

**THE FEMALE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL VOICE IN
INDEPENDENT KENYA**

BY

JENNIFER NYAMBURA MUCHIRI

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in another university.

Candidate: JK fe111..... Date:

Jennifer Nyambura Vluchiri

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

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First supervisor: /... Date *M*

Dr. D. H. Kiiru

Second supervisor: . i i - f ^ r r Date: I k l l z J l . ⁰ O S

Prof. Ciarunji Chesaina

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to George Gichuki. who has been my pillar during the course of this research, egging me on every step of the way. George, you may not have understood *even-thing* I was doing, but you understood one thing - that I needed you -and that is sufficient.

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to analyse the female autobiographical voice in independent Kenya. The study investigates the body of female autobiographies as it exists in Kenya, focusing on the nature and function of autobiography as they exhibit themselves in the autobiographies under study. It takes a keen look at how the autobiographical voice enables the writers to narrate their stories as they analyse personal and social relationships.

The study examines the female autobiographical voice as a tool for women's self-exploration and self-definition. The choice of the narrative voice in female autobiographies enables us to study issues peculiar to women. Available studies indicate that this specialty has not received attention from literary scholars yet it is crucial to the understanding of autobiographical writing in Kenya.

The study focuses on autobiographies by Charity Waciuma, Wanjiku Kabira, Esther Owuor, Rasna Warah, Wambui Otieno, Vluthoni Likimani, and Wangari Maathai. The study adopts three approaches to literary criticism: theory of autobiography, feminist literary criticism and textual analysis. The theory of autobiography directs our investigation of the autobiographies by focusing on the particulars of the genre; feminist literary criticism focuses on the significance of gender issues, history, politics, and culture as they appear in the autobiographies under study; and textual analysis emphasises on the text and enables us to discuss the narrative voice in the autobiographies. The study derives its conclusions exclusively from the autobiographies under study.

The study finds out that the autobiography is the most appropriate form of women's self-expression as it enables them to narrate their stories in their own voices and to highlight social concerns from a domestic and personalised perspective. The autobiographical act becomes a means of empowerment for the Kenyan woman as she seeks her inner self, discovers it, and narrates it for the world to read. The study discovers that some autobiographers employ the autobiographical form to advance agenda other than self-revelation and self-appraisal. In addition, the study shows that the available autobiographies by Kenyan women do not represent the ordinary Kenyan woman.

The study recommends further research in the field of the autobiography in Kenya, focusing on the male autobiography to highlight its concerns and compare it to the female autobiography. In addition, the study recommends a comparative study of the autobiography in Kenya and other regions.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Who can speak and for whom? Who listens? How does one represent the self and others? (Deepika Bahri 199)

An autobiography is the story or an account of one's life written by oneself. The centre of interest in the autobiography is the self, not the outside world, though it must of necessity appear to give shape to the personality. The writing of autobiography entails the reconstruction of the movement of life, or part of a life, in the actual circumstances in which it was lived. The autobiography is interplay between the past and the present and its significance lies more in the revelation of the present than an uncovering of the past.

The Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia defines biography as the written account of an individual life and notes that an autobiography is a biography written by the subject. On the nature of this genre the encyclopaedia states:

The term biography connotes an artful, conscious literary genre that employs a wide range of sources, strategies, and insights: and that attempts to render the whole sense of its subject, not the life only but what it was like to have lived it at its several stages.

Since the autobiography hinges on personal experience and is based on reflections, its authors impose patterns on their lives and construct coherent stories out of them. Its underlying principle is the scrutiny of the self, with outside happenings, persons encountered, and observations admitted primarily as they influence the consciousness of the

person on whose character and actions the writing focuses. The autobiographical voice refers to the narrative voice, the voice that relates the events, in the autobiography. The autobiography, apart from being a record of the author's life, is both a literary and a historical discourse. This study aims at analysing the female autobiographical voice in independent Kenya. It focuses on Charity Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi (1969); Esther Owuor's My Life as a Paraplegic (1995); Rasna Warah's Triple Heritage: A Journey to Self-Discovery (1998); Wambui Otieno's Mau Mau's Daughter: A Life History (1998); Muthoni Likimani's Passbook Number F.47927: Women and Mau Mau in Kenya (1998) and Fighting Without Ceasing (2005); Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira's A Letter to Mariama Ba (2005); and Wangari Maathai's Unbowed: One Woman's Story (2006). These are the autobiographies by Kenyan women in independent Kenya.

Charity Waciuma was born in Kenya in 1936. and her first book. Mweru the Ostrich Girl (1966). was among the pioneer writings for children in the country. It was closely followed by Who's Calling?, which captures the innocent worries of childhood. Merry Making, and The Golden Feather (1967). Daughter of Mumbi (1969), an autobiography of childhood and adolescence, captures the life of her community (the Kikuyu of Kenya) and their history in a colonial setting.

Esther Owuor is a retired teacher and a family life counsellor and Mv Life as a Paraplegic (1995) is her only creative work. This text captures the writer's life before and after a motor vehicle accident that transformed her life.

Rasna Warah was born in 1962. A writer and editor, she obtained her education in Kenya, India, and the United States of America. She has been a columnist for the Nation and Standard, Kenya's leading dailies, but Triple Heritage is her only full length publication. Published in 1988, this work is her attempt to understand herself as a woman with a three-pronged identity - Asian, Kenyan, and Western.

Wambui Waivaki Otieno was born in Kenya in 1936 when the country was under British rule. She joined the Mau Mau while still a teenager and was involved in politics before and after Kenya attained independence. She has been involved in the struggle for women's rights in Kenya, representing women's organisations in national and international forums. Mau Mau's Daughter is the narrative of a woman who not only participated in Kenya's struggle for independence, but has had to fight for justice in issues concerning the rights of women and their children.

Muthoni Likimani, born in Kenya in 1925, is a novelist and a poet, having to her credit three novels, a narrative poem, and a children's story book. Her first novel, They Shall be Chastised (1974), deals with the early missionary schools in colonial Kenya and it features the Kenyan people who were trapped between two very diverse cultures. What Does a Man Want? (1974) a narrative poem, is a satire about the struggle of the African

woman to understand her male counterpart. Her children's story book, written in Swahili, is titled Shangazi na Watoto (2001) and it introduces young readers to the various cultures of the ethnic groups living in Kenya. Passbook Number F. 47927 (1985) draws its title from her own identity number during the Mau Vlau insurgency and it focuses on the crucial role that women played in the struggle for independence in Kenya. Fighting without Ceasing (2005) is her autobiography and it reveals the various battles this writer has had to fight especially against injustice.

Wanjiku Kabira is an educator and writer. She is the author of The Oral Artist (1983) and co-author of Gikuvu Oral Literature (1988). Kenyan Oral Narratives (1985). Our Secret Lives (1990). and The Good Witch of Kiaritha-ini and Other Stories (1994). She has also published widely on women and gender issues. Her autobiography. A Letter to Mariama Ba (2005), is a response to Senegalese Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter and it highlights the experiences of women in her Kenyan society to demonstrate that women's experiences are not unique to particular societies.

Wangari Maathai is a Kenyan politician and environmentalist and the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner. Born in Kenya in 1940. she was the first East African woman to acquire a PhD and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Her autobiography. Unbowed relates her achievements on the academic, environmental, and political fields and the pain of a humiliating divorce. In addition, the story traces Maathai's journey of struggle for democracy, environmental conservation, and human rights.

Our study takes note of the fact that "the central concern of all autobiography is to describe, evoke, and generally recreate the development of the author's experience" (Abbs 6). The female autobiographers under study employ the autobiographical voice to relate their experiences in the societies in which they live since, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o says in Homecoming.

A writer responds, with his [sic] total personality, to a social environment which changes all the time. Being a kind of sensitive needle, he [sic] registers, with varying degrees of accuracy and success, the conflict and tensions in his [sic] changing society....For the writer himself [sic] lives in. and is shaped by, history. (47)

It is on the basis of this concept that this study begins and it proceeds with the aim of examining the nature and role of the narrative voice in the Kenyan female autobiography. Appreciating the essence of the narrative voice in art. Jennifer Muchiri observes:

The narrator ... plays a crucial role in forming a link between a work of art and the reader. [His or her] perspective determines who and what readers look at in a story, how they look at it. what details they focus on, and for how long they look. It is the narrator who directs and organises the readers' view and opinion of issues by being the force at the centre of the narrative - controlling, shaping, and guiding the action therein. (3)

In this sense, we study the autobiographical voice as a unique link between the reader and the world lived in by the woman in independent Kenya.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study analyses the female autobiographical voice in independent Kenya. There are no studies on the female autobiographical voice in independent Kenya despite its significance as a narrative strategy. There are studies on the themes that cut across women's writing and the presentation of women by male writers in Kenya, but not on the narrative voice through which the writers present these themes. An analysis of the female autobiographical voice contributes to literary scholarship by examining the role of narrative voice in writing self. The study is significant because it allows us to examine the nature, function, and effectiveness of the autobiography as a literary form.

OBJECTIVES

The study aims to realise the following objectives:

- i. To study the autobiographical voice as a first person narrative voice.
- ii. To analyse how the autobiographical voice explores the woman's identity and defines her.
- iii. To discuss the social issues that the autobiographical voice addresses.
- iv. To explore how the female autobiographical voice articulates a social vision.

HYPOTHESES

For the purposes of this study, hypotheses are taken to be synonymous with assumptions.

The study is therefore guided by the following assumptions:

- i. The autobiographical voice is a first person narrative voice that serves as a cohesive device in the autobiographies under study.
- ii. The female autobiographical voice enables the woman to explore and define herself.
- iii. The female autobiographical voice addresses social issues that are unique to the woman.
- iv. The female autobiographical voice embodies the woman's social vision.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY)

The autobiography demands our attention for a variety of reasons, the primary one being that it satisfies a legitimate human curiosity about how human beings lead their lives. It is interesting for anyone to have a peek into the private life of a different person and to learn about their social life, likes and dislikes, family affairs, convictions and other issues. The autobiography has a characteristic subjective, emotional quality, which is part of what we find beautiful and fascinating and therefore necessitating the need for an interrogation of the autobiographical voice.

No literary scholar has undertaken a systematic study on the Kenyan female autobiography or the autobiographical voice, which necessitates our investigation of this mode of writing. In addition, scholars who write on the topic of autobiography in Kenya

sometimes use the third person male pronoun thus implicitly excluding the female autobiography or incorporating it into the male autobiography. For instance, William Ochieng asserts that "the aim of the autobiographer is to influence history in his [emphasis added] favour" (101). In his study, Ochieng focuses on the male autobiography and his use of the pronoun "he" totally ignores the presence of this genre of Kenyan women's writing and assumes it to be part of male autobiography, yet there were autobiographies by Kenyan women in the period his study discusses, 1904-2005.

We study the selected autobiographies against the backdrop of the existence of autobiographies by Kenyan men. The male autobiography in Kenya has been in existence longer than the female autobiography and the number of published autobiographies by Kenyan men is noticeably higher than that done by women. Out of the twenty nine autobiographies written by Kenyans since independence, only eight are by women. Moreover, the first Kenyan female autobiography, Charity Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi, was published in 1969, six years after the first male autobiography, Tom Mbova's Freedom and After, was published. Since the publication of these pioneer autobiographies, the number of Kenyan male autobiographies has continued to rise at a pace much faster than that done by women. The beginnings and development of the Kenyan male autobiography and the nature of the concerns they raise will form a strong case for argumentation in our study of the narrative voice in the Kenyan female autobiography. We have selected the mentioned texts for analysis because they form the body of Kenyan female autobiographies, which is the focus of our study.

The autobiographical voice is basically a narrative voice and it is a significant element of form in a work of art. It is the voice that writers of the autobiography employ to tell their stories. As Henry Indangasi says, "whatever considerations determine the choice, point of view has tremendous cohesive properties. The narrative voice guides the reader or audience, and ties the story together" (Mwangi 60). Our study of the autobiographical voice is thus justified because the narrative voice holds a work of art together and therefore offers us an opportunity to study all other aspects of the work. We examine the motive behind the use of the autobiographical voice by the writers under study.

We focus on independent Kenya because it was only after independence that Kenya as a nation came to be. Our study examines the voice of Kenyan women traversing the years right after independence to the present. As such, the autobiographical voice enables us to see and hear, through the eyes and voice of the woman, the changing times and trends as they affect the woman in independent Kenya and the society at large. The authors under study emerge from different social and ethnic backgrounds and therefore serve as archetypes of Kenyan women from various walks of life. Their different ways of life and views on various aspects of the society thus present to us a wholesome picture of the Kenyan woman as she explores and defines herself.

John Palmer says that "besides entertaining a specific audience, the autobiography seeks to answer the question "Who am I" (1). This view points to the centrality of the subject of identity particularly in women's writings. Since literary works are a response to writers' environment, the female autobiography becomes both a response to the existent

representation of women and an attempt to steer forth women's worldview especially concerning their identity. This study looks at the female autobiographical voice as an indicator of the female identity in women's writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section we review three categories of literature: literature on the nature of autobiography, critical perspectives on the autobiographical genre, and literature on the writers at the centre of this study.

Peter Abbs in Autobiography of Education sets out to establish a philosophical and educational base for the discipline of autobiography. He devotes a small section of his work to the nature and origins of autobiography, viewing it as "the search backwards into time to discover the evolution of the true self (7). On the origins of the autobiography he argues, "the impulse to write [autobiographies] derives from the desire to enrich one's identity against the destructiveness of age" (16). He views the genre as a mode of writing that roots in the present and looks back into the past to be able to face the future. Abbs' study analyses the autobiographies of non-Kenyan authors, but it provides our study with a basis to unravel the evolution of the female self through the autobiographical voice.

In Victorian Autobiography: A Tradition of Self-Interpretation. Linda Peterson focuses on the elements of presentation and interpretation in the autobiography particularly during the Victorian period. Focusing on the female autobiographical voice in independent Kenya, our study analyses issues of presentation and interpretation through

the narrative voice. Peterson's study is relevant to our research as we appreciate the role of the autobiographical voice in presenting and interpreting the Kenyan female self.

Norman Denzin in Interpretive Biography recognises the autobiographical mode as a narrative choice by the author^ His being a study on qualitative research methods, it studies this mode of writing as a method of interpreting human disciplines and experiences. He includes in his analysis biographies and other personal experience stories. Our study goes further to explore the role of the narrative voice in the Kenyan female autobiography.

In When Memory Speaks: Reflections on Autobiography Jill Ker Conway writes about readers and writers of autobiography, and about the history of self-narrative in modern times. She suggests why it is that we are so drawn to the reading of autobiography, and she illuminates the cultural assumptions behind the ways in which autobiographers talk about themselves. Conway argues that while the male autobiographer seems to have power over his fate, his female counterpart largely believes that she lacks command of her destiny and tends to censor her own story. Throughout the study. Conway underscores this genre's magic quality of allowing us to enter another human being's life and mind, and how this experience enlarges and instructs our own lives. She observes that in the process of reading this genre, what is important is that "while we think we are reading a gripping story, what really grips us is the inner reflection on our own lives the autobiographer sets in motion" (17). Conway's discussion on the development of the

female autobiography in the West will inform our study of the narrative voice in the Kenyan female autobiography.

In "Mediated Plot in the Construct of the Theme of Struggle in Nelson Mandela's Autobiography Long Walk to Freedom." Jairus Omutече argues that the reconstruction of the autobiography is a creative discipline that involves interpreting the past as a tool of revealing the present. He views the genre as a tool that can be used to assess universal human nature especially in situations of oppression and the quest for justice. He asserts that its narrative value lies in that the autobiographer consciously selects and rejects some past truths and re-shapes them to reveal his or her standpoint on particular issues. Omutече's study of the plot in Mandela's autobiography is relevant to our study because of the uniqueness of this genre particularly the nature of the autobiographical voice and its ability to interpret and communicate the self.

In "Colonial and Post-Colonial Representation in Kenyan Writing with Particular Reference to Richard Meinertzhagen. Elspeth Huxley. Karen Blixen. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Meja Mwangi and Rebeka Njau." Senorina Wendoh demonstrates that to have a clear understanding of the African woman and her vision for a post-colonial society, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive reading of female writers. Wendoh underscores the importance of self in post-colonial writings by women, stating that it embodies "collective reality, past and present, family and community" (39). This view echoes Ngugi's in Writers in Politics where he says that "a writer after all comes from a particular class and race and nation" (6) and that "the writer as a human being is himself

[sic] a product of history', of time and place" (72). Wendoh's study includes male and non-Kenyan writers, but the present study focuses on the self in post-independence writings by Kenyan women by foregrounding the nature and role of the female autobiographical voice.

The narrative voice in any work of art is the primary cohesive device. It maintains the narrative and provides readers with an opinion of the events that take place in the course of narration. In Literature: An Introduction to Reading and Writing, Edgar Roberts and Henry Jacobs recognise the role of a narrator (and narrative voice) in literary works and they posit that the narrator may be considered as "the story's focus, the angle of vision [sic] from which things are not only seen and reported but also judged" (60). These critics note the importance of narration in art saying, "The principal tool (and the heart of fiction) is narration...The object of narration is, as much as possible, to render the story, to make it clear and to bring it alive to the reader's imagination" (60). Their study is not specifically about the autobiographical voice in art, but their views about narrators and the narrative voice will guide our study in appreciating the importance of the autobiographical voice in determining the intelligibility and conceptual coherence of a literary text and in understanding the woman's expression of her identity.

Indangasi in "The Autobiographical Impulse in African and African-American Literature" recognises artistry in the autobiography. He argues that the autobiography is more than just an I-narrative seeking to tell the writer's life story, but rather a narrative that aims at communicating a higher truth by interpreting reality with acumen and

intelligibility. He cites various autobiographies by Africans and African-Americans as illustrations and stresses that besides seeking to answer the question "Who am I." autobiographies are "propelled by a ...impulse to light [unjust] institutions" (116). His article forms an informative background to our study of the female autobiographical voice as we analyse its ability not only to create cohesion in the narrative, but to articulate a social vision too.

In "Artistic Choices and Gender Placement in the Writings of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Grace Ogot." Evan Vhvangi devotes a sub-section to what he refers to as "Mapping the Autobiographical Mode." He views autobiographical impulses in art as a tool of resistance and cites various works by the two writers to illustrate his case. He sees the autobiographical "I" in their works as gendered and hence looks at issues differently and he observes that "the aporiae-looseness and inconsistencies-in the autobiographical narrative voice indicate the principles which structure gender perspective" (62). Mwangi's focus is on artistic choices from a gender perspective and therefore does not attend to the peculiarities of the female autobiographical voice which is the concern of the present study.

In "Autobiography and Audience." Lynn Bloom raises the issue of the intended audience in autobiographical writing and asserts that while some autobiographers write for themselves, others consciously write with an external audience in mind. She studies a large body of autobiographies to illustrate her point, but her main concern is to train students to identify 'skilled and unskilled authors through their different techniques of

writing. She observes that through a close examination of autobiographical texts, students can become "powerful" (13) writers. Bloom's study is informative on techniques of writing autobiography, but our study demonstrates that the implied audience in any autobiography can be communicated effectively through the autobiographical voice.

Chantal Zabus in "Acquiring Body: New Developments in African Female Self-Writing" argues that the field of African women's autobiography is still under-explored. She introduces her study by observing that while women's autobiography in the West acquired body in the past two decades of the 20th Century, that of African women "emerged in the 1970's along with feminisms of African manufacturing" (1). She points out the late appearance of the African female autobiography as opposed to its male counterpart and ascribes this to "educational practices that delayed or limited women's schooling" (1).

However, after noting the growth of African women's autobiography as a genre. Zabus focuses on the female body's materiality and the trauma of genital cutting as practiced in Africa **especially** by the Somali community. She bases her analysis on Somali Waris Dirie's two autobiographies (Desert Flower [1998] and Desert Dawn [2002]) and Guinean Kesso Barry's Kesso. Princesse Peule (1987) and says that these texts "represent a new turn in the history of female autobiography" (1). Her study is an analysis of the three autobiographies to demonstrate the violation of the African woman's body through the ritual cut. The present study examines the role of the female autobiographical voice in

addressing the concerns raised by the writers under study, focusing wholesomeness. not the partiality, of their lives.

In "The Treatment of the Theme of Women's Identity and Self-Definition in the Fictional Works of Mariama Ba. Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta." Okeng'o Matiang'i focuses on the subjects of identity and self-definition in African women's writings. The study demonstrates that African female writers are deeply committed to negotiating their identity and self-definition in the face of the pre-existing patriarchal African cultures. Matiang'i's interrogation into the issues of identity and self-definition is relevant to the present study because the autobiographical voice is essentially a mode through which the female writer seeks to identity- and define herself.

In Place of Biography in Kenyan History: 1904-2005. Ochieng evaluates the relevance and contribution of selected Kenyan biographies and autobiographies to Kenyan history. He points out the challenges faced by the historian in deciding whether to treat autobiographies as authentic sources of history, noting that while some autobiographies **may** be objective, the genre is prone to distortions and deliberate omissions. He says that "the aim of the autobiographer is to influence history in his [sic] favour" (101) which often leads to subjectivity, but he encourages the writing of autobiographies since they contribute greatly to historical knowledge. His study focuses on autobiographies by Kenyan men such as Ngugi. Harry Thuku. J.VI. Kariuki. Mboya. Oginga Odinga and Bildad Kaggia. whose works he views as rich in historical knowledge. He views autobiography as a source of history, but focuses only on male autobiographies yet there

are female autobiographies published during the period he discusses. We study the female autobiographical voice to evaluate the relevance of the female autobiography in independent Kenya.

Roger Kurtz in Urban Obsessions Urban Fears: The Postcolonial Kenyan Novel discusses the development of the Kenyan novel in post-colonial Kenya and mentions Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi as one of the earliest Kenyan novels that deal with the Mau Mau experience. He recognises this work as one of the pioneer writings by Kenyan women and categorises it as a historical novel with a colonial and pre-colonial setting. Our study analyses the narrative voice in Waciuma's autobiography comprehensively to have a deeper understanding of the writer's life through the issues that she addresses through the autobiographical voice.

Douglas Killam and Ruth Rovve in The Companion to African Literatures refer to Waciuma and Likimani as some of the earliest female writers in Kenya, giving a short profile on each of them citing their creative works and what each contains. These scholars' work being a compilation of brief profiles of African writers and various subjects in African literature, its scope is not broad enough to delve into the form in the works they talk about. Our study recognises Waciuma and Likimani as some of the pioneer female autobiographers in Kenya and goes further to examine the narrative voice in their autobiographies.

Our literature review reveals that for a long time, the works written about crime in Kenya have been by men. and women appear only as victims or beneficiaries. Such works include John Kiggia Kimani's Life and Times of a Bank Robber and Prison is not a Holiday Camp. Benjamin Garth Bundeh's Birds of Kamiti. Charles Githae's Comrade Inmate, and John Kiriamiti's Mv Life in Crime. Mv Life with a Criminal and Viv Life in Prison. Milly's story in Kiriamiti's Mv Life with a Criminal is unique because it enables us to see the experiences of the people who are closely related to the criminals and their suffering as victims. Sam Musitwa's article in the Saturday Nation augments this position of women as victims of crime. Monicah believes that her husband is a motor vehicle spare parts dealer and a mechanic. Her husband is responsible, loving, and supportive, and although Monicah has never been to his business premises, she has no reason to suspect him of any crime. She only gets to know about her husband's true "business," carjacking and robbery, when the police kill him in a foiled raid. Her friends do not believe that she is just a victim of her husband's crime and double life and the discovery, too late, that her husband is a gangster, destroys her life. This article is an example of a woman telling her story as a victim. In 2007, however. Saga McOdongo published Deadly Money Maker, the first autobiography about crime written by a Kenyan woman.

This literature review reveals a dearth in studies on the female autobiography in independent Kenya, and particularly the narrative voice in the Kenyan female autobiography.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study is provided by three approaches to literary criticism: theory of autobiography, feminist literary criticism and textual analysis. The theory of autobiography refers to the study of the autobiography and the issues that arise in the discussion of this mode of writing. Scholars in the discipline of autobiography credit Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), a German historian and philosopher, with the beginning of this theory. He and other scholars of his time attempted to unite the discipline of human sciences and they saw biography and autobiography as central to this constitution. Dilthey sees the human sciences as grounded in the understanding of human life and experience and stresses the interrelation between the two. Experience thus becomes a major aspect of autobiographical criticism as this mode of writing is a direct reflection about life. Dilthey further emphasises historicity or historical consciousness as an important factor in autobiographical criticism arguing that "autobiography [occupies] a central place as the key to understanding the curve of history, every sort of cultural manifestation, and the very shape and essence of human culture itself" (Marcus 137). This points to the nature of the autobiography as intertwined with history. Dilthey adds that the value of autobiography is found within the autobiographical structure as opposed to the life it describes.

George Misch, a German too and Dilthey's student, contributes to autobiographical criticism by demonstrating how the concepts of self, individuality and personality develop through history. He views the autobiography as depicting self-consciousness. He emphasises the heterogeneity of autobiographical forms and asserts that the

autobiography is unlike other literary genres because "its boundaries are more fluid and less definable in relation to form [and] it is a representation of life that is committed to no definite form" (Marcus 148). This statement points to the varied views of critics who define the autobiography in generic terms and those who place its significance in the ability to transcend literary conventions. Misch's criticism places the author-subject identity as central to autobiographical theory since it provides essential unity in the text. The unity of the author and subject in autobiographical writing binds all autobiographies because the autobiographer is an I-narrator who narrates both as an observer and the protagonist of the narrative. Misch's approach to autobiographical writing emphasises two main issues: its representative nature and the question of fact.

Georges Gusdorf develops autobiographical criticism by relating autobiographical writing to the Christian context where the soul finds itself through communion with God. Gusdorf is mainly concerned with the growth and development of man's self-knowledge and self-awareness and, like Dilthey, experience. Gusdorf views the autobiography as historical and cultural and relates its emergence to the invention of the mirror such that in the autobiography, individuals reflect their own image. The autobiographical voice acts as a medium through which autobiographers express their exploration and understanding of themselves over time.

Another scholar of autobiographical theory is Roy Pascal whose views in Design and Truth in Autobiography point to the historical and aesthetic approaches to the autobiography. Pascal is largely concerned with the element of truth in autobiographical

writing and lays emphasis on the present moment of telling the story. He views the autobiography as a strategy for creating the illusion of unity and coherence despite the fragmentations of identity. Pascal goes into an intensive study of the an of autobiography in an attempt to establish the element of truth in autobiographical works.

Dilthev. Misch and Pascal have influenced the views of American historian Karl Weintraub who sees autobiography as a historical consciousness linked to the growth of individuality and defines genuine autobiography as "a cultural and literary form which demonstrates temporal scope, interprets the past from a present standpoint, and understands life as a process which can be viewed as a coherent and patterned whole" (Marcus 167). Like. Dilthev. Misch and Pascal, Weintraub argues for the importance of historicity, self and experience of autobiographical writing, which are communicated through the autobiographical voice as narrators relate their personal experiences through the autobiographical form.

Christopher Lasch views contemporary American autobiographies as characterised by narcissism. In The Culture of Narcissism, he bemoans a past in which both history and individuality were highly valued in autobiographical writing and in which, he argues, true autobiography was possible (in Marcus 174). Furthering the discussion on autobiographical criticism, Richard Sennett views the recognition of the autonomy of the autobiography as a genre as having occurred around 1800 when a proper balance and separation between public and private life broke down. In The Fall of Public Man. Sennett emphasises the centralitv of retrospection in the autobiography arguing that the

relationship between the autobiography and nostalgia highlights the significance of memory and retrospection (in Marcus 175). The narrative voice in autobiography is what defines this form since the narrator is also the subject of the narrative, narrating events through memory and retrospection. From the views of the above mentioned scholars, it is clear that the theory of autobiography draws attention to the seminal nature of the autobiographical genre and it is firmly rooted to the question of what constitutes autobiography proper.

One of the main tenets of the theory of autobiography is intention, which not only refers to the stimulus behind the writing of the text, but defines its reception too. In autobiographical criticism, autobiographical truth is achieved from the intention of the writer combined with the character of the subject. Autobiographical truth is one of the problematics of autobiography and it can only be understood and solved through studying the reliability of the autobiographer's testimony. This principle will guide us in identifying and investigating the silences in the narrative voice in the autobiographies under study, that is, what the authors do not tell us in their narratives. An interrogation of the autobiographical voice will enable us to determine the reliability of the narrators and in the process discover the character of the writers and any possible hypocrisies and/or inconsistencies.

