him [she has] no strong personal feelingsö* (15). We are surprised that she resorts to name calling given that she is brought up in a Christian family.

While Wanjeri lived with her parents she could not read romance books written by Charles Mangua and James Chase. She has now changed and vents her anger on the wrong person because *õlife has become a series of compromises and diminishing dreamsö* (16). Bitterness and financial problems for this couple start when her husband loses *õa bigger jobö* (16) and *õon the pain of death of marriage, leave[s] Nairobiö* (16). He loses his City Council job because of

highlighting the corruption that rocks the council. Even though his wife is working as a teacher, he declares that he cannot see himself taking hand-outs from his wife for the rest of his life, and that it would be better to farm in Dundori. It is while on their way to Dundori that they stop at Naivasha instead of driving straight home and Wanjeri tries to derail their journey to Dundori.

Redefinition of gender power relations is apparent in this narrative through Wanjeri's actions, ideas, and speech. Her plans are that when her son, Kamau, grows older she is going to study for a Master's and PhD degrees in order to qualify to teach at the university. In addition, with the combined effort of herself and her husband, she hopes to buy a house in Kilimani or Milimani. Murage does not discourage her from pursuing her dream even though he teases her by making reference to her as, "A typical Kikuyu wife is obsessed with property" (30). Unfortunately, Wanjeri's dreams are unfulfilled when her husband loses his big job with the City Council. The omniscient narrator observes, "In Nairobi, a slip can be a great fall" (30) and thus the couple starts living an unpredictable life in looming poverty, but even so, Wanjeri refuses to go to Dundori where she is likely to be subjugated by patriarchy. For instance, her brother-in-law asks Murage "in a joking-biting way, why he lets [Wanjeri] sit on him and what he always gossiping about with her" (12). Wanjeri thinks that her brother-in-law is jealous of her because she is a modern, educated woman, while his wife is "as hollow as the centres of Dundori's famous Akiba potatoes" (12). This simile suggests that Murage's brother is married to an uneducated woman whom he has subjugated such that he does not have any meaningful discussion with her.

For Wanjeri, the question of settling in Dundori makes her categorically ask Murage, "Do you really believe two acres in Dundori can employ your mother, two brothers, their wives, eleven children, and us?" (20). It is obviously unreasonable for him to imagine that he could

make a living from land that is already overcrowded but he has to hold on to his last straw. We therefore sympathise with Murage as he insists that Wanjeri has to wipe out the image of Nairobi from her mind and realistically think of herself as a rural woman, merely to save face. As far as she is concerned, Dundori is ða vacuum of a place that sucks the answers outö (21). Her hard stance about this rural place is softened by the invocation of marriage rules öin good times and bad?ö (13). We are therefore hopeful that she is not going to desert her husband if he eventually settles in Dundori.

The couple takes up jobs in the flower industry, Wanjeri as a flower girl and Murage as a technical supervisor who inspects and escorts cut roses to the International Airport in Nairobi. Two years later he discovers that a planeload of roses earns seventy million shillings while the cost involved is about thirty million. He ponders why the workers are paid one hundred shillings a day and tries, through advocacy, to challenge the low wages that cripple the labourers, but he is sacked. That is why he is ölying around dressed-up with nowhere to goö (7), for despite the efforts he makes to get another job, he does not succeed. The desperate situation of job seekers is underscored by the statement, öso half the country is looking for work, and potential employers make unreasonable demandsö (10). This statement points at the magnitude of the scarcity of jobs in Kenya.

Murage's loss of his job almost renders his family destitute since Wanjeri also stops working at the flower farms because she is affected by the chemicals used for preservation of flowers. But she and the other workers are inextricably linked to the flower farm through employment. She points out:

For seven months I've propagated, propped, pruned and plucked First ladies. But I itched every second of every minute of every hour upon the POI and the ZON in that hundred

metre-long polythene hothouse. The hairs in my nose itched. The insides of my eyelids, and the slits between my toes itched. Even the sweat in the crack of my bottom itched. Sickeningly sweet mask assaulted my nostrils, drew tears and irritated every square inch of my body until the very thought of a rose broke out a rash. (19)

These details define Naivasha's agricultural business which is dominated by foreign companies. The deadly fumes from the chemicals used to preserve the flowers affect the other workers' health just as much as they affect Wanjeri's.

Having lost their employment at the flower farm, Wanjeri and Murage lead a miserable life dependent on hand outs from Gladys. She wishes that they aren't dependent on her sister, but they cannot avoid it especially at this particular time when the landlord threatens that "whatever happens" (17) to them, they should not hold the landlord responsible. The message is delivered by the agent who slips it under the door when the couple pretends to be absent. Before picking the paper with the message, Wanjira takes time lest the retreating agent hears her footsteps. We witness her effort to buy time by humorously saying that counting in Kikuyu takes longer than in English and hence silently counts from one to seventy in vernacular, "Imwe, Igiri, Ithatu, í Mirongo-itanoí Mirongo itadatoí Mirongo-mugwanjaí" (17) until the agent's footsteps die away completely.

Even though both husband and wife can "visualize epic scenes of destruction" (18) if they continue holding onto the landlord's money, they laugh their heads off about the dirty tactics landlords use "until bitter tears escape [their] eyes" (18). Their sense of sardonic humour serves as comic relief in an otherwise sad situation especially when we realise that while Wanjeri is silently ignoring the remorseless knock on the door, Murage is "lying on the bed like a dead

fish floating atop Lake Naivasha (18). The imagery of a dead fish suggests the emasculation of Wanjeri's husband due to his joblessness.

However, she keeps reminding Murage of his responsibility to his family while at the same time making a declaration of her loyalty to him saying, "I left my job and a good life in Nairobi because of you. You owe it to me, and to Kamau to try harder" (24). The notion that he does not care "whatever" (25) shows the bitterness that shrouds his predicament and the need for Wanjeri to assert herself and change the family for the better. Her statement, "I am not scared of you" (41) when Murage shouts at her after she discovers that her sister has been helping him to masturbate seems to suggest that Wanjeri assumes some independence. She is ready to fend for herself as a woman instead of looking up to her husband.

On the other hand, as a prostitute, Gladys is familiar with the habit of helping men to masturbate but we are surprised that she engages her sister's husband in masturbation. Gladys is embarrassed when Wanjeri finds out the kind of game the two play and she takes off without giving Wanjeri the much needed money to pay the house rent arrears. Wanjeri, in her wisdom or lack of it follows her sister to her house, where she encounters Gladys's husband, women friends and their white boyfriends having a party. Wanjeri drinks herself silly and reveals Gladys's immoral behaviour even as she makes a plea to those at the party "what I need today is a car and money" (52). She gets the money she requires from Gladys's husband and promises to take it as a loan which she is going to repay even though he does not believe her.

Wanjeri explains her plight as one who has a degree in psychology; has been working as an untrained teacher; has a husband who holds a degree in Urban Planning, but cannot get a job even "as a driver" (38). The husband is, therefore, forced by circumstances to use the money that Wanjeri earns from her teaching to start a project which fails, leaving the couple penniless. Their

efforts to sell a piece of land with a remote view of Lake Naivasha or their Toyota Celica hit a snag and thus they depend on Gladys as the ðbuffer in these difficult times between [them] and extreme povertyö (70). On the day that Gladys fails to give the couple the money they so much require, she courts trouble because her sister exposes the darker side of her by stating that she helps Murage to masturbate.

The revelation that Murage and Gladys participate in masturbation stuns those who are at the party and they resort to ða long awkward silence. It is difficult to know who is more scandalised, the men who look uneasily to me, and at each other, and at the ground, or the women who stare at Gladysö (53). The disclosure of Gladys's deviance behaviour reminds us of the pre-colonial days when Naivasha was considered as the happy valley. Garland notes that:

only those who refuse to reconcile themselves to its new incarnation speak of Naivasha as a tea-break near a great freshwater lake in a once-upon-a-time happy valley of volcanic lakes, gorges, savannah plains, wildlife, and citizens native and ex-colonial. (56-57)

Garland implies that the town has changed for the worse. Catherine Mumbi Wanjohi outlines the life lived by prostitutes in Naivasha in *A Walk at Midnight*. She envisions hope that someday this town will stop being associated with ðunassociative and dark side of life, where [prostitution is] the trade markö (blurb). Gladys is portrayed as the epitome of female's deviant behaviour in postcolonial Kenya.

Luise White points out that the driving forces in prostitution are ðsex and moneyö (White 135). Prostitution in Kenya goes back to ðthe 1920s to 1940s wife-swapping eraí epicentre of happy action amongst the elite colonial class in those scandalous daysö (53). Nairobi just like Naivasha has a history of prostitution. White observes that in Nairobi ðfull-time prostitution first became evident during the 1914-1918 warö (136). White further delineates ðprostitution as a

reliable form of capital accumulation, not as a despicable fate or temporary strategy (137). Through Gladys, Garland depicts prostitution as a method that some women use to raise money. Garland represents both the traditional and modern women as struggling in postcolonial Kenya to promote particular forms of female selfhood. She represents female characters to show how women are excluded or included in the imagined nation by using the limited space that both men and women inhabit in their performance of personal and public roles. Garland's female characters' lives are intertwined with the fate that befalls those living in the postcolonial society in the midst of poverty. She highlights women's lack of financial security as a major drawback in the development of the female self and national identity and exposes prostitution as evil with the hope of sensitising Kenyan women to desist from it, even though at face value it appears to be a panacea of all their financial problems.

As the female characters chart their lives they express how it feels to be a woman in a nation that is still informed by patriarchal traditions. For instance, Wanjeri's mother publicly exposes her husband for his role in subjugating her. Although she brings up her daughters, Wanjeri and Gladys, under patriarchal traditions they are able to re-weave their personal identity on the basis of the challenges of modern society in the context of cultural mobility. This is possible because they have some form of formal education that influences their search and assertion of identity unlike their mother who is almost consumed by patriarchy. Garland uses the social environment as the main setting in an urban milieu. Through her writing, she underscores traces of patriarchy that undermine women in Kenya whereby both patriarchy and post-colonial forces join hands to control the development of a positive female self and national identity. She depicts a sensitive and convincing aspect of the female subjectivity with poverty and joblessness impacting heavily on women's progression towards self-definition and self-assertion. In addition,

the author highlights women's responsibility to their children as they bear both physical and psychological problems in order to protect their children from the consequences of broken families.

The gist of *Halfway between Nairobi and Dundori* is its portrayal of both culture and politics as constraining women's search for selfhood and nationhood in the socio-cultural as well as socio-political sphere. Women as well as men are affected by ethnic identities. In *Halfway between Nairobi and Dundori*, Garland points out that tribal clashes in the late 1980s forced the Kikuyu to flee the Northern Rift Valley and settle elsewhere. For instance, the protagonist in this novella, Wanjeri, says that her in-laws were displaced from their family land in the Rift Valley and settled in Dundori. Although they had bought the land soon after independence, they lose it alongside their cattle which are stolen by the Kalenjins who are determined to flush out the Kikuyu "from what they [consider] their ancestral land in the Great Rift Valley" (21). The effects of the fracas continue to linger to-date and hence the efforts being made towards national cohesion that seeks to make and consolidate peace among the different ethnic groups living in Kenya.

Through historical allusion, Garland refers to the great trek of the Boers in South Africa as a parallelism to the manner in which the Kikuyu move from the North Rift. The author views the Kikuyu fleeing as a resurrection of history as they encounter hardships "hiding in the thickets, drinking muddy water from streams, insufficient food, and" (22). Some are fatally wounded for instance the man who "has an arrow sticking out of his shoulder" and [tells] horrific stories of how he "slashed open excited Kalenjin boys who'd come to burn his property" (22). The author notes that the young boys attack the Kikuyus soon after circumcision when they are expected to show their prowess as warriors. The victimisation of innocent Kenyans highlights

the impunity that defines ethnic hostilities whereby reconciliation efforts are always short of fostering permanent peaceful co-existence. The government bears the bulk of blame for its inability to enforce constitutional right of any Kenyan to own land anywhere in the country (23). Thus, unfortunate ethnic hostilities consistently continue to undermine nationhood which is elusive due to competition for the available resources.

Ethnic intolerance is evident at Naivasha where flower farmers, fishermen and herdsmen fight for the lake Naivasha water resources and hence the confrontation between these interested parties from time to time. For instance, during the drought season the Maasai cause disturbance because their cattle are denied access to lake Naivasha since the flower farmers want to conserve water. The Luo fishermen are also annoyed with the farmers because of the pesticides which run into the lake from the farms kill the fish. However, the landowners are able to convince the government to evict these tribal threats to the National Self-Sufficiency Project (17). Consequently, the Masaai and the Luo join forces to fight for the presumed rights to use the water from the lake. Such confrontations show intolerance among Kenyans from different ethnic groups and call for the need for Kenyans to think beyond tribal sensibilities.

4.3 The Female's Search for Identity in the Socio-Political Environment

The female's search for self and national identity is also affected by the social-political set up. Nationalism initially gains relevance in *Wanjira* through reference to the policies in Anglophone and Francophone colonial states. While Francophone policy aims at making Africa an extension of France, Anglophone approach is deemed as exploitative. McClintock, in *Imperial Leather*, views exploitation as a colonial culture which can be blamed on colonialists' pretence that they were providing support to Africans to chart their identity in the postcolonial nation. She posits, "Mimicry is a planned identity imposed on colonised people who are obliged to mirror

back an image of the colonials, but in imperfect form (62). The proposition is that Africans are not wholly assimilated into the white man's way of life, despite their efforts. Thus assimilation policy is viewed by Bhabha, cited in *Imperial Leather*, as a failure since it does not help the Africans to be like White people. Assimilation efforts only make the Africans "almost the same, but not white: a reformed recognisable other that is almost the same, but not quite" (McClintock 62-63). Africans are duped that they can become Frenchmen and women by learning and using the coloniser's language which, unfortunately, fails to fully integrate them into the coloniser's culture.

Even though the Anglophone approach is different, for it keeps the African's at bay, it exploits and discriminates against Africans and thus the nationalists want the British out and wage liberation wars. In Kenya, British nationals appropriate Kenyan's land and hence Kenyans fight for their land because:

Kuma Ndemi na Mathathi

Ithaka ciari citu

Na gutiri ungitutuunya

From the days of Ndemi and Mathathi

The beginning of time

The land belonged to us

And nobody can take it from us. (79)

Ndemi and Mathathi stand for particular Kikuyu generations. They are invoked to show that ownership of land is historical in nature. The author uses vernacular to authenticate the Kikuyu's response to the theft of their land, a historical injustice that continues to plague contemporary Kenya. She also replays the struggle for independence saying, we "would march around the

house, holding up sticks, pretending they were guns and *mapanga*,ö (79) to mimic Kenyans participation in the fight for their land and independence of their country. In other words, the country has to be freed from trappings of colonial history and the Mau Mau war is representative of a turning point in the history of Kenya.

Reference to the Second World War confirms the raw deal that the British government accorded Africans who were recruited to fight a war that was not really theirs. The British soldiers are compensated with African land, while Kenyan war veterans, like Wanjira's father, get nothing in return. He is one of those who are recruited to fight for the British and voices his bitterness when he says, "And then we come back to Kenya and [are] ill treated by the colonial government! we [are] soldiers in Burma and Ceylon but back in Kenya we [become] nobodies" (16). His reflection emphasises the British as "overtly exploitative" that [Britain's] colonial subjects were just that: colonial subjects" (13), who have to produce raw materials for Britain "to keep the colonial machinery going" (I4). Wanjira makes a critical appreciation of nationalism, decolonisation and postcolonial Africa by stating that the Africans wage war against the colonisers at a time when the nationalist spirit in the imagined nation is at its highest.

Anderson points out that the maltreatment that people living in British colonies were subjected to make liberation struggle a necessity because:

regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail ... the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. (7)

At the heart of freedom wars is a sense of patriotism for one's nation but the spirit of togetherness and commitment dies with the achievement of independence due to hostilities that arise due to

sharing of national resources. Competition for resources in the postcolonial nation becomes worse after acquiring self-government. After decolonisation, the spirit of nationalism fails because nationalist leaders mimic the colonial systems of governance, whose only concern is domination rather than national cohesion.

The struggle for decolonisation is reconstructed by political agents who undercut the entire purpose of resisting economic and political changes brought by colonialism. This is because of the influx of foreigners in the imagined community, Kenya, who enjoy high standards of life far removed from the ordinary toil of daily life (41). It is against such background that disillusionment characterises people living in independent Kenya. Githiora tries to negotiate and circumvent the dangers of intolerance, impudence and attendant violence that characterises the lack of aspirations of national consciousness in Kenya. Through song and dance, she captures the spirit of nationalism:

O youth of Africa

Let us defend our nations

With our African revolution

The youth are the spirit of Africa

The youth are the shield and defenders of Africa! (43)

According to Githu Muigai Mboya [is] deemed to be a threat precisely because he [appeals] to Kenyan national solidarity. He [wins] election consistently in a constituency where the Kikuyus outnumber the Luos (213). The notion that he is a successful politician who transcends ethnic politics is viewed as the cause of his murder allegedly by a Kikuyu man who has the blessings of the ruling elite Kenyatta because he is perceived to be a threat to the government.

Most Kenyans at the time assumed that Mboya was Kenyatta's right hand man and are, therefore, shocked by his assassination. His death confirms the frail nature of ethnic alliances since they stand the test of togetherness only as long as those in power continue to reap benefits. The country experiences a crisis with the 1969 when Tom Mboya is killed as noted in the following journal entry:

This murder [is] a rare event, she [learns], that few [have] ever thought one [can] come to this sort of end in independent Kenya. In the colonial days, yes, many [die] such deaths í on the morning the handsome and famous man [is] shot dead in broad daylight, on a very ordinary street on which, to anyone's knowledge, no one [has] ever been shoved around, let alone murdered. (90)

The killing of the politician in broad daylight is an unusual occurrence that is considered more hideous than the murders committed during the liberation struggle. The murder of J.M. Kariuki 1975 just like that of Mboya heralds "an explosive period in the country's history" (117). He is killed at a time when the masses are disillusioned with their independent nation that is polarized by poverty and mismanagement of resources.

At the time Mboya is killed, Wanjira is twelve years old and is mesmerised by her mother's premonition about the politician's death. On the day the murder takes place, her mother wakes up a worried person having seen a vision of a "bloody scene in which she is eating a chicken's head, and that this chicken's head [has] human hair which [reaches] down to what was clearly a man's temples" (90). Among the Kikuyu, a dream encompassing of eating meat is associated with a bad omen, most likely death. Furthermore, the Kikuyu do not usually eat chicken heads and hence the vision portends something unheard of. The announcement of the

death of the famous politician during the noon-day news does not, therefore, come as a surprise to Njahira, Wanjira's mother. Wanjira, like the other Kenyans, experiences fear and outrage at the assassination of Mboya as captured by her emotional state:

She [looks] and [looks] at pictures of the man's wife and children and a feeling of pain and sorrow [fills] her heart (91). She is concerned that she is not the only one who is sad as a result of the murder. She points out that "The most terrible thing [is] that the death of this man [causes] a lot of fear everywhere. [Wanjira] would feel it around her. She [notices] that people visiting her home [refer] to this murder in strange awed tones. (91)

The pathos and sorrow that come with the death of Mboya is further complicated by the fact that people do not openly say who committed the murder, only doing so by inference.

