THE JOURNEY MOTIF IN WOMEN'S IDENTITY FORMATION IN DAVIDMULWA'S *FLEE, MAMA FLEE*

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DECLARATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors.

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Second Supervisor:

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to all those men and women who have committed themselves in taking steps towards making the world a freer place to live in. It is specially dedicated to my daughter Debra Mwende. May she grow to her full life in the days God will give her on earth.To my sons Caleb Muthimi and Victor Kariuki. May they live to their full potential yet appreciate the value of freedom that everybody deserves despite their gender and other constrains. To my mother Jacinta Ciukinyua. May her life culminate in fulfillment for the immense sacrifices she has accorded her children to ensure they lead fruitful lives, despite the myriad of vicissitudes that have surrounded such a life as hers. To my late grandmother Juliana Kori. May she rest in eternal peace for the tranquility she ever brought to our lives through her endless concern, care and subtly concocted narratives. To my late great grandmother Mwakathanje, fondly remembered as Merri, for the merry she brought along our young lives with her endless joy, awesome narratives and infectious laughter.

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ABSTRACT

This research project examines the use of the journey motif in David Mulwa's novel *Flee, Mama Flee*. The study explores the significance of the journey motif and how it is appropriated as a tool in female identity formation particularly during the colonial condition in Kenya. More specifically, the work examines the physical, psychological and emotional facets of the journey motif; and how the journeys imbedded in the motif help shape or define female identity in a subjugated society where the plight of women is far worse off compared to their male counterparts, first due to African traditional patriarchal structures and secondly as a result of foreign subjugation. This study, therefore, examines how the physical movements, psychological reawakening and emotional maturation help to (re)form women's fluid or lost identity. The work is based on feminist, psychoanalytic and postcolonial theories, particularly African feminism and Carl Jung's psychoanalysis strands respectively. Molara's strand of "The Six Mountains on the Woman's Back" is used to explore the "mountains" that have been placed on the woman's back, rendering her identity crushed and thus the need to embark on journeys to reclaim it. To trace the physical journeys, the study is based on identification of the basic motifs of a journey such as the departure, the obstacles and the return, which are instrumental in examining the processes through which the female protagonists pass through on their way towards achieving their quest of embracing a new identity. Jung's tenet of the "unconscious" as brought forth through dreams and mental states becomes necessary in tracing the psychological and emotional movements of the characters. The postcolonial strand of "Writing Back to the Empire" is used to examine how the colonial subjects strive to transcend colonial oppression and form identity by re-writing their misrepresented history. The research work is based on textual analysis of the setting, plot development, characterization and use of language as part of the methodology in the interpretation of thematic concerns in the novel. In the text, women undertake many rigorous journeys which greatly (re)define and determine who they are in the colonized and male dominated society. Where they were under colonial and patriarchal subjugation, they end up in free environments where they are able to form a new identity. The completion of the journeys helps them transcend colonial and cultural oppressions to become comfortable and fulfilled women. The project further analyzes the author's subversion of gender roles in a society where males are perceived to be superior and at the lead in the fight against colonialism, but where females end up taking the first position to champion for liberation from colonial rule. The journey motif is, therefore, an effective technique that helps us to examine how the female protagonists formed their identity during the colonial epoch in Kenya.

CHAPTER ONE
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

David Mulwa is a renowned theatre personality who has written a dozen plays, acted both on stage and in TV soap operas and commercials as well as writing prose fiction. Mulwa, a lecturer at Kenyatta University, was born on 9th April 1945 in Machakos County. Some of the plays he has written include *Redemption*, *Clean Hands* and *Glasshouses*. His prose works include *Master and Servant, We Come in Peace* (a novella) and *Flee, Mama Flee.* It is the latter text I examine in this study.

Mulwa's latest prose work, *Flee, Mama Flee* (2014), depicts the changes that arose in the country when Kenya became a British colony. In his earlier prose, *We Come in Peace* (2014*)*, and which *Flee, Mama Flee* is a sequel, Mulwa reflects the experiences that Africans went through as a result of slavery. In the novella, we are taken back to the experiences that the Africans went through as slaves and that so mush disenfranchised them that their identities almost went into extinction. Further disenfranchisement is seen in the latter novel when the coming of whites in Africa greatly disoriented the "natives" largely because "Europeans and Africans themselves in the colonial period lacked due regard for the unique features of African culture" (Walter Rodney 3). In particular, it made the place of women worse than it already was under traditional patriarchal structures. In an introduction to her text, *Gender in the Making of theNigerian University System* (2007*)*, Charmaine Pereira notes that "colonial administrators brought to the colony Victorian ideas about … a particular gender ideology of domesticity for women" in which "A woman's place was supposed to be in the home, caring for her husband and children" (xii).

This put women in a pretty precarious position. On one hand was the `good' old patriarchal system where man loomed large: on the other hand was the new order that stamped foreign authority with vast vengeance. The conglomeration of these factors formed formidable mountains on the paths of women, the mountains Molara Ogundipe-

Leslie refers to as the "Mountains on the Woman's Back"; the hurdles that have been placed on the woman's path in her strive for self-determination. The institutionalization of these mountains, which include colonialism, patriarchy, race and the woman herself, has led to difficult conditions for women, forcing them to seek means through which to extricate themselves from these societal constraints. Women have had to embark on physical, psychological and emotional journeys, journeys which in *Flee, Mama Flee* are effectively encapsulated in the journey motif.

Much research has been carried out on the use of the journey motif as a tool for identity formation, especially in the area of female identity formation. In her journal article 'African Journeys' (1991), Mildred Mortimer points out that journeys are adventures or forced marches in which a traveler is "seeking exorcism or an exile in search of a new home" (169). The travelers in such journeys are in pursuit of something that they miss in their lives and which, when found fills them with some form of satisfaction, contentment and identity. To get to this status, however, entails facing challenging and rigorous physical and psychological experiences that the traveler must surmount after which she or he is guaranteed a higher revelation. The traveler must "descend into physical and mental hells, undergo rebirth and resurrection to make the ascent or return journey on the river, across the ocean, or through the wilderness" (Mortimer 174).

In order to discover the new identity that they crave for, the characters must first vanish in terms of their former selves so that they can transit into new forms that inform a new status, a defining status. But this transition does not just happen. It takes a process that is gradual but that ultimately leads to the defining moments such as finding a home, discovering one's parentage, getting recognition among others. This study focuses on journeys made by female characters in a text written by a male author. Unlike the historical travel and journey motif that denied women movements to self-discovery, we seek to find out the representation the author accords women through the journey motif by going against the hegemonic discourse where males, whether authors or characters, have almost ruled the world of travel and discovery.

In her MA thesis, `The Journey Motif in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*', Ruth Atsango extensively explores the use of the journey motif in the two texts and convincingly illustrates how the element is effectively applied to bring out "women's quest for liberation and empowerment … (by) redefining women's identity" (120).

In their text, *Women's Identities in Kenyan Landscape: The Novels of Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye* (2012), Shaul Bassi et al have carried out an extensive study of Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's four most famous fictional works *Coming to Birth* (1986), *The Present Moment* (1987), *Homing In* (1994)and *A Farm Called Kishinev* (2005), particularly focusing on the journey and female identity formation. The study dwells on journeys that help women to form their identity through the experiences they face in African patriarchal societies where women are relegated due to male dominance and superiority.

This current study examines whether the use of the journey motif is a tool used for female identity formation in the colonial condition in Kenya. While many texts that reflect women experiences in the colonial and postcolonial conditions bring out women's strive to overcome relegation and discrimination due to male dominance in a patriarchal setting, Mulwa's *Flee, Mama Flee* brings out the colonial experiences that colonial subjects went through, more so women who faced a double-edged sword due to their gender.

The journey motif is, therefore, an essential mode that helps us to explore the physical, psychological and emotional paths that women are bound to walk in their efforts to navigate through the labyrinths created by the aforementioned mountains. By examining the journey motif, the study explores the existence of these mountains, their impacts on the woman particularly their effects on her identity and finally their contribution towards pushing her to undertake steps that eventually lead to longer strides towards mediating spaces that are free and that result to new identity (re)formation.

Key words:

Motif: a symbolic literary element that the author recurrently and consistently uses as a basic tool and through which he blends the form and content of his novel; significantly contributing to the meaning of the text.

Journey motif: recurrent use of and reference tophysical movements, psychological growth, emotional and spiritual maturation of the protagonists as they progress from one stage of life to another in pursuit of some quest or an accomplishment that brings them fulfillment.

Identity formation: the process of coming to terms with oneself, appreciating oneself, enjoying an elevated state of self esteem determined by the cultural, physical, socio-economic and political environments that one is exposed to.

Colonial condition: the cultural subjugation, oppression, suppression and exploitation of Africans by foreign settlers rendering the former to live in a state of alienation, disenfranchisement and identity crises.

Female protagonists: women characters who go through experiences that first render their existence and identity in limbo, stirring in them the resolve to stand up and agitate for better spaces where they can reclaim and regain their lost identity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Most of the works depicting the traveller on a journey to self-discovery have traditionally dwelt on males engrossed in the quest to find homes and identities. Mortimer notes that travel literature is problematic in terms of gender considerations because "travellers to Africa have not only been primarily European but they have also been almost exclusively men" (172). These journeys are not just a means of adventure but they are tours that provide opportunities to find a home, self-identity as well as "building the gap between self and other" (174). Mary Mason emphasizes this arguing that "historically, travel and the journey motif were inaccessible to women as metaphors because of lack of mobility in their lives" (338). Eloise Briere, however, notes that where women have had opportunities to engage in travel, the journeys have given them space to embrace self-betterment and self-determination. She explains that the journeys help women to realize

what Mortimer calls the "vanishing self" making "ecriture" a necessary strategy for reclaiming identity" (272).

By examining the journeys undertaken by the female protagonists, the study seeks to find out whether the journeys afford a different presentation of women in their participation to bring social change, particularly during the disenfranchising colonial period in Kenya, where males are almost always presented as the champions of change. The study focuses on how, through the physical, psychological and emotional facets of the journey motif, the author reflects the colonial experiences and conditions faced by the colonial subjects, especially women, and how these experiences forced women to undertake journeys in order to make transition from environments under immense oppressive forces of colonialism on one hand, and patriarchy on the other. The study, therefore, explores whether through the journeys that they undertake, the women are in a process of self-discovery and identity formation in a society where decisions are made, instructions commanded and policies initiated no longer by black men only but also by white men and women.

1.3 Objectives

The study intends to accomplish the following objectives:

i. To explore the use of the physical journey motif in women's identity formation in Mulwa's *Flee, Mama Flee*.
ii. To examine the use of the psychological and emotional journey motifs in the novel in women's identity formation in the colonial condition in Kenya.
iii. To analyze the journey motif as the basic mode that Mulwa uses to concretize the form and content of his novel.

1.4 Hypotheses

The study is based on the following assumptions:

i. The physical facet of the journey motif is effectively infused to enhance female identity formation in the text of the novel.

ii. The psychological and emotional facets of the journey motif in *Flee, Mama Flee* are significantly used in enhancing women's identity formation in the colonial condition in Kenya.

iii. The journey motif has been used as a basic mode in concretizing the form and content of *Flee Mama, Flee.*

1.5 Justification

Many writers in Kenya have come up with artistic works to depict the different social, cultural, economic, political and historical issues that have shaped or affected the society in different epochs. Some works depict the pre-colonial condition in pre-independent Kenya, others depict the varied experiences that the colonial subjects underwent during colonialism while still others reflect the postcolonial condition, especially with the emergence of colonial extensions such as neocolonialism, capitalism, imperialism and corruption.

However, more often than not, most of the authors who have written works that reflect the colonial condition in Kenya have based their points of view on male characters, where the central characters in various genres are men who are the pioneers of the liberation movements that are initiated to bring independence in the colonized nations. Onyeka Iwuchukwu (2013) points out that "women are portrayed as underdogs, prostitutes and witches without progressive or adventurous attributes" (67) while men are brought out as the movers and shakers of revolutionary changes. Examining "the role of women in revolutionary struggles" as presented in Ngugi wa Thiongo and Micere Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodu*, Iwuchukwu's contests the treatment that women are given by a majority of playwrights in Africa, who *"*present women as hapless victims in the hands of men which is believed to be the true image of women given the patriarchal nature of the African Society (67).

Even though we agree with Iwuchukwu that the women characters in the two texts are not "hapless victims in the hands of men", they still take action in pursuit of what has been initiated by male characters, for instance Kimathi, the hero and protagonist in

The Trial of Dedan Kimathi. The current project underscores the novel presentation the text under study accords women in their revolutionary participation in the freedom struggle. While most of the studies that have been carried out on the journey motif as a tool for female identity formation have analyzed texts that reflect women's experiences in patriarchal societies, this research focuses on examining the journey motif as a tool for female identity formation in an immensely repressive colonial environment. We argue that women have been accorded pivotal presentation in their participation in the fight against colonialism, and unlike the other works where the female characters are brought out as actively involved in revolutionary movements to bring freedom in the colonized nation, the text under study seem to go beyond this presentation by not only reflecting women's active contribution in the struggle but also putting them as the lead and central characters who pioneer, develop and successfully manage endeavours and journeys that result in the establishment of the revolutionary movements that ultimately bring emancipation to the colonized masses. We focus on women being the initiators, the implementers and the influencers who are not reacting to the call or initiatives by men as witnessed in other texts that deal with the colonial experience in Kenya.

As Roger Kurtz points out, "texts following hegemonic impulses are usually written by male writers and support the maintenance of patriarchal society, relegating women to their customary roles" (qtd. in Bassi et al 38). This is evident in the many works by male authors that depict the place of women in patriarchal and colonial or postcolonial literary discourse. In most of these works, the female characters are brought out as weak and subservient to their male counterparts who are usually privileged by being given the lead roles, and more often than not, they are the authors' instruments of social change. It's no wonder women authors come up with what Kurtz refers to as "counter hegemonic works ... challenging borders limiting women to their restricted gender roles" (qtd in Bassi et al 38).

The text under study goes against the grain. It is written by a male author who seems to put his female protagonists' statuses and roles as unique and out of the ordinary, contrary to the presentation they are given in other works that depict the colonial experience.

Through this study, we examine whether they fall under what Bassi et al call "the typical female characters often represented by male writers, who resemble symbolic caricatures or stereotypes rather than rounded and complex protagonists" (31). The examination of the journeys that these protagonists make is crucial in interrogating the presentation and prominence that the author gives his female characters, with particular attention to the colonial experience in Kenya. By examining the journey motif, therefore, the study is meant to fill the gap of examining the role of the journey motif as a tool for mediating the proper presentation of women's pivotal roles in the fight against colonialism, and posits that the journeys the women make immensely contribute towards female identity formation.

As earlier noted, this project is substantially based on feminist theoretical approach in its analysis. It is important to note that feminism is a literary theory that is fundamentally used in the analysis and interpretation of literary works written by women, about women and basically for women. Indeed, many critics have argued that a feminist approach to literary study must essentially be tailored towards the appreciation of those works that bring out the valid experiences that women face; the situations and conditions; the trials and triumphs that only women can express, because their male counterparts cannot claim to be in a position to comment on women issues, for they can never really understand what women go through. In her seminal work, *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf argues that women have been denied the space to express themselves freely because men have ever taken every available space for themselves, leaving none where women can express their feelings, thoughts, needs, aspirations and more so their creative abilities. Elaine Showalter emphasizes this in her text *A Literature of their Own* noting that men have always determined what literature meets the threshold of qualifying to be appropriate literature befitting inclusion in the literature canon, and more often than not, this has almost always turned out to be the works written by men.

The study takes cognizant of these and other fundamental tenets that inform the insistence on using feminist approaches only when studying literary works created by women. The fact that the text under study is written by a male author may seem to render the use of feminism as inappropriate in the analysis of the work, since Mulwa, a man,

cannot successfully write on women's issues. That it takes a woman to talk about women's issues for it is the wearer of the shoe who knows where it pinches, how much it pinches or whether it pinches at all. While to a large extent this is true in many realms of life, it sometimes matters to have an observer inform the wearer about the suitability of the shoe or even whether it makes them to stand or walk in an appropriate poise or gait respectively. This is what Mulwa does in *Flee, Mama Flee*. He provides a view about women's experiences in the colonial condition in Kenya perhaps quite differently from what other authors, whether male or female, have done. As noted later in this project, his presentation of women in the novel subverts hegemonic constructs regarding the role played by women during the repressive colonial epoch.

The use of feminism, therefore, becomes essential in the analysis and interpretation of the experiences that the female characters go through and how these experiences help them to walk along paths towards establishing their identity, which is immensely compromised by oppressive colonial powers. Other literary writers have reflected these experiences in different ways, but Mulwa does it in a different light, by presenting the female protagonists in unique ways that even women authors whose works depict the colonial times in Kenya have not appropriated in their creative discourses. The common denominator in all these works is the experiences that women faced or face in varied social-cultural environments. In *Flee, mama Flee*, Mulwa reflects women's experiences during the colonial era, but his mode of presentation offers subtle deviations. The strands of feminism used in this work thus become fundamental in analyzing women's experiences during colonialism and the mode(s) of presentation used in the text to bring out these experiences. To this extent, feminism becomes core in the analysis of Mulwa's novel.

1.6 Literature Review

The dictionary of Literary Terms defines a motif as a recurring theme, idea, or subject in a literary work or musical composition. It is a figure or an image that a writer uses recurrently and upon which he or she bases the work, making it "the unifying thread in a work" (Shaw 245). A motif helps the writer to put across his or her message in a more unified and concrete manner which helps the reader to understand and appreciate the central ideas or themes that are realized through this technique. A motif further blends the other literary elements such as characterization, plot development as well as other stylistic features in a work of art. Characters are developed, conflicts heightened and other features of style embedded in varied motifs that authors appropriate in their works.

Many literary writers have used different motifs such as a road, river, dream, blindness, birth, death etcetera to exemplify different meanings, ideas, messages and themes in their works. In particular, the journey motif is such a common element in so many literary works that one could argue that it is an ubiquitous archetype that Carl Jung defined as "a figure … that repeats itself in the course of history whenever creative fantasy is fully manifested" (Dobie 59). It is hard to come across a literary work in which the character(s) is not in some kind of a journey or a quest, whether physical, psychological, epic or emotional towards finding some answer, comfort, meaning or even identity of who he or she is.

The journey motif has been the interest of many studies. In his article `The Journey Motif: Vehicle of Form, Structure, and Meaning in Mongo Beti's *Mission to Kala*' (1976), Charles Nnolin argues that the protagonist in the work goes through a process in which he begins from "ignorance of or misconception about himself and ends up more knowledgeable about himself and the nature of the world" (182). Nnolin explains that the protagonist moves from a narrow environment to a broader one, most often from the village to the city. Through this journey, the protagonist passes through environments, situations, challenges, trials and triumphs that render him refined like gold passed through the furnace in the process of purification. But while Nnolin's study is on a male protagonist's journey and identity formation, the current study focuses on female

protagonists who seem bent on challenging the male travel dominance by transiting not from the village to the city but by embarking on long `treks' from the town to the rural environment which greatly determines their identity.

While the hero in *Mission to Kala* (1956) leaves the interior and moves to the city where he discovers his identity, the heroines in *Flee, Mama Flee* literally flee from the town to the interior where they hope to feel at home, find self-acceptance and form a complete appreciation of who they are. However, Mortimer argues that "In modern African fiction … the return to the hearth no longer exists in African societies caught up in the rapid transformation engendered by colonialism and post-colonialism" (170). While this is true in regard to the vast number of works depicting postcolonial condition in Africa and in Kenya in particular, the text under study depicts plausible situations in the colonial condition in Kenya in which the protagonists had to return to the hearth if their existence and the future of their offspring was to survive to see another generation.

In his dissertation, Lee Seok-Ho notes that The Woman in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, "after gaining great recognition through Kimathi's conscious struggle against the colonizer, challenges all men and women … to become involved in the struggle" (118). The Woman in the play, in literary discourse, is probably the epitome of women's liberation involvement against colonialism in Kenya. She is perhaps the equivalent of Wairimu in Maggoye's *The Present Moment*, who asserts herself and "does not conform herself to a passive role but feels the urgent need to participate" in the struggle for emancipation from the fetters of colonialism (Bassi et al 74). While Seok-Ho study is based on the analysis of drama and examines the playwright's presentation of women as active participants and players in the struggle for liberation against colonialism, the current study goes beyond this threshold. It is based on the examination of a novel, Mulwa's *Flee, Mama Flee*, with particular purpose of delving not only into the novelist's treatment of women as active contributors in the fight against colonial suppression but also examines the presentation the writer gives women by placing them at leading or central roles in the freedom struggle.

In her MA project, Atsango has effectively and extensively examined the journey motif as a tool that is significantly used in mediating female identity formation in *Efuru* and *The River and the Source*. However, the project entails the formation of female identity in a patriarchal society where the female protagonists strive to find love, recognition, respect, dignity and self-worth amidst male dominance and chauvinism. Atsango's study therefore adequately tackles the use of the physical, psychological and epic facets of the journey motif and how these facets are significantly used to:

> Compare how the facets of the journey motif … help to concretize on female reconstruction as well as negate patriarchal myths and structures of female marginalization within the texts under examination (31).

It is, therefore, important to note that *Efuru* and *The River and the Source* are texts that depict the relegated position of women in patriarchal societies. Atsango argues that her study is meant to "emphasize the concept that the marginalization of female gender stems out of the relationship between colonial and African male literature" (31). While this is true, the colonial experiences reflected in the two texts do not directly involve women at the centre of action against colonial powers. In these texts, the colonial impact on the women does not as directly disenfranchise them the same way that patriarchal structures directly impact on them. For instance, in *The River and the Source,* the female characters in the novel suffer not so much from colonial subjugation than from traditional patriarchal practices. Indeed, they seek the intervention of the colonial administration in order to overcome retrogressive cultural subjugation, where man's word is final. Their complete emancipation comes by embracing the new religion that is introduced by the white man in the society. Hence, the text reflects more the patriarchal Luo community that is discriminative of the females than it does on colonial experiences that the colonized go through. Evan Mwangi notes that:

> the narrative's appropriation of the properties of the epic is not to primarily advance nationalistic military endeavours associated with the traditional epic but to celebrate the heroic achievements of the characters in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial patriarchal conditions (42).

This is different in *Flee, Mama Flee* in which women are right at the centre of conflict with the powers that be in the colonial administration. They initiate movements and

undertake journeys that bring them freedom from both colonial and patriarchal oppression and this gives a unique portrayal of women that is lacking in the above novels and in other literary works that depict African women on journeys towards liberation.

The current study is based on the assumption that the journey motif is significantly used in the novel to give women their identity in a colonial environment. The issue of identity and its formation has been debated by many scholars. Zavalloni notes that "personal identity develops by the way of personal interaction with the social-cultural environment" (Lee Seok-Ho 33). According to Zavalloni, this personal identity can be categorized into two sets of data which are "the first-order data such as nationality, sex, religion, occupation … and second-order data such as internalized images, collective memories and traditions handed down from one generation to the next" (Seok-Ho 32). It is the latter, according to Zavalloni, which is more important in determining personal identity.

In her article `Self-identity: Reflections on Yusuf K. Dawood', Masumi H. Odari notes that "our identities are shaped in dynamic relationship to our environments" and "The formative role that particular localities play in our lives is reinforced when our environment changes, such as when we relocate or migrate to new lands" (10). This emphasizes that the immediate environments, cultural orientation, traditional influences and practices greatly determine our perceptions about who we are, and ultimately our self-appreciation and identity.

From these perspectives, this research work considers identity formation as the process an individual goes through, being shaped by the social-cultural environment where one lives to ultimately get to a position or status of accepting oneself and embracing one's environment thereby becoming contented or fulfilled in the space that one abounds. It is the interest of this study to examine how the social-cultural environments influence the female protagonists in the text under study, and how they end up forming their identities by making physical, psychological and emotional movements provided via the journey motif. Exploring the journeys that they make is fundamental to find out whether they

return to environments, traditions, memories and spaces that help them to have defined and fulfilling identity. Writing on `Literature and Identity', Benedict Binebai argues that:

> Colonialism and reckless political rule all over the world have contributed a lot to the growth and development of literature and have also established a link between literature, identity and nationalism (204).

This study seeks to interrogate how through the use of the journey motif in his literary work the author mediates a higher place for women, helping them to form their personal identities in a disenfranchising colonial environment. Yakubu Nasidi emphasizes this by pointing out that "African literature is an enclave of freedom where the African re-conquers his lost identity and dignity" (Binebai 204). This research focuses on how through the journey motif, the women in the text under study "re-conquer" their lost identity and dignity, which have been compromised by colonial subjugation.

One of the most outstanding literary writer who has created works that reflect the compromised place of women in Kenya, and their quest to embark on journeys to find recognition and identity in the male dominated society, is perhaps Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye. In their dissertation, Shaul Bassi et al have extensively analyzed Macgoye's works and note on one hand that in *Coming to Birth* (1986) and *The Present Moment* (1987*), "*Mobility can be regarded as one of the first spheres widening the horizons, perspectives and opportunities of Kenyan women" (39). They note that travel was one of the agents of change in which women were accorded an opportunity to leave the restrictive traditional rural life towards a more open and accommodating modern lifestyle. They argue that the female characters in these two texts depart from their rural home and embark on journeys to Nairobi city which offers "a wide range of opportunities to women to forge their identities and their personal emancipation" (44).

It is true that the travel to city gives the female characters exposure and helps them determine their identity, by "allowing them to be free from patriarchal tradition, in particular if they can undertake an educational path or be employed" (Bassi et al 44). However, the present study looks at the flip side of the coin where the disenfranchising colonial town exposure denies women their sense of belonging. The argument here is

that, to substantial extent, the colonially established town and education system were detrimental to African colonial subjects, particularly women, and it is the latter's quest to reclaim the lost identity that endear them to undertake journeys back to the rural, traditional village, where they hope to find their footing so that they can lead a more fulfilling and accomplished life.

