

Female Un-femininity Trajectory in a Changing World: The Journey towards Inclusive Leadership in Jeniffer Makumbi's *Kintu* (2014) and Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* (1994)

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This paper analyses the emancipation journey of women across the four epochs of Africa in general and East Africa in particular namely; pre-colonial, Colonial, postcolonial and contemporary. The paper utilizes two novels by East African novelist with unique styles of writing i.e. presenting several generations of women within the same historical novels hence giving writers an opportunity to depict the transmutations that have taken place both within (and outside) fiction. The paper utilizes feminist theory, specifically African feminism strand. The units of analysis are *Kintu* (2014) by Jeniffer Makumbi and *The River and the Source* (1994) by Margaret Ogola from Uganda and Kenya respectively. In this paper, we conclude that indeed women have been in leadership positions from precolonial period. However, they were restricted to leading only fellow women. The path towards an inclusive women leadership has been gradual, buoyed by introduction of Western culture to East Africa. The contemporary African woman has been included into full leadership positions.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Writing, for East African women, came as a blessing since it provided them with an opportunity to have their voice heard with regards to their engagement with patriarchy. Women have utilized writing in two ways; writing historical novels that trace their history as they transition through the four epochs of African history and presenting several generations of women who depict the changes that take place among the East African women across time. Historical novels are a semi-fictionalized representation of the reality within the country(ies) from which they draw their raw materials. When such novels are written within several generations that transit the time frame of a century, they offer the writers an opportunity to present the history of their people in the pre and colonial epochs before opening the arena to national representation in postcolonial and contemporary East Africa, though with some fictionalized events.

Kintu, the historical novel by Ugandan novelist Jennifer Makumbi is based on Ganda ethnic community. The kingdom is divided into several provinces that are put under the jurisdiction of governors (the *ppookino*) who double as members of the governing council - *lukiiko*. The pre and colonial Ganda people are ruled by a king (*kabaka*). As for *The River and the Source* by Margaret Ogola, it is set among the Luo ethnic community. The pre and colonial time Luo community is ruled by a chief with the help of *jodongo* (council of elders). In both novels and indeed across Africa, the postcolonial and contemporary women move out to interact with the outside world as formal education for both genders, new administration and new administrative units are created and Africans introduced to them. Consequently, the two historical novels depict changes that have taken place in women realm within the two East African countries in particular and Africa in general. Since there are many changes that can be read from the novels under study, this paper restricts itself to a comparative study of leadership as executed by both genders. The paper does not restrict itself to administrative but also familial leadership.

2.1 Precolonial East African Women in Leadership – The Senior Wife

Paul Zeleza, in his essay “Colonial Fictions: Memory and History in Yvonne Vera’s Imagination” highlights the interface between literature and history by bringing to the fore how history and literary

imagination are intertwined. Zeleza opines that African history and literature share powerful deconstructive and decolonization impulses. He goes on to argue that this relationship is transcending especially because both literature and history are narrative, interpretive disciplines that offer representations of experiences, images and ideas (p. 11). Though Zeleza's focus is on a different context, it is indeed true that the historical novels, more than other works of fiction, are geared towards highlighting experiences and ideas of the time. The experiences, images and ideas are captured, not in isolation but rather in concomitant with the prevailing history of the setting of the texts. The same experiences, ideas, and images of any given time are encapsulated in the myths of the people whose experiences are being captured fictionally. Literature intertwines people's experiences and myths in a bid to offer an honest depiction.

Regarding the role of literature in perpetuating cultural myths, Francoise Lionett, in her essay "Geographies of Pain, Captive Bodies and Violent Acts in the Fictions of Gayl Jones, Bessie Head and Myriam Warner-Vieyra" is of the opinion that

Literature as a discursive practice that encodes and transmits as well as creates ideology, is a mediating force in society: it structures our sense of the world since narrative or stylistic conventions and plot resolutions serve to either sanction and perpetuate cultural myths or to create new mythologies that allow the writer and the reader to engage in constructive re-writing of their social contexts. (p. 205)

In this regard, East African women writers in an attempt to candidly, albeit fictionally, record the history of their communities and backdate their concerns to the time when male writers seemed to misrepresent them have incorporated myths that the institution of patriarchy has been using to assert its superiority in their writing with a view to revealing the source of their subjugation.

East African women writers in their endeavour to present an objective account of their foremothers, especially during the pre-colonial period, do not find it necessary to debunk the subjugation tag associated with their foremothers. The same would amount to an attempt to present a skewed subjective perspective of the existing relationships of the two genders owing to the fact that in as much as there is fictionality in writers' works, the fictional works cannot be devoid of nuances from the community in which the work is set. The senior wife position is prevalent among both male and female creative writers whose writings incorporate pre-colonial women. The two books of interest have recognized and prominently featured this important position created by the male institution to make women have a sense of belonging.

Nnakato is the senior wife of Kintu Kidda the *Ppookino* (governor) of Buddu province which is part of Buganda kingdom under the kingship of *kabaka* Kyabaggu in Jennifer Makumbi's novel-*Kintu*. Kintu Kidda, the husband, is forced by the prevailing circumstances surrounding marriage of twins among the Ganda ethnic group to marry twin sisters. The Ganda do not allow the young sister to be married ahead of her elder sisters. His initial aim is to marry Nnakato, the younger of the twins but he is told he must either wait for Babirye to get married or marry both. He chooses to wait. Many years pass without Babirye getting a husband. Kintu Kidda's father dies thus paving way for him to be elevated to governorship. He requests to be allowed to marry Nnakato claiming "...that as governor he was naked without a wife" (p. 11). The twins' parents who now fear Kintu because of his power as the new governor offer Babirye first at half dowry and then for free but Kintu adamantly refuses.