People living in the central part of Kenya attest to this when they make an observation that "When the Old One decides, what we can do about it? We are far away from the seat of power. It is not up to us" (91). Their resigned attitude, nevertheless, does not alleviate fears that the murder is going to cause ethnic strife between the Kikuyu and the Luo. Nyathira observes:

They will come for us. They will kill us all

Who? Who will kill us?

You know who. His people. The murdered one's people. My father said it last night.

Why us? We didn't do anything to him.

Yes, if the old man did it, it means we did it.

í We didn't do anything. I didn't do anything. (91)

This camouflaged conversation exposes the uncertainties that surround the people living in the imagined community of Kenya. They are afraid of stating the ethnic identity of "who" or "their" explicitly, an indication that there is widespread mistrust and possibility of tension in the country

since the Luo view the murder as an attempt to keep them out of political leadership. McClintock in *Imperial Leather* observes that nations are "historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed" (353) and the Kenyan nation is no different; it consists of various ethnic groups constituted alongside differences.

Ethnicity becomes uncomplimentary in the definition and attainment of national solidarity. When Mboya, a Luo, is killed and the alleged murderer is a Kikuyu, the Kikuyu try to consolidate power through massive oathing in Central Province, a ritual that depicts different communities living in Kenya as relying on ethnicity to perpetuate their supremacy and dominion. Muigai observes that:

The oathing of the Kikuyu in 1969 in the aftermath of Mboya's death, with Kenyatta's knowledge and connivance, was perhaps one of his worst political mistakes. The oathing was justified to the ordinary Kikuyu folk on the basis that they had to be prepared to protect the presidency in the "house of Mumbi". Politically the oathing achieved nothing. Yet it served to unmask Kenyatta as an opportunistic and shameless manipulator of ethnic sentiment. (213)

Kenyatta is indicted for failing to promote nationalism, a dilemma of his own making that continues to plague the country. Worse still, the ethnic divide continues to raise fear and apprehension since the oathing entrenches ethnicity as an asset for political mobilisation in Kenya.

The massive oathing at Gatundu, that Kenyatta's government sponsors is metaphorically referred to as taking "tea" and people are forced to take it; even school children who have no idea of what the oathing is all about. Wanjira is among the school girls who are forced by an "invisible force" that operates through rumour, warnings, predictions and outright accusations to

go to Gatundu to take the tea ó ÷chai.ø There is fear that if one fails to partake of the tea, punishment will follow family members will be killed, livestock will be confiscated or homes will be burned. The underlying fear makes the majority of the Kikuyu to partake of the oath, even Wanjira, without understanding its significance although they repeat the words: ÷If I ever reveal this secret, may this meat and drink do me in. May I forever be cursedö (103). The few people who refuse to take the oath such as Christians and Wanjira's mother who wonder what gains can come with the oath are considered dissidents. The administrators of the oath insist that ÷There [is] no choice: you [have] to drink ÷Chai.øThe forces out there [say] you mustö (102). Perhaps the oath is made mandatory as an opportune moment to rally the Kikuyu around the Kenyatta presidency by intimating that the Kikuyu have lots of enemies who want to harm them.

The Kikuyu are depicted as good, the chosen ones, whose ÷homes must remain intact,í must keep all interlopers and evil doers out. The evil doers do not speak our languageö (103). By implication, some Kenyans propagate stereotypes that divide Kenyans along ethnic lines. The oath is though aimed at making the Kikuyu suspicious of other ethnic groups, is counterproductive in that it creates ÷even greater suspicion against the Kikuyu among other ethnic groups in Kenyaö (Muigai 214). Apparently, ethnic jingoism divides the Kikuyu and other ethnic groups, a phenomenon that is a major challenge to nationhood. It is worth noting that Githiora reveals the contents of the oath perhaps as an indication that she does not feel obliged to keep it secret.

During the oath ceremony the Kikuyu are referred to as the ÷house of Mumbiø in an attempt to narrate the genealogy of the Kikuyu. Mumbi is the founding Kikuyu matriarch. Even though she is treated as the mother of the Kikuyu ethnic group, she does, not in the words of McClintock in *Imperial Leather*, inhabit ÷history proper but [exists] like colonised people in a

permanently anterior home within the modern nationö (359). This is to say that Mumbiø's name is evoked to serve male ego. It is this exclusion of women from the realm of the nation that the author questions by appropriating and generating space for Wanjira as an epitome of the new female identity in the 21st Century Kenya. By so doing, notions of nationhood and literary discourse converge as the author responds to womenø's quest for inclusion in the social-political sphere.

With the death of Kenyatta, the country is gripped by fear due to the øsimmering ethnic tensions based on unfulfilled ethnic claims to power and resourcesö (Muigai 215). Kenyans are afraid that there may be a civil war. This apprehension prompts many people to leave the city of Nairobi, making it a ghost town. The situation calms down when Daniel Arap Moi assumes power peacefully even though the Luo see this as move to side-line them from succession politics in the midst of an øillusion of stability [that] is still in place today, discontentment remains unresolvedö (Muigai 215). Moi is mistaken for a øgentle and mild manneredö (144) person as he is sworn in to be the second president of Kenya, but before long, people realise that like his predecessor, he only serves his own political interests and forging a unified nationhood is absent from his agenda. Making satirical reference to the swearing in ceremony, Githiora says:

The new president held the Bible firmly and promised to execute his duties faithfullyí and tears flowed freely from his and many other eyes in the special chamber. Years later Wanjira was to reflect on this event, and smile painfully at the memory of these tears, which everyone later said could only have been tears of joy and anticipation by the new president as he envisioned the vast personal fortune and unlimited power that awaited him as Mzeeø's successor. (145)

People make history by allowing Moi to ascend to the presidency without any protest with the hope that he is going to foster national unity and work towards nationalism in an effort to create meaningful interaction between the various ethnic groups.

Unfortunately Moi, like his predecessor, fails to unite people although he wields excessive power. The various ethnic groups more than ever continue to perceive their differences so that they are 'just Luo or Kikuyu or whatever else' (146), a notion that continues to divide 'our country's past, [present] and future' (146). The oneness of Kenyans in the anti-colonial struggle fails to liberate them from ethnic superiority. This is a sad scenario since 'The nation' so considered, [is] the body of citizens whose collective sovereignty [constitutes] a state which [is] their political expression. For whatever else, a nation uses the element of citizenship and mass participation or choice was never absent from it' (Hobsbawm 19). Unfortunately, this is a dream that is neither realised by the first nor the second president of Kenya nor by persons living in Kenya in the 21st Century.

Kenyatta is depicted as a nationalist because of his enduring of detention and trial at Kapenguria; and appears in a photograph with the Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Sedar Sengor and Julius Nyerere. By linking Kenyatta with these renowned African nationalists, the author tries to hoodwink us into believing that he too is a nationalist, but evidence to back this is lacking in as far as his leadership style is concerned. A Majority of Kenyans view him as one who betrays the aspirations of independence and social transformations promoted by the Mau Mau movement such as the return of stolen land, economic development and interethnic tolerance. However, even though he is blamed for failing to unite Kenyans, he is respected as having participated in the anti-colonial struggle to liberate Kenya.

The day on which Kenyatta was released from prison by the colonial government is usually celebrated as a national holiday. The celebration of Kenyatta day which has recently been changed to Mashujaa Day is a designation aimed at constructing a sense of unity based on the shared experiences of the liberation of Kenya.

More often than not, Kenyatta is scorned for entrenching ethnic differences and hence the fear that comes with his death that the nation is likely to go to war. The hiding by Kenyans is meant to indicate the magnitude of the fear and insecurity that grips the country when he dies. This unusual occurrence is captured thus:

The normally rowdy and noisy manamba and bus conductors were sober, quiet, and, in an unusual show of politeness, quickly and efficiently led the slightly panicked, though composed passengers into their vehicles. It was an eerie sight, this urgent and unnaturally quiet human activity at the bus station. The old man's death had led to this, and the nation moved fast toward the supposedly safe zones of the country, holding its breath. Waiting. (142)

The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) National Radio announcement makes the situation more frightening by consistently asking for the nation's prayers at this time of national grief (143). The sorrow portends the likelihood of ethnic confrontation rather than a nation mourning the demise of their leader. A flashback at the way he lives in his home Ichaweri in Gatundu reveals that school children frequent his home for dances and songs that are of political propagandist and hero worship nature. The songs serve the purpose of entrenching Kenyatta as a tribal chief rather than a president whose effort ought to be the unification of all ethnic groups living in Kenya.

While literature may not bear the liability of truthful representation, it is not free from the influence of the writer's position within the socio-cultural and socio-political sphere. As one of the children of independent Kenya, her writing carries the air of integrity and authenticity as she historicises women in postcolonial Kenyan literature. The author mixes historical facts with imaginary events that not only transgress general boundaries that separate history and literature to challenge Kenya's history on ethnicity and nationalism. Githiora's fiction is based on narrative reality achieved through historical (re)construction. The value that she confers on history is not merely descriptive but transformative in nature and hence her portrayal of Kenya's history in the era of Kenyatta is not merely a historical account. It is an attempt at a transformative act illustrating how Kenyans can overcome the limitations of history and chart their own destiny. According to Florence Sipalla, *Wanjira* is a woman's story whose credibility lies in its ability to generate intergenerational dialogue on issues of concern to individuals and the nation (2). Sipalla's proposition is that the novel uses dialogue to push the boundaries of Kenyan literature to include women's experiences.

Githiora establishes an important connection between women and national history to provide a strong sense of their involvement in the life of the nation. The literary representation of the historical events affecting Kenyans shows that *Wanjira* is a woman's story which aims to narrate women's historical participation and hence the re-evaluation of their place in Kenya's postcolonial history. The protagonist's involvement in the historical events narrated in the novel makes her a significant member of the nation's history. She is therefore involved in the creation of a new national narrative which acknowledges women's participation in the social-cultural and social political realm of the nation.

Acquisition of education has a major influence on the girl-child as in the case of Wanjira whose identity in the postcolonial nation is influenced by university education. She is, therefore, different from other women who have not had the benefit of education. Her determination to acquire university education transcends women's marginal spaces while her resolve to marry a man from the Luo community helps her to explore nationalism that is gender inclusive, embracing all ethnic groups living in Kenya. Through her, Githiora depicts the dialogic connection between selfhood and nationhood as she raises questions about femininity and nationalism. For instance, Wanjira is given a role to play in the making of Kenya as an individual and a citizen; an activist for unity and tolerance among the various ethnic groups.

As a woman and a member of the imagined community, Wanjira is situated within the discourse of national identification and she shares a common historical experience with the rest of the people living in Kenya. We view Githiora as being made and as a maker of the nation, therefore, there is a dual relationship between Wanjira and Kenya that contributes a measure of luminosity to her female self. The Kenya in which Wanjira aims to foster her sense of national belonging becomes the right place for her to preserve and encourage individual and national identity.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has examined problematic representations of the female self and national identity with regard to womanhood and discussed new findings about the interactions of ethnicity, sexuality, gender and social class in women's lives. The focus has been on the nation as primarily and fundamentally affecting individual identification. The complex and multiple ways in which women (re)define themselves as members of a nation are characterised by consciousness or choice. The next chapter explores the question of the female self and national identity in the

socio-cultural and socio-political environment against the backdrop of violence against women. The chapter examines how a society that physically, psychologically or sexually abuses women metaphorically inculcates sickness into the female self.

CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN WRITERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SELF AND THE NATION

5.1 An Overview of Violence towards Women

This chapter depicts women writers making a plea for reasonable and thoughtful treatment of women in relation to violence towards women. Violence is the violation of one's humanity and a transgression of social relations in regard to the mind and the body of the victim. Violation encroaches on women's dignity by erasing one's belief in oneself. The female self is rendered sick metaphorically as demonstrated in this chapter even as the victims fight back to protect their personal dignity. In the event that they are too traumatised to resist, fellow women and sometimes men come to their aid in a bid to help them to begin to identify themselves as dignified members of a nation.

This chapter explores identity in view of women's writing about the female self's perspective on violence with regard to an attempt to write about the literary self. Investigating violence against women in postcolonial Kenya is important because violence is a social ill afflicting women. Sexual violation particularly takes the form of conflict between men and women as two parties clearly distinguished by gender. The use of sexuality as an expression of gender power relations is represented in discourses of gender violence to facilitate reflection on the power dynamics rather than the strange and unmanageable aspects of human sexual behaviour. Incest, rape, sexual harassment and physical abuse are collective male acts of violation which men use to display brutality on the female body. These forms of violence against women point to a sense of helplessness and pessimism that characterise such women. The writers

discussed here confront violence against women and provide agency for women's inclusion as respectable members of the nation.

Most of the women who are violated are unable to act out their own agency. Consequently, they assume a fragmented identity. Representation as well as explication of such women's experiences is important. Moi underpins the necessity of studying women's writings:

But the study of the female tradition in literature, while not necessarily an attempt to create a female enclave is surely more than a methodological choice: it is an urgent political necessity. If patriarchy oppresses women as women, defining us all as 'feminine' regardless of individual differences, the feminist struggle must be both to undo the patriarchal strategy that makes 'femininity' intrinsic to biological femaleness, and at the same time insist on defending women precisely as women. In a patriarchal society that discriminates against women writers because they are women, it is easy enough to justify a discussion of them as a separate group. (81)

This chapter views feminist and women writings as the agents of change in regard to how women are perceived while at the same time advocating for progressive social change. The texts under discussion are Wambui Githiora's *Wanjira*, Wanjiru Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit* and Muthoni Garland's *Tracking the Scent of My Mother*.

The authors of these novels work towards allowing selected issues such as rape, incest, sexual harassment and physical abuse to enter into the discourse of gender power relations. Thus, examination of these texts is an exploration of women's self perspectives on violence and how it affects the development of the female self and national identity. Interpretation is relevant in literary discourses in an effort to construct the authors' worlds, fill in the gaps that they may not distinctly address and make correlations from their writings. Interpretive activity, therefore,

completes the purpose of reading. Jane Marcus observes that:

It is the feeling of incompleteness on the reader's part [that]... activates the interpretive process. We may read a parable or a story but we must interpret it for meaning. We feel that interpretation is a higher skill than reading and we value texts that require interpretive activity. (cited in Aitken 27)

Reading *Wanjira*, *The Unbroken Spirit* and *Tracking the Scent of My Mother* is an exploration of how writers attempt to alter the way men view women and their sexuality.

These narratives form the background against which interpretations and readings of physical and sexual violence try to make sense of male deviant behaviour that is inextricably intertwined with the constructions of sexuality and gender. Towards this end, Michel Foucault argues that rape is not a stubborn drive but a dense transfer point for relations of power, narratives of sexual violence ponder not an alien and uncontrollable part of human nature but the power dynamics of a particular culture (cited in Sabine Sielke 3). Thus, narratives of sexual violence reflect social and national contexts which the authors recast imaginatively as they depict the risk of sexual molestation as significantly greater for women than men.

The disparities of power between male and female are viewed as historically influencing sexual exploitation of women. Thus, power disparity renders sexual violation inherently non-consensual and potentially exploitative. As a result, the paradigm of violence dominates the discourse on sexual molestation and points to the othering of women. Women writers make concerted efforts to constitute the self even though the voice of the self embodied in the text is correspondingly composite and fluctuating, to a degree that distances it from any cohesive sense of self or identity (Harrison 132). The implication that self is a textual representation depicts women's writing as parallel to the wholeness of the text... the wholeness of the woman's

self...the essence of all creativityö (Moi 65). Womenø writings, therefore, become part of the process through which a sense of self is sought since selfhood is an identity recognition process from the literary genre which expresses rather than produces meaning.

Many women suffer, at one time or another, from male pestering, disgrace, abuse and aggression due to their gender disposition as female. On the contrary, men are rarely subjected to sexual or physical violence by females. Therefore, the impact of sexual persecution focuses on women because of the common belief that males respond favourably when propositioned by females. Subsequently, writers make reference to gender differences in sexuality in their construction of female sexuality as victimisation. They also depict womenø subjectivity in the hands of men who rape, harass or beat them up. Consequently, the supremacy of the female narrative, in the words of Northrop Frye recognises ò every work of literature, as something produced for its own time, is an ideological documentö (cited in Aitken 11). The implication here is that literary writings are privileged as a medium for representation and analysis of complexities of life in the case here with regard to hostility against women as discussed in this chapter.

5.2 Symbolic Representation of Violence at the Stratum of the Female Self

One distressing consequence of unequal gender power relations is cruelty towards women and infringement on their sexuality. Although physical pain and psychological violation that come with defilement cannot be adequately represented, writers, through reminiscences communicate the torment that comes with acts of sexual abuse. The writers attempt to break the silence that shrouds sexual contravention in order to speak about the appalling aspects of rape, incest, sexual harassment and physical violence. Literature provides one of the opportunities of representation where images of womenø oppression and exploitation are accessible. The womenø writings considered in this chapter are feminist in nature and make the female portrayal

accessible as the point at which to begin a critique of the development of the female self and national identity. Moi hails feminist studies as essentially concerned with nurturing personal growth and raising the individual consciousness by linking literature to life, particularly to the lived experience of the reader (42). However, depiction is different from reality, though it is the backdrop against which analysis is made in an effort to unearth actuality.

Githiora in *Wanjira* presupposes female violation as a socio-cultural aspect that influences the female and national identity in addition to education, marriage and inter-ethnic strife. Githiora uses the literary space to address gang rape culture at the university where male students pick women off the streets for sexual gratification. In order to avoid paying for sex they cry collection! (119). As a result, groups of male students rape the woman who is unlucky enough to have agreed to accompany a male student to the university halls of residence. Lucy is one such woman who is about to be sexually molested by men who consider women as mere things to be used and abused (120). Wanjira and Josephine rescue her but they too almost fall victim of rape. However, they are assisted by two male students, Mugo and Shiundu. The two young men are an embodiment of the male moral conscience that is ashamed, pained and frustrated by other male students' acts of sexual violation, gang rape. Wanjira and Josephine are the epitome of gender solidarity and female bonding. This explains why they are eager to help a fellow woman from a male student body that is dominantly sexist by condemning the culture of collections. By so doing, they underline the feminist as well as women writers call for a positive transformation of society; affirmation of women as members of the nation who should be respected.

Women have a public and private role to play and hence Wanjira is upset that men at higher institutions of learning can resort to rape. She goes through emotions of sadness, anger and sheer stupefaction. How could university men engage in rape? Were some of these would-be

rapists in her lectures and tutorials?ö (124). The implication is that she is shocked by the occurrence of rape, a barbaric act, which contributes to the fragmentation of women who fall victim and hence her resolve to castigate male behaviour that negatively encroaches on women's dignity.

The Chaplain of Saint Paul's University Chapel underscores Wanjira's humanness and godliness by exalting her for her courage. She neither stops to worry about the danger she faces from the unruly male students nor does she care that the woman is not from the university. She forges 'ahead with courage born of outrage... [challenges] the would-be rapists and defilers of womanhood;í [rescues] the woman from the jaw of the attackersö (123). Furthermore, she sensitises male students to end the harmful and dangerous practice of entertaining prostitution and rape on campus by challenging male students to stop it. Her contention is that, 'women should not be defiled and forced into sexual acts against their willö (123). Wanjira uses the Kamukunji as the forum where the female students should present the issue about female sexual harassment even though her boyfriend, Luka, is against it.