Another important issue that Bassi et al raise concerns the representation of women characters in their role during the struggle for independence. They note that Macgoye's *The Present Moment* reflects the female protagonist's active involvement in the "Land and Freedom" rebellion where the protagonist "is strongly aware of the importance of protesting against oppression and is in support of people's rights" (84). This goes against the grain where most works that depict the colonial experience reflect male characters as the lead actors in the struggle for freedom while females are left in the periphery. In *The Present Moment*, they observe, "Wairimu … embodies Kenya women's contribution to the Mau Mau rebellion" (84).

Nevertheless, Bassi et al note that "Women's contribution to the rebellion centred in … passive wing, the popular support of the non-fighting forces" where they acted as support staff supplying essential things like food, weapons, medicine, information, recruitment of new members as well as officiating in oath-taking (85). They further observe that whereas women did not serve as compact troops, these roles put them in danger from the British authorities who treated women's role and activities as a force to reckon with. But we note that the female characters, epitomized by Wairimu, only reacted by joining the demonstrations that legendary figures like Harry Thuku had initiated to protest against colonial oppression. Women actively took part in the struggle, but they were not the central pillars, the initiators of the freedom movements. The text under study, however, depicts a detailed reflection of events and movements that the female protagonists themselves initiated and boldly ran to overcome the colonial powers in Kenya. The study seeks to find out how these events impacted on women and shaped their resolve to fight for social, cultural and political changes that saw the subjects delivered from colonialism to freedom.

In a journal article `Writing Herstory: The Woman and History in Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye's *Coming to Birth*', Michael Mboya points out that the novel "is the story of a woman's search for fulfillment as a woman" (34). The text brings out a woman's journeys to find her space and contentment in a male-dominated society. Mboya adds that "It is dominated by men and even the events are perceived as men's pursuits. History is his-(man's)-story" (36). This emphasizes the fact that women's participation in the freedom struggle is not directly main-streamed in the discourse of the novel. Their eminent struggles are directed towards gaining freedom in a male-dominated world and not necessarily from colonial oppression. As Mboya observes, "Some historical events enable Paulina's story to move in a particular direction even without her being aware of them (for example, the harassment of the Gikuyu during the Emergency" (34).

Mboya's dismissal of Austin Bukenya's view that "the imprisonment of Chelegat Mutai … turns Paulina into a militant activist" (37) is quite credible because Paulina seldom engages in any serious confrontation that is directed towards liberation from colonial domination. If she exhibits any militarism, it is peripheral, passive, minimal and does not substantially contribute to any significant liberation movement against colonial rule. This is different in *Flee* where Kaveni is in direct confrontation with the whites, and this confrontation eventually pays off when she successfully manages to make the journey to freedom.

It follows that in *Coming to Birth*, the presentation of the females' engagements in the fight against colonialism is more symbolic than through direct confrontation with the colonial masters. The females' consciousness for the need to fight for emancipation is more seen through the personal experiences of the female protagonist, Paulina. Although she undertakes several physical, psychological and emotional journeys that make her become conscious of the goings on in the colony and the need for the country to be independent, Paulina is more conscious of the quest to be free from the strangulating fetters of male dominance and the society's pressure on her to sire male children for her husband. The female protagonist is the symbol of the nation Kenya. Her growth from a

naïve, innocent, young girl to a mature, intelligent and productive woman is subtly equated to the young Kenyan nation that grows from colonial domination to an independent African state.

Marjorie's works therefore reflect experiences that impact on women because of the traditional patriarchal setup. The colonial experience and impact are brought in at particular periods of her characters' journeys towards the destinations that they crave for. In the current study, we dwell on exploring the journeys that the female protagonists directly take against colonial suppression. The female protagonists in the text are given the centre role in the fight against colonial powers while the males are put in the periphery, and largely brought out as the antagonists. Hence, the study examines how the author represents the women characters taking the lead role in the struggle for independence, by focusing on journeys that enable them to conquer the foreign forces and regain their lost identity. It is this representation gap that the study hopes to fill.

A number of critics have carried studies on Mulwa's other works that can give us a sneak pick into the author's portrayal of female characters. In her dissertation, Christine Namayi has examined how Mulwa "depicts metaphors of power and change in his plays, particularly *Inheritance*" (54). The play, just like *Flee, Mama Flee,* depicts the colonial experience in the land of Kutula where the king leads in "resistant to the advent of colonization and whiteman's domination … (and) this puts him at loggerheads with the British Empire" (Namayi 58). The colonizer installs a leader who they can manipulate and this "plunges the country into dark abyss of dictatorship, greed, manipulation, misuse of power … and violation of human rights" (58).

It is the way that the playwright resolves the conflicts that indicate the significance that he accords women in solving the ills that afflict the society. Namayi notes that the play ends with the colony turning to a new popular leader, Princess Songari, who "vows to get the country back on the right track" (59). It is a woman that the citizenry look up to in correcting the social, political and economic crises brought by colonial masters and their collaborators. In the text under study, the author does not centrally use male characters to

champion the cause of resistance against the white man but puts the females at the front of the struggle. Besides, Namayi has examined the metaphors of power in the play *Inheritance* while this study examines the journey motif in his latest novel and hence the portrayal of women as central pillars in the agitation for social change. It interrogates how Mulwa of debunks the peripheral presentation given to women as mere partakers of social change and fills the gap of focusing on their pivotal participation in the agitation for change, an engagement that helps them to form a new identity.

In his dissertation, `Comparative Analysis of Representation of Social and Political Realities in Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* and Mulwa's *Redemption*', Pomak Tengya notes that the use of satire as "stylistic choices aided the development of the story lines and the deployment of the messages" and thereby got the "platform upon which to demand for social and political change in their societies" (217). Tengya basis his study on comparative examination of the dramaturgic analysis of the two plays but this study is on the role of the journey motif in giving women their identity in a culturally subjugated society.

We, however, note that the positive change envisaged through what Tengya refers to as "social and political messages" is immensely influenced by the female protagonists in the drama. It is the respective female voices in the warring families that, though suppressed at the beginning, broker peace and bring reason that gradually challenge the males to put aside their bloated egos for the sake of their specific families and the community at large. This study examines a similar characterization that the author accords female characters in the novel, but we argue that this treatment is more pivotal and places women at the front of not only agitating for positive change but also being at the fore front of literally fighting for freedom, not from corrupt, egoistic church officials as depicted in the play, but from colonial suppressors whose suppression has denied women their true identity.

Karanja has also done studies focusing on `An Analysis of Tragicomic Techniques' in Mulwa's*Redemption*, *Clean Hands* and *Glass House*. Karanja's study is based on identifying and evaluating the "tragicomic techniques" showing how they affect the

aesthetic quality and communicative aspects in the selected plays. She argues that "tragicomedy offers hope to humanity amidst life's problems". Her study thus examines tragic and comic elements that are dramatically fused to give the three dramas aesthetic value and hence communicate the playwright's message subtly and effectively.

None of the works discussed above has tackled the journey motif in any of Mulwa's drama or prose works. There is also no study that has been done on *Flee, Mama Flee*, particularly the use of the journey motif in the novel, or how it has been used as a fundamental element of form that concretizes thematic concerns espoused by the author, and particularly how the motif is appropriated as an essential tool in helping women to form their identity.

This current study, therefore, explores the significance of the journey motif as a tool for female identity formation in the colonial condition in Kenya. The argument here is that the journey motif is used to subvert traditional travel discourse, colonial forces and masculinities thereby giving the female protagonists a process through which they undertake physical, psychological and emotional journeys as means of self-discovery and definition. The reflection of women as the leaders and champions of change as men submit and wither under colonial suppression is the interest of this study. Whereas many literary and critical works on colonial condition in Kenya have dealt with the central roles played by males in the struggle against colonial rule and subjugation, and thereby render females as reactive, supportive and peripheral participants in the liberation endeavours, this study seeks to look into the proactive, pivotal and central role of women in the liberation movements. The study is therefore intended to fill the gap of examining how the women are presented at the frontline in the struggle for freedom against colonialism, and subsequently how this struggle is presented through the journey motif which ends up giving women better spaces for self-affirmation and recognition in the society.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This study uses feminist literary theories particularly African feminism to interrogate the significance of the journey motif in women's identity formation in the colonial condition in Kenya. Charles Bressler says that feminism:

> is an umbrella term for a variety of approaches to culture and literature that are of particular interest to women. Central to the diverse aims and methods of feminist criticism is its focus on patriarchy, the rule of society and culture by men (167-168).

In his text *Literature: Approaches to Fiction, Poetry and Drama* Di Yanni Robert asserts that feminism examines the social, economic and cultural aspects of literary works, but especially for what those works reveal about the role, position and influence of women (1594).

While this research takes cognizant of the fundamental tenets championed by feminists in the wider discourse of its studies, the focus is on particular strands of the theories that are specifically significant for this study. African feminism comes in handy for this purpose because unlike western strands of feminism, it emphasizes the need to bring both women and men on board in the struggle to bring social change. This is not the case with western strands of feminism, for instance liberal feminism, which asserts the individualistic equality of men and women through political and legal reform. For instance, one of the leading scholars of liberal feminism, Judith Butler, "calls for social action that will revise the norms and the masculine/feminine binary so that many genders, and therefore identities, are available and accepted" (Dobie 112). While this study agrees with one of Butler's tenet that "identity is performative" and essentially a social construct, it focuses more on African feminism principles such as the need to be "in concert with males in the struggle" "genuine sisterhood" and "male compatible" as pioneered by Hudson Weems in her Africana Womanism strand.

Radical Feminism is another western strand which advocates for separation of men and women if the latter wish to have complete equality. In her text, *Theory into Practice* (2002), Ann Dobie notes that "some of the more radical feminists envisioned separate

female utopias" (107). Radical feminists call on women to fight for space, status and freedom by getting rid of male dominance, influence and leadership. Dobie adds that "in the literary world, they decried the unjust depictions of women by male writers" (107). For them, women can only find complete freedom only if men are relegated. This subversion of opposing gender binaries is not acceptable to African feminists who argue that changing the male /female binary is not the solution to tackling gender imparity and improving gender relations essentially because privileging one side will directly disadvantage the other. Radical feminism is, therefore, not appropriate for this study since, as Dobie observes, "a radical stance diverts the critic from the main task at hand, which is to pay attention to the aesthetics of literature, not to impose a political agenda on it" (110). This study interrogates the significance of the journey motif as an aesthetic tool, to examine how the author uses it to champion the cause of women and define their identity, and not to study any separatist aspects as posited by radical feminists.

Gynocriticism is another strand of feminism that is commonly used in analyzing texts to look into gender relations, particularly the portrayal of women in the works that reflect their experiences. Elaine Showalter is credited with its origin and development. She points out that "female writers were deliberately excluded from the literary canon by male professors who first established the canon itself" (Blessler 2007, 176). It is essentially based on analyzing works of art written by female authors that reflect the experiences that women face, more so because of male-dominance in both the creation and the criticism of literary works. Blessler explains that Gynocriticism is concerned with constructing "a female framework for analysis of women's literature to develop new models based on the study of female experience rather than to adapt to male models and theories" and this includes the "uncovering of misogyny in texts, a term Showalter uses to describe male hatred of women" (176). Its tenets are not appropriate for this study first because the text under study is written by a male author and secondly because the author's depiction of the female characters is not in line with what Showalter's "misogyny".

This study, therefore, heavily relies on African feminism as the first theoretical framework on which to base the examination of the text under study and achieve the objectives envisaged herein. One of the strands under African feminism is Africana Womanism most commonly credited to Cleonora Hudson-Weems. In her book *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*, she defines it as: "An ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in culture and therefore, necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of Africana women (11).

One fundamental principle in Africana Womanism entails the need to examine literary works from the point of view that women and people of African descent have experienced common discrimination owing to racism and/or colonialism and hence the opposition to prescribe to western feminists who have not suffered such discrimination. In the preface her book *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and sex in an African Society*, Ifi Amadiume affirms this notion by stating that "to expect Black women to separate racism from feminism or minimize racism in favor of class is adding salt to injury" (6).

This study takes cognizant of the views championed by Africana Womanism, but it will be more based on another African feminist strand, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's `The Six Mountains on an African Woman's Back'. This is essentially because this strand is best suited to examine the women experiences in the colonial condition in Kenya, the focus of the study. In her article `The Woman's Condition in Africa: The Six Mountains on Her', Molara says that there are six factors or `mountains' that have been placed on women and which impede their full realization and actualization in the society. Molara summarizes these mountains thus:

> the first mountain is oppression from outside (colonialism and neo-colonialism); the second from traditional structures, feudal, slave-based; the third is her backwardness (neo-colonialism); the fourth is man; the fifth is her colour, her race; and the sixth
> is herself" (107).

The study relies on the first and fourth mountains—oppression from outside and man—to find out how colonialism and patriarchy supplement and complement each other to not

only oppress women but how they also render the latter vulnerable and hanging upon the precipice of extinction as a result of cultural subjugation and male-dominance created by the two institutions respectively. While the fifth mountain will be important in interrogating how race or skin-complexion impacts on the female protagonists, and how this affects their identity especially due to racist attitudes of the colonizer, the sixth one will be necessary in examining how their determination to overcome the societal definition of who they are provide the ultimate channel through which they must pass in finding their true identity. These tools will help us to interrogate how women are oppressed and suppressed by the institutions represented by these mountains and how they recover their lost glory by embarking on several journeys that help them to navigate or climb these mountains in efforts uplift their image and status, leading to identity formation.

The study borrows from Formalism in examining how the form and content of the text are woven to build up the overall significance of the text. Bressler (2007) says that the formalists "redefined the meaning of a text as a unified collection of various literary devices and conventions that can be objectively analyzed" (52). By looking at the work, its literariness, aspects of style, characterization, plot development and language, one can decipher its value and message or meaning. The study explores the significance of the journey motif as an essential element that the author uses to blend the form of the novel and his thematic concerns. Henry Indangasi points out that "the relationship of form and content is of prime importance in our understanding of works of art" (5). The form that the author uses is immensely determined by the plot, structure, characterization and style that he or she applies, for example, in a novel in order to bring out "elements such as the themes, the ideas and the world-view of the author" (5).

It was the interest of this study to find out the effect of the journey motif as a fundamental aspect of form that the author appropriates to give women identity through the physical, psychological and emotional journeys that they make. Nnolin (1976) notes that plots which rely on `The Journey Motif", whether "by land or water, carry the story-line forward and in some cases embody the meaning" (182). This study was aimed at

discovering how the journey motif enhances the author's social vision as well as how effective it is in carrying the plot forward. In particular, the study hoped to find out how the motif is appropriated as a mode through which women negotiate their identity.

For the purposes of this study, Carl Jung's Psychoanalytic approach, particularly the archetypal strand, will be necessary in exploring how the journey motif is used as a central archetypal image that consolidates the form and content of the text under study. Carl Jung defines an archetype as "a figure … that repeats itself in the course of history wherever creative fantasy is fully manifested" (Dobie 59). This study is largely be based upon this premise and will particularly focus on the journey motif as the basic archetypal figure upon which the novelist consolidates the form and content of his work. We will specifically focus on the physical, psychological and emotional journeys that the female protagonists undertake in order to examine the effects of these `movements' in their lives. Our interest will be in any instances where the protagonists make movements, whether on foot, on a contraption or using whatever mode that takes them from one place to another. We will scrutinize to see whether the text mirrors what Allen Brizee et al call "the archetypal narrative pattern" which includes the quest, journey on land or sea, obstacles faced and the return. The assumption here is that these challenging journeys help the female protagonists to come to terms with who they are and hence help them to define themselves by returning to spaces that bring comfort and fulfillment.

Mortimer observes that some journeys "are forced marches" and others can involve a person "in search of a new home" (169). The study examines the forces that drive the female protagonists on journeys as well as whether they face "physical and mental hells"—challenges, hurdles, setbacks and suffering—in their pursuits to find homes; and how these journey problems and the homes they seek shape their perceptions about life leading to identity formation.

Psychological and emotional journeys are based on two areas. The first one entails the analyzes of the different mental or emotional states of the characters to find out how these are determined by and/or commensurate with the environments they live in as well

as the growth or changes that they encounter in the course of their physical movements and their emotional maturation to higher statuses. Jung points out that "uniting the conscious and unconscious archetypes makes us whole and complete" (Dobie 59). The study presupposes that the journeys that the female protagonists make enable them to discover who they are because they are able to blend their present conscious conditions and the past unconscious experiences, thereby enabling them to undertake physical, psychological and emotional journeys that negotiate better spaces for them, ultimately making them to feel whole and complete.

The study borrows from Jung's premise that for a human being to live a fulfilling life, one must live "harmoniously with the fundamental elements of human nature … three powerful archetypes that compose the self" (Dobie 59). The first of these is "the shadow" which involves the aspects of our lives that we do not want to confront or reveal to others. The second one is "the anima" which entails that which makes us act and which is realized as "anima"—the feminine designation in males—and "animus"—the masculine designation in women. The third one is "the persona", the image or perception we want to the world to have about us. We thus focus on the female protagonists to see how they deal with the three principles of full living and find out whether they ultimately become whole and complete, whether they realize what Jung calls "individuation", a process that leads to a fully-balanced human being, leading to identity formation, particularly through the journeys they make.

Secondly, the psychological journeys is be based on bildungsroman to examine how the physical growth of one of the female protagonists is commensurate with the new environments that she is exposed to and how her growth from a young girl to an adolescent and later into adulthood is synonymous with women's mental and emotional progression from naivety and innocence towards discovering whom they are leading to identity formation. Encyclopedia Britannica defines bildungsroman as a novel that deals with the maturation process, morally and psychologically. This study is based on the aspects of bildungsroman to examine the maturation of the protagonist from a young,

naïve, innocent girl to a mature, prudent, informed woman who comes of age through a gradual initiation process in a colonial and patriarchal environment.

"Writing Back to the Empire", a postcolonial strand mostly accredited to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffins and Helen Tiffin becomes necessary to analyze the changing relationship between the colonial masters and their subjects in regard to the appropriation of English language by the latter in efforts to reconstruct the tainted image propagated by the colonizer about the subjugated. The strand becomes essential in analyzing the subversion of the colonial master-servant status by enabling the colonial subjects to be equal or better users of the language of colonization, which the colonizer can no longer claim to have the monopoly of. We examine how the text debunks the myths of the colonizer being the owner and better user of the elevated language compared with the colonial subjects. Postcolonialism is also important in examining the "Eurocentrism" and "mimicry" exhibited by the colonizer and the subjects respectively.

The theoretical approaches play complementary roles because while feminism is important to interrogate the plight of women in the colonial environment as well as the means available to them in the process of emancipation, Jung's psychoanalytic approach helps in exploring how the journey motif is a fundamental and practical literary tool that the author mediates first to expose the states that afflict them and secondly to extricate the female characters from their relegated colonial situations in order to negotiate better spaces for them and hence help them to define their identity. The theories also help to analyze how the female characters interact first with each other, secondly with their male counterparts and thirdly with the environment in efforts to explore the routes that lead them towards self-realization. Postcolonialism helps us to expose the constraining relationship between the colonizer and the subjects, leading to latter's identity crises and later redefinition or damnation of the same. Through formalist strategy of studying a text based on its form, the study analyzes how aspects such as characterization and themes are concretized by use of the journey motif.

1.8 Scope and Limitations

This study limits its analysis on the use of the journey motif as the central tool that the novelist uses to consolidate the form and content in *Flee Mama, Flee*. It explores how the motif is essential in giving the text its meaning by enhancing the author's social vision and thematic concerns. It focuses on how the journey motif negotiates a better place and position for women during the colonial condition in Kenya. The text under study provides the best opportunity to carry out this study because it is best reflects the colonial experience in Kenya and women's pivotal participation in overcoming colonial and patriarchal oppressions, particularly through the journeys that they undertake, which is not reflected in Mulwa's other literary works. Stylistic devices are only analyzed for the purpose of looking into how these techniques are effectively imbedded in the journey motif to enhance thematic concerns and the author's social vision. The use of feminism as one of the key theoretical frameworks in this research work was not without some obvious limitations since both the novelist and the project writer are males. However, as explained under justification, the feminist strands used were substantively applicable.

1.9 Methodology

The study involves a close reading of the primary text with the aim of identifying the use of the three facets of the journey motif. In particular, the study focuses on the journey motif as the basic narrative technique in the text. Carrying out textual analysis by identifying the setting, plot development, characterization and use of language, which are imbedded in the journey motif, is imperative in arriving at the conclusions of the research. The identification of the salient features of the physical journey such as the quest, the departure, the obstacles and the return is of necessity and so are the psychological and emotional states of the characters as seen through dreams and emotional conditions. The study is based on feminism, particularly African feminist strands, in interrogating women's identity formation during the colonial epoch. Jung's psychoanalysis is used in examining the psychological and emotional states of the female protagonists towards identity formation. The research is further based on an interview with the author in order to confirm some of the findings postulated in the study. The

interview becomes useful in confirming the hypotheses posited by the study to find out whether some of the author's views complement the conclusions drawn in the research.

Apart from analyzing the primary text, the research also relies on intensive and extensive reading of the available secondary materials on the use of the journey motif in literary works and studies done on female identity formation. Much of this involves sourcing for relevant texts from libraries, inter-textual reading for the purposes of carrying out comparative analysis and interpretation as well as sourcing from internet scholarly works such as journals and articles.

1.10 Chapter Analysis

Chapter one provides the background to the study, reflecting the various works done on the journey motif and identity formation. It also gives the objectives of the study, the theoretical framework and the methodology to be used as well as the scope and limitations. Chapter two is dedicated to exploring the use of the physical facet of the journey motif in the text. The chapter therefore focuses on detailed identification and illustration of the physical aspect of the journey motif and its relevance in mediating new spaces for women, leading to their identity formation.

Chapter three focuses on the psychological facet, particularly the mental transcendence of the female protagonists brought out through their mental states and the dreams they experience. This chapter is further meant to examine the emotional facet, exploring the bildungsroman aspects of the text to trace the emotional maturation of the young female protagonist. Further examination of the emotional transition of the lead female protagonist is captured here, including her spiritual 'reincarnation' that has profound implications in her psychological and emotional reawakening. Chapter four contains the conclusion, providing summative views on the significance of the journey motif as the basic mode that the writer uses to effectively put across his message. It focuses on the motif as the fundamental form that the text is based on and clinches how each of its facets contributes, and how they all intersect towards consolidating women's identity formation. It also provides insights into other areas of study envisaged for future research.

CHAPTER TWO
NEGOTIATING MOUNTAINS ON THE JOURNEY TOWARDS (RE) DISCOVERING 'HOME' AND 'SELF'

2.1 Introduction

Having defined a motif as a symbolic literary element that the author recurrently and consistently uses as a basic tool and through which he blends the form and content of his novel, thereby significantly contributing to the meaning of the text, we now turn our focus on how Mulwa makes use of the journey motif as the thread he foregrounds to weave his plot, develop characters, bring out his themes and put across the social vision of the novel. The main interest is the way the female characters, particularly the central female protagonist, undertake physical journeys in efforts to negotiate for freer spaces in a world fraught with colonial oppression and patriarchal suppression. We focus our attention on how the journeys are instrumental in the structuring of the novel, first by informing the progression of the story as well as character exposition and secondly by providing important insights into the meaning of the text. The conceptual understanding of the journey motif is that the characters who engage in these journeys begin from a point of oppression, suppression and subjugation but complete them at points of revelation, discovery and emancipation. They commence the journeys as victims but complete them as victors.

The journey motif therefore helps us to examine the two worlds that the female protagonists live through: the world of oppression and the 'other' that they seek to reach in order to be free. We examine the conditions that necessitate the undertaking of these journeys and whether undertaking them informs character introspection and growth, and especially how the completion of the journeys mediates spaces that provide insights, discovery, liberation and fulfillment for the female protagonists. More importantly, we interrogate the significance of these journeys as modes through which the author centrally places women in the struggle for freedom from colonial rule and hence subverts the popular social construct that always present men as the key movers and agitators during the struggle for independence. Our focus is thus on the use of the journey motif as a

means through which Mulwa exposes the silencing of the pivotal roles played by women during the freedom struggle. Through the journey motif, the writer does not only explore the challenges women faced during the colonial era but also voices their pivotal role in the initiation and execution of actions and movements that were fundamental in the fight against colonialism. In an interview—check in the appendix section of this project—Mulwa attest to this, pointing out that he wrote a story of a woman because she is "the mother of all resistance".

As pointed out in the previous chapter, many male writers who have written works reflecting the colonial condition in Kenya have largely silenced the pivotal contribution of women in the freedom struggle. The placement of women in the struggle for social, political and economic changes in a majority of these works has tended to be quite peripheral, and even where they are significantly centrally placed, their role is pegged on their reaction to what a man or men have initiated, particularly if these initiatives are revolutionary.

Three Kenyan women writers attest to this. In an interview with Mike Kuria (2003), Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira observes that though women have greatly contributed to "a lot of struggles … a lot of it has not been recorded" (Kuria 40). On her part, Marjolie Macgoye notes that although women have always actively contributed in the society, "there is a tendency among Kenyans … to down play the role of women in traditions" (60). Margaret Ogola emphasizes this noting that she wrote *The River and the Source* out of inspiration by women whom she had admired and for the need "to tell the story of women because it is rarely ever told" (127). *Flee Mama, Flee* is a novel that tells the story of women's pivotal role and experiences in the struggle for freedom from a man's perspective; the journey motif helps us delve into these experiences; and the completion of the journeys affords us the opportunity to see the changes that the women undergo, resulting in the formation of new identity different from the one prescribed by their oppressors.

2.2 The Weighty Mountains on Kaveni's Back

The novel commences with a depiction of the central female protagonist in a pathetic retrogressive state, "between mountains", where she first grows emaciated physically, mentally and emotionally each minute that passes, before she becomes rejuvenated back to life. Kaveni has had to put up with a past that has completely altered her lifestyle and rendered her identity crushed. For her to have reached this far, it has taken the sheer mustering of her entire goodwill to make the necessary steps to move on despite the odds. But these steps and movements have had a toll on her because she has had to navigate through mountains, negotiate them, climb them and finally view them as the stilts that have contributed towards making her the woman she is. Hers has been a life fraught with mountains, her existence having to do with honing mountain climbing skills in order to scale up the sharp, sloppy and slippery edges.