Another tenet of this theory is the compulsion to write the self. Autobiographical criticism lays a strong emphasis on ethics in the effort of the autobiographer to grasp and communicate the self. This theory holds that a true autobiographer is driven by an inner

compulsion to write the self, and this compulsion should not be driven by mercenary motives. The autobiographical voice takes an I-narrator stance that reveals to the reader, either directly or indirectly, the motive for the narrative.

The conditions and limits of autobiography are a further concern of the theory of autobiography. These relate to the rise of the autobiography and its generic definitions, that is. what marks out the autobiography from other forms of writing and what comprises genuine autobiography. In addition, this theory regards introspection as a significant element in the study of the autobiography. This concept appears in the discussions of the ability of the mind to simultaneously observe and be observed as we understand that the autobiographical author is identical with the subject. The theory of autobiography further highlights the link between historical progress with a growth in human individuality and self-consciousness. It places value on the autonomy of the autobiography due to its insider quality and separates autobiography from forms of history-writing. The autobiographical voice reveals the narrator's growth by going back in time and narrating in retrospection. In addition, the autobiographical voice offers autonomy to the autobiography because the narrative has a kind of an "owner." the I-narrator.

Autobiographical criticism gives way to black autobiographical theory whose major concerns are group or collective identity and authenticity. This branch of the theory of autobiography arises from the relations between autobiography and ethnicity, which raise questions about diversity of culture and identity in the autobiography. The black

autobiographical theory articulates a strong sense of community and emphasises ties and responsibilities to the community. In addition, it pays attention to authenticity in terms of the elements of cultural identity. This theory recognises the background of political and social struggles in which group identity is sustained in part through writing. The black autobiographical theory is relevant to our study because we focus on autobiographies by Kenyan women. The autobiographical voice is a key element in the understanding of cultural identity and black autobiographical theory enables us to demonstrate that the genre of autobiography is not unique to Western cultures.

The early proponents of the theory of autobiography such as Dilthey, Misch. Gusdorf. Pascal. Weintraub. Lasch. and Sennet generally configured autobiography as incontestably white, male, and Western. It was not until around the 1980's that theories on women's autobiography started to emerge. Earlier, women's self narratives had been absent but with time, women have employed this genre to write themselves into history. Writing about theories of women's autobiography. Sidonie Smith says:

Any theory of female textuality must recognize how patriarchal culture has fictionalized 'woman' and how, in response, women autobiographers had challenged the gender ideologies surrounding them in order to script their life narratives. (Women. Autobiography. Theory 12)

This view points to the absence of studies on women's autobiography due to silencing by the existing patriarchal literary tradition. Smith views women's autobiography as having

a double-voiced structure as it reveals the tensions between their desire for narrative authority and their concern about excessive self exposure. The autobiographical voice enables writers to select what to disclose and what to conceal in their narratives since the autobiography is a personal testimony.

Françoise Lionnet endorses Smith's views. She looks at the writings of black women in Africa and the Diaspora and proposes a theory of metisatze to articulate how marginalised subjects voice their lives. This theory refers to the act of viewing autobiography as a multi-voiced enterprise, and emphasises orality and the irreducible hybridity of identity. The theory of women's autobiography explores the relationship between subjectivity and autobiographical practice by examining how women, excluded from official discourse, use autobiography to talk back. Being a first person narrative voice, the autobiographical voice is inherently subjective and writers of autobiography employ other methods of creating credibility in their narratives.

Mary Mason, one of the proponents of the theory of women's autobiography, argues that women's alterity informs their establishment of identity as a relational, rather than individuating, process. She asserts that "the **self**-discovery of female identity seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some "other" (Women, Autobiography. Theory 8). This view points to the ability of the autobiographical voice to create an identity for the woman in the process of narration. The theory of women's autobiography further holds that the basis of women's autobiographical practice is their

experience. It looks at women's autobiographies as emphasising personal and domestic details and describing relationships with other people. In addition, this theory notes the pattern of discontinuity that marks women's lives and relates it to the disconnected and fragmentary nature of their autobiographies.

The theory of women's autobiography goes into the specifics of women's autobiography such as relationality, non-linear narration, fragmentation of the text, authority of experience and female subjectivity. This theory recognises women's autobiography as revealing their sense of collectiveness which, as Susan Friedman says, "can ...be a source of strength and transformation" (Smith 75). The theory centres its investigations on histories of women's subjectivities and asserts women's autobiography as a legitimate field of analysis and practice. This division of the theory of autobiography will enable us analyse the narrative voice in the autobiographies under study as it pays attention to the specifics of female identity and self-definition.

Our study proceeds from the general tenets of the theory of autobiography and incorporates the specific principles of black autobiographical theory and the theory of women's autobiography. These guide us in attending to the specificities of genre, history, culture and gender as these factors have a bearing on the findings of our investigation.

feminist literary criticism refers to the study of literature with particular attention to the woman question. The feminist literary criticism of today is a product of the women's movement of the 1960's. This movement was literary from the start in that it recognised

the significance of the images of women exemplified by literature, and deemed it vital to combat them and question their authority and coherence. Feminist perspectives began to be broached in literary circles with Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own (1929), which describes the difficult conditions under which early women writers had to work.

Feminist criticism examines the social, economic and cultural aspects of literary works, but especially what those works reveal about the role, position and influence of women. Feminist critics see literature as an arena in which to contest for power and control and also as an agent for social transformation. Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of equality and focuses on gender politics, power relations, and sexuality and analyses gender inequality and the promotion of women's rights, interests, and issues. The themes it explores include discrimination, stereotyping, oppression and patriarchy. Feminist criticism seeks to redress the imbalance of literary study in which all important books are written by men or the only characters of real interest are male. It does this by studying women writers whose works have been previously neglected.

Feminist criticism operates with a number of tenets. First, that society is pervasively patriarchal and is organised and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal and artistic. Second, the prevailing concepts of gender are largely, if not entirely, cultural constructs that were generated by the patriarchal biases of our society. Third, this patriarchal ideology pervades those writings which have been considered great literature and which until recently have been written almost entirely by men. Fourth, the traditional

aesthetic categories and criteria for analysing and appraising literary works are infused with masculine assumptions, interests and ways of reasoning, so that the standard rankings and critical treatments of literary works have been tacitly but thoroughly gender-biased.

Feminist criticism draws attention to gender relations in society, which is one of the central themes in literature. It seeks not merely to describe the way things are, but to challenge them. It demonstrates that male and female identity has always been a central concern of society. Feminist criticism insists on a special woman's sensibility of consciousness in literature, that is, a female tradition, language, and aesthetic. According to John Peck and Martin Covle, the aim of feminist literary criticism is "to 'reread' the text so as to emphasise the importance of those elements that most critics have chosen to overlook or could not see because they were writing within the dominant male tradition of criticism" (153). Our study looks at the female autobiographical voice with the aim of establishing the social issues that concern women.

Over the years, feminist criticism has developed into different branches, distinct in their approach to literary texts. Liberal feminism is a branch of feminism that argues for liberty and equality for women, but maintains that these can be achieved through legal means and social reforms without having to challenge men as a group. Liberal feminism seeks to reform the present practices in society rather than advocating for a wholesale revolutionary change. This branch has its origins in the social contract theories of the 16th and 17th centuries which were distinguished from previous political theories by their

insistence that any form of social hierarchy or authority required justification. It calls for the availability of equal opportunities for both men and women in all sectors of the society as long as the people's talents permit it. According to liberal feminists, women will only be liberated when sexist discrimination is eliminated. In literary works, this approach sees inequality in gender stereotypes, devaluation of women, division of labour into women's and men's roles, and restricted entry into top positions.

Radical feminist criticism is a branch of feminist theory that views women's oppression as the basic system of power upon which human relationships in society are arranged and it seeks to challenge this arrangement by rejecting traditional gender roles and male oppression. Radical feminism emerged in the late 1960's simultaneously with liberal feminism when women in developed Western countries noted that they all shared a repressive patriarchal system regardless of their political affiliation or social class. They held consciousness-raising sessions which produced a feminism that stood for the liberation of women from the gender constructs of society. It views the oppression of women by patriarchy as the root cause of all other inequalities in society and therefore seeks to abolish patriarchy. Radical feminists believe that eliminating patriarchy and other systems which perpetuate the domination of one group over another will liberate everyone from an unjust society.

Psychoanalytic feminist criticism maintains that gender is not biological but is based on the psycho-sexual development of the individual. Psychoanalytical feminists believe that gender inequality comes from early childhood experiences, which lead men to believe

they are masculine, and women to believe they are feminine. This branch further maintains that gender leads to a social system that is dominated by males, which in turn influences the individual psycho-sexual development. It suggests that the solution to gender conflicts is to avoid the gender-specific structures of the society by male-female coeducation.

Marxist feminist criticism is based on Marxist ideals of the oppressed and it describes a struggle between two opposed forces: men and women. This branch of feminism regards men as the owners of wealth while women, who work to produce this wealth, remain in the oppressed class. Marxist feminism sees women as oppressed, not by men, but by capitalism. It therefore seeks to overthrow the capitalist system so that all women are liberated and the means of production would belong to the society as a whole, both men and women. The argument here is that the abolition of women's economic dependence on men would eliminate the material basis of women's subordination.

Our study proceeds from the branch of feminist literary criticism referred to as gynocriticism, a term coined by Elaine Showalter, an American critic. This type of criticism began in the early 1970's when feminist critics shifted their attention from works by males to concentrate on those by females. The subjects of gynocriticism are •the history, styles, themes, genres, and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity: the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution or laws of a female literary tradition" (Barry 123). Gynocriticism enables scholars to perceive "how womanhood itself shape[s] women's

creative expression" (Showalter 312). In this light, gynocriticism enables us to understand the autobiographical voice as an avenue through which the woman writer expresses her "womanhood" as she explores and defines herself.

Gynocriticism is writer-centred, that is, it is interested in the woman as a writer and her representation of the reality of women's lives and experiences. It urges women to "become familiar with female authors and to discover their own female 'language,' a language that supposedly enters the subconscious before the "patriarchal" language of the dominant culture" (Griffith 142). The female autobiography is not just a search for identity, but an affirmation of female identity in a predominantly male cultural and literary tradition. In this vein, gynocriticism becomes important to the study of literature because, as Adrienne Rich says:

A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us. how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how we can begin to see and name - and therefore live - afresh. (Kaplan 518)

Gynocriticism is relevant to our study because it highlights the need for women to speak for themselves and argues for a difference between men and women which causes women to think and write differently from men. We apply this branch of feminist criticism in this study with the consideration that there are historical and social-cultural

experiences informing the autobiographies under study. We therefore proceed from a feminist criticism that pays attention to the African woman's consciousness, the Black feminist theory, to evaluate the ability of the autobiographical voice to express the identity of the black woman. This branch of feminism attends to the specifics of the black African woman's struggle for identity and self-definition and projects the African woman's social vision. By using the feminist approach to analyse the autobiographical voice in the texts under study, we are in a position to judge whether the authors present their works from a predominantly female sensibility.

In the case of women's autobiographies, feminist theories emphasise that it is important to understand and consider the fact that women's relation to writing is different from men's and it has not always been self-evident that women have had access to agency. These views refer to the historical fact that women's texts have remained invisible in the literary canon and in literary studies. This holds true also in the case of the Kenyan autobiography where women's narratives have had a marginal position despite Kenyan women having written a number of autobiographies. We analyse the female autobiographical voice in Kenya not exclusively to seek a "female" self in the texts, but rather to interpret how this voice portrays female experience and female subjectivity through a public discourse.

Our study employs the two theoretical frameworks in the context of literary textual analysis because the autobiographical voice is an element of form. However, of the two, the approach that best helps the literary scholar to handle textual analysis is the theory of

autobiography because it attends to the specifics of the autobiographical form, which is the concern of this study. To achieve a focused analysis of the texts, the study confines itself to textual evidence as opposed to extraneous information which may, as Wellek and Warren note, "crowd out literary studies" (20). Aristotle is one of the earliest proponents of textual analysis as an approach to an. In The Poetics, he lists comedy, tragedy and epic as the main forms of art and contends that whatever form a work of art may belong to, it can be studied and analysed as an independent entity. Discussing tragedy, he itemises the parts that make up a work of art - fable or plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and melody (song) and asserts that fable or plot is the most important of the six. His position is that a work of art should be able to explain itself as "an action that is complete, and whole, and of some magnitude" (31). An interrogation into the autobiographical voice leads to an evaluation of the whole narrative because the narrative voice is a cohesive device that contributes to the wholeness of the text.

In the 20th Century, criticism started displaying a switch from an emphasis on the author, as had been the case earlier, to an emphasis on the text. The leading figure in this critical movement was F.R. Leavis, an English critic. While earlier criticism concentrated on literary history and biography, Leavis advocated for a close reading of the text itself, arguing that "the critic should analyse the words on the page rather than work from extrinsic evidence" (Peck and Covle 153). Textual analysis examines a text and discusses its artistry and effect with the aim of revealing the intricacy and subtlety of what it says about human experience. The main interest is in what the text says and how it says it, which is the dual focus of literature - form and content.

Susana Onega and Jose Angel Garcia argue for textual analysis and intrinsic evidence in Narratology. Their argument is that "the text is a self-sufficient entity whose elements should be addressed within its own structure" (22). Their views point to the autonomy of literary works and are echoed by Kellev Griffith when he says:

Understanding and appreciating a work of literature need have little or no connection with the author's intended meanings, with the author's life, or with the social and historical circumstances that may have influenced the author. Everything the reader needs to understand and appreciate a work is contained within the work itself. (121)

While appreciating the role of historical and biographical circumstances in the autobiographies under study, therefore, our study will not be unduly influenced by these factors, but will focus on the information provided by the autobiographical voice.

According to Northrop Frye in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." the basic function of criticism is basically "to mediate between the artist and his public" (542). In view of this, the concepts of the theory of autobiography, feminist literary criticism and textual analysis will guide our examination of the female autobiographical voice in independent Kenya and enable us to evaluate its role and effectiveness in communicating the writers' message. This is because as a cohesive device, the autobiographical voice

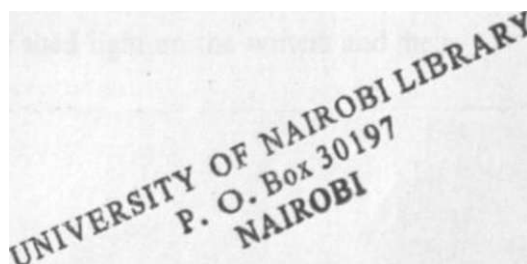
enables us to relate to all other elements of the texts. These approaches will enhance our appreciation of the mutual relationship between form and content.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The focus of our study is the autobiographical voice in Kenyan female autobiographies, but we also refer to the autobiographies by Kenyan males and relate these to the writers who form the ground of our investigation.

The study examines Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi; Owuor's Mv Life as a Paraplegic; Warah's Triple Heritage; Otieno's Mau Mau's Daughter; Likimani's Passbook Number F.47927 and Fighting Without Ceasing; Kabira's A Letter to Mariama Ba; and Maathai's Unbowed to obtain a focused and comprehensive analysis of the female autobiographical voice in independent Kenya. The only Kenyan female autobiography we have not studied is McOdongo's Deadly Money Vlaker, which was published in 2007, when I was preparing to submit my thesis for examination. The focus of the research is on the Kenyan female autobiographies but includes the male component because the female autobiography does not exist in isolation. However, our study of the male autobiography is not intensive.

Our focus is limited to autobiographies written by Kenyan women after independence because it is only after independence that the Kenyan nation was born. In addition, our study is text-bound and therefore not able to comment on issues outside the works under study.



METHODOLOGY

Our study began with a comprehensive reading of all the works by the writers under study to form an informed base for the research. We then proceeded to read works on the nature and function of the autobiography and the elements of narrative voice to contextualise the study and read Kenyan male autobiographies to provide the study with a case for argumentation. The reading of the male autobiographies in Kenya is important as it contextualises the reading of the female autobiography because the latter is not written in isolation.

The principles of the theory of autobiography and feminist literary criticism guided our analysis of the female autobiographical voice in the selected texts, but we approached the research using textual analysis because this approach combines an appreciation of the literary text as an aesthetic construct with a sense of its value and importance. The theory of autobiography has enabled us to appreciate the nature and function of autobiography in the texts under study, while feminist literary criticism points us to women's use of the autobiographical voice to explore themselves and affirm their identity. This being a study of the narrative voice, and in line with the tenets of textual analysis, we take the selected texts as the central focus of analysis and interpretation.

We interviewed some of the writers under study to clarify various issues arising in their autobiographies. We conducted the interviews on a face-to-face basis, but where the writers were not available we contacted them through telephone and e-mail. In addition, we interviewed other people who know the writers to shed light on the writers and their

works. The interviews enabled us elicit information that the authors may have left out in their autobiographies, deliberately or otherwise, and guided us in establishing the motivation behind the telling of their stories and the credibility of the same. Interviews enabled us to eliminate some works such as Kiriamiti's My Life with a Criminal from our analysis as we established through an interview that the writer is male. The interviews were unstructured and the interviewee's views were secondary to an intrinsic study of the texts. Our conclusions are derived from textual analysis, with textual evidence taking precedence over the opinions of the writers and other interviewees.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The study is arranged in five chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction

The first chapter introduces the subject of autobiography and the authors under investigation. It outlines the statement of the problem under study, its objectives, hypotheses, rationale, and reviews the literature relevant to the study. The chapter describes the theoretical framework that guides the study, the methodology, and the scope and limitations of the research.

Chapter Two: The Autobiography

The second chapter discusses the genre of autobiography, focusing on its nature, function, and forms related to this mode of writing, issues that are necessary to our understanding of the autobiography.

Chapter Three: The Autobiography in Kenya

The third chapter traces the development of the autobiography in Kenya and establishes that Kenyan men published autobiographies earlier than women, and the number of their autobiographies far surpasses that by women.

Chapter Four: Exploring the Self

The fourth chapter focuses on the autobiographical voice as a means for self-exploration and discovery. The chapter argues that what the autobiographical voice conceals is as significant as what it divulges.

Chapter Five: Defining the Self

The fifth chapter explores how writers employ the female autobiographical voice to define themselves and assert their identities. We discuss the autobiography as an avenue through which the Kenyan woman defines herself and asserts her identity.

Conclusion

The conclusion comments on the choice and effectiveness of the autobiographical voice in communicating the Kenyan woman's social vision.

CHAPTER TWO: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION

Autobiography is the account of an individual human life, written by the subject. It must be composed by the subject but may be dictated to a second party. It essentially seeks to answer the question "Who am I and how did I become what I am?"

In Reading Autobiography, Smith and Watson record that the term "autobiography" was first coined in the preface to a collection of poems by the 18th Century English working class writer Ann Yearsley, but most sources cite Robert Southey's anglicising of the three Greek words - autos, bios, and graphe - in 1809 as the first use of the term in English. In Greek, autos means "self," from "life", and graphe "writing." Taken together in this order, the words denote "self life writing," a short definition of autobiography. This relates to our earlier definition of autobiography as the story or account of one's life written by oneself. However, the relatively recent coinage of the term autobiography does not mean that the practice of self-writing began only at the end of the 18th Century. The form existed much earlier, with terms such as "memoir" and "confessions" being used to mark writers' reflection of self reference through speculations about history, politics, religion, science, and culture.

Writing on the history of the term autobiography, Robert Folkenflik specifies the exact dates of the word's emergence in the West:

The term autobiography and its synonym self-biography, having never been used in earlier periods, appeared in the late eighteenth-century (sic) in several forms, in isolated instances in the seventies, eighties, and nineties in both England and Germany with no sign that one influenced another. (Reading Autobiography 2)

In this century, autobiographies, viewed as a demonstration of consciousness and self-realisation. were sought by a growing reading public in Europe, particularly the people with access to affordable printed books.

In the autobiography, writers expand life to show how people have become what they are at a given moment in an ongoing process of reflection. Defining autobiography, French theorist Philippe Lejeune says, "we call autobiography the retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his [sic] own existence when he puts the principal accent upon his life, especially upon the story of his own personality" (Reading Autobiography 1). This definition points to the autobiography as being not just a mere record of the incidents of a person's life, but as a form that reflects a holistic picture of the author's character and soul. This picture distinguishes fictional narratives from the intimate and self-revealing nature of the autobiography because the latter aims at presenting the author's life as actually lived through time.

Every imaginative work is, in a sense, autobiographical because authors write from their experiences within the societies in which they live and they are products of those societies. In Writers in Politics, Ngugi argues:

Literature results from conscious acts of men in society... At the collective level, literature, as a product of men's intellectual and imaginative activity embodies, in words and images, the tensions, conflicts, contradictions at the heart of a community's being and process of becoming. (5)

Commenting on the relationship between writers and their societies. Ngugi adds in Homecoming:

A writer responds, with his total personality, to a social environment which changes all the time. Being a kind of sensitive needle, he registers, with varying degrees of accuracy and success, the conflict and tensions in his changing society... For the writer himself lives in, and is shaped by, history. (47)

Writers thus use an to reflect the various experiences of their societies. However, the term •"autobiography" should be confined to a direct narrative aiming at a truthful record of the author's life. Autobiographical narratives can be found in all cultures and all ages, but autobiography as a deliberate literary genre is brought into existence only under certain conditions: the credibility of the author especially in terms of personality and the intention of writing, and truth.

NATURE OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Autobiography is a form of a "coming of age" story in which the writer is initiated into adulthood through knowledge, experience, and understanding. It is an effort to define and understand the self. This self emerges through the experiences that writers describe, and the manner in which they describe them. Many autobiographies address the concept of growth by taking the form of a journey or movement from childhood to adulthood, from innocence to knowledge, and the various experiences that characterise this passage. This movement affords autobiographers a sense of discovery of their identity.

- The autobiography aims at communicating the truth about one's life, and the story must qualify in respect to facts if it is to persuade readers of its authenticity. Smith and Watson define autobiographical truth as "an intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding of the meaning of a life" (Reading Autobiography 13). Standards of autobiographical truth appear in terms of the sincerity of the writers, evaluated through their seriousness of personality and the intention of writing; subjective truth, that is. the unique truth of life as it is seen and understood by the individual; historical truth, that is. truth that can be verified through history; and fictional truth, that is. artistry.

Autobiographers cultivate autobiographical truth through cohesion, especially in terms of consistency of narrative voice and the events narrated in the story. Memory is also important in depicting truth, as is the courage and risk to talk about oneself. Autobiography opens the author's life to the public and this kind of exposure of necessity

requires a courageous character who can withstand public scrutiny. Another element of communicating truth is consistency in character depiction and the various stages of growth as the autobiographer moves from one point of life to another.

Para-textual elements such as speeches, letters, photographs, prefaces, and dedications also assist in communicating truth as they support the author's claims. In Fighting without Ceasing, Likimani provides photographs and letters to validate the various events that she narrates, and the work also has a preface. Ngugi in Detained provides letters to authenticate some of the claims he makes about his experiences. These are often supported by vivid descriptions of events and real life characters. In addition, autobiographical claims such as date of birth can be verified or falsified by recourse to documentation or facts outside the narrative. Photographs and biographical details link the narrative to the autobiographer's life and act as a guarantee of its authenticity. Autobiography also uses other forms of self-revelation such as diary material and letters to validate its claims.

The autobiography relies on memory and recollections as writers dialogue with themselves to reconstruct and to mediate a present identity from the memories that emerge. As Smith and Watson observe, "the writer of autobiography depends on access to memory to tell a retrospective narrative of the past and to situate the present within that experiential history" (Reading Autobiography 16). Memory thus becomes a source and authenticator of autobiographical acts.

The process of memory is not a passive one of mere retrieval from a memory bank. Rather, the remembering subject actively recreates the meaning of the past in the act of calling to mind. Autobiographers remember the experiences of their lives and present an order of values that are their own. History influences memory, such that how people remember, what they remember, and who does the remembering are historically specific. A particular culture or society's understanding of events at a particular moment makes remembering possible for an autobiographer.

Memory is contextual and acts of remembering take place at particular sites and in particular circumstances. The memory invoked in autobiography is specific to the time of writing and the contexts of narrating. These contexts of remembering are charged such that what is remembered and what is forgotten, and why, change over time and this influences what autobiographers recollect and record and what they obscure in their narratives. For example, autobiographers may easily remember and narrate about certain achievements in their lives and conveniently forget painful events such as the death of a loved one or a mistake that they may have made and which they are embarrassed about. Such silences aid the scholar of the autobiography in establishing autobiographical truth in the works under study and hence the credibility of the writer.

Memory is not entirely a private activity, but can be a collective activity to a certain degree. Various communities of memory such as religious, racial, ethnic and familial develop their own occasions, rituals, and practices of remembering which aid in preserving and passing on memories and shape the memories conveyed. Some of the

sources are personal (dreams, photographs, objects, family stories, genealogy) while some are public (documents, historical events, books, collective rituals). For example. Bethwell Ogot in Mv Footprints on the Sands of Time traces his genealogy as part of the collective Luo people while in Triple Heritage Warah refers to historical events such as the arrival of Indian labourers in East Africa to build the Kenya-Uganda Railway and provides a photograph of Indians arriving in Nairobi after being expelled from Uganda by President Idi Amin. The collective nature of acts of remembering extends beyond the recognition of social sites of memory, historical documents, and oral traditions. It extends to motives for remembering and the question of those on whose behalf one remembers. Since acts of remembering are connected to how people understand their past and make claims about it. autobiographers recreate memories as they seek to reconstruct their own sense of identity in the present through retrospection and introspection.

The senses of smell, taste, touch, sound, and sight evoke memory and convey it in objects or events with particular meaning for the autobiographer. People afflicted by traumatic memory due to certain crises in their lives are beset with memories that keep interrupting a present moment and insist on being present. These memories may come to the surface of consciousness in bits and fragments, time and again, despite the passing of years. Such memories are often embroiled with difficulties such as sexual assault, imprisonment, disability, and chronic illnesses, among others, which may be expressed only in the halting fragments of traumatic memory. An example of an autobiography about trauma is Owuor's Mv Life as a Paraplegic in which the writer records her difficult experiences as a paraplegic. Autobiographers in such situations struggle to find ways of telling about

their suffering by reassembling fragments of memories. In such narratives, the problem of recalling and recreating a past life involves organising the irrevocable force of memory and arranging its fragmentary intrusions with increasing, if partial, understanding.

Experience is another important feature of the autobiography because the form involves narrating and interpreting one's experiences through retrospection and introspection. The experience presented in the autobiography is not merely personal, but an interpretation of the past and the author's place in a culturally and historically specific present. Autobiographical narrators do not predate experience, but, instead, they come to be through experience. Experience, then, is the process through which a person becomes a certain kind of subject having certain identities in the social realm, which are constituted through material, cultural, economic, historical, and social relations. In effect, autobiographical subjects know themselves as products of particular experiences attached to their social status and identities.

Experience is discursive depending on the autobiographer and it is embedded in the languages of everyday life and the consciousness or awareness one acquires in different places and disciplines. Everyday human beings know themselves, or experience themselves through various fields which serve as cultural registers for what counts as experience and who counts as an experiencing subject. Experiences change over time and in the autobiographical process, writers retrospectively make experience and convey a sense of it to others through narration. In the process of narrating their experiences, autobiographers become readers of their own experiential histories and they get to know

themselves by looking back at particular historical moments. The process of narration affords autobiographers a chance to be observers of their own lives from a distance created by the lapse of time while still remaining the objects of narration.

Experience is authoritative in the sense that it is the primary type of evidence in autobiography, and the basis on which readers are invited to consider the narrator a uniquely qualified authority. An autobiographer's investment in the authority of experience serves a number of purposes: it invites the reader to believe in the story and the veracity of the narrator, persuades the reader of the narrative's authenticity, validates certain claims as truthful, and justifies writing and publicising the life story. In the autobiography, narrators claim the authority of experience both explicitly and implicitly. Implicit claims can be as humble as the appearance of the autobiographer's name on the

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title page. This often happens for people who are public figures whose names on the front cover announce credibility, such as Maathai in Unbowed. Nelson Mandela in Long Walk to Freedom, or Bill Clinton in My Life.