Unfortunately, once he marries Nnakato, she turns out to be barren and since the subjects are not used to seeing a "bachelor" governor, under pressure he agrees to take in Babirye as a conduit through which he would sire children in the strict understanding that the whole matter will remain a secret between the three people. It would be in public domain that the biological mother of the children is Nnakato. The plan turns out to be a success as "[o]ver the years, she bail(s) Nnakato out four times. Each time, Babirye gave birth to identical twins" (p. 13).

By default, Nnakato occupies the enviable position of the senior wife even when Kintu Kidda later marries other women for various reasons

Kintu married other women besides Nnakato. The women were brought to him as tributes: some from ambitious parents, others were daughters of fellow governors. His wives' homes were scattered all over the province for his convenience when he toured. The families, especially in the far-flung regions were also a reminder to the local populace of his presence. Nnakato was in charge of the wives (p. 16).

As the senior wife in-charge of Kintu Kidda's *Mayirika* (his principal residence), Nnakato is in a pivotal position to decide a variety of issues surrounding the co-wives' lives. She decides the name which a new bride will be given, the duties to be allocated to the new brides depending on their talents – crafts women, farmers and so on.

Kintu Kidda's sojourn on *kabaka*'s assignments also opens an avenue for Nnakato to visit the wives to check on the children and the state of the land where they live. She gathers older children and brings them to *Miyirika* for instructions. Likewise, she acts as Kintu's informal spy, gathering information and the prevailing mood for him from his far away subjects.

The position of a senior wife seems to give women a feeling of elevation, respect and self-worth. It enables women to become ministers in-charge of womenfolk, deputizing their husbands in home affairs. However, as Hanrahan and Antony's argue, senior wives seem to shy away from exercising their authority beyond guiding their fellow women. They posit

[The] thing that makes the assumption of authority dangerous for women is that it feels transgressive to claim authority. Persons who have been socialized to accept subordinate status may well have internalized the view that they cannot be legitimate authorities in whatever they do, that they have no right to set themselves up as authorities. (p. 76)

Thus Nnakato, despite the enviable position she occupies as a senior wife, does not demonstrate any attempt to arrogate the authority to herself owing to her socialization. She feels that the authority she has does not belong to her rather she can only act on behalf of her husband Kintu Kidda the patriarch. Hence she only does as directed, without any external contribution from her viewpoint. Nevertheless, the position is important for the pre-colonial East African woman as it sets the stage for future women to continue usurping power progressively.

The senior wife is also featured prominently in Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*. Owuor Kembo, just like Kintu Kidda, is a Chief of Sakwa village among his ethnic group – the Luo. Like his counterpart, the urgency of marriage is informed by the fact that his father Kembo K'Agina had died in office prompting his eldest son to take up the reigns of chieftaincy which is hereditary. The need for a leader to have a wife is equally emphasized in the introductory speech by the old wizened man on the day they go to betroth Akoko, who explained the reason for their coming for betrothal late as being informed by the passing on of their chief Kembo K'Agina and now the new chief – Owuor Kembo is in urgent need of a wife as it is unthinkable “for a chief to be unmarried” (p. 19).

Among the Luo ethnic group from which the novel is set, just like among their Ganda counterparts, the leader must be married or at least should marry immediately after assuming leadership. The importance of the position that the first wife occupied is emphasized in the explanation

[...] Owuor Kembo, though not such a great chief, was wifeless and therefore, whoever he married would hold the envious position of *mikai*, the first wife, whose house would hold the centre stage directly facing the gate and to whom all other wives and also her husband would defer. (p. 19)

Akoko, unlike Nnakato, does not get the privilege of lording over other junior wives as her husband obdurately refuses to marry another wife despite the push from his mother, Akoko herself, and the council of *Jadongo*. Although she is unable to conceive as regularly as the community deems fit, the husband is willing to put up with her.

Mikai in this community is the one in-charge of other wives with the status of deputizing her husband. She decides what to be done and basically acts as the administrator of women folk under her. Thus the leadership position of pre-colonial women does exist but it is restricted within the realm of fellow women. Patriarchy is not challenge in any way as women only control their fellow women.

2.2 The Colonial East African Woman and Westernization

African history, especially from 17th Century onwards, is intertwined with that of foreigners particularly Europeans and Arabs. Arabs came to Africa earlier and spread Islam whose form of education was mostly religion-based; the *madrassa*. Their influence is still enormous in Africa, especially the Maghreb, where Islam remains the dominant religion. The education system in the predominantly Islamic religion is governed by their socio-cultural and religious beliefs. Europeans remain the most influential foreigners with regards to the way colonial and postcolonial Africa is constructed. During the scramble for and partition of Africa, different nationalities infiltrated Africa with the aim of spreading Christianity, exploiting resources, getting man-power for plantations, “civilizing Africa” among other interests. In most parts of Africa, sons of chiefs, kings, emperors and Converts were introduced to formal education as their fathers signed treaties to allow Europeans to take up land and other resources. Later, the educated Africans would start their own schools which were accommodative to both Christians and pagans. Eventually, formal education became open for everyone who wished to learn the European culture regardless of religious affiliation.