There are two categories of mountains that have surrounded the female protagonist in the text under study. The first category is the one mentioned above, the physical mountains or hills that surround the character, where she now lives after her long journeys across the wilderness in search of a home. Her journeys from the colonial mission centre in Freer Town help her to traverse many miles past Taita hills, Chulu hills to reach The Great Stone Mountain and the Stone Hill of the Dead to finally settle in Mivukoni, The Valley of the Dead. It is in the precinct of these mountains that she seeks her home, to rest and to find comfort. It is here she reunites with the spirits of her fore bearers such as Mumbe and Mama Ngeetele; and identifies with the trees, animals, fish and all the natural home phenomena that bring her joy and contentment.

The second category refers to the 'societal mountains' that have incessantly impacted on the female protagonist's well-being, the mountains that Molara refers to as the "Mountains on the Woman's Back", the institutions that have been erected by the society along the woman's path to self-worth, discovery and fulfillment. It is this second category of mountains that the female protagonist has had to muster her utmost strength to surmount in search of a place to call home, as well as to find comfort and fulfillment that have ever been elusive to her. In this chapter, we explore the mountains that have

been erected on Kaveni's back, rendering her a carrier of burdensome baggage that ultimately culminate to almost stopping her in her tracks along the path towards self-determination. Mountains here become metaphors for the institutionalized societal, cultural constrains surrounding a woman. According to Molara, these mountains include colonialism, traditions, man, race and the woman herself.

Exploring these mountains is not only meant to examine the burdens that Kaveni is expected to carry on her back, but also to interrogate their contribution in re-igniting in her the spirit and energy to seek for new paths along which to walk to reach destinations and spaces where she can shed off the overwhelming loads on her back. On one hand, we explore how the mountains pin her down, rendering her identity crushed and plummeting towards oblivion. On the other hand, we interrogate how the mountains contribute in stirring in her the need to make journeys that take her to spaces where she can form a new identity.

2.3 Reeling under the Weight of Colonialism

The "first mountain on a woman's back" according to Molara is "oppression from outside" which includes "colonialism and neo-colonialism" (107). This is a mountain whose impact on landing on the female protagonist's back does not only literally pin her down on her knees but also makes her to totter all over, unstable and unable to find a spot on which to step or grasp to avoid falling with an injurious thud and an impending imminent fatality. The mountain is forcibly erected first by slavery that uproots the female protagonist from her Mivukoni home to the coast where she becomes a slave to a Portuguese slave master and secondly by the coming of the white man who arrives with the pretence of rescuing slaves from the oppressive slave life, and establishes mission centres ostensibly to provide homes to the rescued slaves. The mission establishments first assume the role of providing a home to the runaway or freed slaves but as it turns out, "The Christian church (becomes) a major instrument for cultural penetration and cultural dominance" (Rodney 39).

It is the latter force that completely disenfranchises the 'saved' African subjects, turning them into servitudes under the cruel and domineering colonial condition. The cultural subjugation they face renders them relegated and living on the verge of oblivion, courtesy of the "Eurocentric" domination and the patronizing nature of colonialism. Their lives become a control programme whose operator is the man who has come to 'discover' and 'rescue' this uncivilized part of the world, to bring it in tune with the civilized parts of the rest of the universe, with Europe being the perfect epitome. The colonizer turns the colonial land into what Fanon calls "The native town", which is starved of not only the basic necessities but also basic human dignity, one of the ingredients a of worthy living.

The result is the creation of an environment which, in the eyes of one the subjects, the female protagonist, is "greater slavery than when the Arabs were here" (11). To her, though the former slavery was oppressive and dehumanizing, it was set to be that way, to enslave her, to make her serve her master wholly without any mutual benefits on her part. However, the 'colonial slavery' is worse because it is disguised in the shroud of civilization that is expected to enlighten her, to improve her lifestyle and in the words of the senior colonial Protector, to ensure the native is "emancipated from the age-old hold of … darkness" (31). From the onset, this emancipation is tainted with bias and prejudice resulting to cultural subjugation that completely disrupts her life.

The female protagonist therefore questions this civilization that takes all her time, makes her work like a beast and worse of all "says I have no past and no name" (91). Kaveni feels stripped of herself owing to the new religion that the colonizer introduces and that coaxes her to take a new name, for her former one is not only hard to pronounce but also not so civilized and in line with Christianity. Highly suspicious that the new Christian names such as her husband's James and daughter's Elizabeth will deprive them of the names given by their ancestors and the subsequent disconnection to their roots, she vehemently refuses the new name and rejects any attempt to identify her by the name "Angelica" wondering what new God the Christian deity is who cannot recognize her original name. The endless coaxing and coercion to take this new name stirs in Kaveni

the quest to free herself from the colonial environment towards freer ones. The need to embark on a journey to take her where names are not forcibly given becomes a necessity. The journey motif is instrumental in exposing the effects of colonialism on the female protagonist. Her predicament is obviously brought about by the journeys that she is forced to undertake and which end up pushing her into environments which deny her freedom and create big dents on her identity. The first journey is the one that uproots her from her ancestral land and forcibly makes her to trek the long, torturous and inhumane distances across the wilderness into slavery. The second journey is when she takes a flight from her slave master due to the mistreatment by the mistress, who is bent on whipping her driven by jealousy and racial prejudice; and takes her past the crocodile infested river Kelele across which she successfully swims to overcome the fetters of slavery. The third journey occurs when she is rescued by one of the British anti-colonial ships to once again be pushed into what she calls the 'new slavery', colonialism. Though the three journeys are not directly reflected in the text, we learn about them through the flashbacks that the author effectively infuses in the plot. The details are however subtly exposed in Mulwa's earlier novel, *We Come in Peace,* and which *Flee Mama, Flee* is a sequel.

We also note that the colonial mountain becomes a much more disenfranchising force with the proliferation of the presence of the colonizer at the mission centre where the female protagonist is already agonizing under the weight of colonialism which renders her a serf, being in the service of both her family and the white masters. This servitude is heightened with the arrival of the ship that docks with more loads of colonial masters who have journeyed from home to the east African coast to reinforce and enforce new rules and "reguleshons" for the expansion of the Empire. The journey culminates with the docking of the "gigantic vessel" into the colonial land. It is the lucidity in the description of the arrival and appearance of the ship that indicates the powers and the gleeful intentions of the passengers it has journeyed across the seas to deliver upon the colony and its people, as noted in the following excerpt:

> The great ship powered majestically on, puffing black smoke into the clear blue sky. Its sudden appearance and sheer size sent waves of fear rippling through me and my young heart could not find words to describe

> my feelings except to blurt out to all the air around me, "It's bad! That thing is bad! I stood, spellbound, watching the gigantic demon grow bigger and bigger … (7).

The narrator describes the ship in such gruesome terms to signify the wrong intentions of the occupants upon their target subjects. The personification of the ship which is described as powering "majestically", and its metaphorical reference as "gigantic demon" demonstrate the evil the people it carries plan to visit upon their hosts. It's no wonder the young narrator concludes the ship must really be "bad". The ship is hence used as a metaphor for oppression, and this does not escape the central female protagonist who later observes that the arrival of the ship means that "our time will no longer be ours even in our sleep" (10). Sure enough, the colonial subjects do not only lose their time but also their names, their identity.

The journey motif becomes essential in exploring the theme of colonialism and its effects in threatening Kaveni's identity. The different journeys enforced by the foreign masters upon their subjects expose the alienation suffered by the latter due to the resulting colonial oppression they are subjected to. As we later witness, it is more journeys that afford the colonial subjects to mediate spaces outside this colonial subjugation. All these journeys are effectively imbedded in the journey motif.

2.4 Dealing with the Mountain of "Man"

The highest and most domineering mountain that becomes almost impossible for the female protagonist to surmount is the mountain of "man". We note that Kaveni is more distraught not by the whites' pressure to have her identified by the new Christian name but by her husband's consistent insistence on calling her by this new name. She finds this too patronizing and an affront to her personal existence, her identity. What makes it worse is that the person who should be on her side, to support her to shun the new name, is the one who is at the forefront and insistently keen on calling her by this name: her husband, her man, whose word she is supposed to treat as final and which she is not supposed to question. This is another mountain that the female protagonist has to

surmount. It is the "fourth mountain" that Molara refers to as "man", which is perpetuated through "centuries-old attitude of patriarchy" (113).

In many traditional and contemporary African communities, patriarchy gives men an advantage in decision making within and without the family circle. Men are socialized to lord it over women, to be the heads of their families and as Kabira observes, "to look down upon women" (Kuria 37). This creates "relationship of power" that more or less leaves women with little option but to assent to the decisions made by men, failure to which there would be instability in the family and breach of peace, the aftermath of which more often than not falls on the aggrieved woman. Women incessantly face this mountain called man because they live in what Kabira calls "a man's world" (Kuria 41).

Kaveni's refusal to accept the new name and her man's insistence on referring to her by it drives the couple to a contest that almost leads to a physical confrontation. We, however, note that this rift is not brought by Musyoka's decision to arbitrary change his wife's name: it emanates from the colonial interference in the whole process and aim of giving the new name. Molara's emphasis on the effect of the colonial mountain on the woman is worth noting. She points out that: "Foreign historical intrusions have certainly created cultural changes in the social realm affecting the self-definition of woman" (110). The female protagonist finds it hard to take the new name out of her frustrations in dealing with two forces that intersect to make her life much more unbearable than it ought to be if she were dealing with her man alone and/or with the traditional African patriarchal structure without the intrusion of the colonial power. The intersection of the two mountains of colonialism and patriarchy merge to form a formidable force that leaves the female protagonist almost swept into the volcano that ruptures as the combined mountains form.

Fearing to be annihilated from the face of the earth, Kaveni refuses any effort to push her into oblivion. Her courage to stand up against the forces of the colonial masters and her husband by refusing to consent to their demands of taking a new name and serving them is an indicator of a woman who is ready to look for ways to navigate round the erupting

mountains and seek for freer and safer spaces and environments. Unfortunately, her direct affront to these forces heralds a worse situation for her, because one of the forces, her man, the only person she should confide in and lean on during the disruptive and alienating colonial times, agrees with the other force, the colonizer, and decides to leave his family for India in pursuit of western education courtesy of the female protagonist's tormentor. Left alone, with a five-year-old daughter to take care of, Kaveni's well-being and the will to carry on is at the verge of collapsing. In traditional African communities, it was hard for a man to dessert his family unless such departure was necessitated by an important family or community engagement such as a war pitying another community or on an important errand.

Therefore, before the coming of the white man, Africans had led largely peaceful and harmonious lifestyles where women, though suppressed under patriarchal structures that subscribed gender roles, expectations and relations, were more at liberty to accomplish the societal roles, duties and responsibilities which they accepted as part and parcel of their daily lives. It was the coming of the whites that disenfranchised them by bringing social changes that made worse an already challenging situation. The many changes introduced by the colonialists greatly impacted on the subjects, particularly women. To quote Molara, "economic changes in Africa following the intrusion of the West were inextricably linked to political changes in the society which … affected cultural attitudes towards women" (108). With the introduction of western culture in Africa, women were viewed as inferior because the colonial administrators trained men in basic education—as teachers, clerks, artisans etcetera—with an intention of appointing them to junior positions to serve the expanding British Empire.

In the text under study, the appointment of her husband first as a head teacher and later as the lucky one to travel overseas for further studies deals such a big blow to the female protagonist that she finds it hard not to hate the man she loves. As the saying goes, with friends like her husband, she needs no more enemies. The friend of her tormentor becomes her tormentor. We note that her predicament is borne by yet another journey, Musyoka's journey to India for further studies. Ironically, while this journey is bound to

bring him personal growth and enlightenment, it abruptly bears pains of rejection and betrayal in the female protagonist.

Unable to deal with the disruptions of her life by the colonial powers, Kaveni finds herself embroiled in direct confrontation with the powerful force that has snatched away her husband and that is obviously bent on taking away her life as well. The fact that the masculine power and support that she could depend on has been compromised, decimated and taken away by the same force that is her tormentor leaves her 'naked', exposed to the manipulation and cruelty of her nemesis. Her husband's decision to embrace not just the new religion but also western education that makes him to dessert his wife, his daughter and his people shocks her to the point of telling him off to "Go … and be their boy as long as (he wishes)" (52). We see the female protagonist's changing character from a submissive wife towards an outspoken woman who is ready to challenge her husband due to his act of rejection and betrayal. By refusing submissiveness, she is bent on commencing Jung's process of "individuation" by confronting her "shadow" and by expressing her "animus". On his part, Musyoka is going through the process Louis Althusser refers to as "interpellation" or the "hailing of the subject" which entails

> the process through which individuals are formed as subjects by powerful forces working in the interest of the prevailing ideology of a given society. … As a result, individual subjects do not create ideas so much as ideas create individual subjects" (Booker and Juraga 57).

According to Althusser, the colonial subjects are encouraged by the colonizers to imitate that which is British as much as possible. In *Flee Mama, Flee*, Musyoka's acceptance to embrace the West and to regard with disdain all that is African is due to the desire to pursue civilization, the "prevailing ideology" that is forcefully and gradually inculcated and nurtured through the western education that he goes through. The ideology becomes so ingrained in him that he becomes aware of the trappings of power and privileges that come with being identified with the whites. White complexion brings recognition, esteem, fame and obvious privileges. Being closer or seeming to be closer to the whites, particularly by pursuing western education as Musyoka does, is bound to bring some of these privileges that are seldom enjoyed by the uneducated subjects. Aware that black

complexion is looked down upon, belittled, infamous and denies its owners apparent privileges, Musyoka does not hesitate to shed off anything that connects him to being African in order to embrace all that is western and hence civilized. He is completely immersed in "mimicry". Seeming to be white by learning their ways, pursuing their education, talking like them and behaving like them stirs in Musyoka the craving to enjoy the colonial trappings of power that he has never enjoyed as an uneducated African subject. In Kaveni's words, he becomes "a master like them" (18).

Once again we see the intersection of race, class and gender in the oppression of the female protagonist. As her man gets a pat on the back for being a 'good boy', "a useful native", Kaveni is first relegated to submissiveness and subsequently to the service of both the colonizer and her husband. When she voices her rejection for this mistreatment, she is considered a dangerous stumbling block to the envisaged progress and spread of the Empire. This is due to the fact that the female protagonist is aware that even though the whites can give a subject a chance to attain some level of 'English' education, the acquired "Englishness" cannot not grow to be the same as that of the masters. No matter how much the individual subject tries to move closer to the master, they "can never fully attain Brutishness no matter how hard they try" (Booker and Juraga) . It is not wonder then Kaveni tells her husband to go to India and be the white man's " boy", the name that the Protectors calls Musyoka, though he is a married man and a father.

The whites, therefore, reduce a grown up man into a boy by promising him a life and privileges that are seldom enjoyed by the other colonial subjects. But this reduction does not seem to affect the 'reduced' man as much as it does the female protagonist. Even though he is called "A boy" by the whites, Musyoka readily accepts the colonizers' offer to pursue further studies in India, something that Kaveni finds suspicious prompting her to wonder whether her husband will still sail to India when he is well aware that the whites do not mean well for him. Musyoka's failure to perceive this belittlement is a factor that greatly destabilizes her for she has always perceived him as her lead, defining what should or should not be. The fact that he sees nothing wrong in the way colonial administrators subject his wife to strenuous casual labour shows the influence that the

new system has had on him, making him insensitive towards his wife, whom he expects, according to the dictates of patriarchy, to cook his meals, clean the house, take care of their daughter and still be at the service the whites to the level of washing their inner wears.

Kaveni feels cornered between a hard place and a rock due to the two mountains that barricade her way in every direction she takes. Had the colonizer not brought the new ways of emphasizing the superiority of men and the inferiority of women, Kaveni would be more willing to serve her husband and child with little dissatisfaction because this is what the society expects of her. But the suppression with which the colonizer brings forth upon women makes the female protagonist witness an unfathomable pressure on her making her unable to cope with the new lifestyle where she is further relegated to serve first the colonizer and secondly her family while her husband is elevated towards higher ranks.

We see an almost similar scenario in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* through Maiguru, Baba Mukuru's wife, who is forced to give up her ambition for career growth so that her husband can move up the professional ladder, achieve an outstanding social status and establish unquestionable economic independence. For him to accomplish all these, Maiguru has to retreat back to the kitchen and child rearing, leaving her husband to progress career-wise while she forgoes hers yet she is as intelligent and as qualified as he is. Pauline Uwakweh notes that Dangarembga "explores the patterns of female subordination arising from patriarchy and its inter-relationship with the experience of colonization" (77). She observes that "Babamukuru's educational status enables him to emerge as the ultimate patriarch" (79).

In the text under study, we note that Kaveni is forced to clean up the mess that is in the white man's quarters, cook for the white folks and tidy up their compounds. She has to juggle between serving the whites and taking care of her daughter and husband. She feels distraught when she realizes that hers is a life of servitude in order to satisfy both the colonial master and her home masters. Perhaps what makes it more difficult for her to

have any peace is that her man sees nothing wrong with this kind of arrangement. He readily accepts the colonial philosophy of relegating women to serve both the colonial masters and their families the plight of his wife notwithstanding. So long as he is elevated, placed at a higher rank than his wife, Musyoka sees no reason for Kaveni's complains and fight against the colonizer. It is not surprising that Kaveni perceives her husband and daughter as "My new overlords … all waiting for their maid to come and do their bidding!" (10). We note that she is not infuriated by the fact that she has to cook for her family but by her husband and daughter's behavior of waiting for her to return home to prepare the mid-day meal when she has been engaged in cleaning the white man's dirt including "washing toilet with a rag with her own bare hands" (17). Dejected, she equates her husband and daughter to "dumb soldiers" for their failure to assist in home chores, yet she knows she has to do all the chores for this is what the society expects and demands of her. To her, everybody has become an overlord: the colonizer, her husband, her daughter and all.

2.5 Overcoming the Negative Perceptions about "herself"

One of the most challenging forces that Kaveni has to deal with is the perception every woman may harbour towards "herself" and which is institutionalized through years of inculcation of inferiority in her by the society. Kaveni's identity is compromised because the only person she has been trained to count on, her husband, ends up betraying her. This brings her face to face with yet another mountain, Molara's sixth mountain on the woman's back which is "herself—the most important" of the mountains. According to Molara, this mountain makes a woman to react with "fear, dependency complexes and attitudes to please and cajole where more-assertive actions are needed" (114).As earlier noted, Musyoka's consent to desert his wife and daughter in pursuit of further education in India deals a great blow on Kaveni's identity. Being her husband, Musyoka ought to be her companion, her protector, her comrade in power against colonial oppression. But when he decides to leave his family in preference for the colonizer's offer of elevation, she becomes cognizant that her man has been compromised and taken away from her. She also realizes that her space has shrunk because if her husband has embraced the white man's ways, who is she to resist? Her only stilt in life has been removed and used

to strengthen the towering edifice of her adversary while her noble abode is caving in under the weight of the colonial storm that is bent on blowing her away into oblivion.

What makes this mountain too heavy to shake off is that it has not just been placed upon her back but also injected in her psyche by the society. Any slight move on her part to shake off this mountain or to scale up its slippery edges is frowned upon and viewed as an abomination because a woman is not expected to make decisions that contradict those of her husband. She is supposed to be submissive, subservient and not a substitute of her husband for there is no substitution in patriarchy. What matters is her husband's opinions: hers do not matter. She is indoctrinated to perceive herself as weaker and her man as stronger in all realms of life. This indoctrination becomes a mountain for many women because failure to bow to it amounts to sins of abomination and sacrilege. For instance, Kaveni's refusal to take the new Christian name is seen as blasphemy by both her husband and the whites, who accuse her of sinning by rebuffing the light of salvation. We again note the merger of the colonial and patriarchal mountains which intersect to form an enlarged formidable mountain of "herself" upon the one already in existence on her back. Where it was her man giving orders before, there emerges another voice whose pitch is so forcefully synchronized with that of her husband that she is bound to shiver at its deafeningly high decibels. As it turns out, there is a stranger in her house but the owner (Musyoka) is quite at home with this unwelcome intrusion.

However, the female protagonist is so much overwhelmed by this intrusion into her life, her marriage, her personal space, her identity, that she realizes that by allowing the white stranger to overstay the hospitality, she has given him complete control of her life. She discovers that for her to regain her freedom the stranger has to leave or she herself will have to make the first move. Molara suggests that a woman needs to avoid "interiorization of the ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy" (114) because her own savior is herself. Her only option is to stand up and defend herself. She is her own "self-definer", her own carrier, her own crusader. In the text under study, the female protagonist realizes that she "herself" is a mountain she has to scale first if she has to access freer, unconstrained environments to seek freedom, liberation and self-

actualization which she never gets in the present colonial environment. To access these free environments, she must embark on journeys destined for freedom.

Kaveni's refusal to submit to the pressure of the mountains on her back can be equated to the heroic female figures created by women writers in works that reflect the transcendence of women from cultural subjugation. In Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, Maiguru is forced to break some of the shackles of patriarchy in order to regain her self-esteem and dignity that have been eroded due to her limitless submissiveness and subservience to her husband. She lives a pretty suppressed life and "subscribes even more rapidly to norms of wifehood and subservience than do the uneducated women of the text" (Katrak 64). A time comes when she discovers that she will never become fulfilled so long as she is lives in the shadow of her husband. She decides enough is enough, speaks out against mistreatment by Babamukuru and even temporarily leaves her matrimonial home as a means of making amends. Through Maiguru, Dangarembga passes the message that it is no longer tenable for men to continue to treat women as second class partners in marriage.

This is also witnessed through Akoko in Ogola's *The River and the Source*. The legendary heroine fights tooth and nail to extricate herself from the doldrums of patriarchy and manages to make transcendence from the Luo cultural subjugation. In the two texts, the female characters successfully manage to overcome the burdensome lifestyles in male dominated societies by pulling off the patriarchal lenses that society has provided them as the means through which to view themselves in relation to the men controlling their lives. This is what Kaveni does: she takes off the patriarchal lenses that provide a miniature image of herself and puts on her own lenses that provide a proper view of whom she genuinely is, a strong woman who should and is capable of championing her way towards self-determination. She starts embarking on journeys that she hopes will take her to the land of freedom, the place where she can enjoy unconstrained space and in which she can form a new identity.

2.6 Kaveni's Identity Dented by Racial Prejudice

Kaveni's unequivocal stance makes the colonial administrators take note of her and begin to squirm in discomfort because they cannot fathom a subject, and an African woman at that, can dare stand up against them when everyone else, more so the female protagonist's husband, has given in to their philosophy of life. Kaveni becomes a marked woman who must "be brought low" (15) to be shown where her 'dark' race belongs. The colonizer then goes ahead to use all manner of means to achieve this mission including and not limited to subjecting the female protagonist to doing dirty work for "both the high and the low", coercing her to use her writing prowess to express the good work of her majesty's Empire and threatening to whip her at the infamous whipping pole.

Accompanying these heinous acts are the endless insults and racist nuances that are leveled at her and that wreck her self-image and self-worth. She is invariably called "black hussy", "dark savage", "black wench" who has a "dark name", insults that are not only belittling and infuriating but also which render the person upon whom they are directed extremely dehumanized and deflated. The use of derogatory terms upon suppressed people is one the most common means of degrading the subjects. David Pilgrim et al note that "racial slurs have victimized all racial and ethnic groups" and essentially indicate "anti-Black prejudice" whether they are spoken, written or used in media. The female protagonist becomes a constant victim of these degrading references.

The intersection of race, gender and class consolidates itself in depleting the little space that ever existed for the female protagonist. In racist terms, she becomes the "native specimen" that must be taught manners for the purpose of civilization; in gender terms, she becomes the "maid" who must serve the "overlords" both at the mission and at home; and in class terms, she becomes the "mule" that must toil and moil for the spread the Empire. Where only three mountains existed, a fourth one erupts on the life path of the female protagonist. Race becomes such a big force on her back that she almost becomes overwhelmed by the immense pressure that it unleashes. Explaining this "fifth mountain on the woman's back", Molara says that "Her race is important since the international economic order is divided along race and class lines" (113). This means it is the input of

those Fanon calls “the wretched of the earth”, who happen to be in the developing world, the majority being women, that contribute the vast resources required for the economic growth of the world. To quote Fanon concerning this input, “The oppressor starts the process of dominion, of exploitation and pillage … the process which moves uninterruptedly from the banks of the colonial territory to the palaces and the docks of the mother country” (The Wretched 51). The pressure heaped on the female protagonist to ‘behave’ is, therefore, not meant for sheer merry-making or mere public relations engagement but is totally tailored towards overcoming any behavior that could signal an iota of resistance to the full exploitation of the native resources by the West.

For the successful execution of this exploitation, any voice of resistance must be nipped in the bud. The female protagonist becomes the epitome of resistance who openly declares her opposition to the white man’s intrusion and tells the senior colonial administrators on their faces that she “is not a new addition to anybody’s kraal nor a cow nor a heifer” (27) to be treated like an object or an animal on sale. She rejects what Fanon calls “Manichaeism”, the dehumanization of the native which perceives and turns him into an animal with no value or sense of what is right or wrong. If the female protagonist’s overt hostility sends shivers down the spines of the colonial masters, her influence and popularity among the colonized subjects stops the colonizers right in their tracks. She becomes a force to reckon with, a “mother superior” who, in Protector Mackenzie’s words, “must be forced to hate and flee from (rebellion)” (140). The only recourse for Kaveni is to get up and run as far away from these threats as her body, mind and spirit can manage. She has to journey from the world of threats to the world of rest and freedom.

2.7 The Physical Flight to Reclaim her Identity

To get any freedom in her life, Kaveni must physically flee from the colonial environment. The mountains in her life have merged and consolidated to become one formidable force that threaten to bury her alive into oblivion. We note it is the sixth mountain—herself—that she is forced to surmount first in order to navigate through the other formidable mountains. It is no wonder Molara considers it as the most important

mountain because "it is up to women to combat their social disabilities (and) fight for their own democratic rights…" (114). We see the female protagonist surmount this mountain when she refuses to succumb to colonialism, patriarchy and racism but decides to stand up to free herself from these fetters. But she cannot do this in the same suppressed environment. She is forced to flee from the colonial environment where she has already been reduced from a "tall courageous woman … to a small, pitiable bundle" (140). Having been incapacitated by the colonizer's violent reaction to her resistance, she has to come to and make steps, however feeble, to flee from the present danger because her continued stay portends worse peril for, upon her recovery, the colonizer intends to whip her till her "flesh turns to melting mincemeat … for the ravens to feed upon" (101). The female protagonist's identity is crushed and at the bleak of extinction. She results to what Mortimer calls "forced marches" to flee by physically moving away from the oppressive place in order to seek for a place of appreciation. She embarks on physical journeys that she hopes will remove her from the present hostility to a place of hospitality. On completion of the journeys, she hopes to find new environments that have spaces where she can regain her physical strength, her peace of mind and (re)shape her dented identity.