The notion of changing women's fortune in Kenya propels the female students to tackle female subjugation through sexual violence at the Kamukunji even though Luka would rather defer any other issue except the one related to Ngugi wa Thiongo's arrest. However, Wanjira thinks that Ngugi's release is as important as women's liberation from sexual violation. She, therefore, refuses to postpone that which concerns her fellow women and takes up the matter as a woman for she reckons that only a woman can play the role of advocacy in regard to issues concerning female defilement. Consequently, she brings to the fore female sexual violation and stipulates that 'The gist of the argument is that rape and harassment of women [are] as crucial an issue as the fight for release of political prisoners and the fight for human rights of all Kenyansö

(124). She challenges Luka to “Tell [her] of a worse violation of women rights than rape” (124). The female students decide to play the role of sisterhood as propagated by feminism by asking men abstain from subjugating women and hence their resolve: “Let’s accept our responsibilities as women and fight this collection nonsense. You know some things need no negotiations” (125). By implication, Githiora is making a demand on educated women to take full advantage of “the privileged positions they [find] themselves in as members of a selected few” (125) and extend the boundaries that confine them in a bid to “improve the quality of life for women at the university” (126) and by extension all women living in postcolonial Kenya.

Through a journal entry, we learn that unlike in the past when female students did not actively participate in Kamukunji meetings, they cause a “quite a stir” [they stand] by the sidelines, as usual, but this time not merely listening. [They are] waiting [their] turn (127). When their turn finally comes, they talk against the “collection” culture at the university that is tantamount to gang rape. They forcefully drive their agenda on female molestation to the extent that the male students realise that women students’ reluctance to participate in Kamukunji is really a matter of choice and not because they have no minds, or mouths of their own. Wangu is the first one to talk:

Everyone here knows about collections on campus. It is a horrible practice and a terrible violation of women’s human rights. How can we blame the government for denying Kenyans their basic human rights when our very own community at this university keeps quiet about the rights of women who are raped by our very own fellow students? All our lives we have been called the future leaders. How can we, who will become Kenya’s doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen and scientists, engage in rape and such gross violation of the fundamental rights of women? (128)

She uses rhetorical questions which are meant to initiate dialogue at private and public level by pointing out the contradiction that human beings live with whenever they adopt a premise that is biased against others. The implication is that unequal gender power relations undermine women and hence the need to appeal for rationality and consideration towards them.

Persuading the male students, who are the culprits, to desist from subjecting women to rape, Wanjira conforms to African feminism which Carole Boyce Davies points out that it is not antagonistic to men but it challenges them to be aware of certain silent aspects of women's subjugation (9) for instance rape. Wanjira points out that "Rape [is] anathema in all civilized society and [cannot] be tolerated in [their] university community" (128). Josephine adds that "Rape causes various physical and emotional trauma" (129) and thus portrays sexual violation as having psychological implications on the violated. The female students' anger at women's rape is featured by the university paper which makes references to Wanjira and her female counterparts as taking the lead on issues concerning women in the society. The paper writes:

Future leaders to watch. We have decided to maintain the spirit born on the night of the would-be collection of Lucy, a woman we must thank for helping us come to our senses and realise that we university women have a job to do besides reading books and preparing for our examinations and good jobs upon graduation. (129)

This excerpt means that women in 21st Century Kenya have to participate in education as well as social matters. Their attack on sexual violators is by extension a castigation of patriarchal practices that subjugate women.

Furthermore, it is a pointer to the notion that gang rape is a collective male act of violation that men use to display brutality on the female body. Susan Brownmiller claims that both the possibility and actuality of rape are political tools perpetuating "male dominion over women by

forceö (209). The culture of ðollectionsø at the university, therefore, perpetuates women subjugation, an experience that silences them. Githiora seems to sanction against womenø silence and invisibility in the limited textual space that she assigns to Lucy and thereby gives her substance and voice. While at the university where she is almost gang raped, Lucy can be considered to be a woman in an alien environment where her screaming initiates her reclamation and refiguring of women in the personal and national history.

The female studentsø decision to confront violence against women is an indication of their quest for womenø inclusion in the nation. Wanjiraø brother, Kairu, cannot fathom how his sister can be one of the female students addressing others at the Kamukunji, ðWhoever heard of a woman addressing a Kamukunjiö (131). He blames her boyfriend, Luka, whom he accuses of putting wild ideas into her head. This is because he does not know that Wanjira has made a reflection on her role in the society and reckons that it is no time to ðbe just an onlooker when terrible things í [happen] in my country? I must do somethingö (114). She therefore decides to crusade against womenø oppression at the university, and by extension negotiates a space for women in the society.

Tracking the Scent of My Mother is a story that is directly based on the symbolic echelon of the female self and it rethinks female selfhood and nationhood. The novella is set in the countryside and characterises womenø subjectivity through patriarchy and sexual molestation. Examination of literary representation of women and their difference from real women circumstances become a fertile ground to begin a critical appreciation of the definite female self reality. This is because the descriptions of the female self produced by womenø acts of writing are part of the context in which women live. Therefore, when the imagery of the female

self is read differently, from a feminist eye, women writings go a long way in altering contemporary Kenya's perceptions of women.

Muthoni Garland uses writing as a mode to express, define and explain incest as sexual violence. Her narrative defines the female voice on physical and sexual violence, especially incest. She attempts to claim textual autonomy to affirm her right to narrate a taboo subject and also physical violence against women. The narrative is told from a feminist eye and provides a female perspective on physical and sexual assault. The patriarchal rural society in which she bases the narrative is silent on these. The silence from the environment in which the acts are perpetrated influence the survivor's complex and compounded response as we witness from the events in the narrative. Through writing, the author validates and legitimizes discussions of the victim's experience of physical and sexual defilement. As a consequence, women's individual struggle is considered metaphoric and representative of all women who may be victims of similar violation today.

The story is told from the perspective of the first person. Writing on women who experience hostility from men in a way amounts to self-writing which is associated with the autobiography which articulates the self through the pronoun 'I'. Celia Britton says that:

...at the intersection of postcolonial and feminist theory, a substantial body of critical texts now exists on literary representations of the subjectivity of postcolonial women. These representations may be fictional or auto biographical... (cited in Nicholas Harrison 132-133)

The inference here is that articulation of self is possible even in works that are not autobiographies through first person narrative voice. The female voice in the textual representation is a major concern of this chapter especially the violated woman as a silenced

subject finding voice. The ability to speak out facilitates the women's movement from patriarchal selves to a postcolonial affirmed selves. Towards this end, the story revolves around Scholastica as the protagonist who conveys her inner thoughts to the audience, relates her experiences and tells of her own and other people's experiences in the text. It is against this background that the analysis of the text is undertaken. The first-person narrative mode makes it possible for the narrator, Scholastica, to also be a character within her own story. She reveals the plot by referring to the view-point as the character 'I' in the first person singular or 'we' as the first person plural. The 'I' character directly conveys the deep internal unspoken thoughts of the narrator.

As the 'I' character Scholastica takes actions, makes judgments, expresses opinions, biases and hence fails to allow the reader to objectively comprehend some of the other characters' thoughts, feelings or understanding. She gives and also withholds information based on her own viewing of events. As a result, the first person narrator emerges as a distinctive character from the author and plays the role of omniscient narrator.

The narrative opens with background information on the parents of Scholastica, the protagonist in the novella. She says, "My father wooed my mother in a 1200 Datsun pick-up [which was] sold so soon afterwards that it must have felt to her like a false promise" (6). By focusing on the narrator's parents' courtship, Garland outlines the moment that women exercise the greatest power. Mary Poovey observes:

í the myth of romantic love tends to freeze the relationship between a man and a woman at its moment of greatest intensityí when women seem to exercise their greatest power, romantic love seems to promise to women an emotional intensity that ideally compensates for all the practical opportunities they are denied. (53)

Women are viewed as exercising power over men only at the time of courtship. The narrator's father is aware of the authority a maiden woman holds and hence woos her by using his 1200 Datsun pick-up as a symbol of his potential riches. The vehicle is symbolic of his economic achievement but he sells it as soon as he marries her.

Gilligan Erikson points out that before marriage, the female can only hold her identity in the abeyance as she prepares to attract the man by whose name she will be known, by whose status she will be defined. The man who will rescue her from emptiness and loneliness by filling the inner space (cited in Aitken 38). The female self-identity is delayed and only realised at the time of matrimony. Marriage is viewed as a process that helps the female to almost have self-fulfilment. Patriarchal society views women as the other and only come close to finding their selves when a man comes by to ask for their hand in marriage. It is therefore, difficult for women to achieve anything like full femininity...become solid defenders of the patriarchal status quo (Moi 64). Thus, given an opportunity, they adopt strategies to counter patriarchy.

While female identity is thought to be dependent on male, it is not so for men whose identity precedes intimacy and generativity in the optimal cycle of human separation and attachment, for women these tasks seem instead to be fused. Intimacy goes along with identity as the female comes to know herself as she is known through her relationship with [men] (Erikson cited in Aitken 38). The insinuation here is that women's self-definition is pegged on men. Consequently, their speech is deprived of them since they have internalised their subordinate space and view themselves as the other rather than the self.

Garland sets the female identity through a relationship of antagonism and violence. She makes a supplication for the silenced woman to speak in a different voice; and also the need to allocate her space and speech denied her by patriarchy. Erikson views the different voices of

women as necessary for them to:

í see the different realities of women's lives and to hear differences in their voicesí By positing instead two different modes, we arrive at the more complex rendition of human experience, which sees the truth of separation and attachment in the lives of women and men. (cited in Aitken 38)

There are differences between male and female other than the biological differentiation since their experiences in life are also dissimilar in instances where the female is viewed as the "other" Garland appears sceptical about the possibility of affirming the female self. She does not displace women's otherness by allowing them to presume a different voice.

Despite the fact that the narrator's mother knows right from the time of courtship that the man already has another wife, she marries him. The narrator says, "But she did not complain about that or the fact that he was already married" (6). Garland depicts polygamy in the African setting as acceptable even to the young beautiful bride. Discussing polygamy in another content, Eustace Palmer states that "The issue of polygamy in Africa" does not necessarily result in the erosion of the status and dignity of the women and that it is perfectly acceptable and welcomed by both men and women" (40). On the contrary, polygamy is still a controversial issue in the postcolonial society as a tool that men use to exercise power over women. It is no wonder then that the narrating character says: "To remind us women of our place, he took to asking upon the slightest excuse, "since when did the neck stretch above the head" (17). Women are consistently reminded of their low status in relation to men. Their silence and endurance is mistaken for acceptance of their predicament and their development in selfhood and nationhood is interfered with.

The narrating as well as the experiencing character in this narrative is Scholastica. Her father marries a second wife in the hope of getting a son in line with the African tradition to ensure his immortality. The first wife has borne him five daughters. He justifies his action to the clan by arguing that ða man cannot eat a single slice of bread. [Announces] to his age-mates that to propagate tradition-he [has] to have more than one woman to warm his bedö (6). He certainly marries another woman to warm his bed as well as try his luck with her to father a son. ðBut really, he [is] looking [forward] to name his late fatherí my father yearned for a sonö (6). The second wife fulfils his wish by bearing him a son. He shares his joy with Miano, his neighbour who boasts that the narrator's father can now ðflood the country with sonsö (7). The neighbour's comment is a confirmation that traditionally, sons are considered more valuable than daughters. Unfortunately, his wife does not experience a fulfilled self on the birth of a son. Her individual self is fragmented for she is torn between tradition and modernity.

The narrated Æ character, Scholastica, is despised by her father who always reprimands her and maintains she never listens and that ðOnly lasting of life can teach herö (7). Her father makes such pronouncements to spite her as he extends the same animosity towards the rest of the womenfolk in his family. The narrator points out that he ð[avoids] engaging with his household women. He often [chuckles] in a deep, biting tone, women have no upright words. Only crooked onesö (8). This underscores his negative attitude towards women. He degrades them as he condemns them to speechlessness and insignificance. The father of the experiencing Æ refers to his two wives as ðTwo pots of poisonö (21). This is an explicit denunciation of polygamy, but he does not mind the privileges that he enjoys for he does not restrain his inclination to sexually exploit them. The narrator says that he would ðYank my mother by the hand to his room to taste her brand of poisonö (21). He imprisons her female body for his sexual gratification without

opening other avenues for her to realise full selfhood for example empowering her economically. His errant behaviour is captured by his demand for conjugal rights during the day in the full knowledge of their children.

Garland portrays the narrator's mother as the silenced woman who does not talk. The absence or lack of speech from both the junior and the senior wife can be construed as a silence that embodies a meaning. In reference to silence, Michele Bullous concedes that silence could be unquiet. She says, "notion of silence, perhaps one that speaks [and that silence is] something more than the opposite of speech" (i). The implication is that silence of women is a metaphor for the otherness that characterises them. They are silenced although they have ability to speak and thus they are deprived of their voice. Garland, in this novella, underscores the powerful aspect of women's purposeful silence. Although the narrator's mother is silenced, her presence pervades the entire narrative. Garland takes it upon herself to give a voice to women by breaking the silence. She does so by speaking on behalf of women who have been silenced by patriarchy.

Patriarchy seems to undermine women's self-esteem and their capacity for self-definition. Diana Tietjens Meyers argues that "the pernicious gender imagery produced by patriarchal cultures has a profound and deleterious effect on women's capacities for self-determination" (i). The implication here is that women are brutalized by a patriarchal society that negates their female self. Garland exposes deprivation, but we are disappointed because her narrative merely points out the harmful patriarchal notions and practices but does not envision a more constructive image of the female self in Kenya. The author deploys the dichotomous view of male-female warring relationship to partially construct the image of an autonomous female self. The narrator asks, "But what was there I wondered, to admire in a boy who swelled his mouth like a Columbus monkey to release nasty screams?" (7). Contrary to her father's pride and joy in getting a son, she

looks down on him since he cannot do most of the things she does, for instance, climbing trees or swimming in the Ragati River. She downplays her father's preference for sons. Furthermore, she is unhappy that her brother drains her mother's strength by describing him as 'a boy who gripped my mother's breast and sucked until she whimpered' (7). This underscores sibling and gender rivalry since Scholastica perceives her brother as a burden to her mother and thus sympathises with a fellow woman.

The narrator is at first denied the opportunity to acquire formal education unlike her brother. This reinforces a notion that opportunities are lacking for or are not made available to women. The narrator's mother, in her wisdom, ensures that her daughter gets some form of literacy by instructing the boy to teach his sister what he learns in school. The nights are turned into classroom sessions where Scholastica and her brother 'can sing 'ABC-EL-EMU up to Zee, and Inky-pinky-ponky, father had a donkey' (22). She also learns to read the tales of Abunuasi and from then on she stops beating her brother and when she shoots a bird she allows him to claim it. Scholastica's sensible disposition is shown in that when she realises that her brother has something to offer to make her even more competitive, she resorts to complementary behaviour towards him.

Contemporary female characters in the narrative are portrayed as leading different lives compared to the women in the 20th Century. Scholastica's mother embodies the self that is struggling to become. To enhance her modernity, she sells passion juice and buys herself bangles and hair gel. She also frequents the Four-in-One Bar where she drinks herself silly. Her behaviour embarrasses her daughter. Nevertheless, she extends a helping hand by guiding her mother into a

public transport vehicle. She is affected by her mother's manners and concedes:

I wanted to hide from the sniggers of sweat stained farmers, and the pitying glances of market women – as the clicking tongues and wagging of heads and scandalised comments turned into curses – people shuffled back, sniffed the air in exaggerated fashion, staring at her as though she'd turned into a baboon right in front of them. Ripples of 'Ngai Fafa! What is that smell? Haiya, Devil Worshiper!'. (27)

Scholastica is embarrassed by her mother's drunkenness but she does not abandon her. Instead, she assists her drunken mother to board a vehicle and they go home together.

The second wife's conduct startles people, including her own husband, and he violently beats her up. The narrator describes a physical encounter between her parents satirically:

His flailing arms [greet] us the moment we [emerge] at the bridge. My mother [shields] me with her body and [urges] me to run, run away, before unfolding herself to turn the attack on him. They [fight] all the way to his room, and all night their wrestling [rumble] the ground. (29)

The narrator's father physically assaults his second wife. Garland highlights wife beating as a form of physical violence towards women. However, the narrator tells us that her mother fights back. Her husband tries to protect her from modernity which he considers a bad influence on her. He vows to restrict his wife's movement and shouts that neither her 'drunken prostitute and devil's messenger nor her useless daughter [will] ever leave the farm again' (29). The second wife's endeavour to embrace modernity is thwarted by a man who resents change if it undermines his authority. He feels threatened and vows to lock up both wife and daughter to protect them against modernity. Unfortunately, Scholastica's father is unable to restrict and confine his second wife. She runs away from home the following day never to return. As far as Aduke is concerned,

“Marriage, traditional or modern, is a veil of submission and deception, limiting the sense of perception of the woman. It amounts to pure obscuration of the woman’s self-identity” (70).

Some women are incarcerated in marriage and thus unable to realise a full female self.

The narrator’s father hopes to contain his second wife in a traditional set up but he fails. The narrator simply says, “The next morning my mother was gone” (29). Her husband uses physical violence as a form of control sanctioned by men in the patriarchal society whereby beating a woman is generally acceptable. The legitimacy of any form of violence against women reinforces the submission of women in a society that does not listen to them. Luce Irigaray points at the need to respect woman: “one must listen to her differently in order to hear an, other -meaning” which is constantly in the process of weaving itself” (cited in Moi 145). The disappearance of Scholastica’s mother is a revolt against a society that suffocates her and happens as a way of signifying her realisation of her identity. She is portrayed as disillusioned by the rural space that restricts women and perhaps ventures into the urban area in search of a wider space where she can exercise her freedom.

The silent manner in which the narrator’s mother disappears from the village can be perceived as a weapon in her struggle towards selfhood. Her determination not to speak can be attributed to the sense of betrayal which she feels as a modern woman who is subjected to a patriarchal order, which inscribes silence on women. Her silence, therefore, is powerfully communicative as it acquires meaning as a way of articulating her agency. The reader, just like the experiencing narrator, becomes curious about her mother’s whereabouts. The reader, consciously or unconsciously, trails along with the narrator to track her mother. The narrator searches for her own individual self as she embarks on a search for her mother. The narrator paints an image of a mother constrained by a social environment characterised by patriarchal

destruction of the female self. All the characters in this novella are tight-lipped about the departure of the narrator's mother; it is only the narrator who searches for her. Even her husband is not bothered by the desertion of his young wife; to him she is merely a sexual object whose place is easily filled by their daughter.

Violence against women is a phenomenon that introduces a new mode of women's expression in literature. Garland challenges the "living happily ever after myth of marriage" (Aduke 69). The narrator's mother, as a wife, is a shadow of her individual self since her husband prevents her from advancing her female self. The physical violence she suffers from her husband interferes with the development of her female self and national identity. Thus, *Tracking the Scent of My Mother* is replete with metaphors of impossible love and marriage. The narrator's mother does not relate well with her husband so she opts out of the marriage. Even his senior wife cannot be said to have a cordial relationship with her husband. When the narrator herself enters in a come-we-stay marriage with a Luo man who is lecturer at Maseno University, it also fails.