It is worth noting that the African socio-cultural set up was favourable to the boy child to receive formal education. Allman and Tashjian observe that the influence of education to Africans was “disaggregated – episodic and uneven, gendered and generational” (p. 222). It was unimaginable to have an educated girl in the initial years of proliferation of formal education. The general notion was that an educated girl would definitely be a threat to the dictates of patriarchy, eventually challenging the status quo in socio-cultural and political milieu. The culture of the day across most African communities sought to prepare girls for marriage after which they were expected to bear children, and bring them up as they performed other household chores. The colonizers, especially the missionaries, came to reinforce education tailored towards attaining a domesticity goal. Stephanie Newell avers

Mission schools imparted a gender – differentiated education: In ‘vocational’ classes, girls were taught European domestic skills and received a thorough ‘bride training’ based on Biblical models, which urged them to enter monogamous marriage as subdued and domestic wives (p. 60).

Evidently, a formally educated girl with a career would attract a jeer rather than applause. Thus the gendered education made boys to have an upper hand in formal education.

With time, the acculturation that had made women to believe that they were meant for household chores started melting away as the quest for formal education took a gender inclusive trajectory. The few African women who acquired formal education began to write about their own world. Diaw observes that

The writing of women during the early years of the twentieth century reflects the desire of the independent - minded women to take their lives into their own hands, an opportunity offered to them by the ambiguous political situation. Their words express a profound awareness of the complexity of the shifting new world they lived in. Their writing reveals their power to deride an already vanishing world and to greet with sarcasm or irony a prediction of better days to come (p. 44).

In line with our earlier argument that women’s writing that cuts across several generations is, in most cases a backdated attempt by women writers to present their realm as it was, I would wish to isolate women characters represented in the second generation in the two texts as I demonstrate how they begin engaging the available structures to contest for leadership positions as they move beyond the senior wife position to seek inclusivity.

In Makumbi’s *Kintu*, second generation women assert themselves more strongly than their passive pre-colonial counterparts: Babirye and Nnakato. Suubi, the main woman character of the second generation’s, thirst for formal education is unquenchable. She suffers from starvation and epilepsy - like disease in her younger age. A neighbour doesn’t mince her words in foretelling her fate when her aunt, Kulata, complains: “If she is your blood... give her food while fate makes up her mind. Look at her: she looks half-dead already” (p. 107).

Our first encounter with Suubi paints a picture of an individual in desperation originating from three aspects: her failing health, her lack of somebody to love her, and her starvation. She has been dumped at aunt Kulata’s house in her absence and against her consent. Kulata’s attitude towards Suubi is supercilious. She reveals that Suubi’s father, Waswa, hacked his twin brother – Kato – to death. Kulata’s attitude is summarized in her explanation to neighbours

The last I heard, this child was taken on by the grandmother, Waswa’s mother, but as the saying goes: *When it rains on a pauper, it does not allow his clothes to dry*. The other day I heard the grandmother had also died and I said to myself, what kind of misfortune does that family have? I did not expect this child to be still alive. I mean, look at her (p. 109).

The only positive thing that Kulata does to Suubi which, ironically, is meant to be punitive is to take her to school: “The following day, Kulata took Suubi to Mother’s Union Nursery School. She asked the teachers to keep her all day” (p. 109). Suubi’s landing in school marks the beginning of her self-aggrandizement. Though she has to go through a lot of hurdles, including being threatened with prospects of being sacrificed by abductors, she pulls through (pp.127-130). She is also threatened with excommunication from the Palace by the landlady since aunt Kulata later finds herself in the throes of death after suffering from an incurable disease. In a bid to get rid of her, the landlady finds her a job and in a callous way congratulates her while explaining why she needs a job

You don’t have a home. You don’t have any one. Your aunt Kulata is on her final lap. Where will you go when she dies? In any case she has never cared for you. You could be knocked down by a car and that woman would walk past your corpse. As a house-servant you will at least live in a proper home, you will be fed and there will be grownups to watch over you. You can save your money towards a stall in the market (p. 133).

Such an obstacle to formal education characterizes the challenges that girls must endure in pursuit of formal education. Where the environment is not conducive for early marriages, they are seen as potential house helps. On hesitating to agree to the deal, the landlady does not mince her words in informing her that she is not being forced to take up the job but the worst awaits her should her aunt die: “It is Ok, if you don’t want to go, ... but I don’t want to see you around my house except if you are living with your aunt. She dies, we pack you with her corpse on a truck and you will be taken to wherever she will be buried. You don’t come back to my house” (p.133). This impediment to formal education can be construed to mean that Suubi’s education is now coming to a halt. Her acceptance to go to work as a house help in Mr. and Mrs Kiyaga’s home is informed by the desire for security but it turns out to be an opportunity for her to acquire formal education and help her change from a dying destitute child to a strong human being ready to face the challenges ahead.

She joins Mr. Kiyaga’s family together with his wife, Muwude, and her three children: Katama, a boy aged fifteen, Kulabato, a girl aged fourteen, and Katiti, a girl aged ten. At first, she is treated as part of the family and allowed to sleep in the family’s house with other children, until they accuse her of stealing from them. At this juncture, her formal education is threatened because Mr. Kayiga decides she should be taken to

wherever she was got from. Fortunately for her, aunt Kulata is dead and there being no other known relative, they have nowhere else to take her. The conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Kayiga goes

‘Didn’t I say I wanted that girl to be removed when I left for work this morning?... I don’t want her mixing with my children ...you know things have been disappearing since she arrived’. ‘What do you want me to do,’ now the wife’s voice came from further in the house, ‘throw her out on the streets? I took her back where I had found her but her aunt had died. She does not know her relations.’ ‘She is lying. Where did she come from? ‘Suubi was very young when she was abandoned and no one had seen any relations visiting. I can’t just send her away; she is too young.’ ‘Then take her to the police.’ ‘And where will I say I found her?’ (p. 141).