As noted in chapter one, a journey denotes the movement, in space and time, from one place to another. A journey is, therefore, both spatial and temporal but Nnolin notes that "concurrent with (the) physical movement is a metaphorical one (through which) experience and maturation are gained" (182). The spatial aspect of a journey should lead to a more informed, enlightened or knowledgeable person. Someone can embark on a journey in pursuit of something such as exploration, discovery or excursion; or to run away from something that threatens their lives or makes them uncomfortable. Perhaps this latter act of moving to escape from a threat can more succinctly be inferred from the famous Igbo saying in Achebe's works, that a frog never jumps in day light unless something is after its life. Undertaking a journey hence has two fundamental importance: moving away from a place of suffering, lack or ignorance and moving into a place of fulfillment, provision and enlightenment. For one to achieve the latter, the journey they

go through must involve "experiences of discovery … or of spiritual growth and renewal" (Mortimer 169).

In the text under study, the female protagonist's life is under imminent threat which leaves her little option but make a leap to safety. Perhaps the most daunting task in mounting an escape journey is the take off, the point at which the first move is made to escape from an enemy who is not just suspicious but also alert and ready to take action against the victim who is planning to flee. The female protagonist's take off point is fraught with palpable peril. On one hand are the guards and hospital staff who are under stern instructions to secure her until her time of suffering at the whipping pole comes. On the other hand, she is incarcerated within the precinct of a mission establishment where the British soldiers and other mission staff loom large making her exit almost impossible to go undetected. Yet, her continued stay is replete with not only the total loss of her identity if she lives beyond the whipping but also with the excruciating pain and probable death which are the core reasons why the heinous act of flaying is incessantly on the colonizer's mind.

A forced journey therefore denotes an escape from danger where one's pursuers are keen to ensure one does not just take leave but flees amid the danger of being hurt in the melee that accompanies the escape. We note that Kaveni's long coma is as a result of bodily attack by Longun Mathews, the deposed colonial Protector, who throws her against the wall rendering her incapacitated. It is Mathews who is assigned the duty of ensuring Kaveni is under tight security so that she can recuperate enough to face the infamous whipping pole as a lesson to dissenting voices like her. The last thing they expect from her is an attempt to mount an escape. Being caught trying to escape by her adversary is tantamount to worse suffering than in the circumstances prior to the escape, particularly if the runaway is a prisoner, a slave or a suspect. The female protagonist fits all these descriptions making her escape the more precarious. The colonial administrators plan to use her as an example to deter the rebellious elements against resistance to colonial rule and exploitation. Losing her is thus tantamount to great failure on the part of the colonizer. Her escape hence becomes a risky affair which could lead to more dire

consequences if she is caught. Her predicament can be equated to Kunta Kinte's in Alex Haley's *Roots*, in the heinous episode in which the slave suffers the ignominy of senseless whipping and later the atrocious chopping off of his leg to prevent him from fleeing from his master.

In *Flee Mama, Flee*, the female protagonist takes a flight from her current place of danger into the wilderness where she hopes to trace her way back home. It is imperative to note that she does not begin the journey alone but she is accompanied by a number of companions who come in handy at every stage of her movement towards freedom. Among these companions is her daughter whose life and identity depend upon her to nurture and help define. In many instances where violence erupts, it is women and children who suffer most. It is Kaveni's responsibility to ensure that her daughter, who is yet to reach maturity, safely goes through the rigours of the journeys of life for this will consequently lead to the latter's maturation courtesy of the obstacles she will experience along these journeys. This will be expounded further in chapter three which deals with the bildungsroman elements of the novel.

We note that for the mother and daughter to make it through the journey, they depend on other companions who are instrumental in making the escape and their movement successful. The companions who are all men, co-ordinate the escape, map the escape routes, provide companionship, security as well as the basic necessities such as food, water and shelter. The importance of the role of men in the agitation for social change is well-captured here, giving credence to Cleonora Hudson-Weems' "Africana Womanism" argument for the need by women to be "in concert with males in the struggle". While the female protagonist has been frustrated by her husband to the point of burning all that reminds her of him, it is men who turn out to be her saviours from colonialism and her protectors on the long journey to freedom. Her flight would have been a flop and probably fatal had the male companions not come in its execution. It is they who snatch her away from the strangulating fetters of colonialism and successfully provide security until mother and daughter trace their way back to their ancestral land. We, however, note that it is she who stirs the men into action. Unlike the common presentation of women as

the stilts that the male characters depend on in their quest for freedom from colonialism, the female protagonist is the pioneer of the movements that catalyze the men into assisting her to execute the initiatives that ultimately deliver liberation.

Companionship is perhaps the most significant aspect in what Mortimer calls "a group" journey. As in everyday interactions, companionship is fundamental because it erases the anxiety, fear and tension that a lone traveler would encounter when traversing across vast, unknown, perilous wilderness. Companionship and friendship therefore nurture warmth, certainty and hope that whatever the journeyer is in pursuit of will be achieved. In the course of the journey, we see the male companions engrossed in such lively banter that Mumbe, Kaveni's young daughter feels secure, protected and surrounded by constant human wall that makes the journey more humane despite the perils and obstacles she witnesses on the way.

2.8 Journey Obstacles: the Defining Wet Stones upon which Identity is Sharpened

The most defining elements of a physical journey are the obstacles that the journeyers face and that have an immense impact on their growth and maturation. There are numerous challenges that the journeyers in the text under study come across. Right from the onset there are "dark roaring depths" which the escapees must carefully meander as they flee. A single mistake would be fatal but it is the only safe route to freedom. The young narrator has to grope her way round "a large overhanging rock … in a huge cave where she cannot see in the dark" (271). The images of a cliff, huge rock and darkness portend the dangerous life now and in future that journeyers are bound to contend with. In Ngugi's *The River Between*, Chege warns his son Waiyaki to be cautious of "danger in the darkness", a warning that later comes to haunt the young man. Darkness is symbolic of the unknown, the uncertainty of the ways that are not very clear but that must be followed. In the text under study, these images signify the peril that is ahead of the travelers, the uncertainty of the new places they will come by, the rough times that they will face hence the need to "grope" for some light, which signifies the knowledge of the right ways to follow to reach home.

The roughness of the journey is evident due to the mode of transport available for them, using ox-carts which make movement slow, energy-sapping and laborious. The narrator describes the monotonous movement of the wagons which "lumbered and rumbled on, rocking us across the ashy expense of the dry Taru plains" (279). The use of the onomatopoeic words "rumbled" and "lumbered" magnify the long, exhausting and hurting travel that the journeyers undertake. Journeying all day without rest across the rough, bushy terrain, mounting ridges and enduring the harsh weather presents the travelers with daunting challenges which are a measure of their willingness to endure the pain in order to achieve their quest to make it to their intended destinations. These obstacles act as endearment for them to surge forward to reach their destination.

Another natural obstacle that the journeyers must contend with are the wild animals that they come across on the way. The image of the "twenty-two foot python" (281) is reminiscent of the biblical serpent that duped the dwellers of the Garden of Eden and that brought the calamity of death. The young narrator almost becomes a victim of its deceitful maneuvers and it takes the immediate response of the men to overcome it and ensure the safety of their young charge. The same is witnessed through the lion attack at night. It does not escape us that once again it is the male companions who come to everyone's rescue. To the female protagonist, who had earlier profusely burnt all that was connected to her husband due his betrayal, it comes to her realization that it might be difficult to entirely erase the other gender if she wishes to take her life back where it was prior to slavery and colonialism. This realization comes to haunt her later, when she discovers that she still needs the contentment that comes with grandchildren, who cannot come unless her daughter Mumbe settles down in wifehood and motherhood.

If the animals present the journeyers with the dread of death, then the breakout of bushfire cajoles in the journeyers' minds a catastrophe whose imminence is an almost impossible calamity to ward off. In many cases, fire is used as a symbol of all that is powerful, strong, lively, passionate among other attributes that have to do with prowess in life. But it can be a symbol of destruction, death and a signal to hell. In the scenario depicted in the text, the fire that threatens the lives of the journeyers is symbolic of this

latter aspect, a fire bent to destroy, maim and kill. It's no wonder Kaveni equates the fire to the "devil's son", an indication of the profusely destructive and fatal nature of the fire. To escape from this approaching fatality, the travelers must hasten their steps but this is further hampered by the bushes, brambles and thorny undergrowth all pointers to the many obstacles the journeyers must overcome in pursuit of their quest.

The lack of basic survival provisions becomes such an obstacle that their ability to traverse the silent grasslands and to wade through the vastness of the wilderness eating and drinking little is out of sheer luck and the will-power to move on to avoid the death that hangs upon them every part of the journey. The "shallow pools of green water" (306) that is harmful to touch let alone to drink leads to thirst and dehydration; and we sympathize with the travelers who seem to be plummeting into what Mortimer calls "physical and mental hells", where the sojourners' lives are at the verge of extinction but from where the survivours could come out stronger and renewed to accomplish their mission in life. The journeyers come upon "a field littered with bones and decomposing carcasses of dead animals" (305). The ominous presence of skeletons, rows of teeth and bones is portentous of the eminent death in the lands they seek to trace the route towards home.

Death on the journey is therefore a constant obstacle that the travelers must keep off in every step that they take. They must be consciously alert of its presence and its likelihood to unleash fatal ambush among its unsuspecting victims. Perhaps the most trying antic of death is when it is plotted by fellow companions on a journey as witnessed in the text when unknown to the journeyers, one of the companions conceals a plot to have the group, particularly the female protagonist, captured at a stop along the journey so that they can be returned to their colonial confines. It is the female protagonist who, having gone through the "physical and mental hells" of the journey and thereby coming through 'reborn' with a unique spiritual prowess to foresee the future, saves herself and her companions from the fatal attack that results to the slaughter of a group that breaks away from the survivours. Though the journeyers come out from this close shave shaken and sorrowful for losing the good companions, the experience leaves them more

knowledgeable about betrayal but more dedicated in accomplishing their quest to reach home.

Yet before the journeyers can achieve this quest, they face the most trying setback, an obstacle that they have all along been running away from: colonial oppression. Fleeing from the colonial administration in the coast takes the female protagonist and her companions right into the territory fraught with direct confrontation with the seat of colonial masters. The climax of the journey towards home is characterized by the presence of colonial home guards who are under instructions from their colonial masters to inflict physical injury and death upon those Africans who rebel colonial rule, particularly the law subjecting them to pay government tax. The rule to force Africans to pay hut tax to the whites is executed with excessive force and ruthlessness that leave the female protagonist profusely shaken by this new trend in colonial oppression. During the colonial era, this policy was meant to control the colonized masses and to ensure their total compliance to the colonial rulers. It is Musyoka, now turned Kilema, who the colonial masters use to implement this policy of control. Still blinded by the ambition to seek higher elevation above his African 'ignoramuses', he informs his foreign bosses, "to get labour and sweat out of these people, begin taxing them" (314).

In the text, failure to pay haut tax is met with such brutal force that shooting the evaders is a welcome last result in dealing with a rebellious subject. To our female protagonist, the brutal harassment and blatant execution of the tax evaders is reminiscent of past experiences she had faced in servitude as a slave and colonial subject. It is a reminder that in the colonial rule facing her country, the oppressive system has grown antennae that transcend the coastal boundary where the subjugation began. It is a lucid but cruel reminder that she can run but she cannot hide from the growing arms of the colonial regime. Seeing grown up men running helter-skelter to escape the painful white man's whip is a reminder of the state she would have suffered at the whipping pole had she not made the journey. It is also an indicator of the colonizer's unrelenting will to suppress his subjects to total submission under his rule. Yet this encounter seems to rejuvenate a renewal of energy and resoluteness in the female protagonist whose quest is to vanquish

these challenges by seeking the security and serenity of home. In spite of the shooting ordeal, Mumbe informs us that "Mama seemed to know the route for she easily picked it among the boulders" (324). It is only by tracing home that she can vanquish these deadly trials.

Perhaps this experience can be equated to Sethe in Toni Morison's historical novel *Beloved* in which the slave woman's only way out from slavery is by seeking the freedom of getting back home, in the slave-free regions of Cincinnati, Ohio, from the slave world of Kentucky. But Sethe does not get her freedom before her master and slave catchers try to return her back to slavery which she successfully rebuffs but not before sacrificing one of her daughters, Beloved, who informs the title of Morrison's award-winning novel. In *Flee Mama, Flee*, the female protagonist is seeking a similar kind of freedom but her journey, unlike Sethe's Underground Railway mode that was used to transport the runaway slaves to freedom, involves literally walking parts of the long distance from the colonial territory to home where she hopes to be free from colonialism. Yet the chasing of the tax evaders and their subsequent shooting is an obstacle that almost holds her still on the route to freedom. It signals the danger she could face, worst of all being returned to the colonial oppression she has so given her life to fight, yet the proximity home is so near.

The blatant shooting of fellow Africans whose only crime is refusal to work and pay tax to people who have forcibly taken their land and hence their means of livelihood is therefore such a big obstacle to the female protagonist and her fellow fleers particularly on the homestretch towards home that it temporarily numbs their spirits. Death on the journey especially when the dying are companions or members of the cause that they are partner is an enormous setback that the journeyers are bound to be held back from pursuing their cause further. The persecuted tax evaders are colonial subjects that Kaveni and her troupe identify with because just like them, they are fellow fleers who are running away from their armed tormentors. The home guards' indiscriminate shooting and cold blood murder of the fleers is a shocker to the travelling home seekers. It is an

encounter that reminds them of their vulnerability, their uncertainty, their 'unidentifiability'.

It is perhaps the female protagonist who gets more distraught yet more strengthened by this shooting encounter. The narrator observes, "my mother had gradually regressed to the day the great fever struck her in our home beside the sea. Now her lips worked incessantly, most silently" (323). The encounter is a reawakening call that it is "not yet Uhuru" in her quest for freedom. The recurrence of the home guards' commander, Kilema, is a signal of yet another unrelenting force that lurks in the shadows and that incessantly follows in her tracks to lay an ambush on her before she reaches home. Just like the shadow of the colonial mountain that trails her with the intent to block the light that guides her steps towards home, the "fourth mountain", man, is still in close proximity, apparently ahead of her to barricade her attainment of freedom. Yet it is a man who saves the current situation by encouraging the journeyers to soldier on, another indicator on the need for the two gender to incorporate each other in resolving life challenges. It takes the intervention of a man to stir the female protagonist back to the journey indicating that man is still part and parcel of looking for the way towards the freedom that the female protagonist seeks. It is a man upon who the female protagonist has relied on across the wilderness and it is he who holds her towards going home. The young narrator probably notices this when she observes that Mudhoka, the man who stirs them back to action, would be a likely "leader of this group" (324). But it is still Mama who is at the lead for, as earlier observed, it is her mother who seem to know the route to reach home and the tranquility it is bound to offer.

2.9 Regaining Identity at Journey's End

The numerous challenges that the journeyers face bring accomplishments at the climax of their journey. At the end of the physical journey, the journeyers are not the same as they were when they began of the journey. As Nnolin points out, the protagonists end up learning quite a few things about themselves, about humanity and about the nature of the world. This knowledge is fundamental in the process of identity formation because it is by knowing oneself well, understanding the various issues that afflict humanity and

appreciating the world that one lives in that he or she is able to have a sense of belonging in the environment where one abounds. The completion of the journey brings discovery, exposure, enlightenment, knowledge and freedom to the journeyers, particularly the female protagonist, who has been able to achieve her quest of getting back home.

As the group nears home, the female protagonist begins to connect with her surroundings and "easily picks the route among the boulders" (324). We note that as she recognizes the route towards home, Kaveni relentlessly sings the slave songs that she and her people sang when they were forced to trek from home to slavery. Though Kaveni is saddened by the memories of her past when she and her people were uprooted from their homes and taken to slavery, her singing is not only reminiscent of this history but also celebratory of the greatest feat of her life: returning back home. She arrives home to an emotional reunion with the environment, the trees, the animals, the streams the fish and all that brings the memories of her original home. This emotional reunion with her home is palpable in Kaveni's instructions to her daughter: "Unpack! Light the dead fire that warmed the drum and let's make a feast for the return of the wanderer" (326).

"The return of the wanderer" is an essential aspect of the journey motif. In the text, it is symbolic of the return of the heroine to her cradle, her home, her ancestral roots, her environment, her original ways of life, in which the fire that was extinguished by slavery and colonialism has to be reignited, the disrupted beat of the drum reawakened and the bountiful feasting revived. The female protagonist's "circular journey …ends where it began, at home" (Mortimer 173). Kaveni's idea of making a feast to celebrate her return to her home where she is at peace and in accord with her immediate environment and her ancestral background signals her real home arrival. In her former colonial environment, she neither had peace nor the choice to voice such a wish or make such a decision, because in the first place, there was nothing to celebrate. In her new environment, however, she is at liberty to not only voice her wish but also to put it into action.

Completing the journey enables her to achieve the quest she set out for at the beginning of the journey. She is finally free to think, do, talk and live as she deems fit and not at the beck and call of all and sundry. Her treasure is the tranquility that comes with leading a life that is free from colonialism, patriarchy and racial prejudice. Nancy Howard notes that it does not matter "whether the treasure is worth a pittance or all the money form a whole kingdom, its real value derives from its significance to the hero or heroine" (9). The female protagonist's treasure is not "material object" but "inner peace", resulting to the change of personality on completing the journey. Though she arrives home in a torn dress and bruised hands, tired body, hungry, thirsty and emaciated, she resonates well with the natural environment, the vegetation, the trees, the spot where she is able to trace where her parents house stood, "where Mama taught me to cook our Papa's meal" (329) and even with the fish in the stream where she used to fetch water as a young girl before she was captured and taken to slavery. These physical things remind her of who she is. She reconnects with them and feels part of their existence. They give her a feeling of acceptance, a sense of belonging and a form of identity that she has never realized in her entire life. She is finally able to reconnect with her roots, her origin, her beginning and satisfy the need to define herself in terms of her actual ancestral lineage but not in the terms imposed by the colonialists or based on racial prejudice.

Kaveni's confidence in the home environment is unmistakable through her decisive stance on what steps should be taken in settling down. One of these decisions is the cutting down of the fig tree, the tree under which Kaveni, as a young girl, served the "ungrateful visitors" who took her to slavery. The stripping and burning of the gigantic tree is symbolic of the demise of colonial oppression in the lives of the protagonist, her daughter and their companions. It is no wonder the young narrator compares the stripped tree to "Protector Mackenzie with his trousers lying apologetically on the ground" (331). Its burning is further equated to "Abel's sacrifice", an allusion that makes the act of burning it symbolic of offering a sacrifice that is acceptable and appealing to the female protagonist's deity. Her return has not been accepted only by nature but even by Mulungu, her God. The return to the hearth brings fond memories in Kaveni, memories of the good existence and the tranquility that abounded at home long ago and that she, her

daughter and her people are free to enjoy once again. She at long last affirms that they have arrived home where they will cook their "new meal", make a new life and form a new identity.

The peace and security of arriving home are commensurate with the confidence with which "the arrivants" preoccupy themselves in efforts to eke a livelihood. The clearing, digging, planting and cultivation they engage in are directed towards providing food for sustenance and for future use. Unlike in the colonial environment where the subjects had to work at the beck and call of the colonial masters, the home environment provides freedom in which the emancipated people work on their own volition, engaging in productive economic activities for their own consumption unlike the forced labour they had been subjected to and whose benefits were seldom theirs but for their colonial masters. The completion of the journey has transformed them from mere attendants to the previous colonial lords to independent bosses of their own. They become free like the free fish in the clear pool which have "grown, undisturbed and free" (335).

Perhaps the most eminent freedom is noted through Kaveni, whose roles have tremendously been reversed. Before she embarks on the journey, she is this insignificant woman who has been "reduced to a small, pitiable bundle" (140" by the white colonial administrators. After the physical journey, she emerges as the epitome of the social change that arises, and occupies a central position in the new socio-economic and political order that is established. She metamorphoses from a "hussy who must be taught manners" (15) to a respected, charismatic leader, a "Warrior-woman (whose) stand has blown … across the plains among the thousands that yearn for a straw of hope' (371). She is elevated from the simple maid who is in the service of both the low and the mighty to the overall land allocation official, complete with full credentials and the power to decide who settles where in the vast colonial-free region that she (re)discovers as her lost home. She has not only undertaken a journey to rediscover this lost haven of peace but also to rediscover herself, to define who she really is, a woman who should, can and is a strong voice, a powerful tool and practical instrument in the agitation for social change and the mediation for higher and better spaces for herself.

The female protagonist's elevated position and defined status are reconstructed not only through the colonial and racial lenses but also through patriarchy. We have seen how the two institutions intersect to blur the identity of the female protagonist, yet it is patriarchy which remains a force she has to reckon with. It still stands tall and unmovable in her path to full consummation of her newly-found freedom. Where she thought she had flattened and vanquished the colonial mountain on her journey towards emancipation, the return of her husband brings with it a monster she seldom suspects is embedded in the sickly groans of her man. Driven by reflex to take care of her wounded husband, well aware that it is her duty to offer him first attention at the trying moment of his life, she leaps into action, medicine at hand, her lap in position for him to place his unstable head. Her first call is to save her husband, his sins of betrayal, abandonment and self-preservation notwithstanding. She forgets the mountains that have ever erected themselves on her life path: the only mountain that must be dealt with now is death. To flatten this mountain, she has to forget for the moment who Kilema is, a senior colonial master worse than the whites themselves. To save his life and nurse him back to health, she has to concentrate on who Kilema was: her husband, her "one-arm Sharkman".

Unknown to her, however, is that behind the unfazed stature of her husband still stand conspicuous traces of the silhouette of the old, indefatigable mountains of colonialism and patriarchy whose intent is to try the last onslaught to mal the new image that the female protagonist is trying to construct of herself. Musyoka's return and intent of using her popularity to pursue his political ambition by assuming the position of "King of the Africans", "the New warrior of our new World" apparently leaves no doubt in her mind that the mountains have once more re-formed and piled their voluminous rocks strategically to crush her into submission once for all. Musyoka's intent is unmistakable when he tells Kaveni, "Now I return—the New warrior of our new World!" (401). Perhaps this is the female protagonist's most defining obstacle. It is an obstacle that requires more attention than physically running away. The physical journey seems not to have removed this mountain. Probably what prepares her for its crush on her is Musyoka's resumption of calling her by the name 'Angelica', the Christian tag that almost made them go physical years ago.

2.10 Conclusion

Though the physical movement from the oppressive colonial environment to the appreciative home environment enables her to turn a new page of her life in which she no longer lives under domineering colonial supervision, it does not completely remove her from the relegating patriarchal domination. The physical journey practically removes her from the world of being forcibly assigned new names, being turned into a serf, being silenced into an ignoramus and enables her to negotiate for a novel world, the world of being identified with the ancestral names that have a meaning in her life, being at peace with others and with oneself as well as being free to voice her thoughts and feelings. It enables her to negotiate for the unconstrained space in which she can register her views openly devoid of interference by colonial control, yet patriarchal domination still looms large.

The physical journey is thus instrumental in making Kaveni to have a tremendous growth in all the spheres of her life. At the end of the physical journey, she is no longer the same woman we see before she undertakes the travel. Where she was naïve, she is now pretty prudent; where she was relegated, she is now highly elevated; and where she served the low and the mighty, she now serves in honour and dignity.

The physical journey hence enables her to vanquish almost all the mountains that have barricaded her road to self-actualization, self-determination and self-fulfillment in her life. It enables her to achieve Carl Jung's "individuation" by coming to terms with her "shadow", her "anima" and her "persona" and thereby become a complete human being who is free and at peace with the world and with herself. The latter will be explored further in the next chapter that deals with the psychological and emotional facets of the journey motif, and examine whether the mental journey helps the female in dealing with the mountain of "man". The significance of the physical journey is noted when the not so young narrator now tells us that the female protagonist's "life and happiness were full", an indicator to the tremendous transformation she has had, occasioned by the physical facet of the journey motif, that removes her from the domineering mountains of her life to the serene mountains of her birth where she rediscovers her lost identity. The physical

journey has helped her to discover home, a place which provides the much sought freedom that enables her to form and enjoy a new identity. She does not only (re)discover home but also herself.

CHAPTER THREE
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL JOURNEYS TOWARDS PEACE AND FULFILLMENT

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have explored the physical the journey motif and its relevance in mediating free spaces for the female protagonists to form a new identity. In this chapter, we turn our attention to the psychological facet, which is realized through various ways such as dreams, characters' mental and emotional states, spiritual reawakening and bildungsroman aspects of the novel. The chapter is divided into sub-headings that provide distinct details regarding the psychological growth of the female protagonists that helps them to transcend cultural and colonial subjugations on their journeys towards forming a new identity.

Psychological journey is essentially a journey of the mind through which we see a character's thoughts run in a kind of mental continuum from a naïve state to a more elevated one. The change in mental states is influenced by the situations, conditions and experiences that a character passes through making them metamorphose from a deprived level of ignorance and naivety to an elevated realm of knowledge and prudence. At the initial stage a character is vulnerable, deprived of not only wisdom, intellect or information but also of the physical material well-being that goes hand in hand with the prowess that comes with intelligibility. On the extreme end, however, a character emerges less vulnerable, more knowledgeable and hence able to acquire a status of respect, dignity and honour. Where low self-esteem earlier abounded in the character's life, high self-esteem informs their elevated position. This does not, however, come easily because the character must fall into "mental hells" where they 'melt' in order to 'solidify' to form the resultant models that are more knowledgeable and intelligent. As mentioned earlier, the character passes through purification like gold passed through furnace. Where there existed mental depravity, plenty of mental ability takes over.