The author's name in the autobiography is a signifier of identity and it contributes to the autobiographer's replication of the real. Writing about the significance of the name in autobiography. Leigh Gilmore says that "It identifies a person within a historical context of place and patrilineage, and focuses attention on the solid corporeality to which it refers. Ultimately, it seems to mark a ground zero of representational veracity" (65). Therefore, the name itself is a kind of guarantee: it assures the reader of the authority of the writers to tell their life stories and promises that the reading public will find the

narratives credible. It serves as an autobiographical signature that seals the contract of trust between the autobiographer and the reader.

In the case of persons who are not widely known by virtue of their lack of public status, appeals to the authority of experience may be explicit. Such appeals may be made on the basis of sexual, ethnic, racial, religious, or national identity claims. This **means** that identity confers political and communal credibility. In such cases, a previously "voiceless" narrator such as a slave, criminal, woman, non-literate person, child, inmate of a mental hospital or prison, or a formerly colonised person, finds the means and impetus to speak publicly. For example, Owuor in My Life as a Paraplegic and Warah in Triple Heritage appeal to the authority of experience by indicating their status as paraplegic and possessing multiple heritage respectively in the titles of their autobiographies. Similarly, Kiriamiti indicates his experience as a criminal and as a prison inmate in the titles of Mv Life in Crime and Mv Life in Prison respectively, again appealing to the authority of experience.

Experience thus becomes a significant issue in the study and understanding of the autobiography because readers have expectations about who has the cultural authority to tell a particular kind of life story and what such stories should highlight. The autobiography tells the personal story of the author and draws its content from the author's experiences over time.

The autobiography is selective, that is. the author deliberately selects what or who to include or leave out of the narrative, thus determining where and how the autobiography starts, proceeds, and ends. The autobiography is a story in the first person point of view where the narrator owns and controls the narrative so that readers get to know only what the narrator tells them. Readers of autobiography sometimes detect omissions or silences in autobiographies when writers deliberately omit or gloss over certain parts of their lives or events. Through such silences and inconsistencies, readers are able to evaluate the autobiographical truth in the autobiographies and in the process assess the credibility of the narrator. On selectivity, Pascal observes that "In the face of the endless complexity of life, the selection of facts, distribution of emphasis, choice of expression: Everything depends on the stand point chosen..." (10). Pascal's view points to autobiographers' power to own the story and to have control over the facts of the narrative, thus giving the form its selective nature.

The autobiography is a transcendental structure which moves with historical fluctuations. It transcends basic categories especially time and space to illustrate the author's maturity from the events of childhood and youth. Autobiographers write their stories mostly as adults who are able to look back in time and pass judgment on others and also on themselves depending on how they have led their lives. Through the process of self-evaluation in introspection, autobiographers assess their development and in the end their stories exhibit a kind of discovery about themselves. The autobiographical self remains fundamentally individualistic because it seeks to define itself in terms of its ability to separate itself from others in the society, and individualism thus becomes a necessary

precondition for the autobiography. However, this individualism is only valuable if autobiographers are to use their own experiences to pass on moral lessons to readers.

The autobiography takes the nature of oral testimony because autobiographers tell their life stories as if they were narrating to an audience. Autobiographers use their own experiences as testimony to the historical times in which they live. However, the autobiography is different from history in its use of personal details. Professionalism requires historians to be faithful to the evidence available and to seek out multiple sources of evidence, including personal narratives. In Oral Tradition, Jan Vansina points out the need for historians to corroborate information by archeological finds and linguistic evidence to ensure reliability. Discussing the use of oral traditions as sources of history, Vansina says that "oral tradition can be of real value, but doubts must be entertained about it unless it can be substantiated by other historical sources" (8). Excellence in writing history demands precise objectivity. Historians preserve this objectivity and the truthfulness it pledges by maintaining distance from their material and removing or qualifying any reference to themselves in the narrative.

Historians, like autobiographers, are writers assembling a story about the past from archives available to them. However, while historians place themselves outside or at the margin of the historical picture, autobiographers are at the centre of the pictures they assemble and are interested in the meaning of larger forces, conditions, or events for their own stories. In relation to this, Ochieng observes that autobiographies provide interpretations of events, not merely records as is the case in history. In History of

Autobiography in Antiquity. Georg Misch notes that although autobiographies are fundamentally personal narratives, they "are bound always to be representative of their period, within a range that will vary with the intensity of the authors' participation in contemporary life and with the sphere in which they moved (Reading Autobiography 113). This view points to the significance of the autobiography in reflecting the historical period in which the writer lives or writes.

Autobiography avoids conscious fictionalising. This relates to the importance of truth in autobiography because writing the self demands loyalty to facts as opposed to fiction. Yet, a certain amount of unconscious fictionalising may take place in autobiography, for authors may be psychologically unable to reveal certain of their motivations, untrained in their analyses of their true motivations, in which case it becomes the reader's duty to make the proper interpretation of the autobiographical details. Even when autobiographers are discreet or reticent they reveal themselves because what they conceal is often as significant as what they recount. While there cannot really exist a psychoanalytic autobiography, even the most cautious and self-protective of autobiographies can be read from a psychoanalytic viewpoint as readers notice both the information that writers provide and the silences in the narratives.

The autobiography is not mere remembrance of the past, but a re-enactment and recreation of the authors' lives and experiences as the authors perceive themselves in retrospection. In relation to this, Pascal says that "the reader [of the autobiography] does

not merely take in historical facts, but participates in an integrated succession of experiences" (23).

When telling their stories, autobiographers engage in imaginative creation to persuade their readers of the credibility of the narratives and to invite readers to share in the autobiographers' experiences. In this vein, autobiographers make use of what Chinua Achebe refers to in "Truth of Fiction" as "beneficent fiction" (151) to relate their reality to that of the world at large. In this essay, Achebe talks about the need for readers to identify imaginatively with what they read in fiction. He says that "imaginative identification is the opposite of indifference: it is human connectedness at its most intimate" (151). Achebe's explanation of the relationship between fiction and readers points to the aspect of empathy, on which beneficent fiction is founded and is an important feature of the autobiography. I am persuaded that we can see a similar relationship between the autobiographer and the reader as the latter identifies with the writer's experiences through the imagination. Readers of autobiographies get an opportunity to share in the writers' personal lives and to identify with their experiences as fellow human beings through empathy.

ARTISTRY IN THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Autobiographers employ deliberate aesthetic craft when telling their stories. Their efforts to recreate past events and put them in narrative form constitute the basis of artistry. Autobiographers employ literary devices to reconstruct their life stories, which render them worth studying in an attempt to unearth not only the motives for writing, but their

vision as well. When studying the autobiography as a literary form, we consider aspects of art such as story, themes, narrative voice, plot, characters, and setting.

A narrative is an account of events, a story, and narration is the process of delivering that story to bring it to life for the reader. In Aspects of the Novel, E. M. Forster defines a story as "a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence" (18). The autobiography essentially tells a story as writers narrate their lives as lived through time. The narrative voice is the voice that authors adopt for their stories, that is, the story's narrator, speaker, or persona who delivers the story to the reader. Literary writers select their narrators deliberately depending on what and how the writers wish to communicate to readers. A story's point of view influences readers' responses to characters and actions as the point of view co-operates with other aspects of a story to convey feeling and embody meaning. The degree of narrators' knowledge, the objectivity of their responses, and the extent of the narrators' participation in the stories' actions all combine to determine readers' understanding of and response to a literary text.

The autobiography employs the first person narrative voice where narrators tell their stories in their own voices. This kind of narrator is the principal character in the narrative and tells the story both as a participant and an observer of the unfolding events. First person narrators report incidents in various ways: what the narrators have done, said, or heard, that is, first hand experience; what they have observed others do and say; what others have told them; and what they are able to reconstruct from the information they

have. The first person narrative voice enables autobiographers to narrate their own experiences as they have lived them.

The first person narrator may be limited, particularly because this narrative voice is subjective and the narrator chooses what to reveal or to conceal. In addition, this narrative voice is limited to the physical and mental boundaries of the narrator such that readers only get to know what the narrator knows, sees, and participates in. Aware of the shortcomings of the first person narrator, autobiographers attempt to counter these drawbacks by employing dialogue, reported speech, other characters, and providing evidence through means such as dates, photographs, diary entries, historical occurrences and figures, and letters in their narratives. Readers and critics of the autobiography look into the narrator's disclosures and silences to determine that narrator's truthfulness and reliability and remain alert to textual signals that either ensure or undermine it. The autobiography being the story of one's life written by that person, this mode of writing has no conclusive full stop because the writer has to be present until the end of the story. The author-narrator in the autobiography is one of the strategies of achieving cohesion in the autobiography as the first person narrator holds the story together. The autobiographical voice is the principal concern of the present study.

A story's plot, the arrangement of events that highlights causality, is what holds readers' attention to the narrative as they keep reading to find out what happens next. In Poetics, Aristotle defines plot as "the combination of the incidents, or things done in the story" (30). Plot includes a sequence of events that bear a noteworthy causal relationship to each

other. Explaining plot. Forster says that it is a narrative of events in which "the time-sequence is preserved, but the sense of causality overshadows it" (60). In a story, all the actions, incidents, speeches, thoughts, and observations are linked together to make up an organic unity, the essence of which is the development of causes and effects. The plot in literature is thus based on actions as they develop either sequentially or chronologically.

The ways in which writers assemble their plots determine the stories' structure. Chronologically, all stories are similar as they all move from beginning to end in accord with the time it takes for causes to produce effects. However, autobiographers may develop their plots in different ways because, since they own their narratives, they choose where to begin and end their stories. Thus, while some autobiographers tell their stories in chronological order, others piece theirs together through widely separated episodes, flashbacks, dreams, speeches, memories, sections of letters, and conversations with other characters. For instance. Maathai begins her autobiography at the point of her birth and structures her plot chronologically so that she ends the story when she receives the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize. In Nothing but the Truth: The Story of a Surgeon with Four Wives. Yusuf Dawood. does not tell his story in a chronological manner, but rather divides his life into four sectors and narrates the story of his life as experienced in each of the four areas.

When studying the autobiography, we look at the arrangement and development of each individual narrative because writers' motivation for writing autobiographies determines how the writers arrange their plots. Most autobiographers present their plots in the form

of a journey to indicate the steps they have taken to be where they are in the present. Whichever plot structure an autobiography may take, what is important is the unity of the text because, as Aristotle says, the story "must represent one action, a complete whole" (32). Similarly, Forster notes the importance of the unity of plot when he says. "[Plot] will constantly rearrange and reconsider, seeking clues, new chains of cause and effect, and the final sense will not be of clues or chains but of something aesthetically compact" (88). This unity, which is the cohesion in the text, ensures that the narrative becomes, like the autobiographer, an organic whole. The autobiography is a subjective form, therefore the unity of plot also aids in enhancing the credibility of the narrative as readers look out for consistency in the autobiography.

The setting of a literary text, that is, the place or location of a story's action along with the time in which it occurs, is essential to the value of the narrative because it provides a physical, historical, and cultural context that enhances readers' understanding of characters and actions. Literary writers use the setting of their stories to create a reality that their readers can experience, whether it is one they actually know, or one they must imagine. Autobiographers use setting to contextualise the concerns they address in their narratives in terms of time, place, and culture.

The depiction of characters in literary texts gives readers a chance to understand and draw conclusions about the characters' qualities. As mentioned earlier, the principal character in the autobiography is the autobiographer and all other characters only exist insofar as they bring the main character into sharper focus and aid in depicting the growth

of the autobiographer. Literary writers employ five distinct ways of presenting information about characters: what the characters do: how their persons and the environments they live or work in are described: what they say through dialogue and reported speech: what other characters say about them: and what the author says about them while speaking as a participant or an observer.

The protagonist in the autobiography is a round character who recognises, changes with, or adjusts to various circumstances. In addition, autobiographies have fiat characters or minor characters, people who interact with the protagonists in the course of their lives, and who highlight the movement of the autobiographers from one stage to another. The autobiography employs real life characters who the autobiographer has interacted with, meaning that we get to know not just the writers, but also those with whom they are in close proximity. The autobiographer selects which people to include and to leave out of the autobiography depending on their role in the autobiographer's life.

The above aspects of art, as they appear in the autobiography, demonstrate the literariness of the form.

FORMS RELATED TO THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The autobiography is only one form among many in which writers speak of themselves and the incidents of their personal experiences. A study of the autobiography requires an understanding of other genres closely related to this mode of writing such as the biography, diary, memoir and the epistle and a distinction between the autobiography and literary forms that have autobiographical content.

A biography is a written account of a person's life by another. Although like the autobiography it narrates a person's life, it does so differently by documenting and interpreting that life from a point of view external to the subject. This means that a biographer can only record or narrate the experience of the subject as seen externally as opposed to internally as is the case in the autobiography. The biographer cannot capture the self that is only experienced by the subject.

Biography is different from autobiography in matters of time and timing too because for a biographer the death of the subject does not necessarily denote the end of the narrative. A biography can be written either during the life or after the death of the person whose life is under narration. In fact, biographies offering different interpretations of particular historical figures or other individuals may appear periodically over many centuries. For the autobiographer, however, while a life narrative can be written over a long time, it must be written during the writer's life span, or be published posthumously. Examples of biographies include Ohaeto Ezenwa's Chinua Achebe: A Biography. Andrew Morton's Moi: The Making of a Statesman or Babafemi Badejo's Raila: An Enigma of Kenyan Politics.

.Another distinguishing factor between biography and autobiography arises in the presentation of evidence. Biographers incorporate multiple sources of evidence, including historical documents, interviews, and family archives, which the biographers evaluate for validity. Few biographers use their personal memories of their subject as reliable evidence, unless they had a personal relationship to the subject of the biography (as a

child, relative, friend, or colleague). For autobiographers, however, memories are the primary archival source. Autobiographers may have recourse to other kinds of sources such as letters, journals, photographs, conversations, and their knowledge of a historical moment, but the value of such evidence for their stories lies in the ways in which they employ that evidence to support, supplement, or offer commentary to their reminiscences. Discussing the importance of memory on autobiographical narratives, Smith and Watson say that "imaginative acts of remembering always intersect with such rhetorical acts such as assertion, justification, judgment, conviction, and interrogation" (Reading Autobiography 6). This view points to the value of memory as a subjective form of evidence, not externally verifiable, but asserted on the subject's authority. In addition, a difference exists between the autobiography and the biography in terms of points of view. Biographers write about the objects of their studies in the third person, while autobiographers employ the first person narrative voice.

The memoir is close to the autobiography as both are based on personal experience, are arranged in chronological order, and are reflective. The distinction between the two is one of intensity, depending on the amount of self-revelation contained in the memoir. The autobiography largely focuses its attention on the self, but the memoir devotes more attention to occurrences around and outside the writer. From the memoir we learn a great deal about the society in which the writer or subject moves, but only get limited information about the writers themselves.

In the memoir, writers recount stories of others and events or movements in which the writers, their other subjects, or both have taken part. Memoirs allow writers to narrate their stories as part of a larger story and their writing justifies the telling of the writers' life stories without demanding that the writers commit themselves to a full disclosure as the autobiography does. The memoir is a popular form because it purports to offer an insider's perspective on a sphere to which the common reader ordinarily has little access. However, it lacks the more intimate focus on the author's own memories, feelings, and emotions that the autobiography has. For instance, Winnie Mandela's Part of My Soul is a memoir, but it is presented as a series of interviews with the subject.

A diary is a personal record or journal of events, reflections, or observations kept daily or at frequent intervals. The terms "diary" and "journal" are both derived from the Latin dies, day, to mean a record of events kept from day to day or periodically. The diary is commonly confined to daily or periodic records kept by individuals; the journal is used in this sense too, but also refers to daily records of institutions and to printed periodicals. The diary is a private document and need have no artistic pretensions although many diaries have possessed high literary quality. The diary preserves a day-to-day process of one's life, without regard to patterned development, narrative continuity, or dramatic movement toward a climax. The autobiography, as opposed to the diary, sees separate occurrences, even in early life, as moving toward and completing a whole finally achieved in a later life. A journal concentrates largely on the interior life of the writer, often excluding events outside the author's memory and imagination.

While the autobiography reviews life from a particular moment in time, diary records move through a series of moments in time. The diary notes down what seems important without considering its long-term significance and entries in a diary are often unaccompanied by comments. In contrast, the autobiography holds an organised shaping of the past with explanatory and interpretive comments by the author. While the autobiography is an artistic whole, the diary is always in the process, making it disjointed in some sense. The shape of the diary derives from its existence in time passing, often informed by internal and external events in the diarist's life. The ongoing effect of time in the diary means that the outcome of time is unknown by both diarists and readers, so that self-positioning is always fluid. The diary depicts events as they occur rather than attempting to select and organise them in terms of a unifying vision. This structure gives the diary broad textual boundaries into which diarists insert various materials. Such boundaries allow for intertextuality of diaries by family members or colleagues.

Writing about the functions of the diary. Suzanne Bunkers and Cynthia Huff refer to this mode of writing as:

A research tool for historians, a therapeutic instrument for psychologists, a repository of information about social structures and relationships for sociologists. and a form of literature and compositions for rhetoricians and literary scholars. (1)

As a work of art, the diary is both flexible and adaptable so that it is able to borrow from, and sometimes contribute to, other narrative structures. The diary has a wide range of

contents as it documents its writer's life and times, and the information it excludes is as important as that which it includes as the writer engages in a process of self-revelation and self-construction. The diary is created in and represents a continuous present. Diarists may reread previous entries before writing a current one, creating a layered present to which a version of the past is immediately available. This is unlike writers of the autobiography or the memoir who look back from a fixed point in time to relate events in retrospect.

Diaries have narrative structures close to those found in autobiographies and memoirs, but the "plots" are different. While writers of autobiographies and memoirs know what happens next and direct readers' response at every point, events in the diary are often a series of surprises to writer and reader alike, which gives the form its spontaneity. The presence of a sense of audience, real or implied, conscious or unconscious, in the diary, as in other forms of self-revelation, has a crucial influence over what is said and how it is said. The question of audience in the literary diary makes this form both private and public, hence challenging readers as they try to understand the personal, social, and historical circumstances of the writer's life. The audience facilitates the diarist's ultimate focus by providing the impetus either for the initial writing or for transforming what might have been casual, fragmented entries into a more carefully arranged and coherent work. The presence of an implied audience serves to change private diaries into public documents.

A study of the diary addresses the issue of artistry because diarists engage in creativity to involve their readers in the experiences the diary presents. Diarists use their texts to assert their individuality while employing strategies such as repetition, deletion and encoding to shape what they say and what they leave out in their entries. In addition, diarists employ foreshadowing, flashbacks, characterisation, setting, and symbols to aid in developing and contextualising their subjects and thus make the work relevant for the reader. Anne Frank's Diary of a Young Girl is one such work which records the experiences of a young girl when her family goes into hiding during the holocaust. In "Introduction to a Day at a Time," Margo Cullev attends to the critical importance of the audience addressed by the diary writer. According to her, the pages of the diary become "a kind of mirror before which the diarist stands assuming this posture or that" (Women, Autobiography, Theory 219). On the value of the diary, Lynn Bloom argues in "I Write for Myself and Strangers" that:

When private diaries become public documents they transcend the realm of the family legacies and historical records where truly private diaries live. In trusting themselves to speak beyond their diary's pages to an audience of strangers, present and to come, the authors of public diaries ... extend the boundaries of the self and the genre to leave a literary legacy for the world. (Bunkers 35)

Bloom's words point to the ability of the diary to serve as a window through which readers look at the writer's life as this form of writing is an imprint of the self.

The epistolary mode of writing refers to works that are contained in or carried on by letters. This mode of writing is close to the autobiography because it is inherently very personal. It allows the writer to delve deeply into personal issues that would otherwise never see the light of day and it reveals innermost feelings of the author in their unedited form. Being a private mode of expression, this genre affords the writer freedom of expression and speech that is not curtailed or constrained. Since the letter as a literary form has an implied audience, it takes on the paradox of intimacy and formality as the writer communicates with the reader. Letter writers use the form's private and public nature to address issues that affect them and their societies without holding back their feelings as they give their personal testimonies. Commenting on the significance of the letter form, Rita Felski says that writers employ the letter form "to inspire a process of involvement and identification by persuading readers that they are reading an intimate communication addressed to them personally by the author" (86). Letter writers share their experiences through a seemingly intimate form, thereby appearing to confide in the readers and a bond of trust that enhances the credibility of the text.

Letters reflect the conflict between the desire to assert oneself and the need to suppress the same self. Smith and Watson note that:

Women letter writers develop strategies of deflection, preoccupation with others, protestations of insignificance, or identification with women as a collectivity, that enable them to engage in the self-assertion of epistolary correspondence. (Women. Autobiography. Theory 31)

An example of a letter written by a woman is Kabira's A Letter to Manama Ba in which the writer highlights the condition of women in her society. Some creative writers use the letter form as a technique in autobiographical works, which indicates the literariness of the letter. Such works include Manama Ba's So Long a Letter and Alice Walkers The Color Purple in which the writers draw attention to the condition of women in the West African and African American societies respectively. In addition to the letters written in prose, there exist letters in verse such as Dennis Brutus' "Letters to Martha" and .Antonio Jacinto's "Letter from a Contract Worker."

The epistolary mode affords writers an opportunity for direct communication as they have the authority to divulge or conceal whatever they please. The form gives writers leeway to be candid with whatever they choose to narrate because privacy is "guaranteed." Letter writing is a process of self-meditation as it allows writers to reflect on their past and present experiences and it aids their efforts towards a clear and rationalised understanding of themselves. What appears on the surface as a mere letter reveals a detailed account of the social structures that human beings live in.

At times, autobiographers may use diary-material or letters in their own works to authenticate their narratives. For example, in Detained. Ngugi includes several letters between him and the University of Nairobi administration to demonstrate how the government of the day used the university administration as an instrument of suppression. Similarly. Mandela in Long Walk to Freedom includes letters especially to his wife and

children to demonstrate the loneliness he experiences while in prison and the pain he feels at not being able to have a normal relationship with his family. Often, a diary entry or a letter will provide the material for a vivid picture which otherwise might have escaped memory.

MOTIVES FOR THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Autobiography has been triggered by a variety of motives which define its type. In the confessional autobiography, the motive is to unburden oneself of a feeling of guilt. Crime autobiographies such as Kiriamiti's Mv Life in Crime and John Kimani's Life and Times of a Bank Robber are confessional as the authors narrate their lives as criminals and the events that lead to their incarceration and eventual transformation. The apology is where writers attempt to declare and to justify the course of their lives or a particular action.

In exploration, the autobiographical act becomes an instrument of research and a probing into the writers' hitherto unexplained behaviour patterns. An example of such is Warah's Triple Heritage in which the writer researches on the history of Kenyan-Asians to help her understand her place as a person with a multiple heritage. The most common motive for the autobiography is where the writers narrate their stories because they believe that their lives are worth sharing with others. Examples of such include Maathai's Unbowed, Kenneth Matiba's Aiming High: The Story of Mv Life, Bethwell Ogot's Mv Footprints in the Sands of Time, Joseph Mungai's From Simple to Complex: The Journey of a Herdsboy, and Likimani's Fighting without Ceasing.

While the autobiography usually results from a combination of such motives, and only rarely from a single motive, it is possible to establish the key motive in most autobiographies. However, there cannot be a common motive triggering autobiographers to take the world into their confidence. Most autobiographers acquire a certain detachment from the events they choose to record often because a kind of transformation has taken place in their experiences. Such changes include a change of environment as is the case for Warah who begins to question her status as a Kenyan immigrant when she goes to study in the United States of America: attainment of an ambition or completion of an undertaking as in Maathai's Unbowed and Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom respectively: enduring something such as failure, disillusionment, or misunderstanding as is the case in Otieno's Mau Mau's Daughter: injustice or imprisonment as related in Ngugi's Detained and J.M. Kariuki's Mau Mau Detainee: or prolonged illness as in Owuor's My Life as a Paraplegic. At other times, autobiographers appear to be moved to write by the realisation of a mission, or by the maturing of a philosophy of life or simply by the lapse of time from the activities of youth and middle life to the reflections of old age as in Mungai's From Simple to Complex. Ogot's My Footprints on the Sands of Time, and Davvood's Nothing but the Truth.

Studying the autobiography, we notice a number of differences in different autobiographies. First, autobiographies differ in the proportion of physical to mental events: the space accorded to the activities done and events and objects seen and the persons known on the one hand, and to the thoughts and emotions of the autobiographer on the other. For example. Mandela in Long Walk to Freedom largely focuses of persons

related to the struggle against apartheid and only briefly on the lives of the members of his family, yet. beneath the story of the nation, we can tell that he is strongly emotional where his family is concerned. He does not say much about his mother after she takes him to grow up in the chiefs house, but he is affected by her death and his inability to attend her burial and. later, that of his son.

Second, autobiographies differ in variety and breadth, according to the opportunities and experiences of the authors and the range of their interests and ideas. In this light, Waciuma in Daughter of Mumbi narrates only part of her life, childhood, perhaps to capture the effect of colonialism on the Kenyan society as seen through the eyes of a child. Otieno's Mau Mau's Daughter largely focuses on her struggle against her in-laws in a legal case involving the burial of her husband, while Kabira in A Letter to Manama Ba narrates her life as a child in relation to the suffering of women in colonial Kenya.

Third, there is moral variation with respect to certain related factors: the activity and reliability of the autobiographers' memory, their honesty and consistency, and the candour of the writers' revelations and opinions.

Fourth, there are artistic differences which arise from the varying skills with which the author selects the significant, disregards the insignificant, appreciates the interrelation of cause and effect, and evokes from the multiplicity of life a cohesive narrative. An example is Dawood's Nothing but the Truth in which the writer relates his life story in relation to four seemingly unrelated passions of his life-his wife Marie, surgery, writing,

and Rotary-yet maintains narrative strategies that hold the story together hence giving the story its unity.

FUNCTIONS OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

One of the functions of the autobiography is a search for one's inner standing or the acquisition of a sense of inner discovery in a world occupied by many other people. An autobiography is a story of a life in the world and it provides a meeting place between the autobiographer and the outer world. The autobiography thus provides us with a representative of the character of life altogether, and its style is not invented by the imagination, but chosen and arranged by the autobiographer through memory.

The autobiography reflects an author's pursuit for voice, the desire to be heard. It allows writers to define themselves as individuals, distinct from those images fostered by society or by cultural stereotypes. The writers prove that no incident is too minor or insignificant to be woven into the autobiography because all experiences shape who we are and who we become. The genre allows writers to examine difficult memories, thoughts, feelings, and social concerns such as sexual identity and power. These subjects are addressed in the autobiographies by Warah. Otieno. Kabira. Owuor, Maathai. and Likimani.

Writers of autobiography bring to light connections between the individual and the society. These connections are important aspects of the autobiography because the form gains much of its drama from writers' attempts to use their stories to come to terms with their personal experiences and gain self-realisation. In the process of narrating their lives,

autobiographers perform several acts: they justify their own perceptions and uphold their reputations as in Otieno's Mau Mau's Daughter, dispute others' accounts as in Ogot's My Footprints in the Sands of Time, invent desirable futures as in Mungai's From Simple to Complex, and convey cultural information as in Warah's Triple Heritage in which she explores the culture of Kenyan-Asians.

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

As Smith and Watson observe, autobiographies, "depending on the memory they construct, are records of acts of interpretation by subjects inescapably in historical time, and their relation to their own ever-moving pasts" (Reading Autobiography 24). This happens because such narratives call attention to forgotten things, irretrievable times, and to the personal and communal effects of that forgetting. For instance, Kariuki's Mau Mau Detainee offers readers who may have suffered detention during the struggle for independence in Kenya a chance to look back at their experiences and come to terms with the injustices they faced and the loss their families experienced while they were away. In addition, by reading the autobiography, readers who may not have been detained are able

to empathise with those who have experienced detention by identifying with their suffering imaginatively.

The autobiography aims at the inscription of the self, that is. leaving one's mark in the world. Elleke Boehmer says that "to write is not only to speak for one's place in the world. It is also to make [sic] one's own place and narrative, to tell the story oneself, to create an identity" (94). Geographical regions are important sites of the formation of identity. In relation to this, Boehmer notes that autobiographies "codify national reality and space and allow emergent national identities to be performed" (66).