Garland paints a negative picture of marriage due to the violence that characterises it. Aduke states that it will not be right to suggest that African female writers advocate divorce or single parenting. Rather [she] "gives" voice to some of women in perpetual [marriage] bondage" (71). There is need, therefore, to reclaim such women from abusive marriages. For instance, the second wife does not find fulfilment in marriage and as a result, she suffers stunted growth and is condemned to a place of inferiority and inadequacy. She disappears from her abusive marriage with the help of Nehemiah, but before he knows what is happening, she is taken away by a cowboy-hatted man. He explains: "She [slips] away and when he [catches] up with her crossing the bridge near Blue Post Hotel, she [waves] him away. [Then] he [sits] in his car at the parking lot only to see her disappear with a cowboy-hatted man in a white Peugeot 405" (35). The

first reference to this vehicle is made when the narrator's mother visits the Four -In- One Bar at Karatina. Perhaps this is where she first meets the man in a large cowboy hat, as he drops school girls. The narrator's mother becomes a kind of a sexual object moving from one man to another.

The author does not tell us what eventually happens to Scholastica's mother. However, she rekindles her memory through the daughter who relentlessly searches for her without success. On the blurb of *Tracking the Scent of my Mother*, the life of the narrator is summarised thus:

Scholastica develops a close bond with her mother, an extraordinarily beautiful young woman trapped in an abusive marriage. When her mother abruptly escapes her life of drudgery and bondage, Scholastica is left abandoned, condemned to grow up vulnerable and alone.

This explains her distressful cry, "Where is my mother?" (32), when her father rapes her. Regrettably, the girl is severely affected by the disappearance of her mother. In her absence, she becomes vulnerable to sexual assault. Unfortunately she does not publicly confess her father's wrongdoing.

When the narrating -I who is also a character is raped, the narrative account of her rape ordeal becomes a record of women's struggles to overcome the silence of women who are violated. Women writers help the rape victims to find voice again. They take up sexual violation and depict aspects of problematic agency in the context of women as sexual objects and who are annihilated in the event of rape. As the sexually abused character, the narrator gives details of the rape scene using figurative language. She says "I was hoeing my father's fields one dusty afternoon" when my father came to work his *jembe*. He hammered it into me, then twisted and turned over my ground" (31-32). The author uses metaphorical language to refer to the rape ordeal. She uses the word -jembe, a hoe, in reference to her father's penis while -ground stands

for the victim's genitalia. The experience makes Scholastica to momentarily lose her memory. She reckons:

Roaring in my ears. The stink of snuff. Talons ripping through me. Still, it did not end. Roaring. Ripping. Heat. Where is my mother? Only when I opened my eyes to the shape of the clouds did I scream [,] *Irimu ria Nyakondo*, the ogre who eats children was mocking me from up high. (32)

The father, in the absence of his second wife, devours their daughter, hence the metaphorical reference to him as a monster that eats up children instead of protecting them.

When Scholastica regains her composure, she goes home and does not share the ordeal with the rest of her family members. She says, "Shivering, I staggered to the compound. On the way the twins glared at me like I was faking pain to get from digging, and my brother sniggered at my torn and strained dress. But my senior-mother smelled the air and hammered my father's wooden door. He ignored her" (32). Her step sisters do not understand what she has been subjected to. They think she is feigning pain as an excuse to stop working on the farm. The snigger from her brother is equally regrettable. He also does not fathom the ordeal his sister has been subjected to. However, the senior mother realises that her step daughter is violated by her own father and tries to reach out to him for an explanation without success.

Unfortunately, just like the victim, the senior mother resorts to silence amidst cries of disappointment: "Yesu Christo! Senior mother beat her head against the door" (32). Her failure to play an active role to pursue the male perpetrator of incest denotes the resigned attitude on the part of women who are unable to raise a finger against female subjugation. Furthermore, the duties and obligations of paternal authority including the responsibility to provide for the needs of the family and to protect the family members are in question. The narrator's father fails in his

duties when he turns on his daughter and sexually abuses her. The senior mother's exclamation "My house is falling!" (32), is an outcry of a woman whose husband has failed in his responsibility. He not only destroys on the family's reputation, but also the wider community, the imagined nation.

The first wife abandons her task as a mother when she fails to extend a helping hand to her step daughter. Following her violation, she lies on the bed she shares with her brother as the rags from her mother's cut-off skirts soak up her bleeding. She vomits, but unlike in the past when her own mother wipes her mouth, there is nobody to clean her mouth. The senior mother is expected to do something tangible under such circumstances; instead, she opts for resignation. Garland seems to blame passive women, who refuse to fight against patriarchy.

Garland takes it upon herself to expose a father who is sexually abusing his daughter. By so doing, she makes the topic of incest surface through the confession she herself assumes. She exposes the audience to the horror of the sexual crime, within the family unit, in an attempt to subvert the transgressive power fathers have over their daughters. She makes public an experience that most families hide. Garland uses literary representation to voice and fight against incest and rape. She intertwines Scholastica's abusive father and the sexual violence that women face in their daily lives. She does this in her effort to depict sexual violence as transcending fictional representation. Her main concern is to provide agency to end the sexual violence towards women.

Through writing, the author speaks for and to the silenced women. As she speaks to these two categories, she reconceptualises the place of motherhood in contemporary Kenya. She establishes the mother image as a representation of maternal love, protection and comfort. It is no wonder then that the narrating and the experiencing narrator is affected by her mother's

disappearance. She suffers hunger and for the first time since her mother run away ö[discovers] that in a house full of women motherless children often sleep hungry. Sometimes food [brings] with it diarrhoea. Once, broken glass in water cut [her] tongueö (31). The narrator points out the problems children have to endure, while at the same time implicating inadequate motherhood as a liability in the postcolonial nation.

This text conceptualises the development of the female self and national identity as problematic due to the plight of women in a society that is predominantly patriarchal. Scholastica's moral purity is defiled, but she is unable to break away from a father who binds both her body and soul. Instead, she blackmails him into educating her by extending more sexual favours to him. This is in the hope of realising her potential and growth of her self. Using sex as a weapon to acquire education underscores Scholastica's disposition to exploit sexual relations to empower herself. Unfortunately, she drops out of school to deliver her father's baby. Her uncle bemoans her fate: öWhat a waste of high quality brain matterö (38). She does not complete her öOö level education and her life is therefore lived around meaningless and incidental acts that continue to infringe on the development of her selfhood.

The senior-mother ö[flusters] wings to spread the gossipö (37) about the incestuous relationship between Scholastica and her father. Her fellow Christians, who the author ironically refers as öher disciples[,] spread the Word and it [multiplies]ö (37). The Biblical allusion to rumours as the ðWordø of God is a confirmation of the shallow nature of the Christianity the senior mother and her friends practice. They fail to give guidance and it takes the elders, the

chief, sub-chief and the policemen to arbitrate over the matter. Scholastica refuses to talk. She ponders:

I could deal with my father's renunciation of me, his swearing with forefinger pointed up to God he now reclaimed, as though the incestuous devils had only plagued me. I could deal with being thrown out of home with my blank-face daughter as though the sight reminded them of their own vulnerability. I could stomach the spitting and hissing at the market. (37)

She takes responsibility for her actions while her father denies everything in self-defence. Surprisingly, she is happy that the child [brings] back the scent of [her] mother with such intensity that [she] sometimes [faints] with gratitude and yearning (38). Strangely enough, the child reminds her of her mother and she is ready to bear anything for the sake of her child whom, she concedes, is a replica of her own mother.

From the incestuous relationship, Scholastica bears a daughter who is retarded and she reckons that it is not surprising [being] that she [is] my father's (37). The child, a female, who is haunted by non-identity; no name is assigned to her. She is merely referred to as 'my daughter' and hence the mother takes up the onerous task of making herself and her daughter visible. Female invisibility is depicted as a challenge in this community. Uncle Erasmus is singled out as a man who ventures out to empower women through education. He takes Scholastica and her child to a mission centre where there are 'so many teenage fruits of incest, homelessness, and murder' (38). This is an indictment of a Kenyan society which seems subdued by immorality. The narrator's quest for education is met to some extent for she manages to complete her secondary education, learns how to sew, bake and take some mechanical courses. Through the

help of a fund raiser, she enrolls in a teachers training college and puts her mentally challenged daughter in a boarding school.

Garland uses the love relationship between Scholastica and the Luo man to represent the effect of rape on the identity of a person. He sympathises with her troubled milieu after she confesses "the bitter portions of [her] background" (40). It is surprising that the author describes Scholastica's boyfriend ethnically, but it is important to show that humanity transcends ethnic boundaries. The boyfriend points out that her "story [serves] as a tragic metaphor for Africa" (40). Scholastica's experience points at the troubles of women in a society that physically and sexually violates them. Garland depicts the private and public realms of the narrator's self interwoven through a narrative that examines an individual's contentious self. When she misconceives that her lover has sexually abused her stunted child, she murders him in revenge. Her action can be traced to a disturbed childhood which becomes an appendage in her adulthood. As a result, the reader experiences sadness in as far as the fate of the girl child in Kenya is concerned.

The protagonist's first and only pregnancy is from her father. When she decides to become pregnant again, she is unable to do so or her boyfriend fails to make it happen. The relationship between them is constrained since both of them "... have not internalised the notion that the woman's self actualisation is no longer dependent on her biological role of reproduction.... (Ify Achufusi, 101). Scholastica and her boyfriend are yet to ascend the ladder that currently governs relationships which perceive children as paramount in marriage. Her disenchantment with him is communicated as follows:

... my Luo man collected my daughter from school. When I arrived, my daughter was on his lap, his arms wrapped around her, her body jerking, her mouth gurgling at the ceiling.

I smelled the Pilsner beer and sweat. I saw the bloody scratches on his face, neck and arms. I heard the Luo words he repeated over and over .í He sounded possessive. (41-42)

Scholastica is suspicious and misinterprets her lover's act of cuddling the child. The intensity of her annoyance with his perceived behaviour prompts her to murder him. The narrator turns out to be a murderer and thus portrays her capacity for aggressive behaviour that exposes the turmoil and trauma that she lives with as a woman who is not only abused by her father, but also her boyfriend and her mother's lovers.

Scholastica seems to have a psychological problem which can be traced to her childhood. She confirms this saying "I scratch through the tracks in my mind to see where I stumbled, and try to differentiate what happened as a result of what was done to me and what happened as a result of my own shortcomings" (46). This denotes a reflective self who assumes part of the responsibility for her actions while at the same time attributing her behaviour to other powers beyond her control. A flashback on the murders she commits confirms her warped female self. The narrator's life is compounded by the psychological suffering she experiences. This is exemplified by the murders she commits, but investigations do not yield the perpetrator because she stealthily covers all of them except the one of the lecturer. For instance, she kills her step sister, Faith, by pushing her into river Ragati because she spies on her when she has sex with her brother. She inwardly takes pleasure when she is not apprehended for Faith's death. She lets us into her unspoken world:

I'd grip the rope with my hands; I'd dangle my feet on the edge, and dry in the sweet morning sun. On this same plank-and-rope bridge, two years later, I pushed

my half-sister, Faith into Ragati's rushing waters; it was not my fault that she had never learnt to swim. (9)

When questioned by a policeman, her father, senior mother, chief or sub-chief, she feigns illness. After visiting the crime scene, testing the planks and the ropes of the bridge, studying the boulders and rushing waters, the policeman concludes that Faith carelessly died while playing on the bridge as a result of "a most unfortunate accident" (25). Scholastica also kills Nehemiah, who is both her mother's and her own sex partner.

Nehemiah's death emanates from his confession that he drove her mother away from home early one morning. This is the day she disappeared. In addition, he says when he stopped to fill his *Matatu* at the Shell BP Station near the River Chania in Thika, she slipped away and when he caught up with her crossing the bridge near the Blue Post Hotel, she waved him away. He further states that while seated in his car at the parking lot, he saw the narrator's mother disappearing with a cowboy-hatted man in a white Peugeot 405. This confession earns Nehemiah his death. The narrator says:

How was I to swallow the words of a man who'd helped steal my mother? Gooseberries [raise] their heads on my naked flesh. I [have] to snatch breath in tiny sips. í Perhaps it [is] shame or shock or fear, or just too dark for him to see, but all Nehemiah [does is] tremble as I [unfold] my body to slash his carotid artery. (35-36)

As far as Scholastica is concerned, Nehemiah plotted her mother's disappearance. This is tantamount to stealing her mother. She is never suspected of his murder and no investigations lead to her. She also kills her boyfriend when he supposedly violates her daughter. She says: "Then I [return] to seek my Luo man because despite the intimate things he [knows] that [bind] us, he [has] used my daughter to punish me. And I [kill] him because of the grip, power and

circular nature of historyö (42). Her acts of murder, incest and the circumstances under which these acts are committed help the reader to understand the complex motivation behind her actions.

Scholastica is distraught at the disappearance of her mother and thus develops a distorted female self. The narrator is depicted as a victim and Garland seems to manipulate her female character's victimised position to extol courage in women. Scholastica assumes this role to mark women's visibility which is necessary for effective participation in the nation as an imagined community. Her murder of the lecturer therefore raises interest for she is not just another female but one who is ða representative of our 300,000 teachers in the country, [says] a lady lawyer in a stripped man-suit, although [she] was yet to qualify in that profession. ðYour voice is bound to cause ripplesö (43). Scholastica refuses to be relegated to the position of a congenial other who endorses her own subjugation.

The murder of the lecturer opens an avenue for self-expression and reinvigorates a sense of violence in an unfulfilled female self. Scholastica grows up in a society where she has not been allowed to contest her opinion on the oppression she is subjected to. Regarding the question of her silenced voice, it appears logical for Garland to assign her speech and a position of relative and crucial power: ðYou are to be admired after allø because instead of taking the easier route of abortion you took the burden of mothering your...father's babyö (43). The narrating character takes it upon herself to safeguard life. Consequently, she does not terminate her pregnancy even though it is from an incestuous relationship. Garland's commendation of her motherly instinct is emphasised by a castigation of the male conception of the female self as an object of sexual gratification especially in circumstances where the perpetrator is a close relative. She therefore uses textual representation to object to suppression of the girl child and also adult women as

objects of the male sexual power. She also seems to be questioning the woman's place in contemporary Kenya amidst rampant sexual violation even in the family.

Garland's purpose in this novella seems to stir a fighting spirit against sexual molestation. The protagonist, instead of focusing on the sexual abuse from her father and other men, preoccupies herself with the disappearance of her mother. By so doing, she fails to provide agency for women's violation. The Æ as the character and first narrator is presented as unfortunate. Garland reflects a consciousness that has been, up to her point of her arrest, troubled, desperate and distressed. The intensity and persisting nature of her longing to find her mother is conveyed through the following description:

Her skin is the soft yellowí her lips are tinged with pink. She has big breasts and hips and buttocks...her waist is narrow....My mother's voice trips over certain letters, but it is deep and rare. Her hair is in the latest curly kit fashion. My mother likes beads and bangles, and itchy music of Congo. (44)

Even if she wonders whether this is an accurate description of her mother, she captures features that convince us that she is a beautiful modern woman who rebels against tradition and has a strong impact on her daughter. It is no wonder then that her presence permeates the entire narrative, giving the story emotional validity, and for Scholastica's account of searching for her mother, whose absence leaves a void that is not filled in the course of the narrative.

Although the lecturer is taken to court, he is released following his defence that he was bonding with the narrator's child and did not really intend to hurt her. The narrator wonders "What is the difference between bending and bonding, and breakingí ö (46). As far as Scholastica is concerned, the lecturer abuses her daughter but he is set free and thus she takes the law into her hands. Her arrest becomes a rallying point for the author to challenge those living in

the community to apprehend violators. She says: "On the wings of my brutalised history they decided to raise awareness of the terrible plight of the girl child and the issue of domestic violence ..."(43). Garland takes a feminist stance to foreground the female protagonist in this novella as an agent of social change in regard to violence against women.

Scholastica is commended for facing challenges of life courageously. Her courage springs out of a female self consumed by despair as her background and predicament reveal. Her power and ability to fight back against such predicament is understood as a struggle to articulate her selfhood. She eventually refuses to assume the stark silence of resignation and thereby says "no" to a resigned female self. The writer uses the narrator as a catalyst for female self agency. She pushes the idea that men should not get "away with rape and defilement" (45), even though murder is not the best way to deal with the violators. Through arrest, Scholastica is allocated a self-identity that is highly politicised in order to accord her and fellow women space in the contemporary society. By so doing, the writer makes the narrating character an integral part of the experiencing narrator's quest for justice in regard to perpetrators of sexual violence.

Scholastica's search for her mother is exaggerated because even while under arrest, she appeals for the whereabouts of her mother: "But to the microphones and photographers, the interviewers and lookers-on, I appealed for news of my mother" (43). The protagonist's search for her mother is mocked rather than praised. It is a confirmation that she suffers from trauma although she does not emotionally show it through outbursts of tears; instead, she shuts the pain in a psychic vault often characterised by the radical denial of the loss of her mother. However, her life in refutation explains her tendency to aggressive behaviour. The search for her mother is symbolic of her own search for autonomy. The author not only redresses socio-economic

structures that defines gender power relations affecting the female self, but also advocates for women rights. She writes:

Editors of the *Nation* and *East African Standard* wrote editorials calling on members of parliament to plan a sexual- crimes bill. Listeners called in on Citizen, Kass, Kenya Broadcasting and Kameme FM to comment on my story. Some said I was desperate or unfortunate. (44)

The narrative is oriented towards the identity crisis of the female self in the postcolonial nation. The writer uses outrage that turns fatal to redefine the relevance of women in the nation. Although the heroine's acts of murder could be traced to a troubled female self, her action can be interpreted as a demonstration of heroic agency that marks women's commitment to resisting any form of violence against them. The author seems to suggest that only demystification of sexual issues in the domestic and public sphere can help women to chart their selfhood and nationhood.

The violence that characterises the experiencing of *ölö* is a lingering after-effect of her brutalised self. She strips herself of her humanity, dignity and becomes an apprentice of violence and hate. As such, she becomes a law unto herself and executor of violence and destruction, and evokes hatred. The disturbance she suffers as a result of her mother's disappearance, sexual victimisation and accompanying post-traumatic stress make her sense of pain unbearable and shifts her own pain to others. The narrative enacts a loss of agency by playing out intricate linkages between implication and the female self-identity in the face of physical and sexual violation.

5.3 Effects of Sexual Harassment on the Female Self

The violence and anguish that characterise women who are violated in *Wanjira* and *Tracking the Scent of my Mother* also permeates *The Unbroken Spirit*. Waithaka makes a powerful statement that sexual harassment and rape are widespread in Kenya and equates the infringement of a single woman to the violation of humanity as a whole. She stresses the inescapable collective dimension of the tragic events that take place in relation to violence against women. Her textual representation of female subjugation, though unfortunate, is a record of reaction to the day-to-day reality of women's suppression. She hopes that by exposing this personal and communal trauma, a profound revolution of human consciousness will surface; a renewed sense of nationalism for the betterment of Kenya.

Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit* establishes sexual violence as archetypal of gender difference. Her emphasis is on the conflict between males and females whereby she constructs the female as victimised even though sex drive is expected to function in an ordinary mode without resulting into aggression. Waithaka records the twisted and distorted forms of sexuality. Using her heroines Tessa, who is sexually harassed at her place of work, and Regina, who is raped while at a party, she focuses on sexual harassment and rape as acts of sexual molestation. Regina, Tessa and Toni share a house which Regina and her brother, who is studying in South Africa, inherit following the death of their parents. She finds the place lonely and invites her two friends to stay with her. The lives of these three young women are thereby intertwined.