Psychological journey is best realized through dreams which help us to decipher a character's state of mind and therefore well-being or lack of it at different times of their lives. Hence, dreams help us to read characters' minds and then journey with them through the trials and triumphs that shape their lives. More importantly, these dreams do not merely reflect the dreamer's intra-personal conflicts but further expose the characters' "collective unconscious" that has much bearing on the psychological states due to human experiences such as colonialism. By following characters' "collective unconscious", we are able to explore their memories which "exist in form of archetypes … that express themselves in [their] stories, dreams, religions, and fantasies" (Bressler 150). In the text under study, we come across most of the dreams through the young female protagonist who, though a child, is used by the author to bring out the vicissitudes that the colonial subjects, particularly her mother, face in the colonial environment. The sequence of the dreams she has right from a young girl of five to a mature young maiden of marriageable age enables us to explore the many setbacks that she, her mother and their companions go through in their long journeys to freedom. Through these dreams, the author introduces us to the difficulties the female protagonists have to deal with, the arduous journeys they have to undertake in their quest for freedom and the fulfillment they get in the unconstrained spaces they finally penetrate.

3.2 Exposing Colonial and Patriarchal Oppressions through Dreams

The young narrator's first dream is on the day she is hosted to a bountiful party to celebrate her fifth birthday. While the festivities go on without any ado, it is the dream she has when she finally falls asleep in the wee hours of the morning that portends peril in her life, in the lives of her parents and those of the other Africans. Her lack of sleep, coupled with her restlessness for the better part of the night, in which she fears that "the angry roaring of the ocean … would seek and drag (her) … to its dark and mysterious depths" (5) is an indicator that the day's partying and interactions are over and something petrifying is in the offing. The fact that the young girl finally falls "into a deep but very troubled sleep" (5) is a signal that the honeymoon is over, not just for her but also for all the Africans living within and without the colonial mission.

The implications of this dream are noted within hours of its occurrence. In the morning of the following day, the young narrator witnesses the frightening arrival of the ship that brings adverse overhaul in the lives of the natives. The "troubled sleep" signifies the troubled, disrupted lives that the colonial subjects are bound to suffer with the arrival of more colonial masters and mistresses whose intent is to help reinforce the perpetuation of oppression that has already been established by those who came first. Indeed, the colonial subjects seem to have been "dragged into the dark mysterious depths" of colonial 'roar'. Probably the first casualty of the "gigantic demon" is the female protagonist, the narrator's mother, who is introduced at a level when she is quite naïve and vulnerable. As indicated under the physical journey, we meet Kaveni at a time when she is under immense pressure to conform to the draconian rule of the colonial masters coupled with the almost complete control by patriarchal structures that give her man absolute powers over her.

No longer does the female protagonist make decisions in her life, whether these decisions regard her personal well-being, her time, her manner of dressing, the right to choose her name, her freedom of expression, association or ownership. It's no wonder she observes that their time will no longer be theirs again even in their sleep. Indeed, time management is in the hands of the colonizer who determines what should be done by the native subjects, at what time, with who and where. Their lives become so disrupted that the child narrator observes that they rush all over "as if we have all gone mad" (9). The subjects stop being who they are in order to fit the colonizer's definition. Their identity changes from grown up men and women into naïve and imprudent boys and girls. Musyoka becomes "miboy" while the female protagonist becomes "a native specimen" who must be taught manners in order to be civilized.

But unlike Musyoka who succumbs to this belittling definition, Kaveni rebuffs it and sticks to her original name "Kaveni wa Musyoka". Unfortunately, as earlier noted, it is this difference in perception between husband and wife that compounds problems for the latter, for while Musyoka is immediately hoisted on top of the colonial mountain by its inhabitants, Keveni is left at its forbearing bottom where she tries to find her footing in

pursuit of her husband, her space, her life. To make matters worse, her attempts to have a glimpse of her man further disenfranchises her because in place of her loving husband, she espies another mountain atop the colonial mountain: her man shouting down at her to behave and pay homage to the combined mountains of colonialism and himself.

Realizing that the range of mountains that she has to climb keeps broadening, Kaveni begins to look for paths along which to navigate round these hilly landscapes. The psychological turmoil that boils within her is textually captured through the body language mannerisms and acts that speak tons of what she is not able to vocalize. The young narrator tells us that her mother "swooped down towards us like the hurricane" (10). This simile subtly captures Kaveni's state of displeasure at being over-worked by the colonial masters and still being expected to run home to cook for her family, yet her husband does not seem concerned with the bloated work his wife has to do. Kaveni's poise and gestures show her psychological state in dealing with her husband and colonialism. The narrator says, "my mother whirled around to face him, arms akimbo, the kitchen knife still in her right hand. Her voice lashed across the room like a lightning bolt…" (11-12). This psychological state indicates a woman so cornered she is ready to change the trend of events.

But perhaps the most expressive action that indicates the female protagonist's anger, disappointment and sense of betrayal by her husband is noted when she physically engages with him in an episode that almost results to a fight. The excerpt below captures this scenario:

> My mother looks long along my father's taut arm and holds it tightly
> with her two strong ones. His hand goes numb. He releases her mouth
> and I see him wince in pain. Then my mother looks at him in the face
> and a dramatic change registers upon her own. It is as if she wants to
> cry and lowering her eyes she says, "I'm sorry, Musyoka, my husband! (12)

This excerpt brings out the emotional pain that Kaveni suffers owing to her husband's decision to embrace the West with all its philosophical, religious and cultural tenets. She is at a loss on what to do since the society expects her to be submissive and obedient to

her husband. Unfortunately, agreeing with him regarding the acceptance of the white man in their lives is apparently problematic for doing so will not only lead to further relegation where she will be in the service of her husband and the colonialist but it will also result to her complete loss of identity if not extinction from the face of the earth all together.

This pressure pushes her to physically react to her husband. She is unable to suppress her "shadow", the aspect of her subconscious that Carl Jung says an individual strives to hide in order to conform to the social expectations. While the society cannot fathom a situation where a woman physically engages with her husband to resolve their differences, Kaveni is under so much pressure that she cannot afford to sit and watch her life go down the drain. She brings out her "animus", and confronts her husband by holding his hand so tightly that it goes numb as he winces in pain. However, even though Kaveni seems the apparent winner in this physical show of power, she is forced to come to her senses to realize that the social order still stands. Cognizant of this fact, she lowers her head and apologizes to her husband. Her "persona" takes over, but the stage is set. Where she cannot directly climb these mountains that have proved to be too steep, she psychologically begins to look for the right paths to meander through them towards self-determination.

Throughout the text, we come across many instances where the female protagonist is in emotional turmoil and struggles to suppress her anger due to the frustrating mountains of colonialism and patriarchy on her back. This is brought out through the pressure exerted by her strong hands upon those close to her, indicating her indignation at being so lowly treated by the colonial masters. The strength of her hands becomes a motif that exhibits the female protagonist's unwavering resolve to give her all in the fight against the oppressive colonial force. As observed above, the pressure of her strong hands first upon her husband indicate her efforts in dealing with the mountain of "man", the patriarchal control of her life. We also see the power of her hands on her daughter every time she is in an encounter with the colonial administrators. She presses her hands on young Mumbe so powerfully that the girl involuntary protests loudly. Yet the victim of her powerful

hands is not this innocent girl: it is directed at her colonial tormentors. Though the hands inflict pain on the wrong target, they do not only bring out the emotional pain in the owner but also express her palpable potential and determination in overcoming colonial oppression. They indicate her consciousness to dislodge the colonial mountain from her back.

Mumbe's dream about the perils that awaits her father is probably the most prominent signal that Musyoka's life as well as that of his wife and their daughter hangs upon the precipice of death. The following excerpt is a part of the agonizing dream that Mumbe has, ironically at the ocean shore where she has gone to seek solace after witnessing her parents' emotional exchange regarding Musyoka's impending departure for India.

> my father had become a fisherman, that the great ship had become his canoe, that he paddled it towards the dark open maw of the gigantic shark waiting at the horizon and that I would never see him again. The more I tried to wrench myself free from this infernal dream, the tighter it wrapped its tentacles around my mind with the agonizing grip of the octopus forcing me to sit still and stare. … (20).

This dream brings to the fore Mumbe's fear that her father' departure from home will be his death knell. Indeed, it forebodes Musyoka's death, an eventuality that the young girl does not want to fathom prompting her into action, at the end of her dream, to leap from her slumber and run after her father who apparently seems headed right "into the darkness beyond" (21). It takes the intuition, courage and determination of her mother, who, driven by motherly instincts, arrives in the nick of time to pull her daughter out of the deadly waters of the ocean. It is imperative to note that in the dream, it is the same ship that will take Musyoka to the new world to pursue western education that turns into a canoe, a trap that is prone to attack by "the gigantic shark". Shark here becomes a metaphor for colonial power.

The young dreamer is so scared of the 'shark' attack on her father that her live turns topsy-turvy. When he finally leaves, she wakes up to find him gone and on running to the shore to at least give a final wave of goodbye, she suffers another reverie in which she sees an apparition, "the terrible figure I had always seen in my dreams" (55). It turns out

that this apparition is Mary May who, like Mumbe's mother, saves the young girl from drowning in the insatiable waters that are bent on swallowing her father alive. Her fruitless efforts to save her father from these waters, coupled with the risks she puts herself into to ward off the 'genies' that are after her Daddy, portend the rough times ahead in a life without a father-figure. It is also telling that the ghost is a white person, indicating that the forces behind all these perilous times are the colonialists who have come to disrupt their lives.

On her part, Kaveni is well aware of the trap that her husband is so keen to get into. She warns him, "They will pack you into that ship … and when they bring you back, you will wish it had been the shark that swallowed you whole!" (19). The ship and the shark here become metaphors for colonial conquest and cultural subjugation. Musyoka's vow that he will never leave his wife and daughter and become a slave again as predicted by his wife becomes a cropper when years later, he returns to his native land and is so changed by western education that he cannot even call on his family to inform them that he is back. He is so brainwashed and modernized that he cannot envisage himself being acquainted with the lowly, 'uneducated' Africans like his wife and daughter. As foreboded in his daughter's dream, Musyoka dies in their lives—before his real death—and it takes many years of hope and patience for the young narrator to come to terms with this fact when she finally acknowledges, "My father has forsaken me" (270).

However, there is one character who has read the times so well that she psychologically sets her mind to deal with the aftermath of the 'death' of her husband: Kaveni. Right from the onset, she is able to discern that Musyoka will seldom be part of her life so long as he embraces western culture and philosophy. She vehemently tells Mary May that Musyoka will never come back because he is "ashamed of us" (59). Her action of lighting a bonfire is not simply to burn all that reminds her of her husband but is also meant to "burning all the ghosts that you people have blown into his mind and soul" (63). Putting her husband's books and things on fire becomes a psychologically satisfying feat because it makes her to have a closure to his betrayal of sleeping, dining and wining with the enemy. By doing so, she is psychologically on the right track to navigate round one of the

mountains that have barricaded her way to freedom. Vanquishing the patriarchal mountain gives her time to pay attention to the remaining mountains, the highest being colonialism. But as she discovers with time, these mountains keep shifting, merging and intersecting to make her journey to complete freedom much more grueling.

3.3 Subversion of Hegemonic Constructs

As earlier noted, the undaunted stance by the female protagonist is a unique phenomenon that is lacking in many literary works that depict the colonial condition in Africa and Kenya in particular. In these works, female characters are brought out as 'weaklings' whose role is to provide some sort of support for their conquering or sometimes falling male counterparts. This is what Iwuchunkwu refers to as treating women "as hapless victims in the hands of men". Kaveni is not only expected to conform to the colonial subjection of the colonized into nothingness but also submit herself to her husband no matter how inappropriate his decisions are. Failure to abide by the colonial rule means failure to abide by her husband's wishes because patriarchy demands a wife to consent to the wishes of her husband.

Through Kaveni, Mulwa subverts this social construct. The female protagonist refuses to be silenced by the powerful forces of patriarchy and colonialism but instead decides to answer back in order to survive in these stultifying colonial conditions. She is constantly aware that her existence is highly compromised in this environment where the people making decisions of who she is, how she should dress, talk, associate, behave and perceive herself are not her usual native men and women, her kith and kin, but a new breed of human beings whose skin-colour, behavior, mannerisms and philosophy of life are as far away from hers and her people's as heaven is from earth.

She is also conscious of the history and experiences that have culminated to this stripping and deprivation of her identity. She is conscious that it is because of the uprooting of her people from their native lands by the slave traders that has culminated to the threatened state that she currently occupies. She is further aware of the hypocritical character of the British who ostensibly want to present an angelic picture of themselves, purporting to

have played the fundamental role of the savior in emancipating the African slaves from slavery and the barbarity of their "age-old darkness". She is also aware that it is this last pretence by the British lords of hosts to civilize Africans from their world that has heralded this condition that denies her who she rightly ought to be, her identity. She questions white man's intentions of pronouncing that "you are not yourself anymore, nor may you ever be from then onwards" (12).

This awareness, however, does not protect her from the oppression of the colonizer. She still remains vulnerable to the harsh realities of the colonial world, a world replete with an incessant nagging reminder that the subjects must always perceive the life through the colonial lenses provided by the colonizer. The colonizer ensures that he "keeps the servants in their place" and the subjects know better than defy. It is this treatment that so disturbs the female protagonist that she realizes that the colonial master has resulted to what Achebe calls taking too much (by a thief) that the owner notices. Though vulnerable, the harsh condition of colonial oppression jolts her to the reality of living under a husband-snatching-whip-brandishing-master. She painfully discovers that the colonial policy of subjugation has stolen too much that the owner is left with nothing; not a husband, family, freedom, dignity nor honour. The 'stealing' is so well executed that it leaves little room for the subjects to have any peace of mind let alone the freedom to enjoy their basic liberties. It is this awareness that drives the female protagonist to seek ways to reclaim her lost space, her compromised status, her former self, her lost identity.

3.4 Re-Writing the History of her People

"Writing Back to the Empire" is a concept used by postcolonial critics interested in analyzing literary works that are based on reacting to reshape the tainted image created by the West regarding their colonies. In *Flee, Mama Flee*, Mulwa "Answers Back" by recollecting the experiences of the colonized, but he subtly does this through Kaveni. To escape from the tumultuous life that is created by colonialism, Kaveni decides to embark on psychological journeys that she hopes will help her get her identity back. She takes up tools, initiates actions and ultimately embarks on movements that are directed towards reclaiming her identity. Her first tool, and which brings her in direct confrontation with

the white enemy, is her quest to record the history of her people which she hopes will reshape the tainted image of herself and her people. She writes the history of her people so authoritatively and impeccably that she "rattles the rafters of our Lords the Protectors" (Flee 154). Her writing achieves what Ashcroft et al refer to as the "capacity to interrogate and subvert the imperial cultural formations" (11).

Having learnt the language of her enemies, she appropriates the English language as a tool to rewrite, to retell the damaged image of the African. She is aware that it is this same tool that her oppressor has used over time to demean his subjects and turn them into uncivilized, second class human beings whose existence is to play servitude to the owners of the language of superiority. Ashcroft et al observe that "Despite the detailed reportage of landscape, custom and language, they (imperial colonial literatures) inevitably privilege the centre, emphasizing the 'home' over the 'native' … (5). This is the misrepresentation that Kaveni strives to reverse: the use of foreign language which is "One of the main features of imperial oppression" (Ashcroft 7).

Kaveni's anguish is heightened by the knowledge that it is the well designed privilege that is accorded to all that is white, including the language of colonialism, that has not only deprived her of peace and the sense of belonging but also her husband who has been brainwashed into hating all that is African and embracing all that is western. Unfortunately, this writing back touches some sore area of the colonizer's paranoid conscience. Furlong Mackenzie, the new, brutal Protector, notes that Kaveni speaks English better than Mathews, the deposed colonial administrator. The colonizer abhors the idea that a subject, a woman at that, can dare use the language of her superiors to attack the masters. By doing so, she has thrown away "all the gifts of civilization … placed on her lap" (64).

Mackenzie's profuse vows to teach the ungrateful rebel a lesson comes through when he paints a lucid picture of how he will whip Kaveni upon the whipping pole till (her) flesh turns to melting mincemeat" (110). He paints such a sordid picture of the peril that awaits the female protagonist that we shudder at the thought of such a brutal act by he who

claims to have the civility of civilizing the uncivilized. Whipping was perhaps the worst form of punishment and one of the most inhuman treatments accorded to slaves and colonial subjects by their masters at all the realms of servitude across the ages. In *The Narrative of Fredrick Douglas (1845),* the mistreatment of slaves was most commonly effected through the whip which always left the victims with bodily brutalized, psychologically traumatized and emotionally derailed. The inflicted wounds would never quite heal before the whip was let loose on the almost healing scars.

In *The Souls of the Black Folk* (1903), Dubois narrates the mind-boggling subjection of the black slaves to the whip that left many scarred, scared and utterly traumatized. In Tony Morrison's *Beloved*, there are many instances of whipping of the slaves with the majority resulting to fleeing from slavery which almost never succeeded resulting to shooting to death of the runaway slaves or lynching, whichever their pursuers found deem to do determined by how entertaining or dehumanizing it could be to their victims.

Such is the inhuman act of whipping the colonizer plans to execute upon the female protagonist as a lesson to her and others who rebel against the authority that brings "the gift of civilization". The colonial mountain seems to erupt every moment the female protagonist attempts to put up sail enroute to her liberating destination. Every step she takes seems to leave a conspicuous trail which her tormentor unmistakably follows to catch up with the rebellious subject whose popularity has spread like bush fire and threatening to "infect her ilk and pave way for conflicts and bloodshed" (129). The colonizer shudders at such an eventuality that could bring shame to the Empire. Whipping, therefore, becomes the last result to put a stop to the "uppity hussy" in her tracks once for all, in spite of the fact that the female protagonist is a wife to a man the Empire has elevated, a respectable mother of a young girl the Empire honours with prospects of academic accolades in 'Mother' country and a dignified woman in the community, who fellow women look up to for guidance and leadership.

What most incenses the colonial masters is Kaveni's blatant refusal to bow to this mountain they have so diligently placed before her to honour, respect and obey. Even when they give her a lee way after they catch her red-handed dishonouring the Empire through her writing, she does not falter in the slightest nod of her head as to indicate supplication. Mackenzie's offer to assist her to hone her special talent on condition that she desists from her infamous writing and commence chronicling for the Empire does not move her an inch, her only response being that this can only happen over her dead body. This is the pivotal presentation that Mulwa accords the female protagonist. The author characterizes her as the unequivocal, determined, visionary, undaunted, charismatic, indefatigable and intelligent character mostly created by male authors in literary works that depict male characters engrossed in revolutionary engagements particularly in the colonial condition in Kenya and in Africa as a whole.

While many of these works follow a certain hegemonic literary discourse in which the female characters follow in the footsteps of their men: fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles or popular community male revolutionary figures, the text under study brings out the female protagonist as the undisputable icon of liberation and beacon of social change. She is equitable to Kimanthi in Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimanthi*, the iconic and charismatic figure who rebuffs the beckon of the white man's call to obey the rule of law because, according to Kimanthi, the foreigner has no business making the law in the first place, let alone calling for its abeyance. Kaveni would rather face the wrath of the colonizer than bow in reverence to the mountain the white man has set for her to worship.This becomes the bone of contention between Kaveni and all the white people in the colonial mission establishment, save for her white sister, Mary May. Longun Mathews and his wife Perinia abhorrence towards her is probably unmatched. Perinea's furry over her husband's failure to put the "black hussy" in her place for "writing about us … and (our) ciwilization" (14) is signal of the condescending and aloof attitude the whites have towards Africans, more so a hardliner like the female protagonist. To prove to his wife that he still has power over the unco-operative subject, Mathews vows to bring her down to "clean the slop of both the High and the Low" (15). Kaveni, however, makes fun of the two racist whites by sarcastically

imitating their poor pronunciation skills and non-standard English. It is ironical that Longun Mathews, born and bred in England, and brought to an African colony to breed education and civilization in the uneducated natives, can barely articulate the word 'civilization' let alone match the eloquence of his subject, the female protagonist.

Through her eloquence in both her spoken and written discourse, she subverts the Western notion that perceives the colonized native as falling below the realm of mastering knowledge at the same rate with the Queens-English-Speaking masters. The novelist makes Kaveni to wrest English language "from the dominant European culture" (Ashcroft et al 7), and uses it to subvert the authority vested in the colonial masters and hands it down to the native subject. This is what the colonizers detest most: the female protagonist's mastery of 'their' language to authoritatively "answer back to the Empire" and her hard line stance to stand up erect to unflinchingly face the colonial mountain instead of bowing in respect like her husband. She becomes an enigma to the colonizer, and the latter reserves neither hatred nor the means to ensure her rebellious spirit is put to rest.

3.5 Breaking Racial Barriers through Sisterhood

It is throughMary May that we are exposed to the perils that surround Kaveni. Through May's nightmarish dream, we get insights into the perilous conditions that the women protagonists go through in their fight against oppression as well as their hope in looking for solutions for the afflictions that bedevil their lives. Being a white woman, May is instrumental in not only providing a shoulder for Kaveni to lean on but also in erecting an important barrier that substantially reduces the impact of the colonialists' weight on Kaveni. She effectively comes out as the sister that Kaveni has never had and perhaps demonstrates the tenet of "sisterhood" among women in their agitation for self-determination. She comes out as the epitome of "sisterhood" as advanced by both Western and African feminism because her role in supporting Kaveni to fight for freer spaces is significant in championing the need for women to put on fellow women's shoes in their journey towards emancipation, their racial, ethnic, cultural or political backgrounds notwithstanding.

When she first comes in their lives, the narrator tells us that May seems quite unlike other whites who have a condescending attitude towards the Africans, particularly Mama. Whilst Furlong Mackenzie looks down upon Kaveni as "a native specimen" he has never met, May deliberately walks "the small, intervening space, making directly for my mother and me" and politely introduces herself to Kaveni, declaring that she is glad to "have someone with spirit to talk to!" (28). It is this space and spirit that May relentlessly occupies and jealously defends that tempers the colonizer's overzealous fury towards Kaveni. A strong bond of sisterhood is immediately established between the two women. May acts as the punching bag that receives some of the blows that are aimed at her sister Kaveni. At one time she advises her to "Lie low" so that she can handle the colonial administrators, a warning whose implications bring Kaveni bodily harm in the long run. When finally Kaveni temporarily succumbs to the almost fatal attack on her body and mind by the colonizer, it is May who probably functions as the airbag that lessens the apparent deadly impact that her sister would have suffered.

The sisterhood between the two women goes a long way towards uplifting not only Kaveni's life but that of the compassionate white woman as well. Their fighting spirits merge to become one, giving them immeasurable strength in forging tremendous psychological battles against the mountains that stand on their life-paths. The narrator informs us that when the two women meet and embrace, they look "like two lonely sisters, long lost to one another" and their appearance merge to form a common human image in which there is "neither black nor red hair but a dancing expression of all the colours of the rainbow" (60). The author here downplays the appearance features that have for ages been used to identify, define and separate people into different races, social classes and ethnic enclaves. But more importantly is the significance the author accords the united front that women need to have in order to overcome the equally united force born by the intersection of race, class and gender. To overcome the latter, they need to shove aside the dividing lines brought by race and class differences. And this is what May does, seeing Kaveni as "an innocent being beyond considerations of colour, class or occupation" (158). Though May is a white woman, her willingness to assist Kaveni

emphasizes African feminist tenet of "sisterhood", the giving of support to a fellow oppressed woman when need arises.

Mary May takes the lead in this endeavour. It is she who refuses to harbor any racial prejudice towards Africans more so towards the two women who become such close companions that they bring her the contentment she has never had in life. When she comes to the colonial land, May herself is on a journey towards knowing, understanding the world that has always treated her harshly. Her physical journey from Europe is an endeavour to discover the world, to find out whether from another part of the world she can get the answers she has always sought for in life. We note that May is not from England like a majority of the Europeans who come to the Kenyan colony depicted in the text. She is from Ireland, a country that has had a fair share of battles with Britain, with the latter resulting to use of force to curtail the former from seceding from Great Britain. When she takes over the narration, May informs us that she is a mere Irish woman "with a marked Irish ancestry that had always been rebellious against an uppity English lordship over our people" (125).

It is this history of discrimination by the British lords that is stirred in May's mind when she witnesses the British continued policy of subjugation of the downtrodden, this time their hapless victims being the African subjects, whom the colonizer condescendingly perceives as the "barbarians of the land". The present colonial oppression upon the Africans bring to the fore May's sub-conscious history of having suffered almost a similar fate. Her sub-conscious state is perhaps the equivalent of Jung's "collective unconscious" that we see through a single character's recollection of history. The present bouts of colonial oppression startles her to recall similar experiences she had faced at home. The fact that the lead colonial administrator, Protector Mackenzie, holds no reservations about reminding May of her weak ancestry jolts her further to pursue her quest to correct the things that have culminated to the discontent that informs her life. He tells her that Kaveni's "writing echoes the words of (her) Irish rabble rousers, some fifty years earlier, against the British government" (130), sarcasm that does not escape the discerning white woman.

The colonial environment in the coastal land of Kenya, therefore, brings to the fore the negative images that have been embedded in May's mind this long. But it is perhaps the encounter with the former slave trader Abdullahi Hassan Ali that makes her resolve to wholly embrace the world of "the wretched of the earth" and walk with them to overcome their oppressors. Ali makes her go down memory lane and reminisce the suffering and demise of those close to her all for the sake of the Empire. Her "collective unconscious" enables her to recall the years of her own painful history that saw the death of her grandfather, the dehumanization of her father and the untimely demise of her brother, the latter fighting in the British Royal Navy. The suffering and death of her Irish kin for the purpose of the expansion of the British Empire has had immense psychological pain on May and when she witnesses a similar kind of treatment upon the African colonial subjects, she cannot but rekindle what she herself has passed through. She identifies with the colonial subjects, empathizes with them and prefers to wear their shoes and accompany them in their journeys to seek for freedom instead of joining her historical 'enemies' to perpetuate their oppressive ways.