Dawood bases his autobiography in different geographical regions that have shaped his life: India, where he was born; Pakistan, where his family moved to; England, where he got higher education and a wife; and Kenya, where he works. He takes readers through all these places and highlights his life as lived in each of them, thus presenting himself as a citizen of the world as he brings his life closer to his readers. Mandela's experiences in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa bring to light what people in other regions may never have known about the condition of South Africa at the time, while Warah highlights the condition of Asian immigrants in Kenya. Simon Gikandi notes the significance of the autobiography in forming identities and discovering the self, saying that "to write is to claim a text of one's own; textuality is an instrument of territorial possession...narrative is crucial to our discovery of selfhood" (Boehmer 94).

The autobiography is intertwined with history and sometimes people read autobiographies as historical documents or evidence for the analysis of historical movements, events, or persons. The autobiography can be read as a history of the writer, but it serves more purposes than just a historical record. It may contain facts, but it is not factual history about a particular time, person, or event. The autobiography does not give prominence to historical events, periods, or figures, but talks about them only in so far as they relate to an autobiographer's experiences. The autobiographies of Thuku, Kariuki, Mbova, Kaggia, and Odinga for example offer different accounts of Kenya's colonial history as each of the writers narrates the events as he experienced them. This means that the writers offer subjective truth depending on individual experiences. Their autobiographies, though about the same period and subject, present each individual's personal opinion. Subjectivity of truth is a pertinent issue in the study of the autobiography because the reader needs to find ways of corroborating the author's claims either from the text itself by gauging the text's consistency or from external sources such as historical records and intertextuality, and finally make judgment on the writer's credibility.

In the autobiography, writers use personal testimonies to gain their sense of being and place. These testimonies are carried on in language, which is the essence of literary activity. As Leigh Gilmore says, the autobiography is "the arena in which the self speaks itself without the artifice of fiction, where language is in some nonmysterious [sic] way a pure mirror of the writer's life" (35). In this sense, the autobiography is not only an account of things done or known, an exposition of personality, but a search for the true

self, and a means to come to terms with it. Pascal argues in the same vein that "Good autobiography represents a new stage in self-knowledge and a new formulation of responsibility towards the self; it involves a mental exploration and change of attitude" (183). Human beings cannot completely know themselves, but autobiography offers a kind of intuitive knowledge of oneself. The autobiography re (constructs) and (re)shapes an author's past and projects a lesson, moral, or ideal for the present and the future. It is an instrument for understanding life, not just as the log of things known, but a voyage of discovery, and a means of reconciliation of the self and the outside world.

This chapter has looked at the genre of autobiography, focusing on its motives, the forms related to it its nature and function. It introduces us to the art of the autobiography. Having looked at the autobiography as a genre, we now discuss its development in Kenya.

CHAPTER 3: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN KENYA

We trace the evolution of the autobiography in Kenya to demonstrate the circumstances in which the female autobiography has emerged and developed in the country. The Kenyan autobiography is a fairly recent development, but the genre has grown as more Kenyans find it necessary to narrate the stories of their lives.

According to scholars such as Smith and Watson, the autobiography is a creation of European civilisation. The Encyclopedia Britannica notes that in the West, the form has progressed through various stages and periods of upheaval and transition as human beings pulled in different directions and sought their bearings, leading to the urge for self recording in some people. Consequently, these people produced books in which the form of autobiography was established.

The earliest book-length autobiography in Europe is St. Augustine's Confessions, written around 397 A.D., in which Augustine reviews his early life retrospectively from the perspective of his conversion to Christianity. Europeans continued to write autobiographies in the model pioneered by Augustine, but it was not until the 20th Century that the form was widely employed and adopted not just in Europe, but in other regions as well. In the 20th Century there arose major conflicts in ideologies which led not only to wars of ideas, but to literal wars as well, notably the First and Second World Wars. These conflicts led to the production of autobiographies in the 20th Century that

were more numerous than the total of all the centuries before. The Western autobiography developed at a time when Kenya was a British colony.

The autobiography is based on the form of the novel, which developed in Europe and was imported into Africa. The origin of the Kenyan autobiography is in these importations, meaning that the form is not indigenous to Kenya. Indeed, as Achebe says in "Thoughts on the African Novel," "we are late starters" (98) in the field of the autobiography. In Kenya, the earliest autobiographies were written by expatriates or people connected to the colonisers. One such writer is Karen Blixen, a Dane, whose Out of Africa recounts her life as a farmer in colonial Kenya. She describes her relationship with native Kenyans, their culture, and the country's wildlife. She relates the challenges she faced in running her coffee farm and her departure when she failed in her farming project. Blixen lived in Kenya between 1914 and 1931, and Out of Africa consists of her reminiscences, in Denmark, about her experiences on the coffee plantation in Kenya.

Blixen's autobiography was followed by Elspeth Huxley's The Flame Trees of Thika: Memories of an African Childhood in 1957. An English woman, Huxley lived in Kenya between 1912 and 1925 and in this work she narrates part of her childhood as the daughter of a British settler living in a coffee plantation in Kenya. She presents, through the eyes of a child the British understanding of colonial Kenya and her peoples and demonstrates that the early British settlers in colonial Kenya were not prepared for the hardships of settling down in an African country. Like Blixen, Huxley writes her autobiography long after leaving Kenya, the setting of her work. The two early

autobiographies **clearly** demonstrate that their writers are outsiders in the context of the Kenyan autobiography, not only because they are not Kenyan, but also because by the time of writing these works, the Kenyan nation was not yet born.

Kenyan autobiography starts after Kenya acquires independence, the earliest being Mbova's Freedom and After in 1963. In the years between 1963 and 1969, other autobiographies were Kariuki's Mau Mau Detainee (1963). Waruhiu Itote's Mau Mau General (1967), Odinga's Not Yet Uhuru (1967) and Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi (1969).

Mbova's Freedom and After is the story of a nationalist and trade unionist which captures the activities of Kenyans who participated in the struggle for independence not just by fighting in the forest, but in talks with the colonisers too. Mboya captures his rise to become a leading Kenyan politician and discusses the problems of nation building. The title of his autobiography points to the author's interest not just in acquiring independence, but also in outlining the future of an independent Kenya and Africa as a whole. For instance, he warns against suppression of the press, emphasises the need for universities to be politically independent and for intellectuals to be free to analyse and criticise government policies, which are some of the problems that Kenya faces after independence.

He is philosophical and serves like a teacher in matters of national development, calling for independence not for its own sake, but as a beginning of creating a way forward for

the free nation. He steps out of his immediate self to offer lessons on leadership, nation building and the possibility of neocolonialism.

He begins his autobiography by asserting his satisfaction with the achievements he has made in his life saying, "Perhaps you will think me immodest if I begin by recalling the proudest day of my life. But I will begin this way, nevertheless" (13). His opening remarks point to an autobiographer who sets out to chronicle his role in the struggle for independence not just in Kenya but in the African continent. He keeps readers in suspense at the beginning of the autobiography as he narrates the events of the first All-African Peoples Conference held in Ghana in 1958 before finally revealing the significance of what he considers the proudest day of his life. His narrative reveals that his pride did not so much arise from being chosen to be the chairman of this important conference, but the age at which he got this responsibility. He explains. "To be chosen, at the age of twenty-eight, as chairman of a conference which represented the passionate hopes of 200 million people made me both proud and humble" (15). Mbova's narrative is not just a record of his life as a nationalist, but a resource on issues that post-independence African states anticipate.

He tells the story of the nation by narrating his own experiences, but focuses more on the nation than on his life. He recounts his childhood in a short section at the beginning of the narrative, and even then he relates his childhood only insofar as it is significant to the activities he undertakes later in his life. For instance, he grows up and attends school among children from different tribes, which impresses on him the need for nationalism as

opposed to tribalism in the struggle for independence. He looks beyond himself as a person to the nation, continent, and the world at large. He finishes the writing of his autobiography only a few days to the day Kenya attains independence and notes the significance of this coincidence by saying, "It is a good ending to the story of a national struggle, and a most hopeful beginning for our future as an independent state" (256). Just as his autobiography comes to a close, so do the days of colonialism in Kenya. He glosses over the details about his personal life, showing only how he joined other African nationalists in preparing Africa for independence.

Kariuki's Mau Mau Detainee recounts his experiences in detention camps between 1953 and 1960, the period of the State of Emergency in colonial Kenya. Kariuki says that the aim of his story is not to express bitterness, but to tell the truth about detention camps due to their significance in the country's colonial history. He grows up surrounded by the evils of colonialism such as racism, landlessness, forced labour, and poor education. He takes oaths to join Mau Mau, a movement that spearheaded the struggle for independence in Kenya. The colonial government arrests him during the State of Emergency for being a member of the Mau Mau and detains him in various camps. Here, the detainees are subjected to hard work and torture in an attempt to restrain other Kenyans from fighting against the colonial government.

Kariuki intertwines his experiences with the history of the nation. His narrative is limited to describing his days as a detainee, but he talks about other occurrences in the country such as the formation of African political parties, the effects of the Second World War,

and the activities of Mau Mau. After his release, he goes back to politics in the hope of driving out the colonial government. Narrating the story of his life, he puts himself on the historical map of this country by telling readers about his contribution to the struggle for independence. He is loyal to his motive of telling the history of the nation through his story and he is subtle about his role in the struggle. By the end of the autobiography, readers discover a selfless individual who puts his life on the line for the sake of his country's independence. Kariuki comes across as a humble and persevering person even in the face of tribulations.

In line with providing us with part of the country's colonial history, Kariuki attaches photographs of screening and detention camps in different parts of the country. He attaches only one photograph of himself, his wife and son, which demonstrates his humble nature. Photographs provide evidence to support the writer's claims. While they can be used to further writers' interests by presenting them as heroes in certain situations, Kariuki provides those of suffering Kenyans to show the effects of colonialism on the ordinary Kenyan.

The title of Itote's Mau Mau General refers to the writer's rank as a senior member of the Mau Mau movement in which he was referred to as General China. At the height of colonial rule in Kenya, he enlists in the British Army in accordance with the government requirements and goes to Burma to fight in the Second World War. It is while fighting for the British that he reflects on his situation as an African soldier fighting for his colonial master and realises that he needs to play an active role in delivering his people from the

yoke of colonialism. When he returns home from the war, he begins his life as a freedom fighter.

He relates his activities as a member of Mau Mau, his life in the forest, the State of Emergency, his arrest and detention, and eventual freedom. His account mentions other freedom fighters who were with him in the movement, but largely focuses on his individual experiences in the movement. His narrative relates his role in organising the Mau Mau into a formidable army and its success in forcing the British out of Kenya. Like Mbova and Kariuki before him, Itote narrates the story of his life as part of the history of Kenya and his account complements those of autobiographers in this period.

Odinga's Not Yet Uhuru captures the country's history through the writer's life story. Its title refers to the postcolonial period in Kenya where the people were subjected to neo-colonialism by the postcolonial government and suggests that although the country is no longer under colonial rule, the people are not yet free to reap the benefits of uhuru (independence). His autobiography captures his life from being a child to an adult who joins politics. He gets into politics to fight colonial rule and joins other like-minded Kenyans to push for freedom.

He joins forces with Jomo Kenyatta and other freedom fighters and he agrees to merge their different political parties, Kenya African National Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), to enhance the struggle for independence. Odinga

expresses his dissatisfaction with KANU's leadership which he views as dictatorial and not in touch with the Kenyan citizens. He states his convictions:

I believe in making the democratic process work in the party, in government, among the people. We fought for uhuru so that the people may rule themselves. Direct action, not underhand diplomacy and silent intrigue by professional politicians won uhuru. and only popular support and popular mobilization can make it meaningful. (285)

He disagrees with his colleagues in the post-independence government and decides to resign from the government and form a new political party, the Kenya People's Union (KPU). He says that his mission in forming the new political party is to fight for the triumph of the people of Kenya despite the hardships he experiences such as slander, rumours, and being sidelined by political leaders in KANU.

Odinga sheds light on an important period of Kenya's history through Not Yet Uhuru. He gives us an insider's perspective of the struggle since he is a member of the Legislative Council and, later, a leader in independent Kenya's first government. His disposition of fighting for freedom is consistent from the early days of his life and by the close of the autobiography we are persuaded that he is committed to the struggle. He attaches photographs of himself and other political leaders in colonial Kenya, of colonial detention camps, and an extract of a letter written to the colonial government by members of the Mau Mau. These paratextual features serve to corroborate his story and contribute

to the credibility- of the autobiography. Like the earlier Kenyan male autobiographers, Odinga leaves out details about his family. The aim of his autobiography seems to be to trace his life in the context of the political history of Kenya and issues about his family may not be relevant to this motive.

These autobiographies by Kenyan men in the 1960s describe the writers' lives during colonial times and record their participation in the struggle for independence. The only autobiography by a Kenyan woman in this period is Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi, which was published six years after the first autobiography by a Kenyan man. Freedom and After. The autobiographies written by Kenyan men by 1969 describe the effects of colonialism and the subsequent struggle for independence from an adult perspective, but Waciuma presents her account of colonial Kenya from the perspective of a child growing up during the Mau Mau and focuses on the domestic situation. Her autobiography is therefore different from the others published by Kenyans in the 1960s.

The 1970s saw the publication of Harry Thuku's An Autobiography in 1970 and Kaggia's Roots of Freedom in 1975, both of which recount the writers' lives in relation to Kenya's colonial history. In this decade there were no autobiographies by Kenyan women.

Thuku's Autobiography narrates the author's experiences in the struggle for Kenya's independence and explains how the colonial authorities arrested and detained him for his anti-government activities. He traces his life from childhood, early education, and

politics. He recounts his personal experiences in detention and writes as a witness and participant in the struggle for independence, thus enabling readers to visualise the effects of colonialism on the Kenyan people. He attaches letters and photographs to corroborate his claims and create credibility for his story. He narrates his story in relation to the political history of Kenya, placing himself in the context of the nation's history such that any discussion about the struggle for independence and the participants will recognise his contribution.

Kaggia's Roots of Freedom narrates the experiences of the author during the struggle for independence in Kenya. Kaggia was a freedom fighter and one of the "Kapenguria Six" who included Paul Ngei, Jomo Kenyatta, Achieng Oneko, Fred Kubai, and Kungu Karumba, who the British authorities arrested in October 1952 for being leaders of the Mau Mau.

When he starts working in the civil service after finishing school, he comes face to face with racial discrimination, which plants the seed of struggle in him. He enlists in the British Army and after the Second World War, returns to Kenya, joins politics and works hand in hand with other nationalists like Kenyatta. He works with the Mau Mau and the colonial government arrests and detains him in 1952. The title of his autobiography points to the history of the struggle for independence in Kenya, with the term "roots" symbolising the struggle, pain, and bloodshed from which Kenya's independence emerged.

In the 1980s there were four autobiographies, all of them by men. These are Ngugi's Detained (1981), Kiriamiti's Mv Life in Crime (1984) and Mv Life with a Criminal (1989). and Kimani's Life and Times of a Bank Robber (1988). It is in this decade that we see the emergence of the autobiography on crime. Just like in the 1970s. Kenyan women did not publish autobiographies in the 1980"s.

In Detained. Ngugi gives an account of his experiences as a political detainee. The account spans the period between 31st December 1977 and 12th December 1978 but Ngugi utilises this period to recount his life before and during his incarceration. His autobiography demonstrates the state of the country's political system immediately after independence. He refers to the work as a prison diary because he moves back and forth in time as he recollects his thoughts and memories while in detention.

His account begins with Wariinga. the main character in his novel Caitani Mutharabaini. That he chooses to begin the account on this note is significant because not only is he about to be freed from detention but is also about to finish writing Caitani Mutharabaini, which he has done while in prison. The opening paragraph in Detained underscores the irony of Ngugi's incarceration in the sense that he is detained because of his writing yet the constricting environment of the prison boosts his creativity and thus enhances his writing. He not only gets the time to write a novel. Caitani Mutharabaini. but also defies the essence of his detention - to humiliate and make him rot intellectually. During his stay in prison, he is just a number in a file -K6. 77 - and the warders treat him just like a number or object.

Through Detained, he castigates the government's exploitation of the masses, the culture of fear, and political strangulation of intellect. He views post-independence Kenya as an extension of the colonial culture of exploitation and oppression and dreams of a time when the masses' consciousness will arise. He says. "Detention without trial is part of that colonial culture of fear... in its origins and purpose, it is clearly a colonial affair" (44). He faces dehumanisation while in detention but perseveres in an effort to maintain his dignity. For instance, he refuses to be chained while being taken to a dentist and the prison warders view his refusal to be chained as insolence so they punish him by refusing to let him go for treatment. In another incident, he gives up a chance to see his wife and children by maintaining that he would not wear chains as a condition for seeing his family.

This powerful will reveals not only his principled nature but his reluctance to abet the government's lies to his family about his whereabouts and physical condition, which the government has lied to his family about. He alludes to other political detainees and rebels who defied colonial rule and criticised the post-independence government like Koigi wa Wamwere and Martin Shikuku. noting that they remained proud, defiant and unrepentant to the end of their detention.

In the second and third sections of the account Ngugi provides letters to his family and prison authorities, and later his communication with the University of Nairobi. The sections give the reader a clear image of Ngugi's situation as a political detainee, and the

physical and psychological torture he experiences. The letters are part of the evidence that he provides to create credibility for his narrative. He reveals a government that is out to silence its critics, kill intellect, and instil fear in its citizens. In addition, he shows that the Kenyan elite is compromised to such an extent that the university cannot reinstate him to his teaching post because the government considers him a dissident.

Ngugi opens his account on the day he is freed and ends it with the same day. giving his autobiography the form of a journey back to his days in detention. By the close of the story readers empathise with detainees but are happy that Ngugi is not only free at last but has refused to be detained intellectually. Ngugi, who has been just a number for a year, regains both his identity and physical freedom. The record of his reflections about prison in this autobiography demonstrates his defiance against detention and his decision to write while in incarceration shows that in his situation physical detention necessitates a renewed spirit to be mentally and intellectually free.

Kiriamiti's Mv Life in Crime, the earliest autobiography on crime in Kenya, narrates the author's experiences as a criminal. In this autobiography, Kiriamiti takes us on his journey from a young man who drops out of school, becomes a pick-pocket, and eventually graduates into a bank robber. He writes this story while in prison after the police arrest and charge him with bank robbery. His story reveals a young man who gets into crime for quick riches and an **easy** life. His family provides for him, but he nevertheless drops out of school, runs away from home and gets into crime. The revelation of his past life allows readers a chance to learn how criminals operate in the

underworld. They lead a life characterised by alcohol, women, and violence. To escape betrayal from fellow criminals, Kiriamiti keeps his colleagues from finding out where he stays. This not only shows the distrust that exists among the criminals, but also discloses the fear that they live in. They are aware that they are enemies of the public and the police and therefore find ways of avoiding arrest such as taking on different names in the underworld. Kiriamiti, for instance, uses the name Jack Zollo in the criminal world.

Kiriamiti's criminal life affects his family, with his sister Connie always asking him to change his ways while his mother thinks that he holds a good job in Nairobi and wonders why he never goes home to visit her. He deceives and convinces Milly, a young lady, to move in with him as he plans to marry her and it takes a long time before Milly realises that he is a criminal. The same deceptive nature makes him lie to his employer in Congo when he flees Kenya that he is seeking political asylum. He gets an opportunity to change his criminal self when in Congo, but he does not. Ironically, he betrays his benevolent employer by not only impregnating his secretary and daughter at the same time but also running away with the employer's money.

Back in Kenya and without money since he has escaped from the police, he goes back to crime. He rationalises his actions by saying that he is looking for a job to provide enough for him to retire. As it turns out, a major bank robbery in Naivasha, which he hopes will be his last before he stops stealing, marks the end of his life as a free man. He not only loses his share of the money when he is cornered in a house by the police, but he is later

arrested and sentenced to twenty- years in prison on a charge of bank robbery. Worse still, he is arrested on the eve of his wedding to Milly, who is expectant.

Mv Life in Crime is the writer's confession of the crimes that he has committed. He has led a deceptive and dangerous life in which he has hurt many people. That he writes this story while in prison shows that he has taken time to look back into his life and realise the pain he has caused other people. He does not only regret, but also pays for his transgressions by being in prison. He learns his lesson that crime does not pay and decides to change. His courage to record a past life that many would not discuss in the open earns him empathy from readers. Readers feel that he has had many chances to transform which he does not take up. yet he eventually realises his mistakes and repents, laying his life bare for the public to see through the writing of Mv Life in Crime. The first person pronoun "My" in the title, as it is even in his later works. Mv Life with a Criminal and Mv Life in Prison, gives the account a personalised perspective by indicating that the writer owns the story. Here is a writer who is not afraid to own up to his criminal past.

Kiriamiti's first autobiography was followed by Kimani's Life and Times of a Bank Robber, whose title points explicitly to the criminal life that the writer led in the past. Life and Times of a Bank Robber uses the journey motif as the author gives an account of his life in crime as well as in prison after his conviction in a court of law. He begins the account of his life by admitting that his desire for the city's glamour when he visits Nairobi transforms him "from an innocent rural boy into a hardened criminal and eventually into a long serving prisoner" (1). He is born in rural Kenya, but he visits his

father who works in Nairobi. It is during these visits that the young Kimani is enthralled by the city to the extent that "Every time I returned home from Nairobi, my heart remained in the city. Even while in the classroom. I could not concentrate on my lessons since my mind was on the city's glamour" (2).

His father, a freedom fighter, is detained during the State of Emergency in Kenya and the young boy decides to travel to Nairobi to pick up his father's belongings. This marks the beginning of his struggle to survive the hardships of the city. He hawks different merchandise but this can hardly sustain him and he has to sleep in construction sites for want of accommodation. In this autobiography, Kimani portrays the criminal in him as a product of the personal and social circumstances surrounding him in his early days in the city saying:

The gem of the criminal that I became later was planted around that time. The seed was sowed by my determination to survive in the city at that time of crisis and was watered by the friends that I acquired. I was initiated into the world of gangsters by Sammy Macharia, a shop assistant, who also doubled up as a burglar... I found myself being lured [emphasis added] into small burglaries (23) [and] I was forced into the crime world again in December 1959 by the need to have a wife. (32)

Discussing the nature of the criminal in Kenyan autobiography, Muchugu Kiiru argues that:

The passive voice [Kimani] uses to seemingly deny his responsibility for his crimes not only helps him to absolve himself of blame for his involvement in crime but also draws attention to defence mechanisms geared towards denying or justifying his culpability in criminal deeds. (161-62)

While discussing his drift into crime, Kimani accuses other people and conditions and presents himself as an innocent victim. Kiiru notes that Kimani even uses racism to rationalise his criminal deeds by appealing to black policemen to pardon him after he steals from Asians because he and the policeman belong to the same black race. In the same vein, he rationalises robbing white patrons at a hotel in Kiambu by arguing that "after all, they were enjoying the fruits of our country illegally, we reasoned, and we had every reason to teach them a lesson" (37). Granted, he faces many hardships when he starts living in the city and easily gets into bad company, but this does not justify his involvement in crime nor his later shift from being a small-time robber to a big-time criminal who dedicates time and energy to crime until he is finally arrested, tried and jailed for fifteen years. During his prison term, he mulls over his criminal past as a result of what he terms "a pre-mediated examination of conscience" (132) and changes.

As a criminal, he is an offender that society would not tolerate. Readers identify and empathise with him through his autobiography. This happens because Kimani being the narrator and protagonist at once, the readers travel with him throughout the text and easily associate with the human being in him. They see him as he changes from a rural

child to a teenager stranded in the city, a criminal, a prisoner and finally to a repentant person. Through the process of narration he takes readers on his journey towards redemption and by the end of the narrative they cannot judge him harshly because he has already learnt the lesson that crime does not pay.

Mv Life with a Criminal, a sequel to Mv Life in Crime, relates Kiriamiti's experiences as a criminal, but this time told from the perspective of the main character's girlfriend and later wife. Milly. This narrative is unique because although it is autobiographical, the subject does not write her story directly as is the case with other autobiographies. In an interview with this researcher, Kiriamiti explained that Milly narrated her experiences to him, and he in turn made a coherent story out of them in Mv Life with a Criminal, which makes him the author. Milly narrates her story from her days in school when she meets and falls in love with Zollo without knowing that the latter is a criminal, and her painful experience as the wife of an armed bank robber. This narrative demonstrates the experiences of women as victims and beneficiaries of criminals.

The decade between 1990 and 1999 abounds with the Kenyan autobiography, both male and female. The male autobiographies in this period include Benjamin Bundeh's Birds of Kamiti (1991), Charles Githae's Comrade Inmate (1994), Kimani's Prison is not a Holiday Camp (1994), and Wanyiri Kihoro's Never Say Die (1998). In this decade, Kenyan women published a record four autobiographies: Owuor's Mv Life as a Paraplegic (1995), Likimani's Passbook Number F. 47927 (1998), Otieno's Mau Mau's Daughter (1998), and Warah's Triple Heritage (1998). The proliferation of female

autobiographies in this period indicates an awakened desire by the Kenyan woman to tell her story.

Bunde's Birds of Kamiti is an account of the author's two and a half years' experience in prison. The title refers to both the birds that he feeds for some time while in Kamiti, Kenya's maximum security prison, and the jail birds that he meets while in prison. The police arrest him after they find the body of Nigel Fawsett, his business associate, dumped in a river.

Bunde attempts to win the readers' trust at the opening of the autobiography by stating:

This story is about my personal experiences and recollections of the events of these two and a half years. There is no creativity involved in my writing, just remembrance. My cry is the desperate cry of one who has been made to go through the most unbearable experience a human being can be asked to endure.

(1)

Referring to his autobiography as a "cry," he points to a narrator who has been wronged and thus calls on readers to hear his cry and empathise with him. He says that his narrative does not involve creativity but just remembrance, meaning that he is not just involved in story telling or fiction for the sake of it but in a process of recollecting his experiences in prison after wrongful confinement. Yet, there is creativity involved in the recollection and narration of such memories because writers of autobiography write after

the events they narrate have passed and they have to reconstruct their memories through imaginative creation to persuade readers of the credibility of the autobiographies.

Birds of Kamiti provides a picture of the prisons in Kenya by describing Bundeh's experiences during his incarceration. We see the tough treatment of suspects by the police and the dehumanising conditions suspects and convicts face. When Bundeh learns of the recovery of Fawsett's body, he makes a wise decision to drive Fawsett's car, of which he is in possession, to a police station. The police arrest him immediately without finding out the circumstances that lead to his being in possession of the deceased's car. They deny him a lawyer, beat and force him to sign blank papers on which they later write a false statement. This cruel treatment of a suspect by the police points to the incompetence of the police force whose members opt to charge innocent people instead of carrying out comprehensive investigations.

Bundeh exposes the cruel and inhuman treatment that he and other suspects face in the remand home, which elicits empathy in readers due to the vivid descriptions that the writer employs. As they get into the remand home, suspects go through a dehumanising body search in which adults are searched in the nude with warders even "peeping" into their private parts to check for contraband. The disgust that Bundeh feels during the search reveals to the reader the nature of police officers and warders especially in dealing with suspects. Remand prisoners seem to beat the search warders at the latter's own game by hiding contraband like bhang in the Holy Bible, which is the only item they are allowed to have in their cells.

The prison warders treat Bunde and his colleagues ruthlessly and, as if to confirm the suspects' less than human status, give them numbers by which they are referred to henceforth. He says, "We instantly ceased to be human beings with names, we became numbers. I became number 77/82/CR" (5). It is in this world that he lives for two and a half years. He meets other prisoners who "teach" him how to survive prison hardships. A prisoner called Maina tells Bunde:

When you enter this place, you have to forget everything about the outside world. This dungeon has now become your home and you must survive in it. Be courageous if you can, but you must give up every thought of the outside world. Forget about your wife and kids. Thinking about them will only make you go crazy.(6)

The other characters inform Bunde, and the readers, of the experiences that criminals face as they carry out their criminal activities. Some like Kamau have no remorse about what they do, and is even proud about what he terms "high voltage risk" (10). He encourages his cell mates to join his criminal gang at the end of their jail terms. Bunde's autobiography points to the danger of housing criminals of different kinds in the same cells. Once in prison, prisoners meet others like them who give them tips on how to operate in the criminal world and they try out the new suggestions as soon as they are free. The violence, hunger, and humiliation that Bunde faces, coupled with the conversations he holds with other prisoners, explain his view of prison as "a world in

which either the spirit was completely broken and degraded, or live courage born"(7).