Before embarking on a discussion of sexual molestation, there is need to differentiate between sexual harassment and rape. Mary Crawford and Rhoda Unger define sexual harassment as 'unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours and other verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature' (461). Sexual harassment involves undesirable sexual advances. On the other

hand, rape is a Latin word meaning to steal, seize or carry away. The repercussion of rape is a feeling of loss comparable to vandalism. The exploration of these abnormal acts of sexual violation against women in *The Unbroken Spirit* commences with a discussion of sexual harassment inflicted on Tessa.

When we first meet Tessa, she is working for the third month at the Marketing and Social Research Centre, Westlands, Nairobi. Being a woman she bears a great risk factor for sexual harassment in postcolonial Kenya. We witness this when Kibuchi, her workmate and boss, starts correlating power with sexuality and hence his tendency to harass Tessa sexually. This is seen when he starts making advances through suggestive remarks as he directs his male gaze at her. She feels as if he is 'undressing [her] mentally' (9). Furthermore, he conveniently places his hands around her shoulders making her even more uncomfortable. Apparently, it appears that the sexual relationship that he wants to begin with her at the workplace is not likely to be voluntary or equal because he has more power in this organisation. The boss/subordinate sex relationship Kibuchi aims at is a form of sexual exploitation that would deny Tessa the enjoyment of sexual freedom.

Kibuchi meets Tessa's boyfriend and openly tells her that he wishes 'he [were] in his shoes' (9). He even enquires whether they consider living together pointing out that if he were Jack, he would not let Tessa out of his sight because as far as he is concerned 'There are too many men out there just waiting to grab someone like [her]' (16). His verbal appraisal of Tessa is outright sexual harassment. He also enquires whether she uses condoms with her boyfriend as he makes casual sex sound as if it is the most usual thing to talk about among workmates. This disgusts Tessa, but he maintains that 'sex is natural just like eating and breathing' (16). His attitude towards sex is annoying, if not outright offensive.

Tessa is surprised that Kibuchi only thinks about sex when he comes across pretty women. As the violator he assumes that his prey is ignorant of what she wants; that he is in a position of greater power and knowledge to know better what is best for her. He attempts to deny her the right to consensual sex but she is an adamant woman who refuses to succumb to his sexual exploitation. She knows that sexual relationship between her and Kibuchi cannot be truly consensual because of the dual relationship that exists between a boss and a subordinate, and also the inherent disparity in gender power between them. Nevertheless, he consistently follows her in a bid to gratify his sexual desires. This makes her detest his oppressive and discriminatory practice towards her because he comes in her way as far as the development of her female self is concerned.

Textual representation helps us to understand the role of male power in females' lives in Kenya. In Kenya job opportunities are used to sexually exploit females and hence the sexual advances and sadistic threats which Tessa receives from Kibuchi. He exercises his male power to subjugate her. This becomes particularly so as she contemplates leaving her job rather than submit to sexual exploitation. Her refusal to succumb to Kibuchi's intimidation underscores women's revolt against subjectivity as well as a sense of courage and also outrage at a society which stereotypes women as readily available to extend sexual favours to males.

Tessa spends sleepless nights when it becomes clear to her that Kibuchi wants to seduce her by taking every opportunity to wear down her resistance by being charming, rationalising and cajoling. She also suffers low self-esteem, self blame and impaired female self-image. She is bothered by his sexual advances because he is an influential man in the company as the Director for Strategy and Client Service. She knows he can influence the direction her life takes in the organisation positively or negatively. He is also respected by the Chairman of the company and if

he so wishes he can manipulate Tessa's promotion to become the Associate Director overnight. That way, she can enjoy a six figure monthly salary, fringe benefits, bonus at the end of the year, maybe even a car. Despite his powerful placement in the company, she rationalises that she cannot compromise her integrity. She contemplates: "Would I actually consider having an affair with Kibuchi to help my career... it's ridiculous" (18). Her resolution marks her as a mature female who does not perpetuate female social stereotyping. It is also suggestive of the psychological growth she experiences in the course of harassment.

The anguish that comes with sexual harassment makes Tessa develop an unusual cheerless self since Kibuchi continues to exercise his power over her. He holds an influential position in the organisation and hence his predisposition to sexually harass her. He becomes physical, starts "groping [her] thighs" (20). This affects her psychologically and hence the anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorders she experiences. Nevertheless, she resists submission to his advances. She does not want him to use her acceptance as a bias against which favourable employment decisions affecting her can be made. Tessa knows too well that offering her body for Kibuchi's gratification will not necessarily benefit her. He will only exploit her sexually and take advantage of her gullibility. She therefore refuses to fall into Kibuchi's trap. The truth is that such men use whatever is in their power as a bait to subdue women. Through textual representation, Waithaka challenges men to change their perception of women by allowing them to exercise their right to choose what they want rather than blackmailing them. She discredits Kibuchi as a male voice that seeks to deny women their voices in matters related to sexuality. His despicable attitude is castigated as behaviour that should not find expression in contemporary Kenya.

Kibuchi is forty-five years of age, married and doing well in his employment. His current status demands that he nurtures Tessa as a daughter or a sister, but he develops monstrous tendencies. When they are travelling back to Nairobi from a workshop, he tries to take advantage of the situation. He drives into a restaurant for a drink even though she insists she does not want a drink. She refuses to get out of the car to the annoyance of Kibuchi. His contention that he cannot stop thinking about [Tessa], how beautiful [she is] and sexy ' I keep thinking about [her] all the time and how good it would feel to be with [her]' (42) affirms his intent to continue pestering her. His talk is characteristic of the male gaze and is aimed at nothing more than bullying her to submitting to him sexually. Instead of accepting his romantic proposition, she gets irritated and develops a fragmented self that becomes obvious to everybody at her place of work.

The female protagonist does not underestimate the power of her molester. Tessa seeks advice on how best to deal with the situation from Toni who suggests that she should involve Jack, her boyfriend. As far as Toni is concerned, he can give a male perspective of sexual harassment that can help her. Sensing that Jack is likely to freak out, Tessa resolves to bail herself out without involving him. She seeks help from Paul who advises her to organise for somebody who is respectable, one who cannot be intimidated to confront Kibuchi. He hopes that this will open his eyes to the realisation that she is not going to yield to his sexual advances. She is too ashamed to admit to Paul that she is the one being harassed because she feels disgraced by the very efforts made towards sexual exploitation.

As advised, she enlists the help of the Managing Director, Mr Kirubi, to stop Kibuchi from harassing her. She nervously tells him:

Someone in the office is harassing me. He keeps pestering me to go out with him and keeps making offensive remarks to me about ' .His behaviour is beginning to affect my

work. I am unable to concentrate because of worrying about what he will do next. He makes me feel ashamed, humiliated and helpless. I want it to stop, that's all I want, for him to stop. (47)

She states that Kibuchi's intrusion to her privacy is interfering with her performance at the company since the working environment is characterised by intimidation and hostility from her boss. Kirubi empathises with her and promises to do what he can to arrest the situation but he requires proof of sexual harassment. It is disheartening that any report on sexual molestation requires substantial substantiation from the victim. This explains why most women shy away from giving information on sexual harassment; instead of getting protection, they are subjected to interrogation, all aimed at protecting the perpetrator of the sexual crime.

The dilemma of getting witnesses to testify about Kibuchi's amorous behaviour weighs down on Tessa's mind. In an effort to trap him, she records a flirtatious relationship between him and her. It is during this escapade that she is confronted with the naked truth that he is not likely to influence her promotion. However, she would continue to dangle it like the proverbial carrot in order to get what he [wants] and once he [gets] bored then he [will] just dump her like the foolish naïve girl she really [is] (98). He merely wants to exploit her sexually for he is not eager to part with anything that facilitates meaningful female self-development in the nation. He is egocentric and hence insensitive to Tessa's career progression for his only interest is his sexual gratification.

Armed with an audio tape, Tessa is happy that at last she has proof. However, Kibuchi rubbishes the recording saying the tape does not contain anything one can call proof. She on the other hand is convinced that it contains hints and innuendos which an intelligent person can use to draw conclusions. She hopes to use the tape as evidence of his sexual pestering to discredit him from participating in the forthcoming recruitment exercise. As long as he is there, she knows she

does not stand a chance for promotion. He controls the company and the persons working there and by inference therefore controls her career prospects in the company.

Waithaka portrays Tessa as an intelligent woman. When she seeks the Chairman's protection from Kibuchi, she knows better than use the tape as evidence that there is really nothing between them. She realises the tape will convince the Chairman that there are some goings-on between them. It is therefore suicidal to use it for it records him admitting his intentions to have sexual relations with her. In other words, the tape puts her in a compromising situation and hence it is likely to strengthen his pronouncements that she is bitter about their break up.

Waithaka's narrative communicates insights into sexual harassment. Kibuchi, who is the epitome of moral decadence not only denies the sexual harassment allegations but feigns innocence. He also has the audacity to tell her that "As far as [he is] concerned it can only have been a misunderstanding unless [she has] some malicious underhand scheme planned" (51). He suggests that her notions of sexual molestation are a fabrication. His aim is to confuse her in order to make her cultivate a negative image of herself that is not likely to be aggressive towards him. Playing into his hands would make it easy for him to exploit her.

Waithaka reveals the complexity of women's lives when they resist subjugation from sexual aggressors. Contrary to the belief that women buy their way to employment or positions of power by offering their bodies as a living sacrifice, Tessa refuses to relent. This is to the disappointment of the likes of Kibuchi who feel that their self-worth undermined. The writer uses him to depict masculine construction that stops at nothing to exert power over women. He

threatens to turn tables on her saying:

Do you know how many employees I've come across who tried to seduce me in order to climb the corporate ladder, and how easy it is for me to paint you like them? Picture this Tessa, you tried to seduce me and when that failed you tried to frame me with sexual harassment. Which one of us do you think will be believed? (53)

His choice of words is meant to intimidate Tessa and thereby construct a passive and submissive female self. His intimation that women try to proposition him with a view to use their sexuality in their career progression is more of a suggestion rather than a reality. His aim is to encourage Tessa to intertwine her career progression with sexual favours in an effort to enlist his support.

Contrary to his expectation that she may fall prey to his manipulative power and submit to his will, she stubbornly holds her ground and deciphers that as things stand at the moment, her job is at stake. He hits back at her by making her life at the company unbearable. He influences the board to refuse Tessa promotion although she deserves it. Sam, who is not as qualified as she is, gets appointed to the post of Associate Director. Unfortunately, he dies from a grisly road accident two months later and Tessa is asked to act in his position. No sooner does she start acting the deceased's position than the job is advertised. She realises to her dismay, that the recruitment exercise is being set up for one reason only, to find [her] replacement, because for one reason or another the board has decided that [she is] not suitable (79-80). This is a blow that Kibuchi deals on Tessa.

When it is obvious that Tessa is not likely to consent, Kibuchi swears to influence her sacking and to also make things hard for her so that she can quit. He states: "This is the corporate world Tessa, a male world, with men's rules. For a while I thought you were an intelligent, ambitious woman but I can see I was wrong. You are naïve and foolish. If I had my way you

wouldn't be working here again" (53). The verbal hostility and scheming he uses to overpower her is symbolic of the specific circumstances that some men use to punish women for stepping beyond the gendered boundaries set for them and to instil in them the fear of considering an extension of sexual favouritism to them. It is this strategy of maintaining female subordination that calls for renegotiation in postcolonial Kenya.

Kibuchi's sexual harassment is a violation of Tessa's sexual and physical autonomy and it is apparent that he is interfering with her promotion. This prompts her to seek the intervention of the Managing Director, Kirubi. As far as she is concerned, Kibuchi is intruding on her inner space and she finds it difficult to silently endure an invasion of her self. She asks Kirubi for an explanation as to why she has not been promoted to the position of Associate Director. He vouches for his innocence. He insinuates that the Director given the responsibility to brief her on the terms and conditions of taking up Sam's duties did not do it properly. He impresses on her that the decision to advertise the position was made as soon as Sam dies and is not a reflection on how she is performing her job. It pains her to be informed that she is not officially the acting Associate Director and that she is just filling in temporarily until a suitable replacement is hired. She really does not require a prophet to know who is behind her tribulations. She acknowledges that he is bent on getting back at her. She remembers him saying something "about making sure she [has] no future in the company" (83). Her reflection enables her to see the futility of applying for the job.

As the head of Strategy and Client Service, Kibuchi holds the ultimate authority as far as the selection of the best candidate is concerned. The author highlights Tessa's courage when she confronts Kibuchi and tells him to the face that she knows some members of the board wanted to confirm her and not conduct a recruitment exercise. However, he and others resisted and thus

prevented the board from appointing her to the position. Her confrontational stance underpins her as a female who consistently fights against female discrimination. She exposes him for who he is, unscrupulous. Her determination not to let him have the satisfaction of firing her makes her consider resignation to save herself from further humiliation. However, the thought of being jobless in Kenya where jobs are few upsets her. The contemporary society she is living in does nothing significant to reduce female sexual harassment at work places. The nation is turned into an arena of brutality and hence the neglect that results to increased sexual harassment of women.

The Chairman of the company, Kirubi, is drawn into the contest of gender power relations when Tessa reports to him that she is being harassed. Her accusations against Kibuchi are interpreted as a love affair gone sour and hence her bitterness. She points out to Kirubi that she can never and will never solicit for promotions or any other benefits in the workplace in exchange of sexual favours. She maintains she would rather resign than do such a thing (109). The Chairman dares her to resign, but she declines. As far as she is concerned, she has done nothing wrong to warrant her leaving the company and hence her response that that is an option she would not want to consider. She challenges the Chairman in regard to the integrity of his organisation:

The official stand of this company is fairness to all employees. So far the company has not been very fair to me. Nobody has come to me and told me that my work is not satisfactory or I am not performing to the expected level. Instead, all I keep getting from my managers is that my work is good and that I should keep it up. (109)

Tessa courageously makes allegations against an institution that is bent on discrediting her. This is an indication that women are coming to an awareness of their human wholeness as individuals in Kenya and have developed a sense of identification with their rights as citizens enacting

nationhood. She says:

My question therefore is this: if my work is good why doesn't the company stand behind me? All I want is a fair shot at the promotion. I want to be judged based on my performance and if that is not satisfactory then I shall accept if I am denied a promotion. But I don't expect to be denied on the grounds of an individual's malicious actions simply because I refused to accept his sexual advances. (109)

Her openness exposes the precarious situation women find themselves in Kenya in the 21st Century. They are not only denied promotions, but the jobs they hold are also at stake in the face of sexual victimisation.

The defence she puts up to the Chairman leaves him convinced that she is being harassed and has been side-lined as far as career progression is concerned. She flatly challenges him to make his own judgment about her performance. Behaving like a daredevil, she says: "The question should be: can [I] do the job? [Have I] performed in the post? Can [I] make a meaningful contribution to MSRC?" (110). She not only poses the questions, she also answers them saying, "And my answer is yes I can. I have and will continue to do so. I just need a chance to prove it" (110). He is left without any option but to buy her argument. He gives her back the job even though he knows Kibuchi will not be happy and may make it difficult for her. She assures him that she is going to do her job well and challenges him to sack her the minute she fails to perform.

The Unbroken Spirit expresses the violent nature of male sexual power through Kibuchi. No sooner does he sack Tessa than he regrets his action. The Chairman asks him to explain why he has fired her. Kibuchi is shocked to realise that nothing goes on in the company without Kirubi's knowledge. He knows it is rare for the Chairman to concern himself with a particular

employeeí which [means] that something [has] happened to arouse his interest in this particular caseö (113). He insinuates that he has broken up with her and that she is probably bitter. He takes refuge in lies to defend himself saying:

I had no ulterior motive in denying her the promotion. The job was given to someone more qualified. That is all there is to it but Tessa has never accepted it. I imagine she assumed that because we are having an affair I would favour her, poor kid. (114)

Such falsehood from Kibuchi is regrettable. He taints Tessa's image but the Chairman sees through his dishonesty for he knows the influence that Kibuchi has on the board's decisions. Furthermore, he knows rather too well that the phenomenon of gender-based violence in Kenya. The author credits the Chairman for showing his willingness to veto abusers and to protect the victims. He singles out Tessa as a 'person of integrity' (114). He finds it difficult to reconcile the image that Kibuchi paints of her with his perceived notion of her personality. As expected, the violator insists he is not harassing her and is sorry for involving himself with her.

The confrontation Kibuchi experiences leaves him convinced that Tessa is viewed as a good worker. He is therefore not justified in her sacking since her record is clean. Furthermore, the CEO points out that he likes Tessa's positive attitude towards the company and her job. The author uses the Chairman to show men who are not victims of the general societal acceptance of violence against women. He therefore desists from behaving in a manner that devalues women. In addition, he does not agree with the notion that it would be a mistake to let Tessa have her job back. He reprimands, dismisses and tells Kibuchi:

We'll just have to wait and see. One more thing í . This whole business, an employee coming to me with complaints about you, I don't expect it to happen again. How you conduct your personal life is up to you, but I don't expect it to spill over into the business.

There are some things I just will not tolerate, so in future make sure you solve such problems before they reach this level. (115)

The Chairman objectively deals with the situation and thereby denies Kibuchi the power to subjugate Tessa by dismissing her. Kibuchi feels humiliated that she succeeds in standing up to him. However, being a person who is bent on revenge, he vows he is not yet through with her, but will change tactics. His plan is to retaliate by subjecting her to more sexual harassment. He resorts to aggression towards her to gain control. His tendency to anger and aggressiveness towards Tessa shows that he lacks coping skills to deal with rejection.

When Tessa feels so weak to take in any more torment she absents herself from work for three consecutive days. Sexual molestation affects not only her female self, but also the atmosphere and climate at the Marketing and Social Research Centre. Rumours start doing rounds in the company that she is having an affair with Kibuchi and that she has even tried to blackmail him to get promoted. It is claimed that the two have fallen out even though his plans were to make her a Research Director for Uganda. That, they claim, explains why Sam was promoted and his job immediately advertised after his death. As far as they are concerned, she is being reserved for a big job. The rumours can be traced back to Kibuchi. He really does not mind peddling such lies in an attempt to save himself the shame that comes with the rejection and her reinstatement after writing a letter to sack her.

Tessa receives two letters simultaneously: one sacking her from Kibuchi, the other promoting her from the Managing Director. Her appointment to the position of Team Leader Qualitative is influenced by the Chairman. Nevertheless, the letter offering her promotion prompts òa million questions, like where was Kibuchi when the board was making the decision to promote herö (105). Her promotion confirms recognition of the female self as capable of

performing both selfhood and nationhood. The turn of events at the company not only surprises her but her colleagues and friends too.

Sexual harassment notwithstanding, the courage with which she challenges her detractors endorses Tessa as the female model in Kenya today. Unfortunately, no sooner does she win the battle between her and her molester than she is involved in another. The day she goes out with Kibuchi in an effort to collect evidence that he is harassing her sexually becomes her undoing. Ben sees them at Kichaka Club. He concludes she has broken up with Jack. He seeks Jack out to tell him he is sorry for the break up. Jack reacts selfishly and insensitively. He is convinced that she is cheating on him. In a desperate move to salvage the relationship, Tessa explains the circumstances under which she accompanies Kibuchi to Kichaka Club:

I [want] to trap him into admitting that he [has] been harassing me. The only way I [can] do that [is] by gaining his trust and letting him think that we [can] í .. that I [am] ready to have an affairí .. I [have] a tape recorder. I [am] going to confront him with the tape í and tell him that unless he [leaves] me alone I [will] expose him. (120)

Jack is too self-centred to listen to her and he dismisses her explanation merely because she does not tell him all that before she acts. The truth is that he would have been of no help. When Tessa previously confided in him about her confrontation with her molester, he reassured her saying he was proud of her for standing up to him. He says, -it can't have been easy considering how senior he is in this company compared to you. It [takes] guts, so always rememberö (90). He commended her for her courage, but we are surprised that even in such bleak circumstances, he does not suggest a way out. He offers no assistance and we are, therefore, not surprised when she singlehandedly makes the next move to get evidence that would implicate her molester. It is not astounding that he does not absolve her even though she is sacked by the very man who is

pestering her for sex. As far as Jack is concerned, if she is not having intimate relations with Kibuchi at the moment she is likely to have an affair with him in future to safeguard her job if the likes of the Chairman fail to intervene.