But it is the 'resurrection' of her long dead daughter in the character of the young female protagonist, Mumbe, that ultimately convinces May that she is on her way to finishing her journey towards filling the void that she has carried for almost a life time. Her physical journey from Europe to Africa has immeasurable significance in helping her to refill the psychological, emotional vacuum that was left after the death of her young daughter, Madeleine. When Kaveni is hospitalized and in incarceration, it is May who takes in young Mumbe and cares for her as if she were her daughter. Meeting with Mumbe reignites her "unconscious" regarding the loss of her daughter, and so to her, Mumbe is the reincarnation of her own child and May cannot but equate her with her own flesh and blood. At one point she observes, "Elizabeth played on, and I thought about this bright and innocent child and how alike she was to Madeleine, my long lost daughter" (143).

From the moment May sees Mumbe and how agile, intelligent, outstanding and lovely she is, she begins to reignite the fire of motherhood that was lost with the demise of her own daughter. She takes care of Mumbe, houses her, feeds her, consoles her, educates her and provides her with the motherly care that she missed to give to her dead daughter. She becomes so preoccupied in this rare chance to be a mother once again that she registers Mumbe as her own child and calls her "my daughter, my child". Being motherly fills her with contentment, satisfaction and much fulfillment, something she would not have achieved back at the unsettling home environment. She discovers and establishes her identity in life: the calling to be a mother to the motherless; to be a sister to the widowed; to be a companion to the lonely; to be a protector to the vulnerable; to love and to give a hand to the downtrodden, the colour of their skin notwithstanding.

It is this realization that engrosses her so much that she dreams for a day when the suffering of the innocent and vulnerable in the hands of the malevolent and mighty will come to an end. She is so intent on accomplishing this mission that her mind, emotions and spirit are in complete tandem with her dream. The dream is seen in her words, "I was so intent upon future possibilities for this woman … that my face was set, alternating between rapture and pain, anger and benign forbearance" (230). But it is perhaps the real dream that she has that informs us of the trials and triumphs of this white woman and those of her temporarily incapacitated black sister, Kaveni.

May's dream about her involvement in Kaveni's life provides important insights into the setbacks that the female protagonists must overcome in their journeys towards discovery and recovery of their lost identity. The following is an excerpt of part of this dream.

> It was in the dark silent hours of that night that a horrifying dream awakened me. In it the clouds that covered the sky were peeled off from horizon to horizon to vanish in the western skies, leaving the deep blue expanse of the overarching sky. Then an unseen gigantic hand peeled off that too, with a thunderous clang and grating clash as all the stars huddled together in the now-gigantic carpet of blue. They then sang a beautiful Tchaikovsky symphony—as the carpet rolled slowly and methodically towards… oblivion. And then there was an eternal void of palpable darkness out of which Kaveni's voice rang and laughed and said, "The morning comes! The harvest is here!

> Awake, my sister, awake!" Then I heard a roar of footsteps running across the sea and I knew that they were warriors, knew they carried spears, knew they all came for me, for I had done some terrible thing for which I would be surely punished. I ran! … (186).

This long dream by the only character who still stands by our female protagonist, Kaveni, brings out the psychological state of not only the dreamer but also the person she dreams about. This dream comes to May at a time when she is under intense pressure to ensure a safe escape for her entrapped sister coupled with the utmost need to ensure that her plans do not leak out lest she betrays her newly found companion. The peeling off of the clouds that end up vanishing in the western horizon could signify the end of colonialism after the exit of the whites from the colonized African country. The personification of the stars singing the beautiful Tchaikovsky orchestra music is an indicator of the celebrations that follow the end of colonial oppression and the coming of freedom to the subjugated masses. With their exit there could be a void, vacuum of leadership, "palpable darkness" which, however, cannot last long because there is able leadership evidenced by the confident voice of the female protagonist, Kaveni, proclaiming the birth of independence and the hope of harvesting the fruits of freedom.

We, however, note that the dream ends at a frightening note because May is startled from her sleep while trying to run from the warriors who seek to administer punishment upon her for something terrible she has done. The dream exposes May's fears, anxiety and dilemma in her efforts to assist Kaveni escape from her tormentors. It also brings forth her hopes, her vision, her optimism in her efforts to ensure that the plans to safely secure Kaveni's escape and subsequent emancipation from colonialism succeeds. Yet it shows that she is wary of the perils and tense circumstances that surround the environment in which she operates. The warriors represent her white counterparts who are bent on curtailing the female protagonist's agitation for freedom. The dream, therefore, exposes both the almost insurmountable hurdles that are placed along the women's path to freedom and their hope for a better, freer world after leaping over these hurdles. Though the dream brings out May's fears, it reawakens her quest to ensure the female protagonist's journey towards freedom does not stall. She is catapulted to keep on

moving to ensure that the female protagonist gets back home where she will be safe, secure and find peace.

3.6 Dreams of Maturation

When the recounting of the story returns to Mumbe, the young woman dreams about her mother reprimanding her for waking up late yet she is a "grown-up woman who shames the sun! Which man will come to claim your hand if you sleep like the ogre's wife of Nzaui Mountain! Up with you" (240). This dream is significant since it indicates the passage of time and hence the continued maturation of the young female protagonist. This is what Mortimer refers to as the "temporal" aspect of the journey motif and which is significant in exploring the change in plot enhancement and character development in a text.

At the beginning of the text, when Mumbe is barely five years old, she dreams about the perceived dangers that abound in a child's physical environment or that she has heard from the stories told by her parents and grown-ups. She dreams about sharks because her father became the "one-arm Sharkman" having lost his other hand in a shark attack. Her other child dreams involve some indefinable creatures who are bent on harming her or her parents. In this latter dream, however, she is more mature and has come of age to dream about her life as a young adult. The dream hence exposes the change in Mumbe's journey from childhood to adulthood in which she is growing to be conscious of the fact that she is growing into a woman who must observe good societal virtues of hard work and responsible adulthood. It also indicates her conceptualization of the marriage institution as the target destination to a successful completion of the journey towards adulthood. We will pay further attention to this maturation in the next section on the bildungsroman aspects of the novel.

The dreamless night on the last day in the colonized coastal island of Mombasa is an indicator of the both the negative past that the escapees wish to forget as well as the positive future they look forward to embrace. Mumbe says that she does not dream about anything, an indicator that she wishes to dislodge all that bad past that has brought her

suffering, loneliness and pain; and welcome a future where she hopes to record good tidings in her mind. The dreamless night, therefore, shows that the young narrator is psychologically set to begin another part of a journey, a journey devoid of the many setbacks that have afflicted her in the past. Her mind is hence a kind of an open slate. She has finished one leg of the journey under colonial suppression and looks forward to moving a second leg that will probably bring her and her two mothers the happiness they have always craved for.

For this happiness to be achieved, there has to be a fighting spirit, sacrifice and endurance. Having travelled long distances on the journey to find their home, the young narrator realizes that it will cost them a great deal to reach their destination. It is while they are in the course of their journey in middle of the vastness of the wilderness that she has another dream that gives us insight into the psychological status of the journeyers. She dreams that they "were all running away from a menace we couldn't see. There were burning arrows flying and the flutes and the horn blowing to herald the war to end all wars" (287). Just as in May's dream about the enemy warriors, Mumbe's dream brings out the sacrifice that she, her mother and their travelling companions must make in their journey towards emancipation. For this to be accomplished, there have be battles to be fought in order to win the war against all kinds of oppression, particularly colonial domination. The dream thus shows the young female protagonist's readiness to fight on, sacrifice and endure so that she and her mother can achieve the tranquility they are looking for.

Having fled from their colonial oppressors; having made long journeys across the wilderness; having endured the rough and rocky terrains; having braved the cold nights and scorching days; having survived close shaves with fierce wild animals; and having overcome the fear to leave the known for the unknown; the female protagonists are heading towards reaching the threshold of their aspirations. For the first time in her life, Kaveni manages to enjoy a peaceful night's sleep that is a sure signal of the psychological satisfaction she begins to have as she closes the gap between depravity and

home. In the following excerpt, we witness an aura of peace that she has never had. Her now quite mature daughter narrates:

> Beside me, my mother slept deeply, breathing evenly, her face calm and smooth as a baby's, oblivious to my wild misgivings about our enigmatic Sabato and the terror of the darkness and its wild animals all around us (293).

The female protagonist has never had a moment of peace from the time we meet her in the colonial mission centre. As earlier mentioned, her life has had to do with constant fights with the forces of colonialism and patriarchy. At the present moment, however, she is so calm that she can afford to sleep soundly despite the dangers that abound in the wilderness. Having managed to negotiate through some of the labyrinths created by the mountains of colonialism and patriarchy, she is more psychologically settled and ready to complete the journey towards full emancipation. Where the colonial environment denied any time to herself, "even in [her] sleep", she can now afford to enjoy undisturbed sleep, yet the sleep is in the animal-infested wilderness.

This sleep is akin to the dreamless sleeps that her daughter has had since leaving the constraining colonial environment, the sweet sleeps that take them "to the land of rest and freedom from all cares" (316). We note that when they finally arrive home, they become part and parcel of the environmental features that abound in the precincts of home. The arrival home brings them peace, joy and fulfillment; and we see this in the psychological well-being that inform the calmness in the female protagonists. Where deprivation and apprehension controlled their lives, provision and appreciation compose their living at home. They become so contented at home that they can finally rest and manage to enjoy "the sleep of the dead" in which no ghost or bad dream disturbs them.

3.7 Spirituality and Bildungsroman: The Emotional Maturation of the Girl-child and her Mother

As earlier defined, bildungsroman is a novel that deals with the maturation process, morally and psychologically. This means that it encompasses the infusion of the growth of a child concomitantly with the progression of the story-line of the novel, with the two playing fundamental significance in giving the text a certain unique meaning. A

bildungsroman novel, therefore, relies on the growth of a child in all spheres of his or her life—physical, biological, social, mental, spiritual—from childhood to adulthood, and this growth informs the making of the novel. The maturation of the child that the novel depicts goes hand in hand with the development of the story-line, and the 'arrival' of the child to maturity and knowledge culminates with the completion of the story-line. The maturity of the child indicates the successful attainment of the quest the child has lived for, and this achievement coincides with the resolution of the novel. Charles Nnolin's defines a bildungsroman as a novel:

> "in which an unheroic hero goes through a process of education and maturation, beginning, as he does from ignorance of or perceptions about himself, and ends up more knowledgeable about himself and the nature of the world" (182).

Flee Mama, Flee is a largely based on bildungroman aspects, with the better part of the story presented from the point of view of a young girl, Elizabeth Mumbe wa Musyoka. The beginning of the novel is narrated by this five-year-old-girl whose growth informs the development of the plot, ending with her maturity when she is a mature woman in her late twenties. Although the middle section of the story is told by her white foster mother, whom she regards as much as a mother as her real mother, the point of view does not much deviate from focusing on the life of this young female protagonist. Mumbe's growth hence helps us to not only trace the trajectory of the plot of the novel but also get insights into other trajectories imbued in her maturation including thematic concerns, characterization as well as the author's social vision.

Perhaps a bildungsroman novel's most significant attribute is the ability to recount a story from a child's point of view, a presentation that has a certain advantage in that it is more convincing to believe a story from a child considering that a child is more unlikely to have bias or prejudice in their perception of things, especially if these things have to do with raw human relations and interactions. A child's innocence, naivety and unpretentious nature endear adults to wish all humans were like children, for then the world would be a more just, open, less evil and lovelier to live in. We are more likely to

believe a child who tells us that we are 'mean' or 'selfless' than we would stomach an adult conveying similar information. On one hand, the child's point of view would make any adult embarrassed, embark on genuine soul-searching or really feel elated for having been so gauged by a child respectively. On the other hand, the adult's view is most likely bound to be treated as a 'hater's' prejudice or flattery respectively. The child's view thus becomes more credible, convincing and believable: the adult's one may be tainted by prejudice, pre-conceived ideas or sheer flattery. An author's use of a child narrator, therefore, enables him or her to highlight issues without raising much suspicion about the credibility of what they raise.

Yet child narration has more textual significance in that the growth of the child and its subsequent maturity are fundamentally significant because they enhance the deeper, symbolic meaning of the text in question. As we will find out, Mumbe's growth and transition from childhood to adulthood gives us important insights into the transition of the colonized land from colonial subjugation to a free region or 'state'. It also plays an imperative role in examining the process the young girl travels in the course of defining herself. Her growth, therefore, becomes a journey that she walks starting with the short, unstable tottering of a child to the wandering (wondering) musings of an adolescent culminating in the assured stature of an adult. Her physical growth goes hand in hand with her mental, psychological and emotional development and this transition becomes a journey that greatly determines the young female protagonist's ability to define who she is and the person she wants become, her destiny, her identity.

Earlier in the chapter, we have seen how the young narrator's psychological growth is embedded in her dream world through which the author exposes the mental states of not only the growing female narrator but also those of her two mothers. In this chapter, we focus on her emotional development and how this growth contributes towards her identity formation. Merriam dictionary defines an emotion as a strong feeling such as love, anger, joy, hate or fear. Emotional growth goes hand in hand with the physical or biological growth of an individual. On one hand, a child's emotions entail perceiving and reacting to things from a naïve, innocent and vulnerable point of view. The innocence through

which a child sees something is usually informed by curiosity, the need to know, to find out or to question. Though the child operates from a point of ignorance, it is not intentional ignorance or ignorance brought by lack of interest to learn; it is raw, innocent ignorance because of lack of exposure owing to a few years of a child's life. The child is at the "beginning" stage and where "ignorance or misconceptions" about himself or herself abound.

On the other hand, a child's reaction to something is often accompanied by outright or outward expression. A child will express appreciation, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, anger, pain etcetera by smiling, laughing, crying among other expressions or behavior commensurate with the action that has affected the child. While as an adult will strive to suppress such emotions due to societal expectations, norms and constrains, a child will genuinely bring out what they feel because such societal dictates are beyond his or her mental faculties. To attain full adult faculties, a child goes through different stages as we witness in our young female protagonist; and this process is guided by the adult figures in Mumbe's life.

3.7.1 Mumbe's Childhood: Maturing under the Tutelage of Two Mothers

We meet Mumbe when she is seventeen years old narrating to us a story beginning when she was a five-year-old child. It is at this formative stage that we trace her emotional growth up to the end of the novel when she is in her late twenties. The narrator's perception of things when she is young reflects the innocence with which children understand the world. At five years, she cannot but enjoy the wholesome attention that everybody in the colonial mission pays her during her fifth birthday party. She does not seem much disturbed by the presence of the party attendees even when some of them do not quite look like Mama and Papa. It is the coming of the ship, the "gigantic demon", that disrupts this aura of peace. From this moment, she begins to see new things, unexpected emergence of new modes of interaction, especially between her Mama and Papa. She begins to note a constrained relationship between these two. Though a child, she is able to note that her parents' constant wars are caused by the couple's differences emanating from the white people who have come to change the way her people do things.

She notes that her mother relentlessly opposed to her father's love for 'things' colonial because these 'things' do not augur well for Mama and other subjects in the colonial environment.

She notices that her parents' constant quarrels have to do with her father's willingness to agree with the white people more than he does with her mother. She is aware, for instance, that her mother vehemently opposed the christening of her daughter by giving her the Christian name, Elizabeth, just as she profusely opposes the name Angelica that the whites, together with Mumbe's father, want to force upon her. Through her parents' altercations, she also learns about the implications of the arrival of the ship which has not only come to deliver more white people but also to take her father away from home. Mumbe's fear of losing her father is seen through the images of the "shark" and the "gigantic demon", which are bent on swallowing her father "into the darkness beyond" (21).

We further see a child's discernment of the changed lifestyles that the Africans have after the arrival of the new group of white people. It does not escape her attention that everybody, including Mama and Papa, is running all over like mad people. This subtle observation by a child indicates the disruption of the lives of the colonized in their efforts to meet the demands and expectations of the colonizer. But it is Mumbe's keen observation of the condescending attitude that Lord Mackenzie, the new colonial administrator, has towards Mama that more subtly forebodes the perils facing her mother and those opposed to colonial power. The Protector's "cold blue eyes" upon her mother during the welcoming party, and at different times of their meetings, make the young girl "much afraid for Mama" (39).

Her intuition later comes to pass when the senior colonial master mercilessly describes the dehumanizing whipping that he plans to subject her mother to as a lesson to those of her ilk who may think of resisting the spread of the Empire. Mackenzie paints such a grisly picture in the execution of this heinous act that young Mumbe involuntary voices her pain to the dismay of the adults present, especially the Protector's colleagues Mary

May and Father Beaumont. The author satirizes the colonizer's inculcation of the policy fear and intimidation for the suppression and control of the colonized subjects. We note that although Mumbe is much distraught by Mackenzie's sordid picture of his intended flaying of her mother at the whipping pole, she sarcastically sees the administrator less of the powerful man he wants to his subjects to fear and more of "a dangerous mad man" (97).

To overcome such fear and anxiety as well as outgrow the innocence and naivety that abound in childhood, a child largely depends on the counsel and guidance of an adult. For instance, it is Mary May who stops Lord Mackenzie from further hurting young Mumbe with his graphic description of the intended punishment of her mother. We further note that Mumbe's life at this age is largely shaped and determined by her two mothers, Kaveni and May. It is they who instruct, advice, encourage, counsel, console, caution, protect, reward and reprimand her. Indeed, it is they who lead her towards the type of woman she becomes later in life.

But this dependency on an adult by a child has more textual significance. Giselle Rampaul notes that "critics see the child as mirroring the colonial condition in her lack of power and control but also as a symbol of resistance and rebellion" (155). Mumbe, therefore, becomes a symbol of the colonized subjects who are powerless and under the control of the colonizer just as she is under the control, counsel and protection of the adult women in her life. We, however, note that she becomes so conscious of the frustrations that the colonizers have brought to their lives, especially to her mother, that she begins to take steps, however insignificant, in the journey towards freedom in the future. At one point she is so distraught by her mother's suffering in the hands of the colonizers that she begins to agitate for freedom saying, "I vowed to myself that no one would ever treat me as those people treated Mama" (17).

Moreover, it is she who questions the lopsided British education system that is discriminative towards Africans. According to her, the policy that African children must touch their right ear with their left hand over the top of the head as the minimum

qualification to join school is unfair because it is not based on a child's intelligence. We note that despite Mumbe's young age, she is able to see through this ridiculous colonial education policy. She challenges her father, "Esther Mariam Mwazera is fifteen years old and her arms are short. She will never grow. God made her that way. Will she never join school because she will never touch her ear?" (45). As earlier noted, Musyoka is so integrated in the western way of life that he cannot give his daughter a plausible answer to her reasonable query and dismisses her as a bother who must learn to obey rules such as this important "Im-perial De-cree" she so vehemently wants to question.

When she finally gets admitted to school courtesy of Mary May, the new teacher and her foster mother, despite falling short of this minimum requirement, she proves the policy makers wrong. She does not only defeat the school's deputy head teacher hands down in a reading contest that May promptly organizes to teach her unbecoming assistant a lesson but also emerges the best pupil in the vast colonial territories, scoring "above ninety-eight percent in all the subjects year in year out" (232). Mumbe's academic achievements can be equated to Margaret Cadmore's in Bessie Head's *Maru*. In this novella, Margaret is snatched from the jaws of death by her white foster mother who brings her up to the reach high echelons of education never before attained by any member of the discriminated Masarwa community. Like Mumbe, she accomplishes exemplary academic feats by scoring above ninety-nine percent in all the subjects and becomes a grade 'A' teacher, heralding an era of liberation for her racially prejudiced people.

For Mumbe, her unmatched academic performance endears her to the owners of the Empire that she is awarded a scholarship to pursue further studies, not in India like her father, but at the prestigious Oxford right in the heart of England. This elevation sets the young female protagonist on journeys towards higher statuses where in the words of Lord Mackenzie she will learn "higher and finer tenets of our civilization" (233). Unfortunately, the colonial condition at home may hamper the completion and realization of these journeys towards academic excellence and discovering the world because as she points out, "It was the figure I cut, standing there as the triumphant justification for the stranger's presence here, that wrankled the people" (245). From this point, Mumbe

embarks on several journeys to maturity, journeys that are on one hand determined by the colonizers' presence in the lands of her people and on the other hand by her personal growth, the quest to learn, to expand her intellect, to discover and to find meaning and contentment in life. She is also forced to juggle between life as defined by her oppressed mothers and the one presented by the powerfully enticing force of the colonizer. When her foster mother asks her to choose between her biological mother's safety and her comfort and advancement in Oxford, she wittingly responds through a question asking May, "Between the world and the mother who brought you into it, would you choose the world? (238).

It is these two sides that determine the young female protagonist's journeys towards maturity and identity formation. We, however, note that whereas Mumbe's powerful and controlling mothers mean well for her, and strive to ensure her growth and maturity is in tandem with her well-being and future aspirations, the colonial power and control epitomized by Lord Mackenzie is instituted for relentless condemnation of the subjects for the benefits of the former including continued exploitation of the target subjects' resources. Mackenzie leaves no doubt in articulating this exploitative objective in the colonizers' education of the natives when he tells Teacher May to observe "Controlled enlightenment. Controlled education … to create such a pliable labour force among the natives as will take place in the lower echelons of government" (184). Taking Mumbe to England for further studies, just like awarding her father a scholarship to study India, is ultimately designed to strengthen colonial control, management and exploitation of the subjects and their resources. As Katrak observes, "Education was devised to create a civil servant class, predominantly male, that would aid a colonial administration" (63).

However, Mumbe's education by her two mothers is obviously in good, caring hands. We note that her biological mother does not bring her up like a chick engulfed in its mother's feathery embrace. After ensuring that her daughter's basic needs and provisions are met, she meticulously exposes her to the rigours of life which are crucial in her journey towards adulthood. One of Kaveni's commonest lessons to her daughter concerns bringing her up with the qualities that befit the making of a woman from a girl according

to the dictates of the society. For instance, when the female protagonist comes home after completing the exhausting cleaning chores at Longun Mathews' residence, she castigates both her husband and daughter, comparing them with "dead soldiers" because of waiting for her to come home to prepare the mid-day meal yet they should be able to do this on their own.

We, however, note that Kaveni's constant reprimand of her daughter is not just geared towards bringing her up to be the responsible person that the society demands of a woman but it is also meant to castigate the burdens thrown upon women who have to do double work of taking care of their families and serving the colonial masters. She is infuriated by the overwhelming expectations heaped upon women who have been turned into maids to serve the "overlords" both at home and at the mission centre. Cognizant of these burdensome mountains that a woman must carry, Kaveni reserves no energy in inculcating and nurturing the right attitude in her daughter lest she suffers the consequences of falling short of developing strong shoulders to withstand these mountains. At one time she shouts at her, "Hold that chicken firmly! You'll grow to be a woman, won't you?" (11). It is fundamental that the girl should properly rehearse some of the woman-making-skills at this young age so that when the time comes for her to go to full time practice, she will not wobble, falter or fail to deliver as a woman.

It is this socialization to behave, to become a responsible woman who is able to cook, sweep and do all that appertains to womanhood that Kaveni so determinedly nurtures in her young daughter that the latter dreams about her mother reprimanding her for waking up late. But perhaps the biggest lesson she learns from her mother is the fighting spirit. Mumbe so keenly takes after her mother in agitating for what is rightfully hers that her foster mother severally observes, "Like mother like daughter" (166). She observes, discerns and puts into practice her mother's agility in fighting against oppression and we see her maturing from the young girl who fears imaginary sharks to a confident young woman who a number of times makes the right decisions on the right way to take in navigating through the mountains that surround a woman like her. Mumbe learns all these survival lessons from her mother before the latter is incapacitated and temporarily falls

into a coma unable to physically withstand the weighty colonial mountain upon her back. The author uses this separation of mother and daughter to mark the transition of time for as the daughter says, "I could not see her as far as childhood lasted" (124). When they meet next, Kaveni is only two inches taller than her daughter, and the latter is more knowledgeable of the world that May informs her that it is she (Mumbe) who should take care of her mother and not the other way round as was earlier the case. She has grown physically, mentally and emotionally to the level of taking care of the one who had earlier taken care of her.

For Mumbe to have matured this far it has taken the dexterous hands of her foster mother, Mary May. Even before May steps in as her foster mother, she already has immense positive influence on young Mumbe, who straight away notices her likeable mien unlike the aloofness espoused by the other whites. It is May who also introduces her to the world of books and thereby sets her on a journey towards discovering the world through reading, a quest that later sees her depart from her native land in pursuit of quenching her insatiable thirst for knowledge. Mumbe does well on the journey that her teacher stirs in her by counseling her to take time to learn because she has much to learn. This learning first involves internalization of some important rules to observe in life, starting with rule number one, "Never start on a piece of work if you know you won't complete it" (34) culminating to rules infinitum. Though Mumbe's first perception about these rules is far from positive and makes her nick-name her teacher "Complex May", she ultimately matures to be a better, more enlightened person by adhering to these simple yet well-inculcated lessons.

It is through May that Mumbe gets exposed to the world outside the only home she has known in the mission centre. She takes her on her first outing to Mombasa town on a shopping spree which does not only expose her to different world view she has never encountered but also opens other spaces that have crucial bearing on her past and that of her mother. During this visit, Mumbe comes across many new things and people that upraise her world view a notch higher compared to her limited space in the colonially controlled mission establishment. But it is the exposure to her mother's past that has

more momentous effect on the young female protagonist. Her meeting with Abdullahi Hassan Ali stirs in the former slave holder the painful memories of losing his wife who was felled by Mumbe's mother. Seeing Mumbe makes Ali to reignite his "unconscious" by raking over the past and opening old sores that subsequently have a direct bearing on her mother's safety because the former master seeks revenge to appease the unsettled spirit of his wife that continuously gnaws his conscience. Of significance, this exposure to her mother's past confirms to Mumbe the validity of the experiences that have somehow shaped the person she is. This knowledge further catapults her into resolving to never depart from her mother in her journeys to overcome this ugly past that combines with the present colonial slavery to threaten her mother's life and also her own.

During the first town visit, the young female protagonist is barely a girl who has to run behind Teacher May in order to keep up with the long strides of her adult companion. But during the second town visit, she has grown so much that she does not lag behind but rather saunters ahead of her teacher who is amazed at her fast her charge has grown. This physical growth is in tandem with her psychological and emotional journey towards maturity. In her first town exposure, she is more timid and under the control of her teacher, but in her second visit we see a more confident and knowledgeable Mumbe who is daring enough to have a chit chat with market women as well as other whites she sees around. May confirms this maturity when she points out that "the years had seen her grow to a most confident girl who was too tall for her age" (225-26).