The motherly approach by Mrs Kiyaga to Suubi’s predicament coupled with the absence of any known relative saves her metaphorical education boat from capsizing. She, however, does not survive from being ejected from the main house. She is taken to the servant quarters. As fate would have it, she suffers from severe falciparum strain whereupon the family is forced to re-admit her to the main house, take her to hospital and be accommodative to her. Suubi’s dream of acquiring formal education survives hence stabilizing the metaphorical boat. Once she recovers, she goes back to school. The narrative goes

One morning she woke up early and walked back to old Kampala Primary. She told the headmistress that she had been unwell and joined the primary seven class. At the end of the term when she brought home a fantastic school report, her (foster) parents could not believe that a child could walk for so many miles to school and still manage to study so well. ‘Katama, Kula, Katiiti, look at this report!’ Mummy said to Suubi’s spoilt siblings (p. 150).

Indeed Suubi’s fantastic school report softens her foster parents to a point of wishing their children, who have all along been enjoying wonderful facilities both at home and in school, to emulate her. She gets celebrated for her good performance and is accommodated to the family on account of her resilience and determination.

Though Suubi’s case may be exceptional in terms of the challenges she faces as an orphan and a sickly child, to a certain extent she represents the East African girl child in pursuit of formal education since she is not considered to be cut for it. She is meant to be prepared for marriage. The challenges that the girl child receives in her pursuit for education is, however, unique to the environment they find themselves in.

The later day Suubi that we meet eighteen years later is an emancipated mature woman with an own job and a boyfriend, Opolot, to boot. She is already an employed graduate from what we gather from the story that she relates to her boyfriend. She has fully been adopted by Kiyaga’s family. With formal education, she seems to be strong and even when her foster parents die, the mother from cancer and the father from strong and the family decides to side line her, and she doesn’t seem to worry. Her financial muscle is demonstrated by the fact that she contributes more than her siblings when it comes to time for her foster father’s after-burial rituals.

The celebration rites also expose the readers to the character of each of Suubi’s foster parents’ children. The narrative goes

However, while everyone else’s contribution was met with approval, mine was met with stony silence yet it was quite substantial compared to everyone else’s. You see, Kula, a teacher, is a single mother and Katiiti didn’t have a man at the time. Katama doesn’t part with money easily even though he is the eldest, the heir and the only son (p. 161).

This elucidation allows the reader to see the financial superiority that characterizes the later day Suubi despite the challenges she faced in her initial stage of life. By virtue of contributing the highest amount, it means she is engaged in the highest paying job even above that of the man of the family – Katama. The implication here is that there is already a significant systematic independence the second generation women are gaining as a result of acquiring formal education. Nevertheless, it is not blanket liberation as seen from the fact that it is conventional for Katiiti to be broke because “[she] didn’t have a man at the time” (p. 161). Consequently, the second generation woman is presented with a choice; to either navigate through the gender discrimination, acquire formal education, secure a job and gain full independence or acquire education and still embed herself to a man for financial support.

However, it is evident that there is a humongous difference between the two generations’ of women. The passivity that characterizes most of the first women’s generation as well as total reliance on men for direction has reduced considerably. That a woman can choose to remain a single mother, rather than enter into a polygamous or loveless marriage marks the beginning of the manifestation of individual choice. Kula, a teacher, chooses the life of single motherhood. This can be juxtaposed against the desperation that characterized Babirye’s parents when Kintu decided to marry Nnakato ahead of her. Kula, and, to a greater extent, Suubi, have been given the heterodoxical characteristics to depict the changing world regarding women’s position in East Africa in particular and Africa in general. Notably, other women across the province choose to be married to Kintu, whom they get to see only when his excursion is necessitated by administrative rather than familial duties.

It is also worth noting that men have reduced the desire to demonstrate their macho considerably. The power relation between the two genders is like a seesaw. The African woman's acquisition of formal education leading to financial and cognitive independence definitely challenges the gender hierarchy of power. The Kintu Kidda we meet among the first generation women is, by all means, a representative of patriarchal dominance. His presence must be felt by women as a means of elevating patriarchy. Contrastingly, Katama of the second generation does not attempt to make his patriarchal machoism to be felt. The decision of how much money ought to be contributed is made by Suubi, a woman, while he remains aloof. Failure to demonstrate his financial muscles by taking up the duty of organizing for his late father's rites through directing what should be done and contributing more than the women involved is indicative of the metaphorical seesaw beginning to tilt in favour of women. The desire for women to act independently, and, subtly take up lead roles in familial matters begins to manifest itself. Thus the future of fully educated woman is foreshadowed as an undertaking that will lead to full incorporation into leadership.

Ogola's *The River and the Source's* second generation's main woman character is personified in Nyabera, later christened Maria. She is the only surviving child of the first generation matriarch—Akoko. Like other women during this time, she starts as a submissive wife, married to Okumu, a neighbour. Just like Akoko before her, the marriage is not informed by attraction between the two. It sprouts from convenience; being the only child, it is essential that she is not married far away from home (p. 67). Akoko, a widow who had refused to be inherited, was the main player in her daughters' life with all decisions placed solely on her shoulders. The narrative goes

Curiously, the only person involved in deciding Nyabera's groom is Akoko, a female figure. This reality is a paradigm shift from the previous generation where Akoko's betrothal was a man's affair. In Nyabera's case, women participation in vital communal affairs has started manifesting itself.