His sarcastic remark "Is there anything you wouldn't do to keep that job?" (121) confirms his illogical reaction to Tessa's circumstances. She scornfully challenges him for his inability to offer any help when she requires it most. She says, "When I explained the situation, why didn't you tell me that [is] how you [feel] that I should just surrender. After all I wasn't going to lose anything much, just the best job I have ever had" (122). She wonders what respect comes with his failure to tell her his true feelings at the right time. However, he castigates her for being independent and hence his fear to tell her what to do. The possible explanation is that he is cowed by a woman who can stand her own ground in the face of male oppression. He justifies his behaviour by accusing her of shutting him out of her life and lying to him. The truth is that he is a failure as far as interpersonal relations with Tessa are concerned. He may have realised, albeit too late, that Tessa is not the kind of woman to order around and hence feels intimidated by the way she exercises her power to challenge the men who try to subjugate her.

Tessa makes an effort to salvage her love relationship with Jack without success. She begs him for another chance but he says goodbye to her. This is despite the fact that she forgave him when she found him cheating on her before. His immature, selfish disposition makes him unreasonable and he casually walks out on her. Considering the circumstances, it is Tessa who would have ended the relationship a long time ago. We blame her for binding herself to a love affair founded on shaky ground that is not likely to withstand much pressure. This may explain why she warns Toni not to tell Jack about the sexual pestering she initially experiences.

Through Tessa, Waithaka asserts women's responsibility to privately and publicly reject any form of discrimination or abuse towards them. She deconstructs the protagonist's female body as a site where unwelcome male advances are countered by a refusal to use sex as a form of goods to be sold or offered for material gain. By depicting sexual harassment, the writer addresses a wider audience, both male and female in a nation, where job opportunities are scarce. The narrative particularly exposes the goings-on in the corporate world just as the tip of an ice berg about what is happening in the entire nation. If people are not being employed and promoted through proxy and nepotism, they are being hired depending on their ability to extend sexual favours to prospective employers. In the event that one already has a job, refusal to succumb to sexual pressure may result in dismissal. The writer castigates men who use job opportunities as a bait to entice young females. In addition, she compliments men who protect victims from amorous men.

Sexual harassment is an ugly experience, but rape is grotesque. Sielke states that "sexual violence has always been a central issue of feminist debate" (12). The implication is that one of the feminist's concerns is to expose the silences that surround rape which is an endemic form of violence between genders. It is deeply rooted in gender inequality with victims of sexual harassment being mainly female. However, sexual harassment is not the equivalent of rape. At least sexual harassment allows the victim to consider and make a decision on how best to respond to the situation while rape is an action that is suddenly imposed on an individual without prior warning as portrayed in the next section of this chapter.

5.4 Rape and Female Subjectivity

In Kenya a person is said to have committed rape if "he or she intentionally and unlawfully commits an act which causes penetration with his or her genital organs; the other person does not consent to the penetration; or consent is obtained by force or by means of threats or intimidation of any kind" (Act No. 3 of 2006 - Sexual Offences Act, 2006). The same definition would apply if the person is violated while in a vulnerable state such as sleep, unconsciousness, intoxication, sick, physical or mental disability.

Writing about rape stems from the "desire to liberate from sexual oppression, a supposedly other, subversive female sexuality [that] has led rape crisis discourse to reassert the gender differences "so firmly inscribed" (Sielke 12). Sexual violation brings to the fore the binary division between the self and the other that characterises the relationship between male and female. Women's writings about violence directed at women introduce a new mode of creative female expression in literature. The writings in the words of Susan Langer, function as art that objectifies "feeling so that we can contemplate and understand it. It is the formulation of so-called "inward experience," inner life," that is impossible to achieve by discursive thought" (317). In other words, literature represents those areas of human experience that touch on the personal and private sensations of life which are at times difficult to fathom. Works of art express such feelings by reproducing their form and thus set a logical way of portraying them.

Feminist and women writings have pointed out the very complex position that women occupy especially in relation to violence perpetrated by men. The rapidly changing political and economic realities have brought about huge transformations in which women in the 21st Century have reconstructed, re-conceptualised and lived with new negotiations continually being made

between men and women; the individual and the nation. To write about women and rape is therefore fundamental to the feminist discussion on sexual brutality which in the words of Sielke has been and still is the question of whether rape is to be considered a crime of violence or one based on sexuality (13). The contention here is that rape is a brutal and frightening experience that affects women regardless of their age, ethnic, political, economic or religious status.

Waithaka writes against rape seemingly to raise awareness in the hope that women will guard themselves at the private and public levels. Her aim is to sensitise people about the effect of rape on the female self. She hopes to reduce the likelihood of individuals becoming rape victims and to also sensitise men against subjugating women. The writer deliberately chooses to prioritise rape as an issue affecting female experience in contemporary society and to demythologise the stigma attached to being raped. Just as there is no stigma in being mugged or having one's property stolen, rape need not be an experience that attracts stigmatisation. It should be viewed as sexual violation a crime that needs to be reported, investigated and perpetrators punished. The motivation behind seeking justice should stem from the eagerness of members of the society to share the victims' experiences, assist them in healing and demonstrate their instinctive resilience as well as their collective responsibility to denounce and manage the shock that attends those violated.

Rape is a primordial as well as a modern vice that continues to affect human beings especially women and men if rape is understood more broadly. Its history consists of the attitude held in the past as well as in the 21st Century. As far as Barbara Baines is concerned, 'Writing the history of rape is an extremely precarious endeavour. Some modern historians contend that there is no such history, for rape is too risky, too political a subject to be dealt with comfortably' (69). The act of writing about rape is a difficult one and this explains the scarcity

of narratives on rape. When Brownmiller devotes a considerable amount of time writing about rape, Vera Buch Weisbord commends her for a breakthrough. Weisbord's review on "A Woman Writes of Rape" based on *Against Our Will-Men, Women and Rape*, acknowledges Brownmiller's success in scripting rape. She says, "at last in this massive scholarly work the outcry of the victims finds utterance" (1). Weisbord recognises the writer's efforts in writing about sexual coercion which is seldom. Sylvana Tomaselli asserts that:

The fact that we have no history of rape is more revealing of modern attitudes to rape than an indication of our forefathers' (and mothers') indifference to it. The reluctance to acknowledge the reality of rape...is only a relatively recent phenomenon... In the past rape was neither passed over in silence nor made light of. (cited in Baines 69)

Rape is portrayed as a taboo subject that societies are uncomfortable with and often conceal it without success. Baines observes that "the reluctance to acknowledge the reality of rape, is the history of rape. Men and women in the past were no less reluctant than we are today to deal with the problem. That reluctance can be shown; the silence can be heard" (69). This means that any efforts made at muting rape have resulted in giving it a greater force that enhances speech.

Waithaka takes a bold step to write a rare story on rape in contemporary Kenya. To paraphrase Sielke, Waithaka does much more for making "an attempt to break the silence on sexual violence, the [feminist and women writers] deployment of rape has nurtured its own silences that are as meaningful as the silences with which dominant culture has veiled sexual violence" (5). By writing rape, she manages to make a marginal thematic area enter into public and national discussion of gender power relations. Mieke Bal outlines the difficulties involved in

writing about sexual violence. She states that:

...rape cannot be [visualised] not only because [decent] culture would not tolerate such representations of the [act] but because rape makes the victim invisible. It does that literally first [the perpetrator covers her] and then figuratively [the rape destroys her self-image, her subjectivity, which is temporarily [narcotised], definitely changed and often destroyed. Finally, rape cannot be [visualised] because the experience is, physically, as well as psychologically, inner. Rape takes place inside. In this sense, rape is by definition imagined; it can exist only as experience and as memory, as image translated into signs, never adequately [objectifiable]. (cited in Sielke 4)

The concern here is that narratives of sexual defilement find it difficult to represent aspects of physical pain and psychic trauma that come with sexual defilement. Waithaka succeeds to a certain extent to textually communicate the victim's agony and emotional distress.

The notion of lack of satisfactory representation of rape notwithstanding, Waithaka narrates the substantial bodily pain and psychic violation that rape causes. However, her literary representation does not generate total speech. Silence still looms in narratives about physical and sexual violation. Sielke says:

Silences themselves generate speech; the central paradigm is rather that of rape, silence, and refiguration. If our readings focus on refigurations of rape as well as on rape as refiguration, we acknowledge that texts do not simply reflect but rather stage and [dramatize] the historical contradictions by which they are over determined. At best, readings of rape therefore reveal not merely the latent text in what is manifest, explicit, and thus produce a text's self-knowledge; they will also evolve a new knowledge pertaining to the ideological necessities of a text's silences and deletions. (5)

The implication here is that silence shrouds sexual violation and hence the writer fails to completely voice implications of sex abuse on a victim. nevertheless the writer generates speech from the silence that has for a long time defined rape. Artistic depiction enables Waithaka to encode and decode pain by making a taboo subject speakable in both the private and public worlds of the female self and the nation.

Portrayal of rape is best captured in artistic works of literature since "Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony" (Collier, Peter and Helga Geyer-Ryan 129). Thus, Waithaka's attempt at recording the history of rape in Kenya in the 21st Century gains credence. She historicises an experience that is usually effaced through her protagonist, Regina, whose rape ordeal is symbolic of the unequal power relations between male and female as an attribute of female sexuality. The author depicts Regina in a victimised situation characterised by injustice and cruelty.

As stated earlier, Regina owns a house which she shares with Tessa and Toni. The three ladies go out with Steve and Mark. They all pass by Mark's home where they find his brother hosting a party. Regina opts to be left behind briefly to have more fun with Mark, whom she hardly knows, while the rest of the group proceed to Carnivore as planned. However, she does not join them later on as expected. When she finds herself intoxicated although she has not taken much beer, she senses danger. She calls Toni to pick her up, but Toni is reluctant arguing that Regina should take responsibility of her own drunkenness. Without mincing words, she points out, "Next time when you get drunk don't call me to bail you out of whatever scrape you're in" (146). Intoxication is implicated as a risk factor in rape for it increases the odds of sexual assault. However, Regina's sexual assault cannot be blamed on alcohol. She is taken advantage of while in a drugged state.

The rape ordeal affects her tremendously. Speaking on rape Weisbord notes that *óí* rape [is] a violent penetration of the sexual parts of a woman against her will and with no possibility of retaliation of any kind from herö (1). The implication is that the victim suffers physically and psychologically. In the context of increasing cases of rape, expression of physical pain and psychological trauma that accompanies defilement becomes a crucial step towards understanding this aspect of the female self experience. Wesbord observes that rape has *ödire* effects on the victim: not merely the physical trauma but the shock and fear, often leaving the woman a nervous wreckí .ö (1). We witness this when Regina suffers a near emotional breakdown while in the shower room:

She [stays] in the shower until her skin [starts] forming goose bumps from the chill then absent-mindedly [turns] off the taps still thinking about the partyí .a clear image [flashes] into her mind. She [freezes] in shock heedless of the water still dripping on to the floorí several long minutes later, she [is] trembling and clutching the towel tightly shaking her head in mute denial ... like a newsheet slowly replaying the events of the night before with crystal clarity. (148)

The description of Regina's pathetic state points to the personal crisis she experiences after sexual violation. Initially she reacts with fear, anxiety and depression. She blames Toni for her rape ordeal as the memory of the violation keeps on recurring such that her life becomes synonymous with fright.

Regina wonders if things would have been different if Toni had picked her up or if Mark had known Toni was likely to pick her up. Self blame compounds her circumstances as the events of the previous night overwhelmingly devastate her. The author captures her plight in her

monologue:

She [whispers] brokenly vigorously shaking her head to dispel what she [is] remembering but the images only become clearer and more detailed. Her legs [give] way and she [sinks] to the floor on her knees as her mind [tries] to absorb the implications. It [is] then she starts to scream. The pain [rises] from somewhere deep inside [washes] over her in waves each more powerfully and agonising than the last. She [can] do nothing except scream with raw anguish and once she [starts] it [seems] she [is] never going to stop. (148 -149)

The psychological shock she experiences is evidence of her struggle with the meaning of the sexual assault. The distress and post-trauma stress disorder she undergoes is made worse by the fact that she is defiled by an acquaintance, Mark and that Toni failed to pick her up before the assailant pounced on her. The narration captures her moments of helplessness:

She [can] hear the banging of the door and shouts but [feels] powerless to react. Someone [is] screaming hysterically and it [is] sometime before she [realises] the sound [is] coming from her own lips. Even then she [seems] to have no control and [feels] as if she [is] suspended in the air looking at someone else writhe and crawl at bathroom walls in anguish. That [isn't] her down there [is] it? (149)

She experiences physical difficulties from injuries that are associated with her emotional trauma following the sexual assault. Feelings of denial cloud her mind. In the short term she is incapacitated, unable to open the bathroom door even though she can hear people calling her from outside. Michael exerts pressure on the bathroom door and the flimsy lock gives way only to find Regina lying face down on the floor partly covered with a towel. She is shivering uncontrollably and mumbling inconsistently. Enquiries about her experiences at the party only make her situation worse. Her female self suffers from diminished self-esteem.

Trauma caused by sexual defilement renders the violated more reactive to anything that reminds them of the environment under which the ordeal takes place. At the mention of the word party, Regina goes rigid and opens her eyes staring into space for several seconds unseeing; then begins screaming once more and throwing her arms wildly. Her female and male friends are devastated by the news of Regina's violation. Waithaka uses this incident to relate how people establish and maintain relationships, engage in activities and make decisions through daily interactions with other people in the event of traumatic experiences. In addition, she accords us the opportunity to observe how people form opinions, influence each other and generate meaning in the context of rape in modern society.

Regina's friends try to calm her down, unsuccessfully. They are puzzled about what causes her to be hysterical. They try to placate her as she becomes more frenzied saying: "No! I won't let you do it. Stop stop it! Help me! Please someone help me! I can't make it stop!" (151). She cries out in agony heaving against the hands restraining her. It becomes obvious she is reliving a nightmare as she weeps uncontrollably and her movements become less violent and her loud cries subside to choking sobs.

Mark, the rape suspect, is the son of a judge, Kilonzo. Regina's sexual violation can be treated as acquaintance rape and that is why she suffers psychological trauma. Her reaction is made worse by feelings of betrayal by Mark, who she had trusted. She is also uncertain about her role in the assault for she experiences memory lapses. Regina reports the rape to the police and Inspector Kipsang is put in charge of the case. Mark, the culprit is the son of Kilonzo, a court of appeal judge. Kipsang is deemed relevant for he enjoys privilege and powers associated with senior officers. The choice is dependent on his ability to co-operate, while at the same time not directly hampering the investigators. Kipsang is expected to ensure that Regina stops the case

“Quickly and quietly before [it becomes] public knowledge” (161). Efforts to combat sexual violation makes Regina involve the criminal justice system in investigating her rape ordeal. Unfortunately, the report does not result in conviction since the judicial system is compromised. The legal system in postcolonial Kenya treats the abuser as the victim, while the violated is suspected of having compromised herself to invite the rapist.

The case is a difficult one given the connections and position of the Kilonzo family. Regina realises that the Inspector’s role is to ensure that investigations are delayed. She is surprised that Mark is yet to be arrested. Kipsang suggests that investigation has to be completed before Mark is apprehended. Her sexual violation and subsequent search for justice reveals widespread yet humiliating experiences for women who seek legal redress for their violation. Waithaka highlights rape as “a crime ‘against the will’ [,] an act that is violent because it [overrides] ambivalence or no consent. The issue of consent generates questions of subject position” (Sielke 18). Regina does not choose to have intercourse with the rapist but he proceeds against her will. She is raped while in a semi-conscious state, after being drugged, a manifestation of her denied personality. She is therefore unable to express either consent or non-consent since she is unconscious.

The Unbroken Spirit provides agency in the circumstances of women being viewed as objects of male aggression. Waithaka makes an attempt to assist violated women to find their silenced voice. By so doing, she “[separates] rape as an expression of violence from intercourse as a sexual act, [objects] to the predominant notion that rape is a natural expression of male sexual desire and an act of sex and lust” (Sielke 13). The proposition is that rape is a form of violence that goes beyond the casual sexual contact whose purpose is to subjugate women and it has far reaching effects on the inner self of the victim.

The writer consistently makes reference to the ambivalence of sexual defilement. As far as the law enforcers are concerned, Regina's rape incident is a mutually agreed sexual union. As a result, the investigating police officer paints her as a liar who consents to having sex with Mark, and then cries foul. Her insistence that she did not consent makes the Inspector shift blame from Mark to somebody else. He tells her to say who slept with her at the party for as far as he is concerned Mark is innocent. He even suggests that she tried to seduce him but failed and thus implicates him in order to punish him to the surprise of Regina and her friends.

Weisbord argues that rape victims do not receive fair treatment in the hands of the law enforcers. She expresses disgust at the "humiliating treatment accorded rape victims in police stations - the impossibility of obtaining a fair trial under present circumstances" (1). This is evident in the manner in which Kipsang embarrasses, intimidates and harasses Regina while posing the following questions: "What time did he rape you? How did he do it? Did you struggle? Scream? Did he threaten you with a weapon? Over twenty people at the party yet no one heard or saw anything. How is that possible?" (165). Regina tries to explain that she does not remember or realise she is raped until she gets home. He dismisses her argument saying, "I have seen rape victims before and let me tell you. It is not an experience you can forget easily. How could you be raped and then forget?" (165). The rhetorical questions used in this text are meant to sensitise the reader about the difficulties victims of rape undergo in the hands of those pretending to assist them and hence "women have to live all their lives in fear of rape" (Weisbord 1). This predicament affects those who have been exposed to the ordeal and those likely to be subjected to it.

Brownmiller denounces law enforcers who require the victims to prove "that they resisted, that they didn't consent, and that their will was overcome by overwhelming force and fear" (cited

in Kaoruko Sakata 52). The requirement by the law for victims to give evidence that they did not consent to having intercourse underscores the cruel nature of rape investigations. The practice is deemed discriminative since robbery victims need not prove they resisted the robber, and it is never inferred that by handing over their money, they "consented" to the act and therefore the act was no crime (Brownmiller cited in Sakata 52). This contradiction is in favour of rapists and hence their endeavour to use whatever is in their power to subdue their victims. Regina is challenged to prove that she offered adequate resistance to the attacker regardless of whether or not she is exploited or overcome by the use of force.