This growth in stature goes hand in hand with her mental and emotional progression. She becomes responsible enough to make a delicious dinner for two and when her teacher asks how she managed to prepare such a delicacy, Mumbe's intelligent response using one of the teacher's wise adages confirms to the trainer that her pupil has indeed come of age. It is this maturity that encourages May to reveal to her 'daughter' all the plans about the latter's mother's escape from the threatening colonial environment. At this stage, Mumbe is at a position to make such fundamental decisions as abandoning the opportunity to pursue studies at the prestigious Oxford University in order to join her

mother in her journeys towards emancipation. Even the vindictive Ali commends May for having brought up Mumbe well.

3.7.2 On the Homestretch towards Full Maturation

When mother and daughter reunite, the latter seldom disappoints the former. She is constantly on her side as they trudge along the wilderness in search of their long lost home and vows never to leave her mother until they reach the panacea for all the afflictions they have faced in life. However, Mumbe still relies much on her mother's counsel and intuition especially during her puberty and adolescent ages when she becomes conscious of the interest the opposite gender has towards her. During their physical journey to freedom, the young woman is engaged in another journey of emotions when she grows conscious of the "tall muscular frame of the men" (308) and is embarrassed when she catches one of the men "staring at the V between my fast growing breasts" (312). Just as the journeyers are on the homestretch towards home, Mumbe herself is on the homestretch towards complete maturity as a woman.

It is along this journey to maturity that she also comes to terms with the aftermath of her missing father. During the formative age, she only feared losing her father's presence and company without realizing further implications of his absence. She also grown up quite contented in the company of her mother and later her teacher to have time to notice the absence of her father to the point of forgetting him in her childhood. But when she begins to walk the emotional journeys to maturity, she notices the void created by her departed father and emotionally feels the pain of his betrayal. She realizes that her life and her mother's could have taken a different course had he been with them to fight colonial oppression. The excerpt below indicates this pain by the young female protagonist:

> And then the waiting. Tomorrow his letter will come! No he did not write! No ship came from India… a week… two weeks… a month… Mama ill in hospital months! A ship comes! Ah! At last a letter will come—and Mary May avoiding my eyes and speaking in that half-whisper. 'I'm sorry, Elizabeth, I'm sure he'll write… soon!' Days… months… years… (269).

The young narrator's stream of consciousness and the author's use of ellipsis bring out the painful repercussions of being forsaken by her father. Mumbe has come of age to realize the effects her father's absence has caused her and her mother. This awareness makes her shed tears of betrayal and conclude, "My father has forsaken me" (270). This emotional turbulence caused by her father's silence gradually renders her stronger and more enlightened to ultimately resolve to make sound decisions that enable her to mediate spaces that help her define her identity.

Mumbe's full maturation is best witnessed at long last when the young female protagonist has fully matured to the point of being warned by her mother, "There are men here. You are now a woman. Behave!" (337). Perhaps this caution is a reminder to her daughter of the importance of being highly conscious of the existence of this mountain called man and the need to learn how to engage with it if she must live her life fully. Having successfully trekked the long torturous physical, psychological and emotional journeys, Mumbe is best prepared to live her life full. The completion of these journeys is noted when Mumbe herself admits, "I was no longer a Sunday school child. I had become mature" (316). She is at the threshold of forming her identity.

This maturity is seen in the way she confidently resolves to be at the fore front in fighting against colonial oppression and other oppressions that hinder the progress of human beings to realize what "Mulungu" intended them to be. She has grown from the naïve and vulnerable child who fears imaginary and real sharks and ships to a mature, courageous, more enlightened and knowledgeable woman. She is "no longer a Sunday school child" (316) who is naïve to the teachings of Beaumont, her white Sunday school teacher. At maturity, she is able to discover the hypocrisy shrouded by such seemingly innocent teaching about "the children of darkness". Her vision is captured in her words:

> In that moment, I saw my mission. I would learn! I would teach! Out of the domination of strangers, our people would rise. And soon. There was a new world to come and in that world, I would help to make great men and women out of the "boys" and "lasses" … (385).

It is this vision that enables Mumbe to successfully extricate herself from spaces that would render her pinned to the ground by the mountains that have been placed on the woman's back. Her mother's experiences, suffering, perseverance and eventual triumph after trouncing the mountains placed upon her back have monumental impact on Mumbe, who is conscious of the perils that would resurface in her own life if she does not make the necessary steps towards seeking higher grounds out of reach of these weighty mountains. The most fundamental decision that Mumbe makes to get to these higher grounds is when she resolves to embark on her last journey overseas to pursue her education at Oxford in England. Before she makes this decision, she agonizes over her strong attachment and feelings for Mudhoka, one of the men who sacrifice their lives to accompany Mumbe and her mother on their journey to freedom. Though she admires and loves Mudhoka, a man whose presence and "voice quickens her heart" (387), her conscience wins over her heart and her decision to travel on the train to the coast and later in a ship destined for England to follow her education dream is perhaps the author's most prominent social vision in mediating higher spaces for women.

Mumbe finally arrives at a point of self-definition. She becomes aware of the happiness, contentment and fulfillment that abound in her mother since their arrival home. She says that her mother "had at last found her joy and life's work among the children" (406). She is aware that her mother, her other mother and teacher Mary May, her friend Mudhoka and the entire community looks forward to the time she will settle down, marry, become a teacher and have children in order to be "a complete person!" (407). But Mumbe refuses to define herself in terms of these societal expectations. She knows who she is, what she is, what she should do and where she should do it. She does not want to deliver these expectations at the expense of fulfilling her aspirations, her dreams, her potential, her vision lest she lives a life full of regrets. Her identity is clearly defined. The following excerpt lucidly captures the female protagonist's moment of self-definition:

> In my musings, I found I had wandered far to the fish pool. I looked at the fish, happily going about their business. Then I looked at the calm endless sky. I seemed to find a lot of peace, then I retraced my steps to our house, determined to do what I must do (410).

Mumbe wants to be as free as the fish in the pool and in spaces where she can afford to dream and subsequently follow the dreams up to the "calm endless sky" without anybody's restrictions. We, however, note that she hopes to return to her motherland and settle down with the love of her life, Mudhoka. The text here champions African feminism which espouses the need to maintain the family institution and the inclusion of both genders in ameliorating gender ties as well as in pursuance of self-determination. Yet in ensuring the realization of these tenets, Mumbe is conscious not to let any mountain conceal the illumination that lights her way to self-fulfillment. She points out:

> This time,I would not let him wander after the vain, hypnotic dazzle of the Empire. This time we would stand, side by side, against the enemies of our individual dignity, family, race, and indeed all men of good will, for the days our maker would grant us (412).

This excerpt indicates the female protagonist's completion of the psychological and emotional journey towards adulthood. While she began as a fearful, naïve and vulnerable child at the mercy of not only the colonial administrators but also in direct control and instructions of her two mothers, she ends up as a courageous, prudent and strong woman who confidently stands upon the pinnacle of knowledge and enlightenment. She has walked the psychological and emotional journeys from childhood through puberty and adolescence to make her way to adulthood where she can afford to make decisions independently without interference from whatever source, may this source be her mother, her teacher, her man or even the mighty power of the colonizer. She knows where she has come from, where she stands, where she will go and even "the path along which [she] will RETURN" (412) in her quest to live a free, fulfilling life.

3.7.3 Spiritual Reawakening: The Resurrection and Reconnection with the Spirit of Home

Another important aspect of the journeys towards liberation and identity formation by the central female protagonist lies in her spiritual reawakening in dealing with the issues that afflict her. The spiritual element is realized when characters are so overwhelmed by the afflictions that bombard them that they plummet into some spiritual realm where they seek answers to the myriad of vicissitudes that surround them. In this process, they

subconsciously go through "experiences of spiritual growth and renewal" (Mortimer 169). Plunging into this 'spiritual world' makes a character to go through some kind of a journey which culminates to their "rebirth" or "resurrection" enabling them to have a better understanding about themselves and the ability to overcome the problems that they face.

Having been almost supplanted by the colonial mountain, Kaveni can barely stand on her feet but ends up on her knees, not in supplication to the colonial edifice but due to its crushing weight on her back. She is pinned to the ground and the only stilt—her husband—that she can hold on to attempt to maintain a dignified posture has been cut off leaving her on a free fall towards oblivion. She becomes physically incapacitated, mentally unstable and emotionally derailed. The colonizers deliberately use colonial tools of oppression to blackmail her into abdicating her cause and bowing to their mighty mountain. She suffers physical attacks on her body that see her plunge into a coma, reel in psychological turmoil leading to hallucinations and face intense emotional moments that make her emotionally derailed. She becomes momentarily silenced. She remains comatose for a long time, and it is during this state that she is pitifully vulnerable, making her white sister refer to her as "a pitiable bundle" (140).

However, when she finally comes out of the coma, the female protagonist is re-energized, and in her power is an ability she has never had before: the ability to commune with unseen people and to read the future. From this point, she charts the way forward through the guidance of spirits of those long gone, among them her father, Mulatevia and her mother, Mumbe wa Karima. She is not only able to correctly point out things that will come but also manages to read people's mind. This is "resurrection" archetype of the journey motif in which a character succumbs into the world of the dead and suffering but ultimately "resurrects" a stronger person in body, mind and spirit to conquer whatever drove them to submission and even more.

Although the female protagonist gets much assistance from Mary May and the other (male) companions who are instrumental in helping her escape from colonial

confinement, it is she who courageously and undauntedly seem to confirm the success of the whole operation that is undertaken to ensure her safety. As earlier noted, the author's presentation of the female protagonist is unique in elevating her character hence making her pivotal and at the centre of action and agitation for social change. We have noted that all her journey companions are male characters who risk their lives to support her by first organizing her escape and secondly securing her way until she gets home where they all enjoy freedom from colonialism. We, however, note she is the one who leads and calls all into action her companions against colonial oppression. It is her spiritual reawakening that completes the picture that her male companions have so meticulously planned for the successful completion of the journey.

All along the tedious and laborious journey to freedom, Kaveni is in constant guidance by the spirits that she communes with. Perhaps it is her unfaltering spirit, her ability to remain calm despite the numerous challenges that the journeyers face that gives them confidence to soldier on undeterred. Even when the group faces mind-boggling threats from wild animals, snakes and deprivation on the journey, she seldom takes interest, concentrating on her communication with the ancestral guidance and protection. We, however, note that when the time comes for her to guide and warn her companions on the right direction to take towards home, she comes in handy and if it were not for her mysterious spiritual ability, the journeyers could not have made it to completion. This spiritual element is significant in complementing both the physical and psychological facets of the journey motif in that the female protagonist is able to guide the travelers to overcome physical obstacles on the way as well as giving them psychological stability in focusing on the task of completing the journeys.

When she finally makes it home, we again see Kaveni in deep communion with her spiritual fore-fathers. She does not just identify with the trees, animals and other physical features but also gets spiritually intimate with her ancestors. Her reconnection with the spirits immensely informs the buildup of her identity. Hardly does she make any decision without consulting with these invisible beings who in turn help her to take the necessary measures towards dealing with the impending issues. The most important issue is the

return of her husband whose coming she predicts many days before he tragically comes calling. It is the spirits who give her the revelation of his return and further guide her on the right medicine to prepare to cure her fatally injured husband. When he is finally cured, it is they whom she turns to for consolation after her man 'returns' from death and starts erecting new mountains, this time with him assuming both the powers of the colonizer and a sterner, sky-rocketing man-(moun)tain of power. Musyoka becomes a replica of the white man, effectively donning his mien, mannerisms and aloofness; complete with a walking-cane in hand just like Furlong Mackenzie. He becomes "a demigod" who has journeyed beyond Africa borders and acquired knowledge that the native mortals only qualify as pathetic ignoramuses. "He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle" (Fanon *Black Skin* 9).

On discovering that the mountains she has successfully shaken off have reformed and are daringly making their way to perch on her back for good, she promptly consults her 'spiritual mother' whom she emotionally asks, "Mumbe! Mother, what is this you let me marry!" (402). It is probably her mother's advice that she follows by letting go of the only man she has ever loved and whom she has painstakingly risked her life in trying to resuscitate from the colonial jaws of death. After communing with her 'mother', she consents to the freedom fighter's decision to take her husband back to the same world of the dead where she had agonizingly snatched him from.

In nutshell, Kaveni's spiritual reawakening is instrumental in helping her to transit from the oppressive colonial world to the free spaces that give her identity. Moreover, it also enhances her ability to transcend the stern boundaries erected by patriarchy. Her spiritual reawakening, therefore, becomes instrumental in supplementing and complementing the female protagonist's mental awareness in dealing with the challenges posed by the weight of the mountains on her back. It is her spiritual connection with her ancestors that guide her in maintaining psychological stability in her journey towards freedom, hence enabling her to navigate through the mountains that stand on her paths towards self-determination. Her spiritual reawakening ultimately enables her to arrive at her destination, and her journey becomes epic because she ends up a heroine in the eyes of both her enemies and

admirers. She ends up becoming elevated as a mother and a grandmother to many; a charismatic leader and healer to all; and a fulfilled and contented woman in her new free 'nation', where her identity is unquestionable.

3.8 Conclusion

We note that the psychological and emotional facets of the journey motif have effectively been infused in the novel to expose the challenging conditions that women have had to face in their contribution towards bringing positive social in the society, particularly in their practical engagement and commitment in the struggle for freedom. They have also been used to reflect the mental turmoil that women have faced in the struggle against colonialism, more so because of the intersection of race, class and gender, brought by the amalgamation of the mountains of colonialism, patriarchy, racism and women's perception towards themselves. Through the dreams and mental states by the female protagonists, the author has not only brought forth the setbacks that women faced in a colonized and patriarchal society but also provided revelation into the pivotal contributions they engaged in during the struggle for independence. Through these dreams, the text exposes the varied psychological states that women engaged in during the fight for freedom from colonialism.

Equally important, the psychological and emotional facets of the journey motif are instrumental in examining the maturation of the female protagonists as they progress from a point of oppression, vulnerability and naivety to a point of freedom, stability and ability. In this progression, the female protagonists face many experiences in navigating through mountains of colonialism, patriarchy, race and gender; and this navigation has enabled them to strive to depart from points of relegation towards points of elevation. This elevation has enabled the female protagonists to enjoy high self-esteem, recognition and fulfillment. The psychological and emotional facets, therefore, significantly supplements the physical facet of the journey motif in tracing the transcendence of women from points of oppression by the aforementioned mountains to points of emancipation where they are able to form and enjoy their new identity.

We further note that where the physical facet fails to fully mediate freedom for the female protagonist in dealing with the mountain of "man", the psychological facet comes in handy in providing the free space that she now enjoys devoid of patronizing patriarchal control of her life. The female protagonist's refusal to hearken to the voice of her husband is the most significant defining moment, and encapsulates the author's social vision of the text. By rebuffing her husband's insensitive control of her life, his egocentric ambition and manipulation, the female protagonist has finally reached the pinnacle of her life and this is marked by the completion of the psychological journey.

At the end of her psychological journey, Kaveni has matured enough to become conscious that she needs to severe further liaison with her man if she has to realize her call to shove away both the colonial and the patriarchal mountains from her back. Fanon points out that "consciousness is a process of transcendence" (2) and the female protagonist's consciousness in dealing the last blow to the mountains of colonialism and patriarchy marks her transcendence from oppressive political and cultural states to liberating spaces in which she forms a new identity as a contented, comfortable and fulfilled person. Where her husband's word was final, its insensitivity notwithstanding, she can now afford to question his prejudiced opinion and loudly wonder: "Mumbe! Mother, what is this that you let me marry?"

CHAPTER FOUR
RECOLLECTIONS OF THE JOURNEY MOTIF AS A BASIC MODE IN THE NOVEL

4.1 Introduction

This study focused on examining the use of the journey motif in women's identity formation in the colonial condition in Kenya in Mulwa's novel *Flee, Mama Flee*. In the previous chapters, we have delved into the significance of the journey motif as a tool that the author uses to champion for the transcendence of women from states of oppression to elevated states of recognition and appreciation. This chapter provides summative views regarding the relevance of the journey motif as a basic literary mode or element that significantly contributes to the substantive portrayal of women in their involvement and commitment in bringing positive social, political and economic changes in the society, hence getting the opportunity to transcend societal constrains towards the formation of new identity.

In this study, I set out to achieve three objectives: to explore the use and significance of the physical facet of the journey motif in Mulwa's *Flee, Mama Flee*; to examine the use and significance of the psychological and emotional facets of the journey motif in the novel in women's identity formation in the colonial condition in Kenya; and to interrogate the journey motif as the basic mode that Mulwa uses to concretize the form and content of his novel. Accordingly, the corresponding hypotheses for the study were that the physical facet of the journey motif is effectively and significantly infused in the text of the novel;thatthe psychological and emotional facets of the journey motif in *Flee, Mama Flee* aresignificantly used in enhancing women'sidentity formation in the colonial condition in Kenya; and that the journey motif has been used as a basic mode in concretizing the form and content of *Flee Mama, Flee*.

The study was based on two theoretical perspectives: African feminism and psychoanalysis, particularly Molara Ogundipe-Lesrie's strand of "The Six Mountains on the Woman's Back" and Carl Jung's psychoanalytic strand respectively. The journey

archetypes like the quest, the departure, the obstacles and the return were further used to trace the movement of the characters on the way to identity formation. Using these approaches, the objectives and hypotheses envisaged by the study were substantively investigated and confirmed in the course of the research. The study found that Mulwa has used the journey motif as the foundation upon which he builds both form and content in *Flee, Mama Flee*. He subtly makes use of the journey motif to build up the plot, enhance characterization and to particularly convey the novel's special meaning. Nnolin's view that the journey motif "carries the story-line forward and in some cases, embodies the meaning" (183) was important in examining the relevance of the motif to the plot, characterization and themes of the text.

In the novel, the journey motif is extensively used and right from the onset, we come across the characters engrossed in one journey or another. These movements, whether they entail characters on arrival or departure from or to some place or space, highly inform their actions, interactions, thoughts and their world view depending on where they are from, where they are at a particular time and where they intend to go. The movements further influence the sequencing of events as the characters endeavour to flee from their place or space of discomfort in order to reach the place or space of comfort. The journeys they embark on are, therefore, both spatial and temporal; and their undertaking have a symbolic or metaphorical significance in the text.

We have noted that the female protagonists in the text end up in the constrained state of colonial oppression because of the many journeys that culminate to their suffering as slaves and subjects. Their disenfranchisement and subsequent loss of identity is as a result of the physical journeys that uproot them from their native homes to the lands of slavery and colonialism. In addition, their predicament is made worse by the journeys that their colonial masters successfully make from their homes in England to Africa with the intention to colonize the natives, exploit their resources and consequently empower their country. These journeys expose the oppressive colonial environments that the female protagonists as well as the other natives are subjected to.

We have explored the themes of colonialism, exploitation and alienation that are exposed through the journeys that bring both the colonized subjects and their colonial masters in one fold where they submit or execute their roles respectively. Further exposition on the theme of colonialism is enhanced through other journeys that entail the elevation of some of the colonial subjects by taking them to overseas destination for the purposes of preparing them to serve the Empire. The most notable of these is Musyoka's journey to India on scholarship by the British Empire. This opportunity is not given in good faith because Musyoka's education is not merely meant to honour him as a teacher who has embraced the West and all its philosophies with little reservation; rather, it is 'elevation' with many strings attached, particularly the colonizers' policy of training some of the subjects in order to strengthen the masters' greater control of the colonized people.

Musyoka's journey to India is further problematic because it has other adverse implications to himself as well as to his family, especially to his wife Kaveni. In his over-zealous ambition to be identified with the whites as much as possible, he is 'interpellated' and made to lose any little taste he had for being African. But pursuing English education is not a direct ticket to being "fully English". The end result is a Musyoka who is alienated in his own country, his British education resulting to what Katrak refers to as "mental exile within one's culture" (63). His journey to India hence becomes a cropper but it is significant for us to examine the effects of "interpellation" on the colonial subjects, and how the western demeanor they seek to exhibit lead to their own damnation and that of their people if their aping style of leadership succeeds.

Musyoka's journey overseas changes his role as the patriarchal figure in his family. It makes him to abandon his traditional role as the head of his family and this abdication does not only impact negatively on himself but also on his wife and daughter. He becomes disconnected from his original duties and responsibilities; and subsequently connected to new obligations that make him subservient to colonial policies but equally suppressive to his kith and kin. The end result is an emasculated Musyoka who is apparently wallowing in the quagmire of pandemonium devoid of the authority vested on him by tradition and society. He becomes so unstable that he flops in executing his

authority over his wife as expected of a man. He cannot convince her to take the new Christian name she is given and neither can he persuade her to drop her clamour against colonialism.

Even when he finally returns home equipped with the white man's vast knowledge which he ruthlessly pushes down his country men's throats, he is still unable to claim his original authority over his wife, who musters her entire strength to ensure she is not covered under the debris of the crumbling mountain created by the "intersection" of colonialism and patriarchy. It is his time to deal with the repercussions of colonial oppression. The subversion of masculinities comes to the fore, but this time the subverted is left neither stooping nor staggering in confusion: he is shoved into the gutter to make the last roar and roll down the drain towards oblivion. Musyoka's journey, therefore, becomes a significant tool that helps us to examine the characterization the author gives him and the female protagonists. It also enables us to interrogate the alienation suffered by the colonial subjects who have to wander all over in efforts to find acceptance in a land where fitting in is much more challenging than departure for the journey abroad.

The most prominent use of the journey motif as a central element of the novel is seen through the female protagonists. Whereas the aforementioned journeys consolidate to push the subjects into colonial environments, the female protagonists' initiation of more journeys that extricate them from these oppressive places contribute a lot to the progression of the story-line, thematic concerns and characterization. As discussed in the previous chapters, the female characters' embark on physical, psychological or emotional journeys which culminate in their emancipation from colonial oppression. All these journeys enable us to examine the changes that these characters undergo as they make the transition from constrained places to free spaces. We examine their transcendence from naïve and vulnerable characters to more informed and elevated ones. The obstacles that stand on the way provide them with the challenges that leave them more knowledgeable and endowed with crucial skills in dealing with the issues affecting their lives. The journey hurdles act as wet stones on which the characters sharpen their minds to emerge brighter individuals at the end of their journeys.

The journeys by the female protagonists inform the plot development of the novel. It their quest to be free from colonialism that motivate them to initiate freedom movements both literally and metaphorically, and these movements greatly contribute to the novel's story-line and meaning. From the onset, it is the forced journeys from their native homes that bring them the conflicts they suffer under colonial control. To resolve these conflicts, they seek more journeys but the sought for resolutions are not easy to mediate because seeking them means leaping over more hurdles in the course of the journeys. The characters' pursuance of these resolutions thereby lead to a sequence of events until the characters' quests are achieved. The completion of these journeys culminates in the achievement of the quests as well as the climax and resolution of the novel. The journey motif, therefore, becomes fundamental in giving the text a special meaning because the successful completion of the journeys bring the female protagonists the attainment of liberation from colonial oppression and this freedom enables them to form a new identity in the free spaces that have always been their quest.

Moreover, the completion of the journeys becomes metaphorical in that these journeys signal the attainment of freedom by a colonized territory that is in the process of disentangling itself from the fetters of colonialism. The female protagonists' enjoyment of emancipation on completion of the journeys is an indicator of a people who are harvesting the fruits of independence having endured the long walk to freedom from colonial subjugation. It is important to underscore that it is female characters who are at the centre of these achievements, making the journey motif significant in another way by expressing the author's social vision of putting women at the fore front in not only the struggle for political independence but also in key areas in the agitation for social change. Another essential aspect that contributes to the significant use of the journey motif as the basic literary element in the text under study is the bildungsroman features of the novel. As earlier noted, the novel's story-line develops hand in hand with the growth of the young female protagonist, Elizabeth Mumbe. It is Mumbe who recounts the story of her life from a young age of five to the time she is an adult in her late twenties. The novel's story-line is plotted to unfold in tandem with the growth and eventual maturation of this

young narrator. The events that take place surround this character and her eventful journey from childhood to adulthood.

But her growth and maturation are not merely meant to tell the story of a young girl: it has a metaphorical significance because her growth and maturation do not just entail the process through which she gains identity but can also be equated to the growth of a young nation from colonial rule to an independent nation. Mumbe's story is substantially about the lives of a colonized people, particularly the disruption that the colonial power causes upon the female figures in her life, leading to the loss of identity by the same people who are meant to shape her own identity. Her arrival at maturity becomes a metaphor for the attainment of independence by her people, who have greatly suffered under colonial power. Being an independent young woman who is at liberty to choose what to do with her life, when to do it, where to do it and with who metaphorically refers to the liberty that her people now have, having journeyed the long walk from colonialism to independence.

The physical facet of the journey motif was found relevant and effective in providing the female protagonists with appropriate means through which they transit from oppressive colonial environments to freer places where they can afford to form a new identity. While the physical movements from the colonial environments enable the female characters to substantially shed off the yoke of colonialism, it does not give them complete freedom from the long tentacles of patriarchy. By fleeing from the colonial mission in the coast of Kenya, the female protagonists successfully manage to vanquish the mountain of colonialism by navigating across the wilderness to finally find their lost home where they begin to define their identity courtesy of the tranquility that abounds in the colonially-free home environment.

Unfortunately, this tranquility is seldom enjoyed because fleeing from foreigners is one thing: fleeing from one's kith and kin is a different thing all together. This is a lesson the central female protagonist comes to learn too late and it almost costs her the freedom she has always sought for. The psychological facet becomes essential here because it is the

female protagonist's mental agility that affords her the ability to deal with the mountain of "man" which has erupted afresh owing to the hot colonial lava of subjugation into which her man is submerged and then retrieved. The emergence of the patriarchal mountain which hangs over her like the sword of Damocles signify the need for women to muster their utmost levels of consciousness in dealing with this mountain of "man" if their quest to live fully fulfilling lives is to be realized. The female protagonist's ability to muster the courage to destroy this mountain for the attainment of her full well-being is the author's attempt in mediating free spaces for women who should not let their lives plummet or go down the drain for the sake of maintenance of liaisons that cripple their efforts to self-determination.

