

# Margaret Ogola's imagination of masculinities in three novels, 2014

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## Abstract:

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