Patriarchy shows signs of dwindling. While Owuor Kembo's source of attraction was his position as a chief hence a source of authority and resources associated with patriarchy as the focal point of power, Okumu Angolo is chosen on the basis of his proximity to the mother's home. Akoko has the wherewithal to take care of her daughter should need arise. Thus the African woman at this point in history has started to demonstrate that marriage is not necessarily for material gain from the husband. At the same time, just as is the case with Katama in *Kintu*, it is evident that man's dominance has started to lessen. The intricate authority associated with Owuor Kembo as the male figure in the first generation is not present in Okumu Angolo's case. He seems to have taken a passive position as Nyabera, with the support of her mother, demonstrates some sense of leadership.

Okumu and Nyabera are blessed with six children out of whom only one, Awiti, survives. Okumu dies at an early age following a short illness leaving Nyabera a devastated young widow. Unlike her mother, Nyabera tries the option of being inherited according to the dictates of the Luo community. The women's consciousness with regards to the inconsiderate nature of rules set for widows starts to manifest itself. It is at this point that the desire to take a lead role in second generation women begins to manifest. Nyabera dares to question the wisdom of *Chik* (tradition) regarding the position of women:

To be a widow and young was an untenable situation. A husband had to be found from close relatives of the dead man, but such a man had no real rights over the woman, his job being that of siring children to maintain the dead man's name and to keep his widow from wandering from one man to man (a scandal). This was called *tero*. Even the children he sired did not belong to him – therefore, he was under no obligation to provide for them. His duty was to his own wife. So in reality instead of being protected the widow was left in a sort of limbo. *Nyabera felt that here Chik had erred*, the first time such a thought had crossed her mind (my emphasis) (p. 99).

I am making this assertion fully aware that *tero* was not as elaborate among all other East African communities as it was among the Luo from which Ogola draws her raw materials. However, almost all the communities had put structures to deal with widowhood amongst them which were tailored in a way that they were unfavourable to the women they were meant to help. With time, women start to realize the injustice inherent in the patriarchy- initiated provisions.

Nyabera thus encapsulates the era in which African women begin to consciously query the dictates of negative traditions that are designed by patriarchy with the aim of subduing women to toe the line. She ruminates being burdened with children by an individual who is not bound in any way to provide for them, a stratagem construed by men as an antidote for taming women from seeking love outside the family set up once their husbands die—an unwarrantable injustice. This consciousness of subjugation of women spells the beginning of disentanglement from the chains of negative traditions. The liberating agent for women from the tight grip of negative tradition hitherto readily accepted by women, is the new religion – Christianity – which comes with formal education in the same package.

Backed by the conscious realization that she, and, to a greater extent, East African women, are exposed to maltreatment that their foremothers were not conscious of, Nyabera decides to seek the New way. She departs from home leaving Awiti, her only surviving child, under the care of her mother Akoko. This journey is

significant as it marks the inauguration of writing another chapter in the African woman's life. She becomes the pioneer of both formal education and Christianity to her community. She would later travel to Aluor mission, join catechism class, get baptized, learn simple arithmetic, and come for her mother Akoko, her daughter Awiti, and her nephew Owuor Sino.

Nyabera thus leads her tribesmen and women to the New way. As an individual, she only acquires functional literacy, she doesn't go beyond learning how to read and write because she joins formal education as an adult. Nevertheless, Nyabera's realization that women's subjugation is a mind-set rather than the norm opens the flood gates for the pursuit of emancipation especially by the next generation that fully embraces literacy and numeracy. She lays the base for future women, her daughter included, to immerse themselves into formal education hence acquiring the hitherto elusive liberty.

Later in life when it comes to Awiti, her daughter's education, Nyabera supports her in spite of the trepidation informed by the fact that Awiti happens to be her only surviving child. She fears losing her when she is admitted to join the teacher training college (p. 133). Thus the pioneering spirit started by the pre-colonial woman in the embodiment of Akoko is carried forward by her daughter, Nyabera, who recognizes that she can disentangle herself from the unfairly constructed injunctions of patriarchy regarding widow comportment and decide on her own what suits her.

2.3 Post-Colonial East African Women Leadership In Monogamous Marriages

In *Kintu*, Makumbi's third generation women characters are, mostly, in monogamous marriages. The way Kanani and his wife Faisi relate with each other is a total contrast to the way, for instance, Kintu Kidda related with his many wives. While Kintu Kidda was an authoritative individual whose authority was felt and respected by all his wives as a husband rather than as a Ppookino, Kanani and Faisi behave like partners in their marriage without a definite head of the family. The two complement each other in their preaching. Christianity is partially responsible for monogamy among Africans as one of the components of its teachings is that a man must have only one wife. Monogamy seems to have a long time effect of diluting masculinity. Kanani, for instance, appears impotent within his own house. The terrible cooking Faisi does is never reprimanded. He is only left to admire Mr. Lane who, when his wife fails him in the kitchen department, does the cooking himself (p. 186). When Ruth's pregnancy is confirmed at the hospital, a very hard decision has to be made with regards to where she will stay because she has put the parents and the church to shame. The expectation is that such a decision would lie squarely on the shoulders of Kanani the head of the family but it happens to the contrary. The narration goes

A week later, Faisi called the family to get together in prayer. Instead of Kanani, she led the prayer and beseeched God to give them wisdom so they would make the right decisions. When they got off their knees, Faisi smiled as if she had had an epiphany. First she wiped the dining table with her hand even though it was clean, then announced that Ruth was going away to live in Nakaseke – Bulemeezi for the time being. Kanaani's heathen cousin, Magda had married there (p. 197).