The confessional mode shatters the silencing of rape. Regina reports to the police but she does not get the help she requires to have the case investigated. She is traumatised further in the corridors of justice where she is not adequately protected by the law. The aggressor enjoys freedom as she faces insurmountable obstacles in trying to bring the perpetrator to justice. Furthermore, the judicial system tries to implicate her in the ordeal to ensure that her search for justice is ignored and denied. Inspector Kipsang intimates:

It must have been all the alcohol you were drinking. Hasn't anyone ever told you to be careful around people you have just met. You are a grown up woman, how could you be so foolish: í Come on Regina, why don't you admit it? There was no rape, was there? You had a little too much to drink and had sex with someone at the party and afterwards you regretted ití you made a mistake, it's no big dealí . But don't push an innocent man with accusations. You don't want to condemn an innocent man to prison, do you? (166)

He accuses Regina of faking the rape or having invited the defiler. He subverts female sexuality by imaging women as yearning for humiliation, degradation and violation of [their] bodily integrity (Brownmiller cited in Sakata 52). As a consequence, women who fall victim are

blamed. Waithaka questions the presupposition that women are at fault whenever they are sexually violated. As far as she is concerned, women do not seduce rapists and thus they should not be blamed. She therefore represents Regina as a victim of rape in an environment of social disorder where men subdue women.

Inefficient legal and social norms that fail to punish violators discourage the victims from reporting defilement cases. The inspector causes pain and frustration to Regina in his determination not to have the case prosecuted. The treatment she receives leaves Phillip convinced that that is why women resort to silence when raped. The Inspector justifies his absurd interrogation of Regina. He maintains that:

That is only a taste of what a lawyer for the defence will do if this case goes to court.

Your friend needs to think very carefully about what she wants to do. This case is not straight forward and at this point the evidence by witnesses shows that there was no rape.

There couldn't have been. Someone would have seen or heard something. (166)

The inspector is trying as much as he can to bully Regina so that she can drop the case. More often than not, rapists in an effort to justify themselves and thus escape chastisement make reference to "male myths of rape" which presume that "All women want to be raped. No woman can be raped against her will. She was asking for it and if you're going to be raped, you might as well relax and enjoy it" (Brownmiller cited in Sakata 52). Such myths of rape purposely obscure the correct nature of sexual violation when the attacker is presented as the victim. As a consequence, rape assumes the characteristics of a crime that traumatises the victim and confirms to a certain extent the discrimination that exists against women. They are rarely accorded justice in regard to rape occurrences.

With the incidence of violation, Regina runs the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. She undergoes a HIV test for she worries that she might have contracted HIV since the aggressor did not use a condom. It is detestable to know that gender based violence exposes women to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. In the advent that the victim contracts the disease, that rape experience becomes a double tragedy. Through her omniscient narrator, Waithaka observes that "coping with the rape [is] hard enough, but HIV infection [is] death sentence" (168). Nevertheless, HIV/AIDS is currently manageable even though it has no cure. The doctor's confirmation that Regina is out of danger at the moment is quite a relief even though she would have the test repeated every three months for the next one year. This is a burden that is going to dictate to her mode of life for the following year to ascertain that she is free from HIV infection.

Regina slowly recovers from the effects of the rape even though she continues to suffer from memory lapses. Her continued experience of amnesia becomes a concern not only to herself but also to her doctor and friends. The doctor observes: "When Regina [is] brought into casualty [she presents] with symptoms resembling the after effects of extreme intoxication and *í . Drug ingestion*" (170). A drug routine toxicology examination is carried out but no traces of drugs are found. This puzzles the physician since the traces of alcohol found in her urine are not enough to affect her memory.

A more advanced drug test is done, even though it is not locally available. A doctor's friend living in Texas sends him a kit to enable him test for a rape drug, GHB or Gamma Hydroxy Butyrate, commonly referred to as the date rape drug. The drug is used variedly as an aesthetic, food supplement, for treatment of sleep disorders and alcoholism. However, it also enhances sexual feelings especially in women causing impaired judgment and as a result they

may fail to resist sexual advances. The doctor points out that when combined with alcohol its effects last for more than twenty hours. Surprisingly, the drug is not included in the routine drug screening. This complicates its use since rape is likely to pass as consensual for there is no proof of drug-inducement. Under such circumstances, the violators are also likely to go scot-free because their victims also experience memory loss. It is disheartening that rapists can resort to using advanced methods to subdue women by making them unable to fend off violators. Through Regina, Waithaka focuses on sexual assault perpetrated through mental abuse rather than physical force.

References to how the drug is easily manufactured is scary as the doctor points out that GHB can be easily manufactured using simple chemicals even in Kenya. Thus, the drug is readily available in the black market as liquid -Eø Georgia Homeboy, scoop, easy lay, gamma 10, fantasy, liquid -Xø salty water, soap and vita ó G. This information is disturbing and a pointer to the recent trends that rapists have adopted to avoid detection and possible apprehension. The availability of GHB and other drugs that can be used leading to rape makes it difficult to convict perpetrators. However, with the rising complications of detecting the actual perpetrators of rape, other forms of nabbing abusers have been adopted. The traces of semen found in a vaginal swab can be subjected to DNA test to verify whether it matches with that of the perpetrator. This is considered to be 99.9% accurate.

The use of drugs to make women vulnerable has recently gained society's attention. Regina is said to be lucky that the effects of the drug are not severe on her. She is only experiencing a bad headache and anxiety which presents itself in the form of hysteria. The possibility that the violator could have drugged Regina to make her an easy prey makes the Inspector to organise for Mark's cosmetic arrest. This is aimed at hoodwinking the victim and her

friends that the case is progressing positively. The Inspector interrogates Mark and he is surprised at Mark's confession that he had put some drugs in her drink to make her relax, but had really no intentions of raping her. He adds that the effects of the drug made her flirt around before she disappeared. Later on, he found her in the East Wing of the house, lying on the corridor, blacked out. He explains that the party was in the West wing of the house which he occupies with his brother, but he found her at the East wing where his parents live. Mark's father objects to the possibility of his son being subjected to a DNA fearing that it could be manipulated. As far as he is concerned, his enemies might take this opportunity to conspire against him and thereby dent his public image. Mark does not mind the test because, he says, he really has nothing to be afraid of but his father refuses to allow it. His desperation to clear his name suggests that he may not be the perpetrator of the hideous crime.

Kilonzo's reaction at the mention of the DNA test points at the possibility that he himself could be the violator. He vehemently says that DNA is out of question even though it is a perfect solution to the case at hand. He convinces his son that he is also at risk. He makes a suspicious statement, "When one of us is in trouble we close ranks" (189). The statement fills the reader with a sense of foreboding. The reader wonders who Kilonzo is protecting since it is apparent Mark does not require any protection. His vow to make Regina regret the day she set foot in his home shows his determination to have the victim treated as a criminal. He instructs the Inspector to dig up anything that is likely to dent her reputation. He also considers having Mark's friend James, take the blame if the worst comes to the worst or buy her out. James is said to have put a drug in Regina's drink with Mark's consent.

Forces working behind the scenes are determined to derail the rape case. The recruitment of the Chairman of Marketing and Social Research Centre into the struggle to have the case

settled out of court confirms this. He instructs Tessa to talk Regina into accepting compensation out of court. He tells her that the Kilonzo family is willing to compensate Regina for the trauma she has suffered, not because Mark is guilty but just a recognition that whatever may have happened occurred when she was a guest in their home. Tessa considers it betrayal to talk her friend into accepting compensation, deeming the gesture as unfair, for it is aimed at curtailing the justice that should be accorded to Regina. Her disposition is influenced by Regina's suffering. She, too, shares in the gravity of the psychological pain experienced by the victim:

I have watched Regina change from being a social, confident, independent person to someone who is always scared, who rarely leaves the house and doesn't even talk much anymore. She takes showers four to five times a day because she feels dirty, cheap but no matter how often she washes, it doesn't help. Do you know what it is like to wake up almost every night listening to your roommate screaming or crying and trying to hide it because she doesn't want you to hear her? (197-198)

What happens to Regina is tearing her up inside. It is on the basis of what Regina is experiencing through that Tessa refuses to talk her into dropping the charges. She raises the question we have been asking ourselves: why is Mark's family so concerned if he did not participate in rape? She considers the monetary offer extended to the victim immoral. She fails to understand how the Chairman can be part of a team trying to cover up the crime by insisting that his gut feeling is that Mark is innocent. Tessa's integrity is underlined in her resolve not to be party to the denial of justice to rape victims even though Regina herself may accept compensation. Her strong belief is that buying Regina with money cannot be justice at all.

The coercion and attempts to blackmail her by offering her any position she wants in the company as a token to persuade Regina to accept reimbursement for rape damages prompts her to

resign. She simply cannot live with herself if she heeds the Chairman's request. We are therefore not surprised at her indignation at the prospect of Regina's consideration to receive monetary compensation in spite of the pressure that Regina receives from her family members to drop the case. As far as Regina is concerned pursuing the case comes with too high a price. She reckons, "you've lost your job, your life has been turned upside down, same for Toni, Phillip, Steve and everyone else who has been unfortunate enough to be my friend ... too many other people are getting hurt and I just want to stop! I can't take it anymore" (205). Her position as a victim puts her in a dilemma that almost turns into guilt. The use of the second person "you" carries a dialogical overtone, a personal appeal that makes Tessa understand her friend's predicament. Her humane, understanding female self sympathises with Regina who is "broken and in despair" (205) despite her earlier predisposition of being "always so positive and filled with a zest for life" (205). The rape ordeal has changed her altogether. Nevertheless, dropping the charges is not a solution. It is going to complicate things for her since a guilty conscience is likely to haunt her for the rest of her life.

Regina's devastation at having been raped drives her to the depths of despair. She experiences a rift between her body and mind. She experiences two beings, her self and her body; the two have become separate entities. In the effort to destroy her despised body she attempts to drown herself in the bath tub. She also slashes her wrists to ensure she bleeds to death. The author ascribes her suicidal tendencies to indignity and culpability following violation. The degrading effects of defilement make her resort to self destructive syndromes which have entrapped her as a rape victim. Her behaviour is a form of rebellion against the female identification with sex. Fortunately, she is rescued before she completely destroys herself and taken to hospital. While at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), she incoherently says she "wants revenge! shoot Mark" (217).

Her friends conclude that it is Tessa who has a gun and is likely to harm the violator. They frantically look for her only to discover they are wrong. She has gone to church in search of something to appease her troubled female self. She says:

I got so angry at Mark because he's the reason she tried to kill herself and í there was this rage inside me, so overwhelming I felt like exploding. I just needed to go somewhere to think, to get it all out of my strength ... I was an emotional mess and useless to help Reggie. Then I remembered the church is just down the road and I went there. (226)

Apparently, sexual victimisation deals a blow not only on the victim but also on those associated with her. Turning to God when everything else seems not to work is a confirmation of the magnitude of the injury perpetrated by the act of violation.

It dawns on Phillip and Mike that if Tessa does not have a gun then somebody else has a gun and is going after Mark. A police reservist unravels the puzzle when he meets Phillip as he is looking for Toni. He has information that Toni picked one of his guns. She is incensed by Regina's resolve to accept the money offered by Mark's family. She plans revenge when her belief that good always triumphs over evil is put to test. First and foremost, she blames herself for failing to assist Regina when she needed help. She acknowledges that in a way she contributed to her violation. Their relationship turns antagonistic; their intimacy is severely stressed. However, she pushes Regina to report the matter to the police with the hope that Mark is apprehended for committing a crime that devalues women. Seeing her friend lying in a hospital bed at death's door, without any justice for her, makes Toni snap. The omniscient narrator gives us an insight into her experience:

A primal instinct to hit back rose inside her overwhelmingly in its intensity and looking for a target. All her rage centred on Mark and from that moment the sane, rational, gentle

Toni disappeared to be replaced by an angry, vengeful, out of control person no one who knew her would have recognised. And it [is] in this emotional cauldron that she [goes] for JP's gun and then [seeks] Mark (231).

She feels the betrayal that comes with the negation of justice in Kenya in the 21st Century. She takes the law into her own hands by seeking out the perpetrator in order to murder him. Phillip gains credence as a level minded person as he tries to save both Mark and Toni. He calls Mark only to get an unintelligible response 'bogus, bomas and then another word mu-somethingö (232). However, this hints at the possible place where Toni can be. He and others trace her to Murichu Road where they find her threatening to shoot Mark in an old isolated building. Philip disarms her before she pulls the trigger while convincing her not to destroy her life over Mark. Amidst raw pain and tension, she obliges.

Following his rescue from death, Mark goes to the hospital to visit Regina. The threat on his life convinces him about the pain Regina's predicament is causing her friends. He understands Toni's hatred towards him to the extent of wanting to kill him. He confirms to his father that he is the one who actually drugged her but did not rape her although she was actually defiled. He tells his father that [he has] never seen so much pain and suffering in another human being. He wonders, 'how could I ever have believed that she lied about what happened that night?' (241). The impact of Regina lying on a hospital bed has a far reaching effect on him. He is won over to the fact that she is not peddling falsehood about her rape ordeal. He understands why she tried to commit suicide; why Toni tried to kill him. He is annoyed with his father for ensuring that all the legal avenues that could reward Regina with justice are blocked.

In an outburst, Mark tells his father that whatever he has done is geared towards protecting himself rather than his son. His response implicates him. He now knows that his father

is the culprit and hence his intense effort to have the charges dropped; his refusal to allow Mark to undergo a DNA test that could clear him. Mark's indignation is captured in the words, "Everything you did was to protect yourself. You lied to me, to all of us pretending it was my welfare you were concerned about and that of this family." You knew all along that I was innocent yet did nothing to prove it" (242). It is with bitterness and pain that he insists that justice be accorded to Regina even if it requires the imprisonment of his father. He is about to call the police when his mother dissuades him.

To unravel the puzzle as to who actually raped Regina, the author makes the victim embark on a journey of self-discovery by delving into her unconsciousness to dig out the truth about what happened to her. Her recall of the circumstances leading to her violation vouches for Mark's innocence. She remembers that while at the party, she felt the need to get outside and get fresh air. With so many people at the party, passage was difficult and hence she crawled under the table to the nearest wall seeking an opening out of the room. She found a door leading to a corridor and began to explore Mark's house only to come across a man who startled her. Then one thing led to another and despite her pleas for him to stop he did not. She reminisces:

What [happens] next [seems] to happen in a slow motion. She [is] somewhere up above as he [removes] the woman's bra, trousers and panties then [thrusts] himself into her as she shook her head from side to side trying to shout something. He [pays] no attention and just [keep] thrusting harder and harder. .. Afterwards he [rolls] off her, but she [lying] still unmoving. Her face streaked with tears, eyes tightly shut. (212)

She vaguely realises that the man who rapes her is not Mark, for she continues to call upon Mark to help her. When she comes to her senses, she tries to remember where she has heard the voice before, the voice of the man who raped her. The resemblance of voice with that of Mark makes

her conclude that Mark is the violator. This happens on the East part of the house which Kilonzo and his wife occupy.

The writer does not describe the abuse in detail and therefore we know very little about his personality. This is deliberate on the part of the author and Pauline Palmer supports such representations and points out that an author can find it particularly difficult to represent the rapist because giving a detailed analysis of his personality and motivation, í runs the risk of implying that he is a special deviant caseö (85). Waithaka gives a sketchy outline of the rapist's individuality perhaps because stereotyping the individual would make õhim appear unconvincingö (Palmer 85). This explains why the text's main focus is on the victim rather than the abuser. Regina's rape is therefore represented in a sensational manner and succeeds in depicting her complex response: her feelings of terror, humiliation and isolation during the act and her contradictory feelings of anger and guilt afterwards.

Frustrated by the man he calls father, Mark drives off from home to James Gichuru Road where he dies, on impact, in a grisly road accident. The judge's family receives the news of their son's death in pain and disbelief. His mother is beside herself with grief and accuses her husband of letting Mark suffer for a crime he did not commit although he all along knew the truth. She is convinced that the DNA test could have cleared her son's name and explains that Mark's results could not have pointed to the judge because Mark is not his biological son. The turn of events undermines his intelligence as a person as well as a judge. Embarrassed and desperate, he drowns himself in the family pool.

Following the death of both Mark and Kilonzo, Regina's case is closed without being investigated. Their deaths pave way for Regina and her friends to heal and start living all over again, as a phase of self enhancement follows. Regina is grateful she lived through the attack and

redefines the meaning of her life to develop a greater sense of positive response to the ordeal as she progresses from being a victim to a survivor. Weisbord points at the difficulties involved in dealing with sexual violation. She argues:

í it will take a revolution to eliminate rape from societyí . since it is such a deeply-rooted thing, as much physiological as sociological and long predating capitalismí . It is really a question of creating a new, more [civilised] human being. Equality of women í will be achieved only when the class struggle comes to an end leaving no motive of one group to suppress anotherí Then we may hope for an end to such outrages as rape. (4)

Weisbord outlines the various factors involved in rape incidences that have social, psychological and economic repercussions. It is apparent that a lot more needs to be done if women's rape phenomenon is to be given the exigency it requires. For instance, sexual violence victims should be given guidance and counselling and complimentary relationships between gender should be encouraged.

Waithaka depicts the socio-cultural and political factors that have an influence on violence against women. She presents patterns of gender abuse in postcolonial Kenya that range from sexual pestering to actual rape. These acts of invasion on women show the extent to which the female self is undermined such that she has difficulties in her development of identity at the individual and national levels. This is due to the psychological trauma that women suffer in the event of sexual harassment and defilement. In addition, rape is compounded by a legal system that is resigned and disinterested in any attempt to change gender power relations that suppress women in Kenya.

Regina's desire to control her own existence enables her to regain agency and her subjectivity is positively reconceptualised to enable her to chart her identity. The writer

renegotiates Regina's painful experience to rebuild her mental and emotional identity in the search for her real self, which is erased after the rape. Regina's rape experience becomes a textual experience in which socio-political meaning is realised as a life lived through both private and public acts. We witness her strong personality, independence and determination to take up a new lease of life. She goes to South Africa to pursue a Master's degree at the University of Cape Town, where she has won a scholarship. Regina's ability to pick up her broken pieces in an effort to enact her selfhood and nationhood paves way for her friends to also breathe life into their future: Tessa gets a job on a one year contract with an international humanitarian organisation in Zimbabwe while Toni and her boyfriend Phillip plan for a holiday together.

5.5 Conclusion

The Unbroken Spirit exposes the struggles that women are subjected to in the form of sexual exploitation. The text also depicts a society in which males are available to protect females who are molested by fellow men. By drawing in the males into the fight against sexual molestation, the writer succeeds in mobilising Kenya towards appreciating and according women the respect they deserve. The statement Waithe is making is that sexual violation is widespread and some men have become schemers in executing rape. They drug their victims in an effort to ensure that the victims momentarily lose memory and then sexually abuse the helpless victims. The use of intoxicants in rape incidents makes prosecution almost impossible. The author decries a nation where men with deviant behaviour devour women's sexuality.

From the analysis of *Tracking the Scent of My Mother* and *The Unbroken Spirit*, it is evident that the two authors depict the sexual problems affecting women in postcolonial Kenya. They offer the reader pleasure of identification and involvement with the characters in the texts. This is not to say that their writings lack fictionality. However, their fictional discourse is closely

tied to what is happening in Kenya in the 21st Century. They represent acts of violence as coming in the way of the development of the female self and national identity. They show women's subjectivity and a sense of women as sexual objects as they challenge patriarchal assumptions. Their aim is to shatter, through literary writing the silences that promote female subjectivity. They contribute to the hope of elimination of sexual abuse that exists in Kenya today. The perception of violence against women discussed in these texts bravely sets the precedent for challenging patriarchal authority, subverting the dominant discourse about female sexuality and exposing sexual victimisation.