It takes one and a half years from the time of Bunde's arrest to the time of his trial in a court of law. He explains that the charge of murder brought against him and the consequent death sentence are based on false evidence obtained through torture. As a convict on death row, he has a chance to appeal and his appeal saves him from death. Ironically, while the state counsel assigned to him during the trial fails to convince the judge of Bunde's innocence. Bunde defends himself during appeal against his sentence and succeeds. His experiences highlight the need for police officers to develop proper means of investigations into criminal deeds. His account shows that he is innocent, but the carelessness of the investigators causes him and his family pain and embarrassment. His emotive words interjected with rhetorical questions towards the close of the narrative demonstrate his pain at the injustice he faces:

I was unjustly imprisoned and condemned and on establishing my innocence I was sent away without even bus fare to get me home, no suit to cover my body, no financial compensation for my long years of incarceration or finance to help me get a sound footing in society. Does our constitution have nothing to offer in such cases?

Think what my wife and parents went through with me. a national disgrace on trial for murder. What about the pain they suffered from the long drawn-out

publicity and the cruelty of ignorant people? I fought for my freedom and won. but now it has turned to ashes and I live with the taste of bitterness. (155)

He attaches his appeal and the judgement of the court of appeal to his autobiography not only to win the readers' empathy but to render his account credible. He records his painful experiences to tell his side of the story and raise the public's awareness about the possibility of wrongful arrest on trumped-up charges and flaws in the judicial system.

After Birds of Kamiti came Githae's Comrade Inmate, an account of the author's time in prison after Githae is charged with causing grievous bodily harm to David Gitau, his roommate. The two had had a quarrel earlier and the police suspected that Githae had intended to kill Gitau. The title of this autobiography refers to the togetherness exhibited by prisoners regardless of their social status, length of jail term, criminal deeds, or ethnic affiliation. The common hardships of prison life hold the inmates together. Among the prisoners that the author interacts with are a former judge, a former member of parliament, a priest, and a doctor. In addition, he shares a block of cells with some mentally handicapped inmates.

At the beginning of the autobiography, Githae gives little information about Gitau and the circumstances that lead to his arrest. Even when his fellow inmates narrate the events that land them in jail, he tells us that he always finds a way to avoid narrating his story and explaining the circumstances that lead to his imprisonment. At one point when he is asked about the offence he says:

I did not want to tell everybody what I had done. I felt cheated by the world when I remembered the sequence of events which led to my imprisonment. I hated myself for not having defended myself in court or even trying to explain the circumstances which had led to my assaulting David...! thought he [another inmate] would have wanted to know the details of how the offence had come about and. because I had heard the stories of all the others. I would have felt obliged to narrate mine to them. (127)

In the spirit of comradeship, he gets help from Cheruiyot, a former judge who he finds in prison, to write his appeal. The appeal is successful and he walks out of the prison gates and joins his family. However, while the judge frees him unconditionally, the readers do not because the narrative ends before the author reveals the cause of his incarceration. He may be free according to the law, but he remains condemned by his own narrative because of the questions he leaves unanswered. His silence on what really transpires between him and Gitau, leading to imprisonment, detracts from the autobiographical truth of this autobiography. We are persuaded that even though he appeals successfully and the court frees him, he is not telling the truth. At the end of the narrative, the doubts that readers have on his sincerity, hence credibility, are confirmed when he and his business associate run away from their place of work to avoid compensating their clients after their garage burns down.

Yet, Comrade Inmate reveals some of the evils that happen in prison, with warders discriminating against inmates. For instance, Kanvanja, a former member of parliament,

gets sugar in his porridge and even eats bananas once in a while, luxuries that other inmates can only dream of. In addition, he and Cheruiyot have a bundle of blankets each compared to the tattered and smelly one that Githae uses. The two receive preference from the warders yet, like all the others, they are criminals. One warder even attempts to move Githae out of the latter's cell to create room for Kanvanja. referring to the prisoner as Mheshimiwa (Swahili for "Honourable"). This obvious bias by the warder revolts not just Githae. but readers too because the autobiographical act aims at winning the readers to the writer's side. We are therefore tempted to condemn Kanvanja. but he redeems himself by sticking to the requisites of comradeship saying:

No! No! No!... I will not be party to any favours in this prison! My friend here has the right to occupy that cell as much as I do or any other inmate for that matter. After all a cell is a cell and there should be nothing like a favourite cell. I will occupy any that is vacant. (124)

By stating that "a cell is a cell." Kanvanja recognises that all prisoners are equal and none should be treated better than others. Comrade Inmate gives us accounts of the inmates' lives, but little about the author himself. Autobiography aims at communicating the truth about one's life, but Githae's silence about the circumstances in which he goes to prison persuades us that he is not sincere.

Published in 1994 together with Comrade Inmate was Kimani's Prison is not a Holiday Camp which gives an account of the writer's life in prison and the experiences that lead

to his reformation. The title of this autobiography points to the difficulty that characterises prison life and it sounds a warning to would-be criminals to rethink their lives. Kimani's first arrest for crime comes when he is about seventeen years old. but that is after he has been a robber for some time. The situation is grave because while criminals his age should be tried in a juvenile court, his charges are so serious that he has to be tried in an ordinary court of law. The court sentences him to three years in prison but he later attempts to escape from jail and gets an additional six months after being re-arrested. He escapes a second time with a group of other convicts and this time round he succeeds. The short stint in prison does not change him and he gets back to crime immediately "to compensate for the past lost days" (37). The police arrest him several other times, the last of which causes him to be sentenced to fifteen years in jail.

His experiences in crime and in prison enable us to see the two worlds of crime and prison. He exposes the experiences that criminals go through in the underworld. Crime goes hand in hand with liquor and sexual immorality as we see through the character of Kimani and his friends. In addition, he reveals that crime is a habit from which a criminal cannot break easily especially because of the quick riches.

In prison, convicts face brutalisation from both prison warders and fellow prisoners. Kimani shows that while prisons are supposed to rehabilitate prisoners, most convicts become hardened criminals because of the violence and other hardships such as hunger, insults, and mental stress. They harden themselves as a strategy of coping with the problems they face, in the process straying from the rehabilitative motive of their

imprisonment. That he decides to reform while in such an environment redeems him in the readers' eyes because he realises the futility of crime and chooses to embrace the essence of imprisonment. He begins his long jail term with thoughts of escape but after realising the futility of escaping he resigns himself to his fate and resolves to do something useful with his life. He does not only attend classes to learn enough language and knowledge to record his life, he educates himself on the need to become a useful member of the society. He has to spend fifteen years of his life in jail to realise the need for honest living, but by the close of the autobiography, he has learnt his lesson. He says. "I had matured enough in prison and I knew what was good for me in life. I had won a very difficult war of transforming myself from an underworld to earning an honest living... My greatest pleasure is that now I am a free man" (151).

His words demonstrate his conviction that he is a changed person, not only free from prison and fear of police, also free of the yoke of crime which has for years made him a misfit in the society.

Prison is not a Holiday Camp is not only an account of a convict's experiences in prison, but an eye-opener to the evils that take place in the Prison Department. The autobiography exposes corrupt warders colluding with rich prisoners to allow contraband such as cigarettes into prison cells, violence, and general negligence on the part of the authorities. The title reveals the writer's realisation that prison is not a good place and should therefore be avoided by staying out of crime and it highlights the need for authorities to ensure that prisoners are reformed by the time they complete their terms.

In 1995. Owuor published Mv Life as a Paraplegic, the second autobiography by a Kenyan woman after Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi twenty six years earlier. Owuor narrates her experiences as a wife, mother, and teacher from the perspective of a disabled person after having lost mobility in her lower limbs in a motor vehicle accident. We shall analyse this autobiography in detail in a later chapter.

Owuor's autobiography was followed by Kihoro's Never Say Die in 1998. whose title reveals the author's determination to fight for human rights and political democracy in Kenya. He refers to his work as "the chronicle of a political prisoner" (4) to point to its content as an account of his experiences as a political detainee for about three years when he is detained during the rule of Daniel Moi. Kenya's second president, for undisclosed reasons. His captors insist that he is a dissident and believe that he is in possession of information that could enable them discover others who are anti-government. His distress starts at half past midnight one night when armed policemen besiege his home and undertake an unexplained and unlawful search, a situation that greatly intimidates his young children. In addition, the officers are verbally aggressive to him and his wife.

Before the official detention, police officers hold Kihoro in the basement cells of a building in Nairobi. His autobiography describes the humiliation and torture that he undergoes in the cells. Most of the time the police officers and guards deny him clothing and he remains naked in the officers' full glare. He goes through agonising interrogations and when his captors fail to extract the information they require from him they torture

him. He describes the many days he goes without food while at other times his interrogators lock him up in a flooded cell while naked for days on end. He falls ill due to starvation and cold, but the interrogating officers deny him medical attention. In addition, they keep his family in the dark regarding his whereabouts. Just as the title of his autobiography suggests, Kihoro endures his suffering. He keeps telling the same story of his innocence to interrogators and they in turn get desperate to get information from him because they need to find offences to charge him with.

His experiences serve as a window into the torture meted out on political prisoners in postcolonial Kenya. He reveals that the authorities have no respect for human dignity or family stability and they exercise their **wTath** on anyone suspected to be a government critic. The police force, which is supposed to protect citizens, ironically becomes the government's tool of oppression as police officers torture suspected government critics. This writer's will to survive the hostility of detention reveals a person who has gone through a lot of pain yet refuses to break down under pressure.

In the same year that Kihoro wrote Never Sav Die, there were autobiographies by Kenyan women namely Likimani, Otieno, and Warah. Likimani's Passbook Number F. 47927 focuses on the contribution of the Kenyan woman to the struggle for independence in Kenya. She captures the experiences of women as they struggle to hold their families together in the face of colonialism. Otieno's Mau Mau's Daughter relates the writer's experiences as a Mau .Mau sympathiser during the struggle for independence, but focuses largely on her involvement in a legal battle as she fights to have the right to bury her

husband on her farm. Warah's Triple Heritage is her journey towards defining herself anew as a person with a multiple heritage - Asian, Kenyan, and Western. We shall analyse the autobiographies by Kenyan women in detail in later chapters in this study.

At the turn into the 21st Century, Kenyan women had published only five autobiographies as compared to the fourteen by Kenyan men. The first few years of this century have seen the publication of autobiographies by both men and women. The male autobiographies include Matiba's Aiming High (2000), Dawood's Nothing but the Truth (2002), Mungai's From Simple to Complex (2002), Ogot's Mv Footprints on the Sands of Time (2003), and Kiriamiti's Mv Life in Prison (2004). The autobiographies by Kenyan women include Kabira's A Letter to Mariama Ba (2005), Likimani's Fighting without Ceasing (2005), and Maathai's Unbowed (2006).

In Aiming High Matiba relates the experiences of his childhood, schooling, business, civil service and politics in a manner that reveals an academically and politically ambitious person. The bulk of this autobiography is about his life as a politician and his fight for multiparty democracy in the **country** and he gives details of his life that touch on his political activities. This struggle for political democracy sees him arrested and detained by the Kenyan government. The motive for his narrative is to present himself as an aspiring politician who has struggled for political democracy in the country. This is evident from the autobiography as he devotes the bulk of the autobiography to his experiences in government service and politics and only a few pages to his childhood and school days.

His inclusion of details about his family and upbringing point to the significance that he attaches to the role of his family in shaping the person that he becomes later in life. He especially singles out his father's influence on him by pointing out that Matiba takes after his father in many ways: the two attend Alliance High School, participate in sports, join the teaching profession and are ready to challenge the authorities on matters of public interest. Matiba demonstrates his admiration for his father and his gratitude for the role he plays in his life by writing about him at the beginning of the autobiography.

He joins politics at the age of forty one and rises to become a cabinet minister. However, disagreements and suspicion lead him to resign from the cabinet, a decision that does not go down well with the KANU government as members of the political party see this as an act of betrayal of the president. The authorities interrogate him in an attempt to find out his position in relation to the government and they confiscate his passport causing him to miss his son's graduation in the United States of America. The interrogation angers him as he feels it is unwarranted yet it plants in him a seed to fight for democracy. He says:

That interrogation made me decide that I was not going to keep away from politics any longer. I had kept a low profile and refused to engage in politics, yet I was being harassed. I had to make public my feelings about politics in Kenya. I knew in a one-party system politicians with dissenting views had no forum to express those views. I therefore decided to call for a multiparty system of government. (251)

His call for multiparty politics marks the beginning of harassment by the government, leading to attempts on his life and the eventual detention. His determination to live to see multiparty democracy in place pushes him to fight against depression and mental breakdown while in detention. He explains:

Although I was under psychological strain. I never ceased to hope for the dawn of better days in my country. I was convinced that the spirit that had inspired me to rise up and demand a change in the way Kenya was governed would continue to strengthen me and other Kenyans who had stood up to be counted under the oppressive and autocratic rule of the KANU government. (269)

While he is in detention, Matiba's captors feed him with poisoned food which leads to his hospitalisation and later a stroke.

His autobiography narrates how his tribulations bear fruit when the president succumbs to international pressure to repeal the constitution to allow for multiparty politics. Matiba relates how he recovers from his stroke and vies for presidency but fails to capture the position in what he alleges were rigged elections. He does not go back to active politics after that, but he continues to call for democracy and justice as opposed to dictatorial rule.

He includes in his autobiography photographs that capture parts of his life and contribute to the credibility of the autobiography. These photographs show him as a university student, businessman, politician, philanthropist, and family man. He arranges the photographs in a chronological order that traces his development from a young student to a mature politician at sixty-seven years. In addition, he provides some of the letters he has written to different people during his detention, press releases, submissions by his lawyers, and confessions that arise in the course of his detention. The photographs and documents enhance the credibility of his narrative by tracing his progress over time and showing the effect of his detention on his family, and they allow the reader an opportunity to learn what the writer may not have included in the body of the narrative. That he refers to the autobiography as the story of his life and devotes the bulk of it to politics reveals a man who sees his life as largely defined by politics.

Aiming High was followed by Mungai's From Simple to Complex and Dawood's Nothing but the Truth both of which were published in 2002. From its title, Mungai's autobiography presupposes a movement. Mungai's autobiography is a journey in academic and professional life and it points out the movements he has made and the steps he has taken in this journey. He says that his journey is a movement from simple to complex, a pointer to the difficulties he experiences. The career he points at in the title - herding - also points to his movement because it requires one to move from place to place in search of pasture. In addition, that he refers to himself as a herdsboy as opposed to a herdsman reveals that the **journey** he outlines begins from his childhood. The motif

of simplicity and complexity keeps appearing throughout as if to remind readers that everything moves in that sequence—from simple to complex.

The structure of Mungai's autobiography indicates the steps that he has taken in his academic and professional life. He divides the work into parts, which he further subdivides into chapters. The titles of the various parts point to the milestones he has achieved in his academic and professional journey. The last part of the narrative, which he titles "Reflections," sums up his movement from simple to complex. In this concluding section, he looks back at the various achievements in his life and, in a sense, tries to explain the need to share his academic and professional life with the reader.

Born in Kenya in 1932, Mungai grows up when the country is a British colony and during the Second World War. He goes to high school and university around the time of the State of Emergency in Kenya, and graduates as a medical doctor towards 1962. His story is silent about the state of affairs in the country during those years because his motive in this autobiography is to outline his academic and professional life. The autobiography is selective and Mungai selects what to include or leave out of his narration. When political issues arise in the autobiography, therefore, they do so only in so far as they concern his academic life. This is consistent with the motive behind the writing of his story. The plan of events that he provides at the end of his work demonstrates the narrative's preoccupation with his academic and professional journey as he does not place much prominence on the historical and political happenings in the

country. However, where necessary, he acknowledges the influence and implications of these elements on his academic life.

Through a recollection of memories, he takes us to his childhood. Being an academician, he states that memories of childhood serve to demonstrate how human beings develop from simple to complex. As such, the incidents he narrates are not merely for the development of the plot in the autobiography, but illustrations of his concept of movement from simple to complex. The first memory he records describes a visit to a photographer's studio, and later to a hospital where a doctor pricks his finger to draw blood for testing for ailments. What ensures the vivid memory of the hospital visit is the simple distraction the doctor provides to be able to draw blood from the young Mungai's finger. Mungai captures the doctor's words by quoting him in the vernacular he uses to ask "have you ever seen this building?" (21). He relates this incident using short sentences which capture the short concentration, understanding and memory of a three and a half year old:

The first [incident] occurred when I was three-and-a-half years old. I remember that my parents and I traveled to a place where I was made to sit on a high stool. I learnt later that we had gone to have our photograph taken. On the way home we went through a hospital where I was made to sit on a table. A white doctor held my hand and squeezed one finger. He then looked up, pointed to the ceiling and asked me in my vernacular: "Nvumba ino-ri, uri wamiona?" (Have you ever seen this building?). (21)

His autobiography reveals his belief that he has come of age in his academic pursuits. He moves from being a poor child, an early school dropout, to a respected scholar and educator on a journey characterised by difficult experiences which shape the adult that he becomes. He includes photographs in his autobiography not only to create credibility for his autobiography but to demonstrate his transformation from a simple herdsboy to a complex figure particularly on the Kenyan academic scene. His autobiography illustrates the selective nature of this genre as he chooses to describe only his academic and professional life, leaving out the other aspects of his life and the society he lives in.

In Nothing but the Truth. Dawood tells the story of his life and refers to himself as the surgeon with four wives. His is not just a story about identity, but the narrative of a man who believes that he has lived a fulfilling life, which he shares through the writing of his autobiography at the age of seventy four. He is born in India where he acquires basic education, moves to Britain for further studies and marries an English woman, and finally settles and works in Kenya. He is thus a person with a three pronged identity - Asian by birth. European by education and marriage, and African by domicile. The four wives that he claims are surgery, writing, Rotary, and his family. While he compartmentalises them in the text, they operate concurrently in his life.

The title of his work refers to his effort to lay his life bare for readers. Through the writing of the work, he says that he has "raised the curtain of my life and let others peep inside" (336). This effort to expose his life is consistent with the nature of the

autobiography as a window through which we peek into the writer's life. The work reveals a man who is committed to his four "wives." Family is very important to him and this is evident in the sense that while he devotes separate chapters to his three other "wives," his family pervades the entire work, demonstrating that he regards his family as the backbone of every aspect of his life.

Nothing but the Truth reveals a writer whose life has touched and changed many people's lives. He confesses that he looks for a purpose and a philosophy in his life and sums up his autobiography by quoting from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life":

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

Life is real, life is earnest
And the grave is not its goal
Dust thou art. to dust thou returnest
Was not spoken of the soul. (136)

This quotation is significant because it demonstrates the autobiography as an effort in self-portraiture.

Nothing but the Truth, as Dawood says, is a rather ambitious title considering that the genre is subjective and often susceptible to biases and distortion of truth. The autobiography is a selective genre and writers reveal only what they wish to. creating a subjective image of themselves since the form takes a first person point of view. The title alludes to Dawood's intention to tell all about his life and indicates his awareness that although the autobiography calls for truth, it is very difficult for readers to determine the truth and therefore only he knows, and can narrate, the truth about his life. In addition, the title is a kind of an oath promising readers that what the writer narrates is true. By taking the form of an oath, the title of his autobiography draws readers' attention to the work and heightens their curiosity about what the writer intends to reveal. Dawood includes dates, letters, events, and photographs in his autobiography to enhance the reliability of the autobiography.

Mungai and Dawood's autobiographies were followed by Ogot's Mv Footprints on the Sands of Time in 2003. The title of Ogot's autobiography indicates his conviction that his life has made a mark on time. This title captures not only his confidence in his experiences, but the essence of a journey and subsequent arrival. Ogot is a historian and he begins his autobiography by tracing the history of the Luo community to which his family belongs. He records events dating back to the 17th Century and includes maps and diagrams detailing the migration patterns of his community to demonstrate his sense of identity and belonging to the community.

He borrows the title of his autobiography from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life" which reads in part:

Lives of great men all remind us

We can make our lives sublime.

And, departing, leave behind us

Footsteps on the sands of time.

Footsteps, that, perhaps another.

Sailing o'er life's solemn main.

A forlorn and shipwreck'd brother.

Seeing, shall take heart again. (136)

The poem refers to the marks that great human beings make and the legacy they leave in the society. Longfellow views footprints made on sand as permanent, but H. Coombes argues that "this is a very bad metaphor [because] sands like these, in their extent and lack of any forward movement, do not in themselves suggest time" (53). Coombes refers to Longfellow's metaphor as bad because footprints made on sand are temporary, as is time, but Ogot claims that he has made footprints on the sands of time. I am persuaded that Ogot is aware that just like footprints made on sand are temporary, the impact of his achievements will also fade away with the passing of time. He therefore decides to record the story of his life through the writing of his autobiography. Members of the society emulate the acts of those who have succeeded, and Ogot suggests that his acts are worth

emulating, hence the title of his autobiography. His life narrative records his footprints in education, research, administration and the public service and he hopes that readers can emulate him. He writes his autobiography at the age of seventy two. an age when he believes he has lived his life to the full and accomplished his dreams, especially in the academic arena.

He acknowledges his satisfaction with his life by narrating the story of his life, thereby demonstrating the imprints he believes he has made in various institutions. His is an academic and professional autobiography, but the title and narrative voice act as cohesive elements. The footprints he refers to are not just the marks he leaves in every field he works in. but also refer to his growth, or the steps he takes progressively from one stage of his life to another. They point to the journey motif that his autobiography alludes to as he grows from a young boy to a seventy two-year old man.

The possessive pronoun "My" in the title captures the spirit of this autobiography in the sense that Ogot is at the centre of the events and it is he who makes the footprints. As such, characters and events are only significant in so far as they point to this centrality. For instance, in the course of talking about various occurrences in Kenya, he talks about the death of Mboya in 1969. but is silent about Robert Ouko's death in 1990 yet the two cases are somewhat similar. This silence relates to the selective nature of the autobiography as the writer chooses what to include or leave out of his autobiography, but the inconsistency causes readers to doubt the autobiographical truth of the autobiography.

His mother dies when he is still young and her death affects his life immensely. His father remarries and the second wife mistreats the young Ogot, transforming him into a frustrated young man. The detailed description of his mother's funeral portrays the hard blow her death deals him and reveals the strong character of the mother. He includes one of the praise songs the choir sings at her funeral both in Dholuo and in English to show that his mother's special nature is recognised not just in the family but in the society.

His autobiography focuses on the strides he has taken in the academic and professional world and he describes events and characters only if they further this cause. The speech that he delivers at the award of African Studies Association (ASA) Distinguished African Award is the culmination of his scholarly life. His ending the autobiography with this speech is an indication of his belief that he has led a productive academic life.

In 2004, Kiriamiti published Mv Life in Prison in which he gives an account of his experiences while serving a jail term for robbery with violence and possession of arms. After engaging in crime for a long time the police arrest him and he gets a sentence of twenty years in prison. He serves only fourteen as he gets a remission on account of good behaviour. Mv Life in Prison is both a confession and part of the author's effort to let go of his dark past. While in prison, he takes time to rethink his past, realises the mistakes he has made, and decides to make better use of his remaining life. He learns sign writing and screen printing, trades which come in handy when he gets his freedom fourteen years later. In addition, he discovers the need to be a useful human being and starts relating

well with both the warders and his fellow inmates. It is this change in behaviour that earns him a reduced sentence. The details that he gives about his devices to escape from prison such as acting mad are a narrative strategy to draw readers' empathy so that rather than condemn him, we feel the need to give him a second chance.

After Mv Life in Prison came Kabira's A Letter to .Vlariama Ba and Likimani's Fighting without Ceasing in 2005. Written in the epistolary mode, Kabira's autobiography describes her childhood during colonial Kenya and focuses on the experiences of the Kenyan woman during the struggle for independence. Fighting without Ceasing is Likimani's second autobiography after Passbook Number F.47927 in 1998. She writes the second autobiography when she is eighty years old and describes her experiences from childhood to adulthood, highlighting her achievements in different spheres of her life. The latest entrant into this field was Maathai's Unbowed in 2006 which celebrates her winning of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize and demonstrates her interest in nurturing the environment. We shall analyse the autobiographies by Kabira, Likimani, and Maathai in depth in later chapters in this study.

A look at the male autobiographies in Kenya shows that men generally write about crime and national, historical and political issues, without giving much narrative space to personal and domestic issues. When writing about the struggle for independence in Kenya, male autobiographers highlight the role played by men, but rarely mention the contribution of women to the struggle. Having traced the growth of the Kenyan autobiography from independence to the present, this chapter demonstrates that the male

autobiography emerged earlier and has more published works than the female autobiography, which is the focus of this study. It is to these autobiographies written by Kenyan women that we now return.

CHAPTER FOUR: EXPLORING THE SELF

How does [the woman] name herself in her own narratives? How does she find meaning in her own experiences, and how does she understand the role of language in her effort to name these experiences?

Framboise Lionnet. (Postcolonial Representations 3)

This chapter is an analysis of the female autobiographical voice in Likimani's Passbook Number F.47927, Kabira's A Lener to Mariama Ba, Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi, and Maathai's Unbowed to establish how these writers employ the autobiographical voice to explore and discover themselves. We study these autobiographies together because they are works in which social concerns seem to trigger the writing of the autobiography. The primary occupation of the writers appears to be an exploration of the public persona, but the works touch on aspects of personal lives.

Self-exploration refers to the writers' examination of their lives or parts of it. The four writers do so by taking a journey to the past and inviting the reader to travel with them to the present. Self-discovery for these writers occurs as they perceive themselves in better light in view of what their lives have been like. These writers take a survey of their lives by looking back at themselves from the present and it is only after reminiscing about their past that they make a disclosure of what they have discovered to the readers, through the autobiographical voice.

Likimani's Passbook Number F.47927, published in 1998, focuses on the role of women in the struggle for Kenya's independence. She begins her story by explaining the title of her work, Passbook Number F.47927, which refers to her passbook, the letter "F" referring to her gender, female. The passbook was an identification document required of people from the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities living in urban areas during the colonial period, particularly during the State of Emergency. The passbook was especially required of people from these communities because they were believed to be members and supporters of the outlawed Mau Mau. Anyone from these communities was treated as a suspect and the colonial authorities reduced their identity as human beings to a mere number on a card. The title therefore points to Likimani's autobiography as an exploration of the dehumanisation of Kenyans by the colonial authorities.

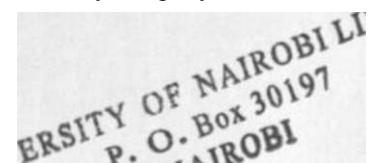
She gives an introduction to each of the chapters in her narrative. The introductions serve to provide background information on the issues she raises in each section. In addition, the introductions serve as a cohesive element linking the narrative to the author's life story. Passbook Number F.47927 is autobiographical and its writing enables Likimani to explore her experiences and those of Kenyan women during the State of Emergency. She tells the story of the Kenyan woman's contribution to the struggle for independence. She explores the significance of the passbook, saying that Kenyans from the suspect tribes have to carry it with them at all times, failure to which they could be detained. The process of acquiring the passbook is tedious and requires the applicant to be either employed or running a legitimate business. For women, one has to be either employed or the wife of a passbook holder. At a time when not many women are able to get

employment in urban areas, this requirement is oppressive because not all women have husbands either. The requirement of a passbook thus makes women dependent either on employers or on husbands. The result is that out of desperation, some women seek the help of unmarried male passbook holders or those whose wives live in the rural areas to acquire passbooks. The women live with these men, pretending to be their wives, to qualify for passbooks. We thus see these women suffering the double tragedy of acquiring a new identity as wives and the distress of living with men who are not their husbands in an effort to be recognised by the colonial authorities. Ironically, as these women seek the security offered by a passbook, they lose their identity and independence as single women by becoming the passbook holders' wives.

Likimani also explores the condition of women in the rural areas. These women experience hardships as they have to take care of their families while participating in the communal labour forced on them by the colonial government. They lose their husbands when the latter are either detained by the colonial government, join the Mau Mau to fight in the forests, or die. Her primary concern is the State of Emergency and she combines her experiences with those of other women and communicates them through various female characters. She employs the characters of various women to tell the story of the Kenyan woman during the struggle for independence. She infuses creativity into her autobiographical work to capture and present a holistic view of the condition of women during the State of Emergency.