That this decision which is of great import to the family is made by Faisi without Kanani's input is indicative of the distribution of familial power, a break from the norm. The assertive characteristics of patriarchy appear to cede some power to women to partake in family management. The peripheral and passive role that women hitherto have been known to take is challenged and redefined.

Kanani and Faisi's lives become intertwined with that of Magda, Kanani's heathen cousin who must take care of Ruth until she is "untied". Interestingly, Faisi refuses to take Ruth to Nakaseke. Despite the duty being a woman affair, the onus of escorting her falls on the shoulders of Kanani, the man. She offers a lame excuse: "Only Kanani accompanied Ruth to Nakaseke because Magda was his heathen cousin. Faisi could not bring herself to go to the Devil's lair. Besides, "she had sowing to do" (198). The refusal indicates that the male gender is becoming accommodative to the decisions and wishes of East African women. Under the "old dispensation" Kanani would have invoked his powers as the head of the family to force his wife to take her daughter to Nakaseke. Instead, he opts to do it himself. The onus of going for Ruth from Nakaseke once she gives birth rests on Kanani's shoulders once again. Faisi does not bother to perform a duty that is feminine from both historical and biological perspective where women relate closely with each other during the early years of birth.

This stream of consciousness happening in the mind of the character Magda is an indication that the gender disproportion witnessed among men is not sanctioned by the ancestors... "But why choose Luusi (Ruth)? ...You would think if the lad wanted himself reincarnated, he would go for a male's child... well what do we know about the world of the dead? Maybe over there they don't erect boundaries between daughters and sons" (p. 214).

This conclusion stems from the questions that Magda asks herself which demonstrate human understanding is not the same as that of underworld. Though the remark is meant to disparage Kanani owing to the different religious dispensation they belong, unconsciously, it serves to show the position of the two genders

at that point in history. The message from the author is that inequality in all spheres of life is only endorsed by the living. It is, therefore, justifiable to have it redefined as it is happening within the monogamous family set up.

This intrusion by the author resonates with Lihamba et al's postulation that writing provides avenues "through which women may be seen not as passive or barely visible entities, but as articulate and talented producers of art and knowledge, and as heroic makers of history" (p. 1). Thus the third generation East African woman is, to a greater extent, accommodated into familial leadership and her voice heard.

In Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source*, Elizabeth Awiti the third generation woman whose formal education is marked by insurmountable challenges gets engaged to ex-Sergeant Mark Antony Oloo Sigu, while a student in a Teacher's Training College. The type of engagement between the two lovers is a break from the formerly male dominated betrothal where men had the express right to choose a husband for their daughters as is the case with her grandmother, Akoko. Mark and Elizabeth's engagement remains a secret until Awiti breaks the news to her grandmother and mother about the impending visit by Mark and his entourage to seek consent for the wedding to take place. The news is broken two weeks to the planned visit. Maria Nyabera cannot fathom how a lady could consider friendship with a stranger. She wonders through a series of rhetorical questions

And why child have you not told us about this man before? Two weeks indeed. Where does he come from and what are the names of his parents? ... what do you mean you don't know! How can you even consider having friendship with a man whose roots and antecedents you don't know? What is the world coming to? (p. 142)

This incident marks the beginning of change that has started creeping into the social set up and, specifically, in the institution of marriage. Akoko, representing the first generation of women, fails to understand how a lady can plan a marriage that is not sanctioned by a man, the head of the family.

Once the marriage takes place and the two lovers start staying together, familial leadership by women is evident. Polygamy, like most other places in Africa, is dwindling. Thus Mark Antony Oloo Sigu remains monogamous throughout his life. Monogamy allows for closer interaction between couples hence paving way for the leadership of the wife to manifest itself. From the onset, the union seems to be complimentary rather than male dominated as was the case with the previous generations. Neither Elizabeth nor Mark holds absolute power. They bring on board what each is good in.

When their children are born, Elizabeth emerges to be a force to reckon with in ensuring that they are well brought up. Mark finds it easy to entrust the upbringing of their children with her when the war between the MAU MAU and the white *johnnies* intensifies. She moves to her teaching job at Aluru with their three children leaving Mark in Nakuru. With the newly acquired freedom, Mark involves himself with a girl and almost forgets his family. He is jolted by the girl's declaration that she is pregnant upon which he sends her away and opts to go back to the family. The exchange between him and his wife is a proof that she, and to greater extent women, no longer belong to the periphery. Mark is taken into task with regards to neglecting his paternal duties: "You have remembered us at last... did you receive my letters? The girls had a bad attack of malaria. I thought Becky would die. ... why didn't you write at least to console us?" (p. 170). Mark's fear is evident as he tries to conceal his guilt of having involved himself with another woman behind his wife's back. But for the change that has swept the continent as a result of Christianity and education, it would have been considered normal if Mark married another wife or even wives. But here he, fears the repercussions because he had erred in veering outside the matrimonial vows.

The directive issued by Elizabeth proves that she is at the centre stage of the family affairs: "We are going back together. We are a family and it is clear that you need someone to constantly remind you of your duty all the time" (p. 170). Mark obeys without questions. The incidence above serves to buttress the co-existence between the third generation couples which is characterized by efforts towards achieving gender inclusivity in leadership, more so familial leadership.

With the family having expanded, Awiti is overwhelmed by the chores especially owing to the fact that she is a working lady. Buoyed by the need to surround his family under the ring of love, Mark sheds off the phallogocentric comportment and offers a helping hand in matters that would have hitherto been considered unmanly

He did things for Elizabeth that would never have even crossed the mind of a full – blooded man with a low opinion for women bred into him. She was constantly overworked in spite of the house help they had. Seven children at home and forty children in a classroom are a lot of work; so Mark took to helping her around the house – especially taking the children off her hand. His friends derided him for a while but when he proved adamant, they gave him up as lost case (p. 173).