The texts attempt to break the silence on sexual violence by adopting a self-reflexive mode on the crisis of brutality towards women. Sexual violence makes the victim invisible since, figuratively, it destroys the woman's self image at private and public levels. Advocating for change, the authors call for enforcement of new models of renegotiation that can positively influence the development of the female self and national identity in the 21st Century. The writers advocate for the respect and protection of women against sexual abuse which is both violent and exploitative. They endeavour to alter the devastating consequences of sexual violation and hence their dedication of narratives to the development of the female self. They project the hope that with concerted efforts women in postcolonial Kenya are likely to be accorded justice and dignity as they enact both selfhood and nationhood. Justice towards women is only achievable through interdependence and coexistence between men and women so that sexuality ceases to be an aspect of exercising gender power through sexual molestation.

Thus, forms of sexual abuse, which are an indicators of disintegration of logical thinking as well as human decorum, are castigated and possibilities for resistance and the social national change projected by the authors in the narratives. Whatever the female victims reclaim of and for

their nation are only imagined fragments of a wrecked nation since violence against women leads to a sense of helplessness and pessimism. Through literary representation, the women writers under study assume agency towards women's progressive social change.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is an evaluation of the development of the female self and national identity as perceived through the literary representations of a given contested reality in postcolonial Kenya. Critical appraisal has been done with regard to patriarchy, disease, ethnicity and violence all of which are shown to affect women's identity in Kenya. The women's writings considered in this study inform Kenya's postcolonial literature in as far as the development of the female self and national identity is concerned. The writers have advanced the female self's social and national engagement by providing agency to women's issues that designate a source of self-worth and dignity in the postcolonial nation. The narration of the self and the nation takes into account the writers themselves and their fellow women's efforts of developing the nation as well as the self. As a result, the women writers formulate and reflect on the on-going status and experiences of women in postcolonial Kenya.

Creative writing provides space to historicise the dialectical relationship between women and the Kenyan historical contexts in which women's identity in the nation is reaffirmed or rejected at private and public levels. The women writers interrogated in this study represent the Kenyan pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial history and the creation of new knowledge. These writings provide the background against which rethinking of the place of women in the postcolonial space is sought from women and feminist perspectives. The women authors studied in this thesis represent the contestation between the notions of the individual and the nation with regard to the space that women inhabit in postcolonial Kenya. The process of writing is not completed in the text but in the interaction of the reader as well as the critic with the text. Thus, an examination of women writings gains significance for the act of reading becomes a critical

moment of the analysis of the texts. An examination of the selected Kenyan women writers reveals the search for the female self and national identity as an experience that calls for self knowledge and understanding.

Women artists mediate between the self and the other as women struggle to express personal autonomy. Thus, women's literary representation is a diverse response towards women's self-definition and self-assertion. The distinct feature of women's writing is not just that it is written by women, but that it reflects women's writing in terms of according women a voice since their writings develop with a consciousness that women's writing are different from men's writing. Need arises, therefore, to analyse the women writers' portrayals of the women's circumstances in private, individual, public and collective spheres. The nature of the female selves explored by the women writers considered in this thesis show that there is a reciprocal relationship between self and nation. The self influences the action of the individual and thus the writers create literature that is a reflection of that nation. The writers have made an attempt to transform the status of women by challenging patriarchal ideology, presenting women as educated and taking up careers away from home.

A feminist attempt to establish female self-identity in relation to a series of differences between the 'self' and 'other' is examined through women writers' (re)conceptualisation of the female self. A self /other notion of women portrays the female self as trapped between what the woman would like to be and what the woman actually is. Need, therefore, arises for women to ask themselves why patriarchy creates a women whose self is far from being realised. To answer this question, the selected Kenyan women writers considered in this study participate in the female self (re)conceptualisation act and manage to show the dialectical relationship between women and

the nation even though the question of the female self and national identity is complex and compounded by the self/other binary opposition.

One of the findings of this study is that the texts studied revealed how the female self is affected by patriarchy. To enable women to acquire autonomy, the women writers make a statement that patriarchy has to cease from differentiating woman with reference to man since by so doing, man is portrayed as autonomous, representing the "self" while the woman represents the "other". Women are encouraged to transcend otherness and confront the principles and practices that patriarchy imposes on them by way of silencing them. Consequently, women writers aim at empowering women through self-consciousness as we have seen in the semi-autobiographical and self-narration fictional writings examined in this study which affirm women's rise to autonomy. However, it is not an autonomy that disregards the multifaceted relationship between men and women.

Nevertheless, the one preoccupation of the select Kenyan women writers in this study is the tension between men and women, particularly the ones that affect women's acquisition of self-identity in regard to women's voice as socially constructed or inherently owned. This follows women's realisation that to give up their voice is to give up resolve that comes with conscious construction of the national space they want to occupy in Kenya. In other words, women writers help themselves and their counterparts to presuppose an identity that enables them to access the privileges of the "self" by challenging the subordination and oppression dictated on women's identity by patriarchy as seen in *The River and the Source*, *I Swear by Apollo* and *A Journey Within*. These texts are both fictional and semi-autobiographical works based on the characters themselves rather than the authors. The two modes of representation are intertwined with the construction of the self in a bid to explore how these writers observe their environment and its

contradictions in order to question the females' subjective position. Thus, an exploration of these women writings points to self-disclosure which is a useful strategy for women to share information about themselves with others. In so doing, they champion the rights of women as the silenced subjects and delineate new roles for them and therefore play the role of agents of change in as far as women are concerned in the national scene.

Ogola and Mbaya seem to understand the precariousness of women in the postcolonial society such as Kenya. They have therefore reworked the concept of the female self-identity to create a sense of purpose that propels women to foster their selfhood alongside nationhood. The Kenyan nation is portrayed as a crucial site for re-organisation of individual and the public life since it is a meaningful and coherent space for the struggle for female self empowerment. The two authors narrate of women's discovery of their female self and national identity as they try to recover from patriarchy which precipitates identity vacuum for the female self.

Patriarchy silences and makes women invisible but the authors support women's visibility and participation in the realm of the nation since they portray women's attempt to establish themselves by defining themselves as 'self' rather than the 'other' to be subjugated and assimilated. Thus, even though women perform the roles assigned to them in a patriarchal society that should not be taken as a confirmation that patriarchal ideology is right. While enacting patriarchal roles, women experience a sense of lack of self since they are alienated by the notion that they are perceived as the 'other'. Ogola and Mbaya convey the need for women to reclaim their identity and dignity lost under patriarchy. They give their women characters distinguished value and attention as they identify with them while at the same time revise the women's definitions that patriarchal culture imposes on them. By so doing, female characters are made to traverse the literary territories as both self and other while at the same time trying to emancipate

themselves from the suffering that comes with the insignificant way in which women are viewed in patriarchal society.

Ogola and Mbaya have foregrounded the social construction of women, portray a shift of women from the nonspeaking to speaking subject, unheard to being heard. By so doing, the writers provide agency by telling stories about fellow women trapped in cultural and patriarchal environments, and the efforts women make to transcend the constraints they face as women. The female characters are also depicted as demanding a positive change in their lives and thus Ogola and Mbaya attempt to write back to the cultural and patriarchal stories that depict women as inferior members of the community.

The changing fortunes of women as portrayed by Ogola and Mbaya are a strategy that women writers use to assign agency to women's issues. In (re)conceptualising the female self, women's writings reveal the potential to present self-reflection as a process that points at the metaphorical creation of self. The characters are, therefore, portrayed as acquiring some sort of knowledge and awakening that helps them to develop self-awareness and hence get an opportunity of reimagining and recognising their self-identity. The writers have highlighted the efforts made by women to achieve their selfhood in a patriarchal society that is encountering changes that come with women who are taking up careers outside the home in the modern world.

In an effort to realise their selfhood some of the female characters in *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo* embrace Christian religion which symbolically elevates them into a life where spiritual inspiration is possible. They are governed by their heart passions rather than the expectations of the patriarchal society, which is blind towards women's need for self-definition. Women, therefore, constantly make selfless sacrifices in an on-going struggle for selfhood whereby they refuse to conform to the patriarchal society and turn to Christianity. As a

result, their assertion of selfhood is realised and they get opportunities to assume fulfilled selves through concerted efforts to denounce patriarchal sightlessness and short sightedness. To rebel against codes of behaviour that have strong invisible confining power over women is pertinent for women to achieve self emancipation by awakening the long suppressed potential of self-assertion in their subconscious and conscious mind.

Writing, as far as Ogola and Mbaya are concerned, is an act which is significant at the personal and collective level as the writers seek to project female autonomy. Their attempt to (re)conceptualise the female self shows women's ability to cope with transitional society that accords women autonomy and access to validation of the self. Thus, there are positive changes in the direction of greater levels of self-determination and self-definition of women in the twenty first Century than before. This is evident from the literary representations which women writers use to make sense of the postcolonial conditions under which women are living in Kenya.

Examination of women's writings shows that women writers begin and continue the construction of female self and national identity in relation to the postcolonial nation. Using writing that is based on the family unit as is the case of Ogola in *The River and the Source* and *I Swear by Apollo* and career as in Mbaya's *A Journey Within*, the authors represent the individual realm which they make public through the individuals participation in the collective sphere of the nation. Literary representation of female characters becomes the women writers and feminists' way of privileging female writings, which relate though in disguise, women's personal as well as their protagonists' stories to the nation's social and political standing.

Patriarchy is not the only vice that affects the development of the female self and national identity; there are also other conditions and circumstances existing in the nation, a good example being disease. The findings of this study in as far as disease is concerned show that autonomous

self-identity is made problematic by the occurrence of incurable diseases. Ogoalæ *Place of Destiny* and Gitaalæ *Crucible for Silver and Furnace for Gold* explore the subjectivity of women suffering from cancer and HIV/AIDS. It is worth noting that female subjectivity in the face of disease takes a central stage. There is a sense then in which these novels also examine the conflict between the desire to live an individual life and the rival claim of social responsibility to fellow human beings. It is within this context that the diseased women grapple with sickness at individual and collective spheres within the nation.

Textualisation of the subjectivity of the female self in contemporary womenalæ writings provides space to (re)define new identities for the diseased female self. These writers show the need for specialised modern methods of treatment and make the sick visible in the realm of the nation as persons who are assigned an identity that is not whole, an identity undermined by the diseased condition. With ailment, the self becomes fragmented and hence a loss of wholeness is experienced. HIV/AIDS narrative considered in this study has entwined issues of discrimination and stigmatisation alongside the need for care and love for those who are diseased. The authors use confessional mode in the cancer and HIV/AIDS narratives to enable the protagonists to tell their own stories about illness. The writersalæ aim is to intervene between the individual and national signification and response to illness. By voicing their stories, they in a way provide agency since other people come to know about certain forms of diseases and the need to care for those who are sick. Thus, the narratives help to reclaim the sick from social marginalisation as they come to terms with their diseased condition.

Place of Destiny outlines the protagonistalæ effort to cope with cancer which is untreatable in her case. The spiritual journey that the protagonist takes unfolds a journey through pain as she prepares for death. A sense of spiritual fulfilment and survival in a space of sustaining belief in

the supernatural helps the diseased to sojourn, her illness notwithstanding, in an aura of motivation and dedication to spiritual beliefs and values. Through the death of the protagonist, Ogola implies that a woman's search of selfhood is threatened by disease and curtailed by cancer which not only afflicts women but also men more so because cancer treatment is elusive.

HIV/AIDS, just like cancer, is difficult to treat and cure. Gitaa suggests that love can be a means of transforming the stigmatisation that attends those who contract the disease. Romance is presented as a kind of fire which can change human beings from their insensitivity to passionate regard towards the sick in the postcolonial nation. Gitaa in her literary representation gives facts and stereotypes about HIV/AIDS with the hope that knowledge of the facts can help people to desist from blatant condemnation of those living with the disease. She empathises with the sick while at the same time suggesting that Kenyans should exercise resilience when dealing with the diseased. By consciously cultivating friendship, people can remove the mask of hypocrisy, illusions and inhibitions that those who have not contracted the disease adorn. In so doing, they will brace themselves to face the truth of the revelation of the positive status of their fellow Kenyans for they will discover a recognisable unifying human emotion, which reflects the reality and potentiality of humanity.

HIV/AIDS narratives are used to mirror Kenya as a diseased nation whose hope lies in developing a positive attitude in interpersonal relationships with regard to the disease. This is in the hope that there is going to be a subsequent success in the treatment and cure of HIV/AIDS. Gitaa portrays love as revolutionary strategy in that it redeems Lavina from suicidal tendencies so as to reflect on the mitigating circumstances that define her identity. The author shows the difficulties involved in interpersonal love relationships in which contraction of HIV/AIDS is linked to sex. She transcends the fear of contraction by claiming willingness on the part of a HIV

negative male to forge friendship with a HIV positive female, which is a gesture towards acceptance of those who are sick as worthwhile members of the nation. Gitaa, therefore, paves way for the sick to develop both a new consciousness and identity. By being friendly to the sick, they are likely to experience a catharsis following the purging of emotions that suppress them as persons living with disease and hence a sense of worth can be cultivated.

Gitaa, in her narrative seems to ask: can there be any meaningful shared experience between the HIV/AIDS positive and the HIV/AIDS negative persons? In the course of her literary representation, she demonstrates that it is possible for the HIV/AIDS victims to interact, enjoy romance and even marry HIV negative people. In a way, Gitaa crusades for HIV positive persons to be accorded their humanity so that they can benefit from the rights and privileges due to them despite their sickness.

Women's writings on ethnicity and community outlook also affect the female's search for identity in Githiora's *Wanjira* and Garland's *Halfway between Nairobi and Dundori*. The writings of these two authors form the milieu against which this study evaluates the socio-cultural and socio-political problematic question of the female self and national identity, within the framework of the contemporary postcolonial Kenyan nation. In their writing, they portray the female characters' perception of subjectivity as they make efforts at individual and collective level to actualise their potential through self-reflexive insight. The female characters show their capacity to examine cultural forces acting upon them and try to find their true self in contrast to the foreign 'other' that patriarchy assigns women. The authors portray culture as embedded in the narrative of the nation and shaped by the politics of national emergence. Thus, socio-cultural and socio-political paradigms become part of the political process of constructing the distinctive female self as well as the collective national identity.

Githiora and Garland place the struggle for female agency in different postcolonial contexts that question the plight of both the individual and the nation in the wake of a capitalist modernity. Githiora resists the tendency to subsume women within the patriarchal views of socio-culture and portrays the disruptions of traditionally regulated gender relations pitted against sites of modernity which are represented by education for women. Both Githiora and Garland focus on women's perspective of socio-cultural and political milieu with reference to female agency and hence their writing about ethnic and community identity is a wakeup call towards reforming the nation so that the citizens in the imagined community, postcolonial Kenya, foster peaceful coexistence despite their diversity.

Women's writings also form the backdrop against which interrogation of women's self perspectives on violence becomes significant within the contemporary postcolonial Kenya. Githiora's *Wanjira*, Waithaka's *The Unbroken Spirit* and Garland's *Tracking the Scent of My Mother* represent sexual violence extended to women. Garland works towards the emancipation of women from sexual violation but it appears impossible in the contemporary postcolonial era. Nevertheless, she provides the agency for resistance to different forms of cruelty and thus there is hope that it may be realised in future. The reality of sexual violence is live in *Tracking the Scent of My Mother* where the protagonist experiences a difficult childhood when her mother deserts her and her brother. She is sexually abused by her biological father, gets a child out of that incestuous encounter, and develops murderous tendencies before she is incarcerated. The protagonist's sobbing image of a child who is abused sexually foreshadows the suppression that women experience and as a result fail to realise their selfhood. The only time that the protagonist comes close to realising 'selfhood' albeit negatively, is when she finds herself in a difficult situation when her child is defiled and she reflexively murders the defiler of her child. Murder

becomes an act of revenge and also an act through which to begin to construct her own sense of justice.

Scholastica's act of murder heralds her imprisonment and any positive development of her selfhood is curtailed. Nevertheless, her going to jail provides an agency to female sexual violation. Scholastica is defiled by her father and she supposes that her boyfriend has defiled her daughter. She is disheartened that both culprits are not apprehended. Garland portrays an innocent girl having distressing problems physically and psychologically that are symbolic of the violence that the girl child and women undergo in postcolonial Kenya. Even though women experience the problems generally facing Kenya's contemporary society, they are worse off than men because their lives are complicated and compounded by the sexual and physical violence that men extend to them, which renders their development retrogressive rather than progressive. Thus, in the absence of judicial justice, women have no choice than to take the law into their own hands due to the frustration that they face as women living in a society that treats them merely as sexual objects.

Waithaka portrays sexual harassment as a reality in a society where some men persistently pursue women for sexual gratification, and if the women refuse to comply, they are sacked or denied promotion. Women of integrity resist any attempts to allow their bosses to exploit them sexually and seek intervention, but if that does not work, they opt out. Thus, even if both men and women are facing the challenges of scarcity of jobs in postcolonial Kenya, women's problems in their search for employment are more complex since meeting job requirements alone, more often than not, does not guarantee a woman a job. The author intertwines sexual harassment and rape whereby violated women who seek judicial redress are ridiculed while at the same time efforts are made to ensure that the culprits are not apprehended. The gravity of rape in postcolonial Kenya

takes a new dimension as the rapists try to protect themselves against detection. They administer drugs on would be victims to ensure that they are incapable of remembering any details about sexual violation. The judicial system gags justice by heartlessly squashing rape cases and therefore makes the realisation of positive female identity very difficult to achieve.

Grappling with the effects of rape on an individual's psyche, the quest for individual and national identity is somehow thwarted. The victims are trapped between what they would like to be and what they actually are as a result of sexual violation. Self-fulfilment is not possible until the victims come to terms with their fate amidst questions that plague their minds for instance, why are the lives they lead in the postcolonial nation so ugly and empty? Once a woman becomes rape victim, the psyche endlessly engages in a dubious psychological battle. However, Waithaka depicts sexual violence victims as experiencing an awakening of self-consciousness which results in a feeling of self-worth and subsequent assertion of this self. The act of the victims' endeavour to start charting their lives again is a process of self actualisation whereby the dignity of self in the aftermath of rape calls for a renewed search for self-definition and self-discovery.

The six women writers examined in this study portray the female self figuratively. By narrating patriarchal ideology, cancer, HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse, socio-cultural and socio-political spheres, it is evident that women in the postcolonial nation, Kenya, experience suffering that is very traumatic. Writing about these women in distress becomes a process through which both the women writers and the female characters find voice to utter what is considered unspeakable. Writing and speaking, in a way, becomes therapeutic in that through writing the authors change the circumstances of the narrators as well as the narrative as they attempt to empower women.

Consequently, the reader and the critic get an opportunity to identify with the female characters represented in the literary world.

The writers considered in this study seem to seek to motivate women to reject the identity of women as the oppressed group in order to gain access to social, economic and political opportunities. The selected Kenyan women writers have represented the female self through women's experiences. Thus, these stories, to a large extent, reflect what these writers, as women, too have experienced or observed in various aspects of life.

Considering that the focus of this study is the development of the female self and national identity by select Kenyan women writers, this thesis, is but a partial contribution to the study of women's writing in Kenya. Further studies can be done on other women writers in Kenya whose works are not studied here in regard to the development of the female self and national identity. In addition, other studies could compare works written by both Kenyan men and women writers with a focus on the intersection between the female self and national identity.

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