One of Likimani's characters in this autobiography is Wacu, a hardworking woman who serves her white employer loyally. Likimani explores Wacu's independence and courage when the latter divorces her husband and finds ways of fending for herself. The circumstances that lead Wacu into becoming a "passbook wife" to Irungu are a statement on the oppressive nature of the social systems that women operate in during the State of Emergency. Likimani explains that a woman needs to be the wife of a passbook holder to be issued with a passbook, and if she is single as happens when Wacu divorces her husband, the dowry that her family had received from her husband has to be repaid to him. The repayment of Wacu's dowry causes friction between her and her brothers because as they see her as having denied them wealth when they return her dowry to her former husband. Likimani explores Wacu's identity as a daughter and a wife and discovers that both her family and husband deny her a chance to chart out her own life. Wacu desires independence and therefore looks for employment as a domestic servant. When her employer goes on leave, the colonial government passes the law requiring members of her community to carry passbooks, but she is stranded because only an employer or a husband can recommend her for the important document and she has neither. She discovers that the only identity she can have is that of a wife or an employee, an appendage to someone else, a situation that causes her anxiety. Likimani depicts this anxiety in short sentences and rhetorical questions:

How can I get a passbook? What shall I do? What indeed? Where else can I go? Where indeed? What then shall I do? Living in Nairobi is impossible without a passbook. To get a passbook I have to get a letter from my employer, or have a



husband to sign for me. My employer is out of the country. A husband I don't have. And to go back to the village. I would rather die. (14)

Wacu becomes desperate and seeks the help of a male friend, Irungu, who agrees to help her by presenting her to the colonial government as his wife. Like many other desperate women during the State of Emergency, she becomes a passbook wife. Ironically, the independence that Wacu seeks so desperately takes her full circle from being her first husband's wife to becoming Irungu's passbook wife, which means that she has lost her independence as a single woman and can only claim the identity of a wife. Wacu gets passbook number F.47927, Likimani's own passbook number, from which the narrative borrows its title, contributing to the autobiographical nature of this work.

She tells the story of Maria, whose husband, Yusuf, is the chief of Kariokor Location in Nairobi. Yusuf works during the night to ensure that the Mau Mau do not carry out oath-taking ceremonies in his location. His frequent night duties frustrate Maria because she feels abandoned by Yusuf and she refers to herself as an "emergency widow" (41). Likimani explores Maria's situation and discovers that despite Yusuf being a chief and therefore a loyalist, her family's unity is threatened because he is often away from home, leaving her to take care of the children and the home on her own. She therefore discovers that while the families of Mau Mau supporters lose their husbands and sons to death, the forest and detention, those of the loyalists lose theirs to the colonial government in the form of duty. Eventually, she discovers that the State of Emergency disrupts families regardless of which side of the colonial government one is on.

Likimani looks into the effects of communal labour which was forced on Kenyans residing in rural areas during the State of Emergency. She focuses on this aspect of the colonial rule because she discovers that it affected women more than it did men. She explains, "with many men in the forest [fighting as Vlau Mau], and others in prison or in detention camps, die majority of those forced to labour were women" (24). In an interview with this researcher, she explained her claims by saying that there were times when, during the State of Emergency, whole villages in central Kenya were occupied by only women, children, and a few old men as all able-bodied men had either joined the Mau Mau or been detained by the colonial government. Some of the women have to participate in the labour while pregnant or nursing young babies. She explores the hardships the women face by describing their experiences:

The weak and the aged served as baby-sitters, but only by the communal site. They had to be there to answer [the headman's] roll call and sometimes they were useful for fetching water for the thirsty workers. There were lactating mothers, their breasts swollen and dripping with milk which should have been fed to the children, but they had to work. Expectant, underfed mothers had to cope with the forced communal labour...From the hunger and from the heavy work, many of the pregnant women had miscarriages. But that did not stop them from being forced to work day after day. (36)

Her detailed description demonstrates that although both men and women have to participate in the forced labour, it has a greater effect on the women due to their gender and role in reproduction and as nurturers in the society. The labour hours are followed by a strict curfew that leaves the women little time to attend to their personal responsibilities such as weeding gardens, fetching water and firewood, cooking, washing, and taking care of their babies. In the process of exploring the effect of forced labour on the Kenyan woman, she discovers the women's resilience and says that they are able to take care of their families and hold them together because "traditionally these women were very hardworking [and had] unity and a sense of sharing" (25).

Likimani employs the characters of three women. Nduta. Nvakio and Njeri to explore the disruption of African families during the struggle for independence and women's determination to hold their families together. The three are young women whose husbands work in Nairobi, while they remain in the village to take care of their homes and children. With the introduction of the forced communal labour in the village, they find it exceedingly difficult to support their families as well as take on the colonial burden of forced labour. In addition, the situation in the city is such that their husbands have been away for years, leaving the young women to worry about their husbands whereabouts in the face of so many deaths and detention camps. Likimani refers to them as "wives living like widows" (54) to show that the State of Emergency disrupts the family unit such that the young women discover that their status as wives is similar to those whose husbands have died.

She explores the three women's courage by describing how these women travel to Nairobi to look for their husbands, yet they are aware of the dangers of travelling without passes. That they take the long journey on foot, travelling through thick forests in which the Mau Mau hide, is a further indication of their fortitude. When they get to Nairobi, Nduta finds that her husband already has a passbook wife, which makes it difficult for Nduta to live in Nairobi initially. Nyakio finds out that her husband is dead and the distress of going back to the village to be beaten and raped by the home guards forces her to live in Nairobi as a passbook wife to a stranger. Njeri finds out that her husband is in detention, but does not know which camp he is in. She decides to return to the village but has to lie to the home guards that she had been kidnapped by Mau Mau to be allowed back home. The decision to travel together demonstrates the sense of community that held women and their families together when they had to fend for their families without their husbands. The circumstances during the struggle force some of them like Nyakio and Wanjira to live with men just to ensure their survival in the towns. Yet, Nduta is finally able to reunite with her husband and son, indicating that there is still hope for the survival of the family unit in spite of the prevailing conditions.

A character called Nyaruai, a Kikuyu, takes a Mau Mau oath and swears to do all that she can to help deliver her nation from the yoke of colonialism. Her husband, Mwacharo, a medical assistant, is a Taita, a tribe the colonialists consider loyal. Nyaruai gets an opportunity to help her people when Mwacharo becomes a medical attendant in a detention camp whose inmates are suffering from diseases related to malnutrition. His appointment is largely influenced by his ethnic background as the colonial authorities

believe that a Taita medical assistant would not be a threat to the security of a detention camp. After Mwacharo sees the poor living conditions in the camp and meets a former schoolmate in detention, his position as a member of the "loyalist" tribes wavers and he "bitterly renounced colonialism" (139). When Nyaruai visits him at the camp, she too finds out that one of the detainees is her former boyfriend. She uses her position as Mwacharo's wife to find out information about the detention camp and plans with Mwacharo to help the detainees.

Mwacharo begins by recommending some detainees for hospitalisation at the general hospital where Nyaruai works as a nurse. The officer in charge of the camp, an Englishman, disapproves of the recommendation, but Mwacharo stands up to him by invoking his sworn duty as a medical assistant-to save lives. The disapproval by Mwacharo's senior sets the former thinking deeply about his position both as a medical assistant and as a Kenyan and discovers that he needs to help the detainees since they are his fellow Kenyans fighting for freedom. Likimani describes his discovery saying:

Mwacharo stood for a moment thinking which steps to take. He felt deeply of where he belonged; he looked at his hands, yes I am a black man. black African and a Kenyan. Then what kind of black man am I if I cannot help my people? Do I expect to be one of the whites or to be recognised by them - for what? I am a real Kenyan, a black Kenyan. I am going to proudly remain so. What other sons of the land are going through. I must go through, though in another way. (145-46)

The "sick" detainees preach support for the Mau Mau and the freedom struggle in the hospital, with Nyaruai giving her room to be used for oath operations. Mwacharo and one of his friends aid the detainees in drafting reports and letters to the colonial office in England and to the press, thus spreading the news about the poor living conditions in the detention camps. Nyaruai is significant in the narrative because she influences change in an otherwise grim situation. Her daring nature moves her husband to realise the need to participate in the struggle in his capacity as a doctor.

Of all the female characters that Likimani creates in this narrative, it is Nyaruai whose life bears the most likeness, to some extent to that of the writer. Likimani is a Kikuyu, and her late husband, J.C. Likimani, was a Maasai, one of the tribes the colonial government considered loyal. In addition, he was a medical doctor. The character of Nyaruai thus contributes to the autobiographical nature of this work and to Likimani's exploration of the Kenyan woman's role in the struggle for independence. Likimani has never been a nurse, but she is a trained nutritionist and, in an interview, said that she borrowed from that knowledge when creating the characters suffering from malnutrition and related illnesses. She told me that she has never been a Mau Mau and neither did she take any oath because she grew up in a Christian family and lived in a mission. However, she says that she was a Mau Mau sympathiser and did what she could to contribute to the struggle for independence. Therefore, when her husband got a chance to work in Isenya detention camp due to his supposed ethnic harmlessness, she used her influence to have detainees admitted to hospital and she helped to smuggle letters to the detainees' relatives and even to have some of them visit the sick detainees. The character of Nyaruai

therefore helps Likimani explore her contribution to the struggle for independence and she discovers that her efforts had an effect on Kenya's independence. Nyaruai's resilience is evident in the person of Likimani and even in the character she presents in her later autobiography, Fighting without Ceasing. We shall discuss Fighting without Ceasing in chapter five because in this work Likimani focuses on defining herself as an independent single woman after her divorce.

In Passbook Number F47927. Likimani employs various female characters with different experiences to tell the story of women in general during the struggle for independence in Kenya. The telling of the women's stories defines her as one of the Kenyan women who participated in the struggle for independence. The women's stories reveal that Kenyan women were involved in the struggle for independence just as much as the men and they had the extra responsibility of holding families together in the face of war, starvation, detention, and death. Young women lost their husbands to the Mau Mau, detention, or death while the older lost both husbands and sons. Muthoni discovers that the State of Emergency and the struggle for independence shook the stability of the family by causing disruptions, and while the men were busy fighting the colonialists or in detention, women remained behind to take care of their children and property. While the colonial authorities defined her as a colonial subject or as a number on a passbook, Likimani discovers herself as a courageous Kenyan woman who is proud of the contribution of Kenyan women in the struggle for independence.

Kabira's A Letter to Mariama Ba, published in 2005, reconstructs only part of her life as a child growing up in rural Kenya in the colonial days. A Letter to Mariama Ba tells the story of Kabira as a young girl growing up in colonial Kenya. She observes the adults around her, mostly women, and narrates the stories of these adults and their experiences in taking care of their families during the struggle for independence. She writes this autobiography in the form of a letter addressed to Mariama Ba, a Senegalese writer. Ba's So Long a Letter, a novella in the form of a letter, is a record of a Muslim woman's experiences in a patriarchal and polygamous Muslim society which views men as superior to women. Ba's letter is fictional, but Kabira identifies with the concerns that Ba raises about the Senegalese society and she captures her perspective of the Kenyan society in a non-fictional letter. Kabira's letter is a request to Ba to find out why women go through the difficult experiences that they do.

The letter form is a narrative strategy that allows the writer to explore herself as a woman by focusing on the lives of the women in her immediate society. She begins her letter by acknowledging that Ba's letter, though addressed to Aissatou, speaks to all African women. She clarifies the fact that she and Ba come from different parts of the African continent, yet their experiences are similar and she easily identifies with Ba's concerns for women. She views Ba as a part of the sisterhood that binds African women and feels inclined to share her experiences with this "sister."

Kabira is concerned about both men and women because society comprises both sexes. She narrates the stories of Wanyahunyu and Githinji, both unmarried elderly men who

live in abject poverty. She gives details of the chores they undertake such as cultivating, cutting hedges, cutting firewood and earning it home, fetching water and tending crops. Her community assigns roles along gender lines and this forms part of her early definition of herself as a woman so she is perplexed to see the two men performing women's duties. She captures a child's curiosity when she decides to find out where Wanyahunyu, the mystery man, lives. Her discovery that the man lives in a hole is so startling that when he gets out and greets her she runs away. She does not understand why Wanyahunyu does not have a wife like other men of his age yet "he could choose a woman while according to Gikuvu tradition, women waited to be chosen"¹ (4).

She portrays Wanyahunyu as strange because by staying unmarried, he goes against the norm. During the last two weeks of his life, Wanyahunyu stays with Monicah, a kind widow in the same village. In the process of narration, Wanjiku makes a statement that even though Wanyahunyu has lived alone all his life, he still requires somebody (a woman) to take care of him when he is about to die. Githinji is mentally handicapped and his brother abuses this disability by overworking him. Githinji moves from his brother's house to live with his widowed sister, who treats him kindly. Kabira portrays the two unmarried men as weird because while one lives in a hole, the other is mentally handicapped and they are the only men in the village who undertake chores designated as women's. Through the story of Wanyahunyu and Githinji, Kabira explores the role of women in nurturing the community. One stays with a kind villager, the other with his sister, yet both women do not have husbands.

In a statement loaded with emotion. Kabira requests Ba to thank God for creating women and asks God to bless women: "Mariama. tell God that we are grateful that He created women" (18). The request to Ba distances Kabira from the weight of this statement about the importance of women in society, but implicitly suggests that the world would not have been as it is without women's contribution. She digresses from the story of Wanyahunyu to highlight some of the evils in modern day Kenyan society such as corruption, illegal acquisition of land and destruction of forests. In the same vein, she comments on recent developments such as the honour accorded to Kenyan and African women when Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan environmentalist, receives the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize. She refers to Maathai as a great daughter of Africa to demonstrate that Kenyan women are indeed pursuing and achieving their dreams.

She narrates an encounter between Tata and Monicah as they reflect on life as widows and their accomplishments over the years, which reveals their resilience in spite of poverty and war. The two widows mention Mukabi, Kabira's father, as one of the role models for their young sons, and one who is concerned about his neighbours. Monicah refers to Mukabi as "a wonderful man." (7) noting that despite his kindness, he too served seven years in detention. Kabira introduces the character of her father to get an opportunity to praise him without seeming biased, in the process exploring her view of her father and discovering that he was a strong character. She appears biased against men because her father is the only strong male character in her autobiography. In another dialogue between Sarah and Njoki, also widows, Kabira explores the problems that Kenyan women faced during the struggle for independence. As a first person narrator,

she employs dialogue so that the two women can relate their experiences in their own words, hence creating credibility for her autobiography. This contributes to the credibility of both the narrator and the narrative as the writer employs dialogue as a device for overcoming some of the temporal limitations of the first person narrative mode. Njoki explains:

My husband was killed by the colonial homeguards during the Mau Mau war. I had my five daughters and my son. Their father was about thirty years when he was killed. With five children holding on to your dress, life was one long nightmare. As the girls grew up, you were afraid they would be taken by Mau Mau to go and join the struggle in the forest or remain at home and be raped by homeguards. (9)

She mentions many other young widows in her village and says that none of them remarries, perhaps because the women are busy taking care of their children in difficult circumstances and they are determined to survive poverty and offer their children a good life. She views the young widows' choice not to remarry as a clear indication of their independence from male dominance, which she calls "male shepherding" (13). This independence relates to the woman's ability to lead herself.

She addresses Ba often in the letter as she narrates the stories of the various women she has encountered in her life. The continuous address to Ba serves as a cohesive strategy for the letter, holding the various characters and events together. She keeps posing

questions to Ba, but they are rhetorical questions essentially meant to provoke the readers' thoughts about women's experiences such as widowhood, single parenthood, and marriage in difficult conditions such as colonialism and the struggle for independence.

She confides in Ba her embarrassment at taking so long to give a thought to the great women in her community. Her concession of embarrassment and shame is a strategy of winning readers to her side by painting a positive image of herself as a person who accepts mistakes and seeks to correct them. This being a letter, the narrator is able to express her innermost feelings without fear of reprimand. After all, she is addressing a "sister" who understands her pains. She highlights the irony that while Kenyans celebrate Madaraka Day, the day that commemorates internal self-governance, the women who fought for independence and even lost their husbands in the struggle have nothing to celebrate. Her autobiography demonstrates that independence has not changed these women's lives and the ongoing celebrations have no effect on their daily routine of working on their farms, collecting firewood, cooking, and feeding grandchildren. These women's lives are a commentary on the lot of many African women whose only experience is that found within the home, and the women live only for their families. Kabira compliments them as having sworn their loyalty to life because they have refused to be taken down by forces of poverty, death, and male domination.

She observes that although there are men who have lost their wives, "society ensured that these men got women companions" (15). She alludes to the Bible which says that "it is

not good for a man to be alone" (15) but goes further to wonder whether God could have forgotten to say the same about women. She tells Ba:

It seems as if God forgot to say. *It is not good for a woman to be alone either.'

Or did He forget? Please check with God on His views on this. Tell Him that many women on earth would like to know His views. Is it good for women to be alone? (15)

She takes religion to task and views it as conspiring with the patriarchal African society to oppress women. Since Kenyan women have not yet fully found their voice, the courage to question and challenge the status quo, she hopes that Ba, being in a privileged position in "the other world," can ask God His views about the condition of widows and women in general. Through these questions Kabira explores the condition of the Kenyan woman and recognises women's contribution to society. She specifically highlights the struggle for independence in Kenya and notes that the story of women's role in this struggle has not been told, suggesting part of her motivation in writing her autobiography:

Mariama, these women have sung their hearts out in African independent churches where they have been for many years...They have celebrated the lives of their children. They have supported other women and these women's children and have supported other needy people like Wanvahunvu. The story of their role in the struggle for independence and those of many other women has not been told.

Manama, tell God about these women. Let God's eyes look down upon them.

(16)

Writing about divorce, she narrates the story of her aunt who could not put up with beatings and other forms of oppression from her husband and she walked out of the marriage to lead an independent life. The determination and courage reflected by Kabira's aunt when she walks out of what she sees as the chains of marriage are comparable to Aissatou's in So Long a Letter who is the addressee in the long letter. The two women, though belonging to different geographical regions, are representatives of the new liberated woman who has learnt to define herself using different parameters as opposed to those used by the patriarchal society.

She explores the pressure that society often places on African women to bear male children through the character of her aunt. The ability to have sons was one of the ways of defining a woman's place in traditional African society and many women were often derided for failing to beget sons. In a rare occurrence, this character, having been under pressure to get a son in addition to her two daughters, decides that not only will she not get sons, but will not get any more children. As readers, we find this is unusual in a society where sons are valued more than daughters, and at a time when women are expected to get as many children as possible. Kabira notes that her aunt's courage is exceptional considering that "nobody had talked to [her] about family planning; she was just a courageous woman who defied tradition" (21). This woman's decision to chart her

own life demonstrates her realisation that she needs to define herself as the parameters of definition used by the society may be limiting.

.Another character. Auntie Wanjiru. is significant to Kabira's exploration of the conscientious woman. Auntie Wanjiru takes her first step into the discovery and assertion of independence when she leaves her cowardly husband. She walks out of her matrimonial home after an incident in which she risks her life and that of her unborn child to protect the Mau Mau but her husband almost betrays her. According to her. a man who cannot fight for his people does not deserve the honour of having her as a wife. In the spirit of freedom, Wanjiru not only leaves her marital home, but drops her husband's name and reverts to her maiden name. A name is the basic field of identity and by dropping her husband's name, she demonstrates her discovery of independence and courage.

This woman of rare courage defies tradition by walking into her son-in-law's bedroom and whipping him for beating her daughter, his wife. She then goes to the colonial chiefs office to apply for a divorce on behalf of her daughter, where the chief tells her that the law does not have such a provision. However, this mother does not understand the kind of law that the chief talks about, and Kabira relates their exchange through dialogue to capture its gravity. One of the most significant statements this woman utters to the chief- is. "I can see you are also a man: you don't know what I am talking about. You can't understand the pain of a mother..." (25). Auntie Wanjiru here relates the chief to her son-in-law. husband, and all other men who have no regard for women and invokes the pain

of a mother in the birth process as binding her to her children in a special way, which men cannot understand because they do not experience it.

Through the character of Auntie Wanjiru, Wanjiku challenges the institutions of law and traditions because they do not protect women. This woman defies the two to protect her daughter from the oppression of patriarchy. Her bravery and the audacity to question authority are an inspiration to all women, and the eulogy that Kabira reads at the funeral of Auntie Wanjiru is more than just a eulogy: it is a tribute to all the women who struggle to liberate themselves from the yoke of patriarchy and to offer hope to other women. As she tells Ba, Wanjiru's story needs to be told to the whole world so that women can have the inspiration to break free from their chains and pursue their dreams.

It is in her conclusion that Kabira justifies her reason for writing to Ba. She discovers that African women are bound at two levels: the first is their experiences of oppression by a patriarchal system that treats women as inferior citizens and the second is their common spirit of resistance:

We are tied together by our experiences of oppression by a patriarchal system that has relegated women to second class citizens. We are tied together by colonial and other foreign rules. We are tied together by our common experiences in marriage. Religion, whether Hindu, Islam, Christianity or African, oppresses women. Traditions also oppress women. We are tied together by subservient roles that societies have given us. We have common experiences as mothers, as wives

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and as daughters of Africa. But ... I have reflected much more on our common bond of resistance. (28)

She repeats the phrase "we are tied together" four times to indicate and emphasise on the various sources of the knots of oppression that put women down. She ends her letter on this note of resistance and continuing struggle to underscore the fact that women of the black race are still in the struggle for their liberation. Her letter is just one among many strategies in this struggle to satisfy the woman's need for independence and self-expression. Both Kabira's and Ba's letters relate to Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man where the narrator asks, "Who knows but that on the lower frequencies. I speak for you?" (568). Narrating the stories of various women in their narratives, both writers succeed in articulating common concerns of the larger women's community.

In A Letter to Mariama Ba, Kabira is more interested in rewriting the history of her society during colonialism and the struggle for independence, the period in which she sets her letter, than in the retrieval of the private self. Kabira reveals little about her childhood, but her autobiography nevertheless explores the condition of the Kenyan woman and the challenges she faced during the struggle for independence. The backdrop of this struggle reflects not only the desire for Kenya to gain freedom from her colonial masters, but that of women to be free from the forces of oppression, poverty, disease, and fear. Her letter marks a step towards the Kenyan woman's exploration of her identity. It is a personal testimony through which the writer speaks to gain her sense of being and place in society because writing autobiography allows women to take stock of their

situation. Through this narrative Kabira attempts to navigate the African woman's way out of her present condition and she offers courage and ceaseless resistance as the way forward.

She creates strong female characters such as Auntie Wanjiru, Tata, and Monica and weak male characters such as Wanyahunvu and Githinji. The women in this narrative are symbols of courage and resilience, while the men are dependent and vulnerable, with the exception of her father who she portrays as reliable. Her creation of characters is biased and the strong female characters give the autobiography a strong feminist inclination. By the end of the narrative we discover that her motivation is not the self-revelation that the autobiographical form calls for, but her way of furthering a feminist agenda. The autobiography reveals Kabira to be a feminist. The autobiography tells the story of an individual but she avoids self-revelation and personal narrative, concerning herself with the consciousness of others, such that by the close of the narrative we cannot claim to know anything about her. Out of all the autobiographies we study in this chapter, Kabira's is the most detached from the self yet, ironically, it takes on the most intimate form, a letter.

Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi, published in 1969, was the earliest autobiography published by a Kenyan woman after independence. Waciuma focuses on her life as a child growing up in rural Kenya during the struggle for independence and the Mau Mau uprising. She gives a child's perspective of the fear, uncertainty, humiliation, and disruption that affect her community during this period. The name Mumbi in the title of

Waciuma's autobiography refers to the tribal mother of the Agikuvu community of central Kenya to which she belongs. The title therefore is part of her efforts to discover herself as a member of her community by referring to herself as a daughter of her people.

She begins to explore her identity by looking into her origins and the history of her community. She establishes her identity by explaining the circumstances surrounding her name to demonstrate the significance of a name among her people. She says:

In our country names are not chosen haphazardly; they are vitally bound up with being the sort of person you are...it binds its owner deep into Kikuyu history, beyond the oldest man with the longest memory. (8)

In this community, a name identifies a person as belonging to a particular family or clan, giving the person a sense of belonging that is important in defining themselves. Her grandfather narrates to her the myth of origin of the Agikuyu, legendary figures, early prophecies about the coming of the colonisers, and intertribal wars and as she retells these stories, she demonstrates the role of oral traditions in passing on information through generations.

Growing up in colonial Kenya she notices the conflict of cultures that occurs as members of her community try to hold on to their African traditions in the face of influences from the colonial British culture. The earliest conflict that she writes about is between her father and the traditional witchdoctors who view the dispensary he runs together with the

colonial authorities as a threat to the witchdoctors' livelihood and powerful position in the community. The witchdoctors threaten to place a curse on Waciuma's father if he continues to turn the people away from traditional medicines, but Waciuma perceives fear beneath their threats when they pray to their God to "destroy the white man's teaching" (29). She empathises with these witchdoctors as she realises the hopelessness they experience as their economic mainstay is pulled from right under their feet. She says. "I realised now how tragic and sad it must have been for the witchdoctors, separately holding on to their ancient knowledge and power against the onslaught of modern scientific medicine" (30).

The community in which she grows up holds circumcision in high esteem but because her parents are Christians and they are opposed to female circumcision, she and her sisters do not undergo the rite. Her failure to undergo circumcision causes her community to define her as unclean such that her circumcised age mates taunt and reject her. saying that she and her sisters would not get husbands. She makes new friends with uncircumcised girls, but the one thing that hurts her most is that her grandfather, whom she so loves, bans her and her sisters from visiting him because, their uncircumcised status embarrasses him as a community elder. His attitude of rejection towards her and her sisters detracts from her self-esteem because although she is indifferent towards how the community views her. her grandfather is family and his rejection hurts her and reduces her sense of self worth.

She comes across as representing Kenyan colonial children at cultural crossroads. She describes how Christian women take their thanksgiving offerings to the church and non-

Christians take theirs to the traditional shrine in what she describes as a "beautiful ceremony" (64). She is so awed by the traditional thanksgiving sacrifice that she spends many days wishing that "my mother gave her offering to Mwenenvaea [god] instead of taking it to church" (64).

One of the greatest influences on Waciuma's young life is her mother who she looks up to for direction. She describes her mother as a hardworking woman who delights in nurturing her family. She says of her mother:

We lived in a house provided by the government so my mother had a long walk of four miles to the shamba. On the way she would knit for us although she was also carrying food for our mid-day meal. It was very tiring for her carrying home the load of food, secured on her back in the traditional way by a strap across the top of her head. Our home was always spick and span and we children were well-dressed and tidy. She never complained to my father about how hard she worked.

(46)

She explains that her mother works hard to ensure that their family is provided for with food and decent shelter. Her father works at the health dispensary and provides financial support to his family, but she notes that it is her mother who ensures that the home and family are clean and comfortable.

Waciuma develops not just love and admiration for her mother, but respect too. She explores her identity- as a daughter and discovers that being her mother's daughter instils in her confidence in being a girl so that when her age mates make marks on their chests so that one day they would have large breasts, she is not worried because "I knew I would have a big bust like my mother and my grandmother" (53). When a friend suggests that Waciuma pierces her ears to be able to wear earrings. Waciuma refuses because she fears her mother and "I knew my mother would beat me for it" (53). We therefore see a daughter who grows up with a desire to obey and grow up to be like her mother.

She explores the innocence of childhood by narrating her childhood memories. Her grandmother tells her that a rainbow is "a long bright snake that dwells in the water" (56). At that age, she has no reason to doubt her grandmother and she demonstrates this unshakable faith by not commenting on this explanation even as an adult narrator. Her refusal to discard her grandmother's explanation makes an implicit statement that with age and experience, she discovers that that was the best explanation her grandmother would have given her at that age and it was sufficient for an innocent child. In another incident, she and her friends delight in stealing an old witchdoctor's ripe bananas from his farm, considering an achievement their audacity to steal from a man who the community regards with awe. Her memories about she and her sisters trying to deceive their mother by pretending to pray for long periods so that they avoid going to church give the narrative a humorous taste. Her memories of childhood capture the experiences of a young girl growing up in colonial Kenya caught between traditional African culture and the western culture introduced by the colonialists. Her recollections of childhood

memories enable her to look back at her past and thus explore the experiences that have shaped her life as an adult.