Change in both how women are perceived in the patriarchal worldview and the position of a working woman come into focus in this incidence. That some men deride what Mark is doing for his wife is indicative of

men trying to hang on to patriarchal ideologies, the same men who had tried to prevent girls from acquiring formal education. Nevertheless, change is inevitable.

Elizabeth remains a force to reckon with even as Sigu's family expands. The near drowning incidence of the twins, Odongo and Opiyo, when they accompany their elder brothers to a swimming spree again brings to the fore the import of having a hands on mother. Being hot-tempered, Mark is threatening to put the older boys – Aoro and Tony through a life-threatening punitive experience for exposing their twin brothers to danger. Elizabeth comes in to save the situation

He thought of the near drowning and his face darkened with anger. Elizabeth took one hasty look at him and decided to take over. "You boys go to your room. When I come there, Aoro, I expect to find you bathed and ready for bed. The twins will have their dinner. You two will not. Off with you. (p. 178)

The move by Elizabeth to save the situation thrusts her to familial leadership arena. The outsider phenomenon previously occupied by women where an interference with a man's department would have been construed to mean direct affront to patriarchy is gradually being erased. The same is being replaced with a career woman who has benefited from formal education that has combined with religion to water down the powers of patriarchy. Transformation from an inert partner in a marriage to an active partaker of family affairs is, therefore, evident.

2.4 Contemporary East African Woman in Leadership Equality

The aspect of change within gender has produced what I have preferred to term as a contemporary woman, modern woman captured in the two novels as the fourth generation woman, the epitome of women's leadership climax. The changes that take place within the fourth generation East African women cohere with Deniz Kandiyoti's argument that "patriarchal bargains are not timeless or immutable entities, but are susceptible to historical transformations that open up new area of struggle and renegotiation of relationship between genders" (p. 275). Hence the transformational nature of the interrelationships between genders opens an avenue for us to interrogate the changes that have taken place within the continuum of history covered within the time in question.

Unlike the previous generations discussed in this paper, the fourth generation woman does not operate under the restrictive environment. The contemporary East African woman is aptly captured by Wolf's rhetorical question

You have won rooms of your own in the house hitherto exclusively owned by men... but this freedom is only a beginning; the room is your own, but is still bare. It has to be furnished; it has to be decorated; it has to be shared. How are you going to furnish it, how are you going to decorate it? With whom are you going to share it, and upon what terms? (p. 226)

Compared with the first generation precolonial, passive, and inert woman, the contemporary woman has conquered most of the restraints placed in her path by the patriarchy. Men, having realized that her resurgence is inexorable, have learned to be accommodative to her. At this point in history, therefore, women have won a considerable space of their own room; they are only working on furnishing it.

Though conscious that the East African woman is not yet at the same level with the man in totality, the impediments that initially prevented women from attaining equality in leadership have almost been neutralized. It is in this understanding that Devor advocates for accommodative approach towards ensuring that both genders are empowered. Devor argues

Members of society might be taught to value adaptability and flexibility rather than obedience to gender roles, so that the most respected and socially valued personality types would be those which were able to make use of any behaviours which served their purposes in any situation. ... men and women, masculinity and femininity, would be seen as immature stages in the process of reaching a blended gender identity and display (Qtd in Tripp, p. 16)

The fourth generation woman's life is intertwined with both formal education and religion – especially Christianity. The two cultures from the West thus play a key role in ensuring women attain leadership positions.

Kusi Nnakintu in Makumbi's novel, *Kintu*, is a re-defined and re-packaged woman. In comparison to women of earlier generations – Nnakato, Suubi and Faisi of first, second and third generations respectively who, seemingly, could not fully disentangle themselves from the shackles of patriarchy, the contemporary woman is, arguably, at par with her male counterparts.

Having fathered twelve children, Miisi has only one remaining at the time—Kusi Nnakintu popularly known as General Salamander. She is a General in the Army. Ideally, the practice of choosing what the daughters should do in regards to their profession and life in general is no longer tenable among the contemporary generations. The contemporary generation has taken up the jobs that were a preserve of the male child therefore breaking from the societal norm where women are unconsciously taught to stick to what the society considers conventional for them. General Salamander has chosen the life of the jungle on her own

volition. In the process, she has risen through the ranks to become a general and hence she has men under her command, some as members of her platoon and others as her body guards (p. 363). Owing to her choice, Kusi occupies a very significant position both in her family and her country. After most of other Miisi's children are killed by either HIV/AIDS or the war, she turns out to be the provider. She visits her father, carrying so much food stuffs that he is forced to invite the household to come and witness her providence: "come everyone, come and see what my girl has done" (p. 364). Thus her "masculinity" is celebrated, not frowned upon by her father. Tellingly, Kusi's choice of a "masculine" profession anchored by her elevation to a senior rank in the army where she has men at her service elevates her to the level that had hitherto been a preserve for men. Her father's remark and the author's comment demonstrate this elevation: "[W]e have something important to talk about" Miisi told her sister as *if Kusi was a son and they were going to have manly whispers* (my emphasis, p. 265). Evidently, it is the choice that Kusi has made that earns her such respect from her father in particular and the country in general. She explains to her father that she has been busy in the Northern part of the country trying to suppress Kony's rebellion, an important undertaking in the effort to ensure the country remains stable. She has thus positioned herself as the provider of the family and the protector of the state, a known masculine occupation by the dictates of patriarchy.