However, Mulwa does not seem to suggest the severing of gender relations and the subsequent death of the institution of marriage. Though the text seems to suggest the severing of man-woman relationship where it turns out that such liaisons lead to the elevation of one and damnation of the other, a philosophy espoused by a number of western strands of feminism, the author provides a plausible view in ameliorating gender relations by the presentation he gives the female protagonists. None of them perceives the men in their lives as the original cause of their oppression; they are aware that other forces at play are the real cause of the strife they have with their men. Among these are the mountains of colonialism, ignorance and racism. Kaveni has to vanquish colonialism before she can settle scores with her husband; her daughter Mumbe has to ensure that her man is lifted from the low levels of illiteracy to higher echelons of literacy before she meditates upon making the return journey to start a family with him; and Mary May has to overlook racial barriers to find true companionship with her Arab acquaintance.

The author, therefore, champions for the maintenance of the family institution where both men and women play complementary roles in the dealing with the issues that determine their well-being. The author espouses African feminism here, the need to work towards the maintenance of the marriage institution for the benefit of both men and women. This is perhaps best articulated through the central female protagonist who is keen to have her daughter settle down in marriage because the fact that she is a modern, educated and

more enlightened woman leaves her with nothing to show for it unless she settles down and brings forth children. The text underscores the importance for women to consider the need to embrace wifehood and motherhood as means towards realizing full identity. It is this consciousness that makes the central female protagonist say, "We live for family—always and it should only be our guiding force" (299). The demise of her husband does not necessarily mean the execution of man in the process of flattening the mountain that man has created for the relegation of women. She is only forced to let go of the new 'colonial product' that her man has become because failure to do so would completely stultify her and deny her full identity.

All the three facets of the journey motif are instrumental in substantive portrayal of women in their pivotal roles in the struggle for freedom from colonialism. Through the journeys they undertake, the author subverts the social constructs that perceive women as peripheral contributors in the fight against colonialism. As previously mentioned, many writers who have reflected the colonial condition in Kenya have almost always privileged men as the initiators, pioneers and executers of the freedom movements and relegated women to the sides in line with traditional patriarchal dictates. Through the excruciating, agonizing journeys the female protagonists undergo in their quests to free themselves from the oppressive world of colonialism, the text gives a fresh portrayal of women figures at the front-line in the battles that eventually win the war against colonial rule. This portrayal is captured in the author's own words in an interview done in May 2016. In this interview, Mulwa says this about the role of women in the fight for socio-political change:

> The person who is best equipped or best qualified or best placed to nurture resistance is the mother who bore, who bears the warrior! The mother of a warrior should herself be a warrior!

Through the journey motif, Mulwa tells us the story of brave, warrior women never told before. The fact that the story is recounted by a young girl on her journey towards maturation and enlightenment is significant in subverting the notion perpetuated by the hegemonic literary discourses that have largely presented the colonial experience from a boy's or man's point of view. By giving the girl the agency to tell the story, the text

fundamentally subverts the point of view accorded to male agency that has the privilege of determining the course of events that inform the lives of the characters. By using the female agency, Mulwa gives women the privilege of telling their story thereby giving women the voice that has been silenced by male writers following hegemonic influences and traditional patriarchal narratives that have always treated women at the periphery in both literary and historical discourses. Just like his central female protagonist, Mulwa subtly rewrites the story of the colonial experiences from a women's perspective, but instead of "writing back to the Empire", he writes back to all and sundry, informing us that where men bravely fought against colonial oppression, women fought as much if not more.

4.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of the journey motif in *Flee Mama, Flee* is an effective tool that significantly contributes to the blending of the form and content of the text; that accords women a pivotal portrayal in their commitment and fight against colonial oppression; and that mediates elevated statuses for women where they become fulfilled and manage to form their identity. The text does not stop at retelling the experiences women had during the colonial condition in Kenya: it reflects the past for purposes of championing the transformation that humanity needs to embrace in the different journeys towards liberation from all forms of oppression. This is so to those who may feel the pressure to succumb to the many oppressions that inform human life, particularly women, who may still have mountains perched on their backs in the contemporary social, economic, political and cultural spheres that are in constant dynamism and relentless eruption of new mountains.

As the novelist points out in the aforementioned interview—available in the appendix section of this project—human beings are in constant state of movements to discover, to learn, to seek, to improve, to achieve higher statuses to change the status quo. The achievement of these quests leads to more settled lives filled with contentment, peace, fulfillment and a stable sense of belonging; the state in which our identity is fully defined. This is what Mulwa says nudged him to write the story of women in movements, on

journeys to discover, to learn in order to find comfort, contentment and fulfillment in their lives. In *Flee, Mama Flee*, they accomplish these feats and their identity is no longer in fluidity or suppression. The journeys afford them the spatial and temporal benefits of shaking off the oppressive mountains on their backs.

This study provided insights into the relevance of the journey motif in women's identity formation in *Mulwa's Flee Mama, Flee*. It focused on the physical, psychological and emotional facets of the journey motif and how these consolidate to give women identity during the colonial condition in Kenya. An important aspect of the journey motif that the study has fleetingly highlighted and that can be the interest of future studies is the epic elements in the novel. In addition, although the study has mentioned a few of the stylistic aspects used in the novel, this has been in passing to build up the interpretation of the journey motif in women's identity formation. More research on the use of style and language may be done for more appreciation and analysis of the novel.

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APPENDIX 1
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introduction

Prior to conducting the interview that appears in appendix two of this project, I prepared a set of questions that were appropriate in confirming the conclusions postulated by the study. The following interview schedule was, therefore, prepared with the referred deductions in mind. The author's reaction to the questions was meant to find out whether his views were commensurate or closely connected to the conclusions made in the study.

Q1. It is now over half a century since colonizer left Kenya. Why write on issues that took place a long time ago? Why now?

Q2. Do the characters in this novel represent some known or unknown historical or legendary figures?

Q3. Why have you presented females as the pioneers, the initiators of movements that bring freedom from colonial domination?

Q4. The characters, especially the female protagonists, embark on numerous journeys in the text. Did you do this by design?

Q5. How much does the novel borrow from history or historical events?

Q6. A good number of your works, whether prose or drama, depict a higher or positive presentation of women in tackling social issues and bringing positive social changes in the society. Do you do this because you feel women have been given a low deal by male writers?

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID MULWA

Introduction

The following interview was conducted on March 16, 2016 at Ruiru Campus of Kenyatta University. It shed much light on the factors that motivated the author to write *Flee Mama, Flee*. The interview was important for my research project for the insights it provided in the analysis of the text, and helped in confirmation of some of the issues envisaged by the study.

Interview

MUGO: Thank you Mwalimu for giving me this opportunity to interview you on your novel *Flee Mama, Flee*. My first reading of the novel was during a KICD book evaluation exercise and I marveled at your decision to write on experiences that happened a long time. Why now?

MULWA: Mmm! Yes, indeed I have written on issues that took place way way back. I was informed by my experiences in high school, you know the curriculum. Sometimes while in high school, we were forced to read books written by western authors. We were told that the interior places in Kenya were free of slavery because of the fierceness of some of the tribes, the Maasai and all that. There were some European writers such as the French man who wrote about the idolization of some savage communities. It is this same idolization that led to the war between Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda, you know…

MUGO: Yes.

MULWA: The Tutsis were idolized and this led to the infamous genocide. Or the writing of Allan Paton, you have read what he wrote…

MUGO: No, I have not.

MULWA: It is the same idolization of the savage … any way, to come back to the point, because of that idolization, they wanted to portray as if the Maasai were the protectors of Kenya, just because they were fierce or war-like. But then later, I happened to read a book by … by … this writer … I am forgetting his name. But the title of the book is *Mukamba wa Wuo*…

MUGO: Mukamba wa…

MULWA: Mukamba wa Wuo … A True Mkamba!

MUGO: Okey.

MULWA: In that story, a very moving story, he narrates the story of his grandmother, who as a girl was captured by slave traders. She came from Mukaa division of Machakos district, you know…

MUGO: Yes.

MULWA: I got very fascinated by her because she pretended she was going to die and so on and so on and so she could not match to the coast. And somewhere around Mtitu Andei, again, Mtitu wa Ndei in Kikamba actually means the forest of the vultures…

MUGO: Aha!

MULWA: At Mtitu wa Ndei she decided to go back and she walked back the route they had come. And what fascinated me was this slip of a girl, deciding to walk all the way back…

MUGO: Home.

MULWA: Yes, back home.Yet the area was inhabited by lions, snakes, wild animals and so on. But she beat the odds. And you know how the slaves were treated on the slave routes by the Arabs and so forth. She must have been bold, she had the courage to get back home despite the odds.

MUGO: Yes.

MULWA: What used to happen at Mtitu wa Ndei was that it was the dividing line between the hinterland and the coast. That's where they culled the slaves. Those who could make it could continue but those who had succumbed to fatigue and so on were left to die there. A lot of old men, old women died there. That was why it was called Mtitu wa Ndei because the dead would be damped there. Wherever they were taken from in the hinterland, they attracted a lot of vultures and the birds knew this was food. These vultures were akin to the cloud that led the Israelites during their days in the wilderness.

(Laughter)

MUGO: Oh my!

MULWA: And they would also be followed by hyenas. What happened to Africans in the hands of these people … you feel like you would… you know … what our people went through is unthinkable.

MUGO: Terrible!

MULWA: That is why I decided I have to go back there and revisit that area and that is why perhaps today, let me digress a bit…

MUGO: Okey.

MULWA: This idea today that we can depend on foreigners to sort out our issues is a most terrible thing. You know if we talk about the oil in the Middle East… this idea of women going there or the workers and they go through…eh…

MUGO: Slavery.

MULWA: Exactly! I mean, it's bad.

MUGO: It's bad.

MULWA: Anyway, let me get back to this girl. She was not able to go back to Mukaa where she was taken from but she got to… I think it was Mbooni where kind people took her in and that's where she was married and became the mother of this writer. And I decided this was a myth to be created.

MUGO: To clarify, Mwalimu, you mean this was your mother.

MULWA: Yes. And again in a way to immortalize her… you know when someone mentions her in a book about the history of the Akamba people and gives this girl about one page… you know in the background… I mean, I felt that kind of courage needed more…

MUGO: Coverage.

MULWA: Yes, more attention. I used that girl as a symbol of both courage, resistance, hope and so on. So, I wrote a novella…

MUGO: *We Come in Peace*.

MULWA: Yes, *We Come in Peace*. The girl who becomes Kaveni…

MUGO: Kaveni!

MULWA: And she continued…

MUGO: She does not return at Mtitu Andei, she goes all the way…

MULWA: All the way to the coast. And this time, she becomes the mother of a greater movement…

MUGO: A resistance movement.

MULWA: Yes, and at the end she is now a grown up and she can articulate issues and she turns around. She is looking at the people [whites]not just like the Arabs as people who are working for them but notices these are more senior persons … colonization which is in itself slavery. But it is a slavery of a different nature … slavery of the spirit also, which is where Christianity comes in and that's why in the novel *Flee Mama, Flee,* the first thing she says is that I don't need a name…

MUGO: I have a name.

MULWA: Yes! I am! You cannot come here and blow out, wipe out my being…

MUGO: My identity!

MULWA: My identity yes. So, she says the wazungu's (the whites) are worse than the slavers. That is why that kind of resistance is the mother of all resistance. And I was saying in a way, if you have looked at this as a family…

MUGO: Yes.

MULWA: The person who is best equipped or best qualified or best placed to nurture resistance is the mother who bore, who bears the warrior! The mother of a warrior should herself be a warrior!

MUGO: A warrior?

MULWA: Yes, not just… whatever. So in a way, that's the idea I was towing with.

MUGO: Yes.

MULWA: And again among the Arabs. You know we have been told a number of them were all very bad but there were some very good Arabs. If you could learn as Muslim you could not keep slaves, it was against the Quran. If fact I talked to a sheik when I was writing *Flee Mama, Flee* who told me slavery… you know there is a big misnomer. A Muslim is not allowed, Islam forbids the keeping of slaves.

MUGO: Yes.

MULWA: Or trading in slaves, human beings; inflicting pain and so on and so forth. We talked a lot and actually I gained a lot from Sheik Ahmed because he told me even the name, the name of the prophet, you don't want to misuse it. It is just like in Christianity, you know you can't… a staunch Christian would flinch in using the name 'Jesus' anyhow, it's a name with respect.

MUGO: True.

MULWA: And originally, in we *Come in Peace*, the slaver, the owner of the ship was originally called Mohamed Hassan Ali. And then I talked with this man and he said Mwalimu you are going the wrong way. If you associate slavery and the name of a prophet, you may get into trouble. Actually, that was why when I was re-reading *Flee Mama, Flee*, I realized I had to change his name to Abdullahi Hassan Ali.

MUGO: I had not even realized.

MULWA: But some people have asked me, why did you change his name? You know I give some reasons… but that was why I changed the name.

MUGO: There is something you have said, that the mother of the warrior should also be a warrior. And something that got me interested, that you have placed the mother and later her daughter centrally as you are giving the story.

MULWA: Yes.

MUGO: Was this informed by the first story about the girl or did you also want to present genuine issues that took place and where women actively participated?

MULWA: Exactly! Look even at nowadays society. It's a male world and actually we forget what a lot of women went through. For instance, we know what Kimathi and o on and so forth did. But who knows about Mukami? Mukami wa Kimathi

MUGO: Yes.

MULWA: She herself was a freedom fighter but nobody… well, it's like she was shadow of her husband. And I get very mad about that because women

have not been given their due place. Actually, in the resistance, a lot of knowledge that a warrior will get is from his mother and not the father. In nurturing a person, a lot of knowledge comes from the mother and in an unjust way we want to say everything that happens it's the man, it's the man. It is wrong.

MUGO: It's no wonder we say behind every successful man is a woman.

MULWA: Is a woman. And you know in Ukambani, for example, in the sayings and idioms and so on, it is the woman who knows more. For instance, when the wazees (elders), when they could deliberate on an issue and fail to come to a conclusion, they would invariably say let's go consult our pillows…

(Laughter)

But this was a tacit agreement that this matter needed the consultation of you know the wives and women provided that.

MUGO: They came in handy.

MULWA: Yes, a fellow would come in, call his first wife and they would talk and the man would seek some advice and she would laugh at him. I know because I was close to my grandmother who would confide in me, you know. And the wife would ask the man, is that what the whole clan of men have been discussing the entire day? Then she would remind her man, when so and so did this and that after talking to so and so from here and there, is't that how this was solved? And the solution would be found. But because of having women silent, women would just keep quiet and watch men blundering all over.

MUGO: Is that so?

MULWA: Yes, and that's why so much knowledge is from the women, not the men. And we have again coined this idiocy that they are the weaker sex. It's not true. I mean even physically… tell me, a woman who gives birth after every two years for many years, what does the mzee (husband) do? Every afternoon he picks his stuff, mobile phone and whatever, goes out and comes back in the evening arrogantly asking for food. This fellow dies

before the woman. She survives more than ten years later with all the pain…

MUGO: That she has had…

MULWA: Yes. Is that a weak person?

MUGO: No, she is not.

MULWA: Exactly! And some of these little things that are done and said are born out of patriarchal society and they are not good. I mean you want to look at it from the point that in some cases men are stronger but in other cases women are stronger. Anyway, without digressing too much, I felt that even politically, women needed to be given more prominence, in the society that they are mothers of, they need to be given prominence. Why we just mention them in passing I think it's wrong.

MUGO: Quite true.

MULWA: And so I wanted this woman to be like the mother of resistance. Even in terms of intelligence, perception, she is a rebel right from the mission place, Freer Town. She is the one infects this fellow Mpangalala, the slave, you know the freed slave. She is the one who energizes Barissa, she is even the one who energizes Mpini. And actually her fame has gone throughout the coastal land to the degree that even the rebels to slavery also come to hear of her. That's how when she comes to Ukambani somewhere near Nzauni, these people who are fighting colonialism, the ones who are fighting against the kipande, the hut tax, and stopping the transportation of goods to the hinterland. The minute these people they hear of her they say, you are the one!

MUGO: Oh yea!

MULWA: She is the one who makes them to overcome these superstitions and so on and so forth. She indicates to them that to be yourself you must come above these beliefs and superstitions.

MUGO: And her husband.

MULWA: Mmmh!

MUGO: Her husband right from the word go, her husband Musyoka wa…

MULWA: Mang'oka.

MUGO: Musyoka wa Mang'oka is passive. He is passive in the sense that he offers no resistance to colonialism and to the issues that they go through. He collaborates and even decides to go to India for further studies. And the man even forgets his family.

MULWA: Oh yes.

MUGO: He comes back and even this white lady…

MULWA: Mary May.

MUGO: Yes, Mary May sees him on a train. He knows that he is the one she calls but he behaves in a way to suggest, I have nothing to do with them… he forgets his family, something uncommon in African traditional communities although nowadays this has become common. But much later we see him realize that he has to go back to his wife and his daughter, not for the purpose of taking care of them.

MULWA: Hapana (No).

MUGO: It is for the purpose of uplifting himself as a leader…

MULWA: Yes, he is like the modern politician to be, our politicians. He realizes she has the numbers, I better go there. Because if he really loves her, you know, when they are discussing about what she has done and so on, he doesn't see that as anything. He uses people. Just like the colonialists, he uses people instead of appreciating them and so on. Look at the final confrontation between him and the wife. In the end I saw the appeal to 'what are you?'

MUGO: What are you!

MULWA: For me the lowest part of that novel is when the wife says, "Mumbe! My Mother, what is that you let me marry?" Which again makes me go back to tradition, if an aunt was told there was a suitor from this family, she would investigate, even for a girl, the amount of investigation involved was colossal. And again that's why I am saying, women were central. They would probe. Was there a recurring illness? Madness? It's that kind of a thing that makes you not yourself. Does he work hard? Is he a

provider? Is he a man enough and so on and so forth… So when she is asking that question she means how could you even have allowed this to happen, you know this marriage to go on…

MUGO: You know, when I first read this section of the novel, I laughed. I was also frustrated. I mean, what type of a man is this? When I saw him coming back to his wife I thought maybe he has come to his senses. He has come to do something positive however late. But then he wants to force her to do things that uplift him. And for him it is elevation that matters, he does not even care about what she has gone through. And, therefore, Mwalimu, you have given the female characters a presentation I have not seen in other texts. Of course in other texts women participate actively, but here there do not only participate actively but they are centrally placed.

MULWA: They are. They are the healers of the society. They are the mothers, they are the knowledgeable ones. In other words they ultimately… and here I am speaking philosophically, the ultimate guardian of a community is a mother, really. And that means the widows and the girls and whatever. When we talk about survival and the continuation of the brain it is the mother.

MUGO: It is the mother.

NULWA: Even in the animal kingdom it is the same. Look at the lion, the male lion will sleep there but the hunter, the real hunter is the lioness… You know I did a film that is related to this. Now what was it? It was an NBC film where I, along with the owner of the zoo. No it was not a zoo, what do we call these? Yes, conservators.

MUGO: Yes.

MULWA: Where we rehabilitate the lions, a kind of orphanage. And on this day, there were these lions that had been trained and brought in. They were female lions, about three of them and I said… I was walking towards them and they came towards me… I have never seen such horror. I mean the thing comes directly …and it is not even seeing the wire. And the thing came waaa! Aya ya ya ya ya ya! And I thought suppose I am holding her

cub, she would not even have seen those wires. So it is the mother that knows how a child should grow. And I think we make a mistake in trying to take away that honour from her and give it to the man. The man is a protector, he is of value and so on, but the real influence is by the mother. Even psychologically … I don't know if you have read on Dialectics…

MUGO: Dialectics?

MULWA: Yea, *Dialectics: Modern Science of Mental Health.* It'sa text by Elron Herbart

MUGO: I have not read it.

MULWA: When you read it you realize how the parts that a mother plays, it's not just cells, there is a lot more in what makes motherhood, more than just the cells. That's why in commandment four in the Bible we are told to honour your father and mother, you know … bla bla bla! It is that, what a mother is… anyway, we are digressing. So then for me, obviously when you are writing, the person becomes bigger than normal, because she is also the carrier of any idea that has got to come out very clearly. If you notice most of the time, in a lot of my writing, I invariably find my heroes are heroines. Eh, look at eh, *Redemption*…

MUGO: Yes, *Redemption*!

MULWA: Without even thinking, someone like Millicent Muthemba and so on and so forth, she becomes like the heroine who wants to put the home together and so on.

MUGO: Yes, and this is reflected in your works, whether you are talking about change… you use female characters to pioneer social change. And you are saying that this is not by design?

MULWA: Not quite. I often find myself more drawn towards female characters because of what they take, and even naturally, they are the ones who are more responsible. For instance, when you talk of home, it is the mother who matters. Even when you come to my house it is not me who will receive you: it is the wife. It is the wife who you will give us water, it is she who will give food, it is she who welcomes you. Which is why I detest

this issue of equality, it is not there. There is a place for the man but the sustenance of a home, the care of children, or the community of tomorrow, it is the mother. If the man fails in the duty of standing guard, the mother has to come up to the duty you know like the lioness and provide for her offspring, you get the idea?

MUGO: Yes, I get the idea. I have noticed that in this text, the story is told through the many journeys that the women embark on. The women embark on physical journeys that are outright; we see them in constant movements.

MULWA: Yes.

MUGO: Did you do this by design?

MULWA: Yes, it is also a journey towards self-realization, self-knowledge and so on and so forth. Just like the little girl, the story of this little girl … that the story is coming through. Just as she realizes that she has got to find herself by actually wrenching herself as she comes back, all the time she is on a journey towards self-realization. For me, I don't know where I got that idea, but I see women as potential rebels against the status quo all the time. Men tend to be don't brood about, women tend to be I want to find out, you know. I don't know whether it has got to do with the fact that they tend to talk a lot. For every few words you speak a woman will speak about ten times more. For me, I don't whether it is by design, but I find myself all the time to be leaving where you knew, and going towards a new reality all the time. This is actually social advancement and what have you. That is what happens to all of us, you can't remain at one place, so I used perenigration concept, moving from a place, one reality to another reality and by doing so you become greater and better than you were at the beginning.

MUGO: Yes.

MULWA: We have a saying in Ukambani, the man who has not traveled thinks his mother is the best cook.

MUGO: True.

MULWA: You have to go away from the beaten path and go your own unbeaten path; you've got to go on a journey so that you grow. It also has to do with a lot of communication, you can't remain with a single idea, you got to know and find out more, make more journeys, acquire more knowledge, and with you coming there, you come to the reality, what is there and with reality, the truth. You don't dismiss what you find in a people who have been living calmly and have known how to solve their problems, and then bring in a new truth. You will get chaos, and that is what Abdullahi tells the woman (Mary May) that there is a lot to know from the natives. Actually, to answer your question… it is not a question of marriage between them (Abdullahi and May) but a bond where they can be as equals. Mary May comes back from the idea of feeling white and this man comes up to be like her teacher, and tells her you don't know anything about these people (Africans) and that's why it's also funny when she says I will also learn their truth. Which again is the arrogance of what historically I found this white man who went to Kangundo. He thought that he could speak Kikamba and thought that gave him the license to teach the language. And people laughed at him because of the way he used the language. It reminds me of yet another preacher who thought he could use Kikamba after speaking it in two, three weeks and he used this Kamba comparative, you know big, bigger, biggest.

MUGO: Yes.

MULWA: Now, he thought he had mastered Kikamba enough, and so he takes three girls and says this girl is short, this one is shorter and this one is the shortest. In Kikamba, the word for short is 'kakuvi'; for example 'keretu kaa ni kakuvi' (this girl is short). You see a mzungu doesn't have the last Kikamba vowel sound, and so he goes 'keretu kaa nin kakuve'. Now in Kikamba, 'kakuve' means this little girl has been cut. And he goes ahead to the second girl… and all this time the old men snigger, what the hell is this man talking about! And the white man is very happy thinking I have made my point, these people can understand my point, you know. And

then he goes to the second girl and says, 'keretu kaa ni kakuvange' (this little girl has been circumcised many times). Then on the third girl, 'keretu kaa ni kakuve muno' (this little girl has been circumcised a lot).

(Prolonged Laughter)

MULWA: Now, it is that ridiculousness that Abdullahi, of course I changed a bit; it this ridiculousness that Abdullahi notices in Mary May and says you can't come pretending you know my language and that makes you think you know everything about me. It is like teaching you my Islam greeting 'Asalam aleikum' and you think you can now speak my language. You see your language runs your whole life and so it is difficult to learn it arrogantly in five minutes and that's why he gets so cross with her attitude… and so the "Ama Yiki" we find this man is not ready to teach them any reality. He doesn't bother to go and find out, teach new things about his life, he goes out there and discovers their hospitality, he begins to drink with the 'wazees' (elders), he gets himself a wife and even throws away his trousers.

MUGO: Yes, he becomes one of them.

MULWA: In other words he becomes a real man, a warrior and says, to hell with those western things and so the point Abdullahi makes is that you can't go to teach a new people new things, you must observe and know what you are teaching. You don't come with a chip on your shoulders and say you want to teach them this. You will find they knew it better than you. It is like the dialogue between Ezeulu, the elder and Winterbottom, the white administrator in Achebes' *Arrow of God*. You know the elder tells him, we knew God long before you! God is not a predictable…

MUGO: Being.

MULWA: Exactly. God is not man that you teach. He is me. He is that tree. He is that animal. He is that whatever… not the wazungu (white man's) God. It's like another man I read who was describing God in such linear manner as if God acts in a straight line… anyway we are digressing…

MUGO: Not at all. In fact your other stories are much relevant and related to the issues reflected in your novel.

MULWA: Aye!

MUGO: Thank you Mwalimu for your time and the insightful comments. Your views will go a long way in my analysis and appreciation of *Flee Mama, Flee.*

MULWA: Karibu. By the way, how did you find the novel? I mean, is it worth it … does it resonate with the young, the children, the youth… does it entertain?

MUGO: Of course it does, mwalimu. This is a novel that has come at the right time. I believe any young person will find it worth reading, not only for the purposes of entertainment and language development but also because it reflects history in such a subtle child-oriented way.

MULWA: Aye!

MUGO: Congrats Mwalimu.

MULWA: Asante. And welcome once again.

MUGO: Thank you.