She explores the kind of education offered to Kenyan children during colonialism. She spends the first two years of school learning numbers and the alphabet, with most of the time spent telling stories and singing. She and her classmates are introduced to algebra in the third and fourth years and to history in the fifth year, after which she joins intermediate school. When she joins intermediate school, the white school doctor takes the students through an examination to establish those who are circumcised so that they may be separated from the rest as this is a Christian institution and the authorities are opposed to female circumcision. Waciuma explains:

All those who were circumcised were put into one dormitory. They were segregated from the rest and we were taught to despise them... they spent their three years at the school in half-seclusion, where their lives were made a misery and they became very withdrawn. (83)

She discovers that her experience during this medical examination alters her perception of herself as she finds herself in a reversed situation. Back in the village other girls consider her an outcast because she is not circumcised but in the missionary school she joins the group that is acceptable. Once she is accepted in spite of her being uncircumcised, she discovers that she is more privileged than the circumcised girls who lead miserable lives in school and focuses on succeeding in her school work. Her

experience reveals the hypocrisy of the colonial education system since the school is run by Christian missionaries whose faith teaches tolerance.

She completes her studies in the intermediate school and sits her Kenya African Preliminary Education certificate in 1953 soon after the declaration of the State of Emergency in colonial Kenya. She returns home from the school to find a changed country where the colonial government has crowded families into villages due to the State of Emergency. She says, "I looked in wonder at the strange new village, row upon military row of crooked huts showing every sign of the hurry in which they had been flung together" (112). The colonial government put the natives in villages to ensure that the colonial administration officers had control over the Kenyans and to make it easier for security forces to trace the Mau Mau and their sympathisers. The colonial government subjects the natives to forced communal labour and when Waciuma returns home from school she joins in the labour. She says that she is happy to share in the tribulations of her people, and in the process we see her discovering herself as a Kenyan and part of the colonial subjects. She matures into a young adult as the struggle for independence intensifies. The home guards constantly search her family's house to get an opportunity to rape her and her sisters but she manages to escape their traps. When she gets an opportunity to go to a teachers' training college, she takes this opportunity as her way of escaping the problems in the village.

Her autobiography ends with the death of her father while she is away in college. This ending is significant because her father's death coincides with her last year in college

marking the end of an era in her life as she crosses over from childhood to adulthood. Her father's death greatly saddens her, but it is the effect it has on her mother that pains her more. She says, "I wished that I could change my mother's appearance. My mother used to blaze like [a] fire when "baba" was here. Now, she was greyish, old, remote, as if her spirit too had gone to another world" (152). Waciuma's concern for her mother relates to the close mother-daughter relationship that is evident throughout the narrative. Yet, her decision to close the autobiography with an apostrophe addressing her deceased father shows her discovery that she loves him too and misses his presence in her family.

She explores how she overcomes various problems as she grows up during the colonial period, thus discovering herself as a courageous person. She leads her sisters in ignoring the village girls who taunt them for being uncircumcised: she beats up a home guard who attempts to rape her: she stops female home guards from bathing in the only clean well in the village: and she pours water in the sleeping quarters of home guards after they open her water tins at the well, causing her water to run out. Her consistent resistance not only depicts a courageous woman, but also portrays how the evils of colonialism called for fortitude in her. Her narration of these incidents enables her to recollect some of the challenges that she has had to overcome as she grows up into an adult. She is able to discover herself as a worthy human being and assert her identity as an important member of her community.

Waciuma's tale of a child growing up in colonial Kenya communicates the effects of colonialism on the Kenyan family. Her autobiography, therefore, though focusing only on

a pan of her life, articulates the problems faced by the colonial subjects in Kenya as seen through the eyes of a young girl. She takes on the double role of looking back from an adult's position on the events of her childhood and moving close to the action and narrating it in present continuous tense as if it were happening in the present. The autobiographical voice enables her to take a journey back to her childhood and explore her status as a daughter of her community because of the events that have shaped her life from an early age. She writes her autobiography as a way of exploring the effects of colonialism on the colonial Kenyan child and she discovers that this child grew up in a difficult situation both within the family and in the community. The child's perspective protects her from the pain of recalling the real magnitude of the suffering experienced by colonial subjects, while at the same time capturing this suffering on the domestic front.

The title of Maathai's autobiography, Unbowed, published in 2006, indicates the writer's belief in her gallantry and it invites readers to share the experiences of a woman who is bold enough to declare her courage publicly. This initial declaration of fortitude portrays a person who is proud of her achievements over the years and who certainly is satisfied with the way she has lived her life. The insinuation of resilience in the title also points to the egocentric nature of the autobiography where writers put themselves at the centre of the action and create an image of themselves as strong and enduring.

The autobiography is chronological as Maathai takes us on a step-by-step journey of her experiences from birth to adulthood. The linear plot of this autobiography points to a writer who desires to have full control of her life such that she can relate events as vividly

as possible. She begins her story at the time of her birth, a beginning that defies the first person narrative because she would have had to be told about the environment in which she was born and the culture of her people. This opening strategy points to a kind of exaggeration on her part because she does not acknowledge the source of her information about the time and place of her birth. At the beginning of her story, she says that her birthplace is close to the Aberdare Ranges and the Mount Kenya. The two mountain peaks become significant in her later life when she becomes an environmentalist because they are among the forests she struggles to protect from cultivation and illegal logging. Her starting the autobiography with this information identifies both the motive for her autobiography, to serve her purpose as an environmentalist, and her target audience, people who are interested in her environmental campaigns.

Her interest in the environment appears very early in her narrative as she describes the time of her birth as having been "two weeks into mbura va niahi. the season of the long rains" and explains that her community "lived from the soil" (3) meaning that the community depended on the land for its livelihood. When she looks back at the place and time of her birth, she discovers her deep concern for the destruction that the environment suffers today:

At the time of my birth, the land around Ihithe was still lush, green, and fertile. The seasons were so regular that you could almost predict that the long, monsoon rains would start falling in mid-March. In July you knew it would be so foggy you would not be able to see ten feet in front of you. and so cold in the morning that

the grass would be silvery-white with frost. In Kikuyu. July is known as mworia nvoni. the month when birds rot. because birds would freeze to death and fall from trees.

We lived in a land abundant with shrubs, creepers, ferns and trees, like mitundu mikeu and migumo. some of which produced berries and nuts. Because rain fell regularly and reliably, clean drinking water was every where. There were large well-watered fields of maize, beans, wheat, and vegetables. Hunger was virtually unknown. The soil was rich dark red-brown, and moist. (3-4)

Words such as "lush," "green." "fertile." and "silvery-white" indicate the beauty of the land at the time of her birth. She remembers the environment and describes the land in vivid images because she now is an environmentalist.

When describing the traditional reception of a new bom baby among the Kikuyu. she emphasises the significance of the environment. She explains that a baby's first meal, even before breastmilk. was a mixture of juices from green bananas, blue-purple sugarcane, sweet potatoes, and a fattened lamb, all which she refers to as " fruits of the local land" (4). For her. the environment sustains life and she sees that first meal as having bound her firmly to the land and its produce, which partly explains her interest in environmental conservation, an interest that has made her a world renowned figure.

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Through oral traditions, she explores herself as a woman and discovers her identity as a member of her Gikuyu community. Oral traditions provide her with a sense of identity and aid in her journey to self-discovery. She relates the Gikuyu myth of origin, emphasising its environmental significance. She therefore notes that God showed the Gikuyu parents the land on which they were to settle, between four mountainous peaks: that Gikuyu prayed under a holy fig tree: the daughters collected sticks to aid them get suitors from the forest; and Gikuyu sacrificed a lamb under the fig tree. She thus underscores the importance of the environment. In addition, through this myth, she discovers that she belongs to the Anjiru clan, one she explains is associated with leadership. Through oral traditions, therefore, she implicitly discloses to readers her conviction that she is a bom leader and thus explains the leadership roles she undertakes later in her life. Through this myth, she explores the role of the woman in nurturing the society especially in her community where clans are matrilineal. She notes that with time, however, women have lost this control of the society as men take on land and leadership rights that were originally meant for women. This may partly explain her efforts to empower women through the Green Belt Movement, perhaps with a hope to rediscover the woman's powerful position in society.

She was bom when Kenya was a British colony, and her experiences portray the lives of Kenyan families during colonial rule. She traces the early colonial settlement in Kenya and its effects on African culture as the British introduce Christianity and formal education to the African people. She captures the role that Kenyan women play in keeping their families together when their husbands are away working to pay the colonial

government's taxes and meet the families' expenses. As a result of the need to meet these expenses, her family faces separation from her father when he starts to work on a settler's farm, but she and some of her family members are allowed to join him on the farm on condition that they provide labour for the white settler.

She explores herself as a member of a polygamous family and discovers that each of her father's four wives still has to take care of her own household. Due to the disruption that her family finds itself in, she becomes close to and learns to depend largely on her mother. She states that her mother "was my anchor in life" (13) so much so that when the mother dies at an advanced age, Maathai feels lost: "when she passed away, I was more upset than I have ever been in my life" (275). Maathai presents her mother as a person who instils in her the virtues of discipline and hard work, virtues which she discovers in herself too as she explores herself through the autobiographical voice. Describing her mother's work, she relates it to the environment saying, "I also watched my mother work. She planted seeds, tilled the soil, plucked weeds, and harvested crops" (16). Through retrospection she discovers that she admires her mother's work on the environment

Her relationship with her father enables her to explore herself as a daughter, which she does by employing a mixture of personal pronouns:

When I met him on the farm, he would not say, "Oh, Wangari, there you are." I would just know "That's my father." That was all I needed. If you are trained to

be satisfied seeing your father at a distance, you accept it. You are just happy he is there. (20)

The second person pronoun "you" in the passage above creates a distance between her and her father and helps her to present him as a respectful figure despite the fact that she is not close to him. Her shift to the second person pronoun implicitly indicates the distance that exists between her and her father.

That her father is polygamous and works away from home during her early years contributes to the formal relationship between the two and she learns to depend more on her mother. She credits her mother for making the decision to take her to school after her elder brother questions why she does not attend school like him. She sees her mother as having laid the foundation for her academic life and presents her as a loving person who works hard to ensure that her children do not lack school fees. In the process of narration, she explores her position as a daughter and discovers that her mother has had a great influence on her life. In addition, she demonstrates her gratitude to her brother for having seen the need for her to go to school.

As she recalls her relationship with her mother, Maathai explores her past and discovers herself in the present. She shows her mother as hardworking, in the process exploring herself and discovering that she too is hardworking, having learnt from her mother. The absence of her father in the photographs that she includes in the autobiography is a silence that indicates that he was not very much involved in her life. In her later life,

absenteeism takes on a new face in the form of her divorce. She presents herself and her mother as being in similar situations in that while her father is away from home and her mother has to learn to take care of her family on her own. Maathai divorces her husband therefore she has to fend for herself and her children. In a way, by showing that women who are left by men become strong. I am persuaded that she is making a statement that her mother made it without a husband, she has made it, and therefore other women can too.

The British government declares a State of Emergency in Kenya during her school days. She intertwines her story with the history of the Mau Mau struggle in Kenya and demonstrates the effects of the State of Emergency on Kenyan families. She says how the State of Emergency leads to widowhood and women-headed households when some Kenyan men are killed by the Mau Mau or the colonial government while others go to detention. In the process, she relates to what she says earlier about absentee husbands when men separate from their families as they work to pay colonial taxes. While discussing the story of Kenya during the Mau Mau insurgency, she focuses on her autobiography as she narrates her story alongside that of the nation such that as she explores her own growth, she explores that of the nation too. The autobiography is important because it reflects the historical period in which the writer lives or writes. Therefore, through the autobiographical voice, Maathai's personal story becomes part of the national history.

In the course of her work, she narrates her experience soon after she completes high school to explore challenges she faces as an educated Kenyan girl during colonialism. After acquiring high school education she refuses to enrol for the only available careers for women - teaching and nursing. She desires to acquire higher education, much to the bewilderment of her society which places very little significance on women's education. Her decision to pursue higher education suggests that she is a determined woman. She says:

I did not want to become a teacher then and I never tried to be a nurse. I wanted to go on with my studies, which for a girl was unusual. Neighbours would say to my mother about me: "There's no need to keep her in school. She cannot even become a clerk. She's a girl, after all." But my mind was focused elsewhere... "I'm going to Makerere University." (72)

Her determination to obtain higher education pays off and she receives a scholarship to go for university studies in the United States of America. Her period of study in the United States of America is significant because just as she is adapting to life in a foreign country, her own country is undergoing change too. She leaves for America in 1960, three years before Kenya attains independence, and returns home in 1966, three years after independence. Her arrival in America puts on what she refers to as a "lightbulb" in her head and she discovers herself as an African when she faces racism for the first time in her life. The image of a light bulb concretises her discovery of a totally new world and experience that changes her perspective of life. As she explores her life before going to

America, she learns to question the education offered by the coloniser back home and discovers that the education the British have given her is wanting, thus raising her consciousness:

Years of colonial education of the subject of America had somehow kept the African American part hidden from us. Even though we studied the slave trade, the subject was taught in a way that did not leave us appreciating its inhumanity. An African has to go to America to understand slavery and its impact on black people-not only in Africa but also in the Diaspora. It is in America that words such as "black," "white," "Negro," "mulatto," "skin color," "segregation," "discrimination," and "the ghetto" take on lives of their own. (78)

In retrospect, she notes that America opens a new chapter in her life and she acquires experiences and knowledge that widen her worldview.

As Kenya turns on a new chapter at independence. Maathai is discovering herself as an African in America. By the end of her university studies, her greatest desire is to return home and help build her independent country. She explores herself from the time when she leaves Kenya as a young girl, inexperienced and nai'Ve. until later in America, a country that instils in her a sense of discovery that makes her more mature, knowledgeable, and experienced. In America, she discovers her identity as an African and her first step after discovering herself is to drop the names she has acquired in the course of her education and through Christian baptism and go back to her traditional

name. Wangari. the name she uses to date. She leaves Kenya as Man Josephine Wangari but returns as Wangari Muta which "was what I should always have been" (96). She says of her stay in America:

The United States prepared me to be confident not only in reclaiming my original names but critique what was happening at home, including what women were experiencing... even though many women were still bound to traditional ideas about themselves at that time. I came to see that as an African woman I was perhaps even more constrained in what I could do or think or even hope for. (96)

Her stay in the United States of America helps her to discover herself anew, particularly as a Kenyan, but her narration counters this discovery and corroborates her statement that "I took .America back to Kenya with me" (95). The process of narrating her life story reveals her high regard for the American society because, throughout the autobiography, she uses American English as opposed to British English which Kenyans use. This detail, coupled with the fact that her autobiography was first published in the United States of .America, persuades us that her implied audience is the Western countries. She confirms our conviction later in her autobiography when, describing the day she received information about a proposed building in Uhuru Park, says that it was "in the autumn of 1989" (184) a concept of seasons that Kenyans would not identify with. She goes further to describe Uhuru Park by comparing it to Hyde Park in London and Central Park in New York City. When describing Makerere University, she refers to it as the "Oxford of East Africa" (72) again indicating that she is narrating for a foreign audience.

Through the autobiography, we discover that her attitude towards white people is that of awe. Narrating her school days in Kenya in the 1950s, she describes the teaching nuns in glowing terms, portraying them as nurturing, encouraging and compassionate. Writing about her first encounter with a Catholic nun, she describes the nun's habit as having been "as white as snow" (55) a simile that implies a foreign audience because its image is alien to Kenyan readers. We are therefore not surprised when she compares New York City to "the moon" (75) and describes Kansas as a "miracle" (83). Expressions which clearly capture her fascination with the United States of America when she arrives there for the first time.

She paints the missionary teachers in positive light and mentions some of the sisters by name to show her gratitude to them for their role in her education. She says, "After my education by the nuns, I emerged as a person who believed that society is inherently good and that people generally act for the best" (70). She talks about an Irish priest's invitation to tea to demonstrate the good in white people. The autobiography is selective therefore she chooses to talk about her relationship with the missionaries in the schools that she attends, but not about the political situation in the country in the same period yet Kenyans were experiencing the effects of the State of Emergency declared by the same colonial government that sponsors the missionaries.

Photographs are important in autobiography as they authenticate the writer's claims. Most of the photographs show her associating with white people. In the photographs

showing her period of study in the United States of America and Germany, she is surrounded by white people, and. later, she provides photographs of herself with the Canadian High Commissioner and the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United Kingdom. While she includes these photographs in the autobiography to provide evidence about the various people she has met and the places she has been to. we are persuaded to conclude that she places high value to her relationship with white people.

The autobiographical voice normally narrates events in the past tense because the autobiography is a product of writers' recollections of their past. She describes her arrival in Kenya in present continuous tense which captures the arrival as if it were happening in the present. This tense enables her to relive her moment of arrival and to signify the importance she attaches to her return to her country. She uses a three-word sentence to describe her intense feeling at having returned to Kenya: "I am home" (98). She takes us through the steps of her arrival in a kind of a cinematographic movement, using short sentences to describe each step and person vividly to indicate her great excitement at being back home and seeing her family again after being away from home for seven years:

I step off the plane into the warm, dry air and descend the metal stairs to the tarmac. I see a group of people waving frantically from the observation bay. Even from that distance I recognize my father's towering figure. Thrilled that my family has come to greet me. I wave and walk faster toward them. They stretch out their hands and wave back, calling my name. I am home. Tears roll down my

tace as I think of how much has happened to my country since I last walked on the same tarmac. I hurry to the terminal. (98)

She has already received a job offer to teach at the University of Nairobi and is therefore optimistic about the role she can play in serving independent Kenya. She however discovers that the professor of zoology has offered her teaching post to someone else on the basis of ethnicity and she braces herself for a struggle against ethnic and gender discrimination. She explores the discrimination she faces after returning to Kenya and discovers that her gender might be a hindrance to her advancement in a male dominated field:

It was the first time I had encountered that form of discrimination. Was it also because I was a woman? Perhaps not. but it wasn't long after that, when seeking another job at the same institution, that I encountered sexism from the same men. Both ethnic and gender barriers now were placed in the way of my self-advancement. I realized then that the sky would not be my limit! Most likely, my gender and my ethnicity would be. (101)

The narrative process allows her an opportunity to look back and take stock of the hurdles she has had to overcome to become who she is today. Although she later gets a job as a research assistant in the Department of Veterinary Anatomy in the same institution, she confesses that as a young female lecturer, it was not easy to deal with

male students and lecturers who doubted her qualifications and capability on account of her gender.

She discovers the need to struggle for gender equity and justice with regard to university-benefits while teaching at the university. The university administration denies female lecturers housing allowance, health insurance, and pension on the basis that they are married, yet give these benefits to the male lecturers, and they pay the women less than their male colleagues. With Vertistine Vlbaya, a female colleague, she fights for better terms of service, and the university administration yields to their demands.

In 1966, while teaching at the university, she meets her future husband, Mwangi. She explains that she meets him "through mutual friends" (106) and they get married in 1969. The two get three children, but divorce in 1979, ten years after their marriage. She includes a photograph of their wedding day in the autobiography to confirm that she and Mwangi had wedded. In a chapter she titles "Difficult Years," she recollects part of her experiences as she goes through marital problems and the consequent divorce. She employs the first and third person plural pronouns to explore what might have caused the rift between her and Mwangi. She says:

When we go through profound experiences, they change us. We risk our relationships with friends and family. They may not like the direction we have taken or may feel threatened or judged by our decisions. They may wonder what happened to the person they thought they once knew. There may not be enough

space in a relationship for aspirations and beliefs or mutual interests and aims to untold. For a couple, this is particularly so because most people many young and are bound to grow and change in their perceptions and appreciation of life. This is probably what happened with Mwangi and me. (139)

The plural pronouns help her to distance herself from the claims she makes so that perhaps she may not seem judgmental. The pronoun "we" allows her to explore her situation as part of a larger group of people who have experienced divorce. Her statement, put in a philosophical manner and distanced from herself, is perhaps a strategy to conceal her pain or blunt the hurt of divorce.

In retrospect, she explores the possible causes of their marital problems and suggests that her academic qualifications might have contributed to the strained relationship between her and Mwangi. She says, "Nobody told me that men would be threatened by the high academic achievements of women like me... therefore, it was an unspoken problem that I and not my husband had a PhD and taught in the university" (139). Through the plural "men." she veils Mwangi's individuality by considering him a part of a group. She explains that after staying married for eight years. Mwangi walks out on her without offering any explanation and later humiliates her by making their divorce proceedings public. She writes about her divorce twenty-seven years after it happened, but although the autobiography allows her to narrate only her side of the story, she seems to justify Mwangi's actions and absolves him of blame saying, "He was a product of the times and felt toward educated women the way most men in Kenya did then" (139-40). Looking

back at the divorce after so many years, she discovers that she is a victim of Mwangi's attempt to save his image in the face of the society:

Society's perception was part of the problem. It placed constant pressure on men to behave in certain ways. Even if their wives had more education or more achievements, they were expected to demonstrate that they were in control of their households and were not henpecked by and under the control of their wives. (140)

She describes her distress after he leaves using rhetorical questions not only to explore her status as a divorced woman, but also to let us into her anguish and invite us to empathise with her. She takes us into her confidence as she searches her life to identify what she might have done **wTong** to warrant Mwangi's desertion, and we empathise with her when she confesses:

I thought I had done everything: humbled myself, helped with his public role, served him, and loved him. I had tried to be a good mother, a good politician's wife, a good African woman, and a successful university teacher. Is it that those were just too many roles for one person to excel in? Did I miss something I should have paid attention to? Where did I go wrong? Because of the nature of our work, did we spend too much time apart? How could I have done so much for somebody, only to find it had not been enough to keep him with me? How was I going to cope with three children by myself? (142)

She describes her different responsibilities, in the process exploring the roles that she plays as a wife and discovering that it is not easy to strike a balance between all of them. She repeats the word "good" thrice to present herself as having done her best to save her marriage and although she does not blame Mwangi directly for the failed relationship, she comes across as a first person narrator who is an innocent victim. However, her reference to herself as unbowed in the title of her autobiography paints a different picture of her as uncompromising, and we are persuaded to believe that her inflexibility, rather than her husband's discomfort with her academic qualifications and job, may have been part of the cause of their marital problems. In addition, her silence about how she meets Mwangi leads us to suspect that they do not have a period of courtship, but she only marries him because as her aunt says, her "biological clock [is ticking] constantly" (105) yet she wants to start a family of her own. She explains further that although she is engaged to Mwangi, she is not in a hurry to marry him, but he persuades her to return from Germany where she is studying to hasten their wedding plans. We are therefore persuaded that she is not ready for marriage when she weds Mwangi and their marriage is bound to have problems.

As she narrates about the divorce proceedings in court, she is silent about the specifics of the case, only offering that Mwangi "accused me of adultery, of causing his high blood pressure, and of being cruel" (145). At some point in the court room, Mwangi's lawyer asks her a question that seemingly irritates her and instead of answering, she asks the lawyer why he is asking her that question. She chooses not to reveal the details about the

question, which might have helped us in understanding the marital problems between her and Mwangi, perhaps because the question was insulting or humiliating.

Nonetheless, we notice her determination to carry on with her life after the divorce despite the feeling of rejection from Mwangi and the public. She realises that although her academic achievements may have come in the way of her marriage, she needs to be proud of her success:

I decided to hold my head high, put my shoulders back, and suffer with dignity: I would give every woman and girl reasons to be proud and never regret being educated, successful, and talented. What I have...is something to celebrate and not to ridicule or dishonor. (146)

The autobiography becomes an avenue for her to recall and celebrate her academic achievement. She tells us that she was the first in her class at St. Cecilia's, that she made it to the dean's list several times at Mount St. Scholastics and quotes part of a letter written by one of her teachers to her parents saying, "your daughter is doing highly satisfactory work"(80). Talking about her doctorate, she says:

I was the first woman in East and Central Africa to receive a doctoral degree - a significant achievement that went largely unnoticed. It didn't even make the media headlines, probably because I was not the president, or his daughter, and

my husband wasn't famous. It is funny how such things can be conveniently ignored. (113)

Within a few years of teaching in the University of Nairobi, she becomes a senior lecturer, then a head of department, and finally an associate professor. She mentions these achievements as if they are just plain feats saving that she and her colleagues do not make a big deal out of it. but reveals her pride by repeating that she was the first woman to hold all these positions.

In the process of narrating her story, she explores her new identity as a divorced woman after Mwangi orders her to stop using his name. She recollects, with bitterness, that she had resisted adopting her husband's name when she was newly married, but agreed to avoid conflicts, yet. ironically, the change of names into Wangari Mathai does not assure her of a happy marriage. She explains that since she does not wish to go through the inconveniences of changing names again, she adds an extra "a" to Mwangi's surname, Mathai, to signify her new status. With the divorce and change of names, therefore, she becomes a different person with a new name and a change in marital status. Through the change of names, she discovers her new self and asserts her new identity in the new name she gives herself. Wangari Muta Maathai, saying that from then on she would define herself on her own terms. Her insistence on retaining her husband's name, albeit slightly altered, reveals a kind of uncertainty in her as she begins life as a divorced woman. Using this name contradicts her claims of independence and acquisition of a new identity.

When narrating her experiences after the divorce, she only tells us about one friend, Vertistine Mbaya, who helps her get over the traumatic period. Her mention of only this friend implies that she may not have been able to make new social relationships after her divorce. Through the autobiographical voice, she comes across as a caring mother who does all she can to protect her children from the pain of a divorce. She says, "I wanted to protect the children as much as I could from what had happened between their father and me. They **were** too young to **fully** understand the pain and struggle I was experiencing" (152). She sees in her children a reason to live and works to ensure that they are comfortable. She explores her new marital status and discovers that as a single woman with children, she may face financial problems. We empathise with her when she takes her children to swim and she cannot afford a pair of floating wings for the youngest, or a plate of chips for each of them. She relates the swimming pool incident to explore her experience as a divorced woman because when she was married, she did not struggle financially.

Although Maathai believes that Mwangi has been unfair to her, she tells us that she ensures that the children do not get entangled in their differences and she encourages them to cultivate a good relationship with their father. She seems to be concerned about the welfare of her children and ensures that they get a good education, but she is silent about their development, personalities, achievements, or her personal relationship with each of them. The silence about her children is consistent with the nature of the autobiography as the story of one's life in which the writer selects what to include or leave out. Granted, this is her autobiography and she therefore selects what to narrate, but

since she has introduced herself to us as a mother who has had to contend with the pain of a divorce, we feel deprived of information when we do not actually see the mother in her as she relates with her children. In a way, we are persuaded that she might also be a protective mother who wishes to safeguard her children from publicity because, unlike them, she has chosen to go public. As she explores herself, she relates her experiences in the Green Belt Movement, women's organisations, and politics with a lot of passion, but lacks the same passion when she talks about her family. The obvious silence about her children, and the foregrounding of her activities in the Green Belt Movement, point to her motive for the autobiography, to highlight her work as an environmentalist and therefore satisfy her implied audience. For her, the autobiography is an avenue to market her curriculum vitae as an environmentalist.

In the early 1980's she decides to join politics to further, she says, women's development and prove her capabilities in the face of those who have vilified her about her marital status in the past. She says that during this period, the Kenyan parliament had a dearth of female members and even the few that the president appointed did not have "real power in that male-dominated assembly" (160). When she decides to run for a parliamentary seat, she takes the risk of resigning from her job at the University of Nairobi where she has worked for sixteen years, knowing only too well that she could lose in the elections. As she explores her decision to leave her job and join politics, we are persuaded to believe that she realises that her decision may have been unwise. She says, "...I took a big leap, without a safety net below me" (161). Her action presents her to us as impulsive

because although she has served the university for a long time, this does not guarantee her another university appointment in case she loses in the elections.

She claims that the government frustrates her efforts to run in the elections, and the university refuses to reinstate her as a lecturer. In just one day, she loses a chance to fight for women's empowerment by being a member of parliament and loses her job, her only means of livelihood. Through her experience with the university authorities, she explores herself as a victim of compromised elite, a problem that Ngugi also raises in Detained, thus validating Maathai's account. Since she has resigned from the university, she loses her pension and health insurance and faces eviction from the university house she occupies. She captures her frustration during this period in a series of short sentences that indicate her psychological turmoil:

On Monday, I woke up and was confronted with the question of what to do with my life. I had no job and no salary. I had no pension and very few savings. I was about to be evicted from my house. Everything that I had hoped for and relied on was gone-in the space of three days. I was forty-one years old and for the first time in decades I had nothing to do. I was down to zero. (163)

These words denote a disappointed woman who, despite her academic achievements and willingness to serve her country, finds herself in difficult circumstances fighting a lone battle. Writing about her experience at the university, she is philosophical about how life turns out. She discovers that:

Life is funny though: The wheel sometimes comes full circle. After I was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the university of which I was an alumna, which was pleased to see the back of me in 1982, and which ignored my achievements in the ensuing years, awarded me an honorary doctorate in science in 2005. with full honors and all pomp and circumstance. (162)

Through the above words, she explores her feelings about the University of Nairobi and discovers that as a Nobel Laureate, she cannot afford to be harsh or attack the institution through a public medium. We feel a tone of bitterness in her voice, which is even more evident when she refuses to name the university directly. Yet, she seems to be telling the University of Nairobi authorities, "behold, here I am." revealing her satisfaction with the way her life has turned out.