It is worth noting that, "masculine" professions that contemporary women take do not shun them from their femininity. Despite Kusi's accomplishments, her father feels that her childlessness is a void that she needs to fill and thus he emphatically enquires from her when she is going to have a child. Although she tries to be elusive, he makes it clear that she needs to give him a grandchild. Miisi desires to have General Salamander provide a grandchild for him, but alludes that her status places her above marriage. Miisi explains: "I am not asking you to get married. I would not inflict on you any man, I am only asking for a child... I am asking for yours, at least one" (p. 365). Thus despite the contemporary East African women making choices that put them, arguably, beyond marriage, the societal expectation does not occlude them from continuing the process of procreation. The author in a subtle manner supports the contemporary woman's self – elevation through venturing into what had, for a long time, been considered a masculine profession but hints at the need not to forget the duties that nature rather than patriarchy prescribes for the female gender.

The River and the Source likewise depicts a revised standpoint with regards to gendered professions. Vera emerges as a beneficiary of the same. In recognition of her brilliance, occupants of certain leadership positions are revised to accommodate a female school captain. The author notes: "When she was fourteen and in the top class of her primary school, they made her the school captain – a position which had only been held by boys before. Her father was quite beside himself" (my emphasis, p. 173). Vera's leadership as the pioneer female school captain breaks the patriarchal dogma that had been in operation in most African communities, and which the Europeans perpetuated, by hinting that it belonged to men only. Her pioneering at school acts as a preparatory ground for her future exploits. By steering the school successfully, she signals to men that the ideology regarding women and leadership has been redefined. Consequently, women can now occupy leadership positions once preserved for men.

At maturity, we meet her having excelled in 'A' level exams and having chosen to study Electrical Engineering at the university, a very demanding course deemed to be the realm for men. So demanding it is that she does not get time to socialize, and she only has one hour for Mass on Sundays (p. 213). Her employment as an electronics engineer furthers the revision and re-definition of gender roles. Through her, the contemporary woman is depicted as having encroached into the former territorial occupation of man. We meet Vera much later as an independent-minded lass with a well-paying job whose life is not intertwined with that of any man. Unlike women in earlier generations who needed the support of a man, she is well paid and an independent thinker who lives her life. It is no surprise when she opts to join *Opus Dei*, a non-marrying branch of Catholic Church, and decides to live a life of chastity. Her father, just like Kusi's father in *Kintu*, is uncomfortable with the diminishing possibility of Vera having children

Then she had arrived home one day and declared that she wanted to join the Catholic Prelature of *Opus Dei* as a non-marrying member. It didn't help that Mark had never heard of *Opus Dei* and could not understand why Vera could not marry. But he had eventually accepted because he loved her... it was a pity though that she did not wear a veil or a habit. That way he could have bragged about her a little to his less lucky friends. Vera for one was a fully qualified electronics expert and had a lucrative job in the city with a large salary and all sorts of benefits (p. 269).

The deep lying desire by Vera's father to get grandchildren through her is indicative of how women's re-defining of roles does not entail distancing themselves from recreation. It however, gives women the freedom to choose "when" and "whether" to have children unlike the case in the past where reaching nineteen seasons without a suitor was a case to be frowned upon and failing to give birth to children in quick succession was a cause for alarm as is the case with Akoko (pp. 17, 34).

Evidently, Vera's case presents a totally different position with earlier women such as her grandmother, Akoko, whom we learn that her decision to leave her matrimonial home after her mother-in-law accuses her of *juok* (witchcraft) was a new phenomenon because once a man marries, "[he] own(s) the woman's body and soul" (p. 36). In a similar setup, the community was also apprehensive of Elizabeth's (Vera's mother) show of brilliance in school as they prophesied that she would fall into catastrophic experience of not getting a man to marry her (130). This trepidation was despite the fact that formal education had started being embraced among the natives. In Vera's scenario, a departure from the accepted patriarchal worldview, a woman acquires the freedom to manage her body, soul, time, and finances as well as to become a leader.

Motherhood is not lost to Vera just because she chooses not to have children of her own rather she emerges to be a good mother as evidenced by the declaration from her ardent critic and sister – Becky. On her death bed, she confesses that Vera possessed better motherly attributes than her and confidently leaves her two children under her care

My sister Vera and I have had differences but I have no doubt she would have made an excellent mother – much better than I ever was. The children love her. So it is in confidence that I leave every aspect of their care in her capable hands with the assistance of whichever family members she chooses for I appreciate that the nature of her calling may not allow her to establish her own home (p. 285).

Becky's declaration coupled with the role Vera plays in bringing up her sister's children with tender care and love is indicative of the fact that deciding not to have children of one's own is not tantamount to losing one's motherhood. The religious attachment in it, coupled with the freedom of choice, makes it an aspect of womanhood to be celebrated. Thus Vera encapsulates a contemporary generation woman who is economically, socially, and politically empowered.

II. CONCLUSION

I would wish to conclude his paper by asserting that historical novels written by East African women writers featuring several generations of women in the same novel offer an opportunity for analysis of the transformation of East African women journey, moving from leadership which is exclusively within their circles in form of senior wives to an inclusive one in which contemporary East African woman is accommodated into formerly preserved space for women. The novels depict how four generations of women gradually gain inclusion into leadership positions, culminating into the contemporary East African woman who, arguably, has destroyed the structures used by patriarchy to subjugate women. Inclusivity in leadership positions has thus been achieved, enabling contemporary East African woman to share leadership position with men.

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