She narrates about the government's discomfort with her activities in the Green Belt Movement. In the process, she exposes some of the evils of the political leadership of the time. She recalls the assassination of Mboya in 1969 and J.M. Kariuki in 1975, the attempted coup in 1982, detention of suspected political dissidents in the late 1980s, rigged elections, harassment of the press and students' activists, and general fear instilled in the citizenry. Mentioning some of these events reveals the country's poor leadership then and allows her to create historical truth for her narrative by placing the story of her life in Kenya's historical perspective.

From the autobiography, we learn that she participated in the search for political democracy in Kenya. She presents as one of the highest points in her life as her struggle to save Uhuru Park, a recreational park in Nairobi, from destruction when the government, which she has already exposed as avaricious, makes plans to construct a skyscraper on the park's grounds. She gets to know about the construction plans from a university student, whose identity she protects even in the narrative. Her protection of this student reveals her to be reliable because the student had spoken to her in confidence and even though she writes her autobiography seventeen years after his revelation, she keeps her promise of not revealing his identity. Just like she protects her children from publicity, she protects the university student's identity: after all, this is her autobiography.

She recalls her role in protecting Uhuru Park and says that she struggled greatly to do so. She explains that the government is so piqued by her persistence in exposing its plans about the park construction that "on November 8, 1989. Members of Parliament used a parliamentary procedure reserved for a national emergency to interrupt their ongoing debate to discuss" (190) her. She exposes the vanity of government leaders through the autobiographical voice.

She shows her determination and courage in standing up against corruption, and we admire her persistence despite the pain she suffers in her struggle. She discovers that the kind of struggle she is involved in is difficult because the public attention she receives is destructive for her and her children, and she faces rejection from friends who are afraid of being associated with her. Even when the president, to whom she has appealed to save

Uhuru Park, does appear, it is to give his approval for the project. Her narration exposes a head of state who has no regard for the rights of the people he leads, and his contempt for women comes to the fore when he suggests that in respect to African tradition. Maathai should "respect men and be quiet" (136). In the end, due to the publicity that she has raised about the government's corruption and disregard for the people and the environment, the construction project fails and she is happy with her success. Through the autobiographical voice, therefore, she explores the challenges she faces as she opposes corruption successfully, which concretises her conviction that she is unbowed as the title of her autobiography suggests.

In the chapter "Freedom Turns a Comer." Maathai intertwines her story as an advocate for human rights and environmental conservation with the political history of the country. She talks about how she joins mothers of political prisoners to fight for their sons' release. She explains that as a mother herself, she feels compassion for these women whose sons are in prison. She talks about her role in accompanying the women to the Attorney General and serving as an interpreter as they petition him to release their sons. When the government does not release their sons, the women go on a hunger strike and camp in Uhuru Park for one year.

She describes her association with the women in the course of the year-long struggle as the women face hunger, cold, disease, and beatings from the police, but they do not give up. In the course of describing the experiences, she discovers Kenyan women's persistence and tenacity in fighting for the welfare of their children. She makes a strong

case for Kenyan women's contribution to the struggle for democracy when after getting a rough beating from the police that gets her hospitalised, she declares that "I wouldn't be silenced or deterred from telling the truth and I wouldn't go away" (221).

In the course of fighting for their sons' freedom, the mothers strip in front of the police officers to indicate anger and frustration. As Maathai describes this scene, she explores herself and discovers that although she may have been in cooperation with the mothers, her social status may have made it difficult for her to strip like them. She therefore emphasises, by using parentheses, that she did not strip. As a result, her emphasis on the detail that she did not strip reveals to readers that although she would wish to be seen as working together with the mothers, she belongs to a different social and intellectual class from theirs. Her narration of these events helps her to discover herself as a defender of humanrights.

She explores her involvement in elective politics which she joins in 1997 with the hope of bringing together politicians opposed to the ruling party. She explains her action saying that although she has always wished to bring about social change outside of elective politics, she sees parliament as the rostrum she needs to enable her institute the change in governance she so desires for Kenya. She runs for a parliamentary seat and the presidency, but loses the seat due to what she claims is dirty politics. The greatest disappointment for her at this time is that due to disunity in the opposition. KANU wins the elections again and takes the country back to what she refers to as "bad governance,

mismanagement of resources, environmental destruction, and poverty" (255). After losing the elections, she goes back to her activities in the Green Belt Movement.

She gets into yet another confrontation with the government in 1998 when she opposes the allocation of portions of land in Karura Forest to private developers. Giving specific dates, she describes her efforts to prevent the construction of office and residential blocks in the forest by raising people's awareness and planting tree seedlings in the forest. She reveals her courage and resilience as she stands up to police brutality to save the forest. Even though she is wounded during the protests, she does not give up her struggle to conserve the forest and she sees the injury as part of the price she has to pay for her desire for environmental conservation. As she explores her past, she discovers that her persistence is what helps her keep up the struggle to defend her rights and those of other people. She expresses her realisation by saying, "what people see as fearlessness is really persistence" (272).

When she gets another chance to vie for a parliamentary seat in 2002, she has great hope because, finally, the opposition parties unite to form the National **Rainbow** Coalition, NARC. She wins in the elections by receiving a large percentage of the votes cast in her constituency and expresses her delight in the win saying:

When the ballots of the first free and fair election in Kenya in nearly a quarter century [emphasis added] were counted, I was astonished and gratified to discover

that the voters had elected me to Parliament with 98 percent of the votes cast - a truly humbling experience. (288)

Her emphasis on the percentage of votes that she garnered and her reference to her win as a "humbling" experience reveals her gratitude to the people who vote for her and her modesty in revealing the large number of votes that she gets. The new government appoints her as an assistant minister in the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. Finally, she has a chance to bring about the change she wishes to see in the country.

She wins the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize about two years after joining the government. For a Kenyan woman whose struggles to conserve the environment have largely gone unnoticed by the people around her, or when they are she gets into trouble with government authorities, the award comes as a surprise and we see her perplexity captured through rhetorical questions: "The news hit me like a thunderbolt. How was I supposed to handle it? How did this happen? How did they find such a person as me?" (291). We discover that although she has worked towards environmental conservation for twenty nine years, she does not expect recognition of this magnitude. She receives the news about her win while visiting her constituency and her immediate response is to plant a tree. The act of planting a tree is consistent with her environmental interests and this consistency adds to the credibility of her autobiography.

As readers, having travelled with her through her **journey**, we empathise with her and feel that she deserves the award. We admire her efforts because even with such a prestigious award, her desire to conserve the environment continues and she says that she cannot afford to be complacent: *'We cannot tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations of all species to rise up and walk" (295). She closes her autobiography with an indication that the struggle is far from over, revealing that for her. the winning of a prestigious award is only a catalyst towards her environmental work.

Unbowed is the autobiography of a Kenyan woman who refuses to be defeated by difficult experiences in her struggle for human rights, environmental conservation and political democracy. She believes that her life is a lesson in fortitude as we see a woman fighting for what she believes is right amidst difficulties. Through the autobiographical voice, she discovers herself as a woman who is hardworking, courageous, determined, and modest, and a believer in the value of education, a defender of human and environmental rights, and an example to other women. She intertwines her story with that of the nation and includes verifiable data such as dates, places, and people's names, all which serve to authenticate her narrative. She also provides photographs that capture some of the people and events in her life, which add to the credibility of her autobiography. She selects incidents in her life that show her in positive light and create a desirable image of herself.

She sees her life as a kind of journey, the most memorable part of which occurs when she receives the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, a point that marks the culmination of a long

struggle particularly with regard to environmental conservation. Being the first African woman and the first person to receive the award for environmental conservation, she feels that the one-woman struggle she has been involved in is finally recognised and accorded its due value. To capture this journey distinctly, she structures her autobiography chronologically, taking the reader sequentially from one step to another as she explores her life. The sequential order in which she arranges and narrates the events in her life reveals her to be an organised person. The autobiography reveals an extent of decency in her because even though she is a renowned person, her autobiography becomes an avenue to tell her side of the story and bare herself to her readers. She presents people who may have hurt her in the past such as Mwangi, President Moi, the professor of Zoology at the University of Nairobi as men who need to be understood within the circumstances they act in. In the act of narration, therefore, she comes across as a forgiving person.

She not only teaches society about the need to fight for its rights, but also leaves a legacy of fortitude amidst difficulties. She discovers that she is "unbowed" as the title of her narrative indicates, and she creates for herself a kind of heroic identity by downplaying her achievements and seeking to authenticate her narrative. For instance, as she describes her activities and the problems she has faced as she tries to oppose corruption and environmental destruction, she comes across as a true nationalist who fights selflessly for the good of her fellow citizens. Through her actions and the title she gives her autobiography, we discover that she is a persistent person who stands by what she believes is right. We do not learn much about Maathai as a person in Unbowed because

the autobiography comes across as an avenue to publicise her environmental activities and seek the attention of her implied audience.

The writers examined in this chapter write their autobiographies as journeys of self exploration from infancy to maturity and the autobiographical voice becomes a tool of this exploration and discovery of the self. Their autobiographies are motivated by social concerns: Likimani by the State of Emergency. Kabira by feminism. Waciuma by colonialism, and Maathai by her winning of an international award. They tell their stories after the events they describe have passed, indicating the retrospective nature of the autobiography, which enables writers to reflect on their lives and share their experiences with the public.

This chapter has examined how the female autobiographical voice explores the woman's identity and helps her to discover herself. The next chapter analyses the female autobiographical voice in Warah's Triple Heritage. Otieno's Mau Mau's Daughter. Likimani's Fighting without Ceasing, and Owuor's Mv Life as a Paraplegic.

CHAPTER FIVE: DEFINING THE SELF

The previous chapter looked at how autobiographers employ the female autobiographical voice to explore the self. This chapter is an analysis of the female autobiographical voice in Warah's Triple Heritage, Otieno's Mau Mau's Daughter, Likimani's Fighting without Ceasing, and Owuor's My Life as a Paraplegic. We study these autobiographies together in this chapter because their writing appears to be triggered by the writers' personal identity. These autobiographies seem to be primarily concerned with the definition of the person, but they touch on the public arena in which the writers live. We evaluate the role of the autobiographical voice as an avenue through which these writers define themselves and assert their identities in the society.

In Triple Heritage, published in 1998, Warah takes us on a journey in which she tries to discover herself as a woman in an immigrant society. Warah is a person with a multiple identity - Asian, African, and American. She is a member of an immigrant Asian family, and she traces the birth of her multiple heritage to 1897 when her paternal great-grandfather left his home in India to work in East Africa. She is born and brought up in Kenya and educated in both Kenya and the United States of America. The title of her autobiography Triple Heritage refers to her experiences as a member of the Indian, Kenyan, and Western cultures.

She traces the history of her community in Triple Heritage in an attempt to tell her story and define herself as a woman bearing a multiple identity. She relates the history of her

people in an attempt to find her own place among a displaced people. The overriding question in her autobiography is "Who am I?" She begins her story by saying that she only realised her confusing identity when her friends at the university in the United States of America asked how she could be Kenyan yet she was not black. She is a descendant of Indian immigrants to Kenya, but the history of her family remains insignificant to her until her friends point out the peculiar contradiction between her nationality and skin colour. Her friends' curiosity sows in her seeds of doubt and confusion about her identity. She explains:

Although the story of how my paternal great-grandfather arrived in Kenya always fascinated my audience, it left me with a nagging question: who am I? Kenyan or Indian? Or am I just one insignificant member of a huge Indian Diaspora scattered throughout the world with no roots, no scruples and no love or loyalty for the country of their adoption? I desperately [emphasis added] needed an identity and the more I searched for it the more confused I became. Over the years, I have learnt to accept that my identity is multi-faceted and that I am a product of not one, but three diverse cultures: the Indian sub-continent, where my ancestors came from; Kenya, where I was born and brought up; and the West, where I attained higher education and which invariably influences all people who were once colonized. (10-11)

While tracing the roots of her people, and hence her own roots, through history, she gives specific dates and she refers to them often to render her historical accounts credible.

She relates British economic and political interest in East Africa to the early Indian settlement in the region when the British hired Indians to provide cheap labour during the construction of the Kenya-Uganda Railway. In the beginning, the two races had a kind of symbiotic relationship as the British provided money and business opportunities and the Indians provided labour and acted as a link between the British and the indigenous people through trade. In addition to labouring on the railway, Indian troops also served in the police force and the army to aid the British administration in Kenya and Uganda. She therefore defines herself, through her ancestors, as a member of a race that contributed to the development of the British colonies in East Africa. Warah underscores the significance of the Indian race to the British rule by noting that "without the Indians, therefore, British imperialism in East Africa may have come to a sluggish half" (18).

Unfortunately, the Indian presence contributed to sour and suspicious feelings towards Indians by the Africans as the indigenous people regarded Indians as agents of imperialism. The Indians occupied a middle level position in society that meant that they could not have close relations with either the colonialists or the colonised. She says of this situation that the Indians' role "left them with neither the authority of the oppressor nor the humanity of the oppressed" (19). Her words capture the problem of identity that faces the Indian population in Kenya. She notes that the history of their role in colonial Kenya judges them harshly in the eyes of the natives and with suspicion in the eyes of the coloniser. Warah, being a descendant of this race that is torn between being Kenyan, British, or Indian, realises that she has a triple heritage and therefore needs to choose which identity to assert.

She comes across as courageous when she takes an observer's position and criticises the Indian community's refusal to integrate into the Kenyan society and define themselves as Kenyans. Nevertheless, she pays tribute to individual Indians, particularly lawyers and journalists, who played key roles in supporting the African cause in the anti-colonial struggle. She calls on Indians living in Kenya not to complain when they are treated as non-citizens because they had the opportunity to acquire citizen status after independence but rejected it. Accepting citizenship is one way of defining herself as a Kenyan, and criticising people of Indian origins for failing to integrate with black people defines her as a liberal person.

She says that although she did not experience racism while growing up in Kenya, she always had "this uncomfortable feeling that being an Asian was not a very pleasant thing to be" (37). This feeling gave her a sense of isolation and self-contempt that led her to ask herself "Why, oh why was I born Brown?" (37). To answer this question and hence understand and be able to define herself, she decides to take a journey back to history through Triple Heritage. She undertakes research in history in an effort to understand and explain the identity and status of the Indian people in Kenya since she is one of them. She aptly notes that by seeking an explanation to her question, she reconciles herself to being an Asian. Her decision to dig up the history of her people is a courageous step in discovering herself and asserting her identity as a fourth generation immigrant. She also draws from the Indian culture to assert her position not just as an Asian, but also as a woman. She therefore discovers part of her heritage as an Indian.

In a section she titles "The Woman's Place in Asian Society," Warali criticises what she sees as the oppressive nature of the Asian culture towards women. When her father dies, she breaks tradition and lights the pyre, a ritual reserved for the deceased's son or closest male relative. The ritual, according to religious belief, releases the deceased's soul into eternity. Warah's father has no son and she being the only unmarried daughter, volunteers to perform this most important ritual for her departed father, a decision that most of the religious leaders oppose. The Indian culture considers women "impure" and therefore a defiling presence in such religious ceremonies. Nevertheless, she stands her ground as her father's daughter and therefore one with a right to aid his transition to the next world. The act of performing this important ritual for her father helps her define herself both as a woman and a daughter. For her, this is a bold and significant move because it is "the culmination of a lifelong struggle [because] she was aware of the subtle and not-so-subtle messages of inferiority and docility that are ingrained in Asian girls as soon as they learn to walk" (42).

Asserting her rights as a daughter symbolically asserts her rights as a human being. The autobiographical voice adds onto this assertion because she defies tradition by speaking out yet she is an Indian woman only supposed to be seen and not heard. She gives the exact date of her father's cremation, 16th February 1989, not only to give truth to her narrative, but also to underscore the significance of that day in relation to her journey to self definition. When relating the incident, she distances herself from the story and only reveals that she is the one involved at the end of the account. As an autobiographer, she

employs this strategy to indicate her role both as a participant and observer in the life of the Indian society in Kenya and as a way of distancing herself as author from herself as a character.

Warah's act of breaking such an age-old custom, particularly one relating to religion, is her way of questioning the status quo and asserting her worth as an Asian woman in a patriarchal society. She rebels against the common belief that women need to preserve the family reputation by being "good." which, according to her, entails nurturing the male ego. In addition, she castigates the custom of arranged marriages arguing that it denies the girl a chance to freely choose her destiny. She says in her objection to arranged marriages that the unions are "a violation of a human being's right to self-determination and can be a device used to perpetuate the oppression of women in patriarchal family set-ups" (44). However, she applauds the positive aspects of her culture, especially family support and retention of language, noting that one's culture has a bearing on their identity as it helps people to know "who we are and where we come from" (45). She calls upon Indians to discard the aspects of their culture which inhibit their progress, such as arranged marriages, noting that some of these aspects are often labelled as custom and tradition but are "used as a convenient excuse to oppress women" (45). Lighting her father's pyre is a courageous act and it helps her to make a bold statement about the need to free women from patriarchal prisons formed in the guise of custom. In the process, she defines herself as liberated and an advocate for women's liberation. As Françoise Lionnet says in Autobiographical Voices:

The female writer who struggles to articulate a personal vision and to verbalise the vast areas of feminine experience which have remained unexpressed, if not repressed, is engaged in an attempt to excavate those elements of the female self which have been buried under the cultural and patriarchal myths of selfhood. (91)

In Warah's autobiography, the history of her people becomes the story of her life. History plays a significant role in this autobiography as it provides her with an opportunity to discover herself and reconcile with her status as an immigrant Kenyan. Her journey back to history helps her to relate to the past as to herself, thus defining herself through historical associations. Her position as a female member of an immigrant community forms part of her identity and she asserts that identity by narrating the history of her Kenyan-Indian community. As Anne Goldman says in "Autobiography, Ethnography, and History: A Model for Reading"

We conceptualize race - and every other determinant of identity - not as a pure and irreducible category, but instead as formed by and informing the whole range of social, historical, political, and cultural circumstances within which the subject locates herself. (Smith and Watson 292)

Rather than give an account of her life as an individual as is the nature of autobiography, Warah is more interested in telling the world who she is and how she has become what she is - an individual with a triple heritage. She engages history to help her understand herself, explaining that Kenyans of Indian origin "must take stock of their present

situation and reflect on how they got here" (52). Regarding the significance of history in the definition of the self, Lionnet argues that:

Since history and memory have to be reclaimed either in the absence of hard copy or in full acknowledgement of the ideological distortions that have coloured whatever written documents and archival materials do exist, contemporary women writers especially have been interested in reappropriating the past so as to transform our understanding of ourselves. (Autobiographical Voices 4-5)

Warah recreates a collective identity for Indian Kenyans through the autobiographical voice. For her, the process of defining herself through history becomes a kind of rebirth as a Kenyan and reconciliation with her immigrant identity, a mode of healing for the narrating self. She takes the position of a culturally mixed individual who seeks to repossess her Kenyan-Indian-Western heritage through history and affirms her mixed heritage by re-presenting and narrating the processes and experiences that have created her. In addition to providing specific dates to corroborate her historical narrative, she includes photographs capturing historical occurrences and members of her family. These details contribute to the element of truth in the autobiography.

Warah's mixed heritage and her desire to define herself and assert her identity are her motivation for the examination of history which leads to the writing of *Triple Heritage*.

Otieno's Mau Mau's Daughter, published in 1998, is the story of Otieno, a woman who joined the Mau Mau forces and participated in the struggle for independence in Kenya. The narrative is the first and most detailed autobiography about women's participation in the struggle for independence told from an adult woman's perspective. Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi and Kabira's A Letter to Mariama Ba demonstrate the effects of colonialism and the struggle for independence on the family, but the writers tell their stories from a child's perspective. Waciuma and Kabira were school girls during the struggle for independence, but Otieno was an adult and she chose to abandon her parents to join in the struggle. Therefore, Otieno's narrative affords a mature description and analysis of the Kenyan woman's role in this struggle from an insider's point of view.

The combination of this writer's names -Virginia Wambui Waiyaki Otieno - elicits a significant commentary on the history of Kenya and the events that shape Otieno's life. The name Virginia has English origins and she acquires it through Christian baptism by the early Church of Scotland missionaries in Thogoto. The name Wambui comes from one of the nine Agikuyu clans who derive their names from the daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi, their tribal parents. Waiyaki is the name of her father and of her great-grandfather. The latter, Waiyaki wa Hinga (Waiyaki son of Hinga) is a historical leader of the Agikuyu who led his people to resist colonial invasion in the 19th Century. Otieno, a Luo name, is the name of her late husband, a prominent Kenyan criminal lawyer after independence. All these names define her at different levels: as a daughter, a Christian, and a wife.

Born in 1936. Otieno grows up in rural Kenya during the colonial period and faces the challenge of being both Kikuyu and Christian. One of the major cultural hurdles she faces is female circumcision. Her Christian parents refuse to sanction her circumcision and her circumcised age mates tease and reject her. She fights those who tease her physically at times, but the derogatory terms they use to refer to her upset her and, she says, "I got so frustrated that I would hide myself and cry bitterly. I wanted nothing more than to be circumcised and hated my mother for not allowing it" (28). She has to fight for her dignity among circumcised girls who are out to humiliate her because she has not been circumcised. The ritual of circumcision forms part of her fields of self-definition as she sees herself as an outsider among her peers. At this age she defines herself as wanting in terms of tribal identity because she does not fit in with her peers. Her fighting back indicates her desire to be accepted among her age mates despite being uncircumcised and she is willing to get that acceptance by force.

She begins to rebel against authority while still a school girl. She starts by questioning why the white missionary teachers should insist on calling her by her baptismal name instead of her given Kikuyu name. In addition, she views the whites as being biased against her Kikuyu culture because, while they condemn the Kikuyu dances as barbaric, they teach the school children Scottish dances. She says, "Nothing could convince me that the Kikuyu dance was inferior to the Scottish one" (29). She secretly learns Kikuyu tribal songs and dances in protest, in the process defining herself as rebellious. She rejects the colonial definition of herself and her culture as primitive and instead chooses to define herself as an enlightened person with a valuable culture.

She takes the first Mau Mau oath to join the movement and fight the colonialists while still in school before the declaration of the State of Emergency in Kenya. Once out of school, she participates in the activities of the Mau Mau and runs away from home to avoid suspicion for being a Mau Mau by her mother. Part of her duties as a junior member of the movement include getting documents and information from government officials, recruiting house servants as members of the Mau Mau, and smuggling firearms to the fighters in the forests. Some of the people who aid her efforts are taxi drivers and young women who trick British soldiers and steal arms and ammunition from them for use by the Mau Mau. The young women, posing as prostitutes, take advantage of the soldiers by making them drunk and, in the soldiers' unguarded state, the women gather supplies of arms for the Mau Mau. She works as a Mau Mau spy, gathering information from security officers that enables the Mau Mau to attack homeguard posts, killing white government officials and Kenyan home guards. Her narration of the different roles she plays in serving the Mau Mau informs readers about her participation in the struggle for independence, thus defining her as a freedom fighter.

While still a member of the Mau Mau, she has three children with an unnamed man who she does not marry because her step-grandfather is opposed to their relationship. Not naming him or explaining the circumstances of their relationship leaves readers wondering who this man might have been, or why her grandfather was opposed to their relationship. This silence about the father of her first three children may be occasioned by her wish to protect him, but it also defines her as a guarded person who heeds her

grandfather's caution, which later turns to be wise because her fiancé betrays her to the colonial authorities and she is detained. Nevertheless, we appreciate her determination to take care of her young children while still working as a Mau Mau to aid in seeking independence for her country.

When the Mau Mau struggle intensifies the colonial government registers a few Kenyan political parties to voice the concerns of the colonised. She joins the Nairobi Peoples' Convention Party (NPCP) which has a women's wing consisting of women from various parts of the country. She mentions these women by their names to indicate the presence of women's participation in party politics during the struggle for independence. Women participate in the struggle for independence by organising demonstrations, mostly for the release of Jomo Kenyatta, smuggling ammunition, clothing, and food to the Mau Mau in the forests and welcoming dignitaries who support the struggle. Due to her political activities, she gets restriction orders that last for one and a half years, requiring her to report to her area District Officer daily for interrogation. In 1960, she is detained in Lamu together with her children, where she is not only beaten but also raped by British police officers and soldiers, ending up in a pregnancy.

She goes to the detention camp in Lamu with another Kenyan, Enoch, but he does not suffer as much as she does because he only has himself to take care of while she has three children with her. She has to feed her children and take care of them when they fall sick in the detention camp, while still facing brutal interrogations from police officers. This suffering defines her as a courageous woman because she perseveres the pain of beatings

and humiliation of rape to take care of her children who are innocent and she displays the same courage by disclosing her rape ordeals through the autobiography. Despite the humiliation, she is determined to fight for her country's independence and take care of her children.

In 1961, after her release from detention, she marries S.M. Otieno. S.M. is a Luo and she is aware that her parents might not approve of her relationship with a man from a different tribe. She therefore refuses to take him to her home despite that they are living together in Nairobi and even have a baby. Eventually, S.M. finds out where her home is and tricks her into introducing him to her parents by driving her to the home on the pretext of taking a leisurely drive. When Otieno's mother sees S.M., she makes a statement that is loaded with misgivings about their relationship. She asks her daughter, "Ino navo wamiruta naku?"(93) meaning, "Where did you find this one?" Asked in Kikuyu, this question refers to S.M. as "it" (mo), showing a mother's concern and fear about her daughter's relationship with a non-Kikuyu. Otieno's mother tells her daughter that although her parents would not force her to leave S.M., they would appreciate if she would find a Kikuyu man to marry. S.M. on the other hand also faces opposition from his sister who refers to Otieno as a "Kikuyu prostitute" (94) and even when S.M. and Otieno legalise their marriage, his relatives do not attend the wedding ceremony, with some giving reasons such as attending to business and taking care of a sick relative, while others keep away without offering any explanations.

Her rebellious character emerges when her father asks for bridewealth just before she and S.M. legalise their marriage. She tells her father. "Dad, that custom is outdated and I do not like it. I am not a goat to be sold. I am your child. I will never be sold to anybody" (97). Her rejection of bridewealth portrays a courageous woman who is aware of her worth as a human being and is not afraid to challenge the status quo regarding customs that she feels are dehumanising. She emerges as an unconventional woman when she refuses to be "sold" to her husband, thus challenging the culture of her community.

Kenya attains independence in 1963. but Otieno continues to participate in the political affairs of the country and in 1969 decides to vie for a parliamentary seat in Lang'ata Constituency. In the same year, Mboya, a leading Luo politician and Minister for Economic Planning and Development is assassinated. Otieno explains that Mboya's death produced hatred between the Kikuyu and the Luo as it was widely suspected that President Kenyatta and members of the ruling party, KANU, may have had a hand in Mboya's assassination. She says that Special Branch officers are directed to gauge her popularity in Lang'ata and when they discover that she could win the elections, politicians allied to the president decide that she should not be allowed to win because she would leak sensitive information about the Kikuyu to the Luo. An unnamed politician who supports her reminds those opposed to her candidacy about her participation in the struggle for independence and the release of Kenyatta, but they tell him that she would only be successful if she divorced S.M., a condition she rejects. Her rejection of their condition demonstrates her ability to define herself as a principled woman who is

committed to her family, a trait that is evident when she conceals information about the politicians' proposal that she divorces S.M. from him to protect his feelings.

Despite the opposition from members of KANU, she vies for the parliamentary seat but election officials burn her ballots papers and destroy others, so she loses. Determined to become a Member of Parliament, she runs for parliament in 1974 but, again, powerful politicians from her community ask her to withdraw in support of Mwangi Mathai. She believes in democracy and therefore does not withdraw from the race, but she loses to Mwangi. Despite the defeats, she explains that she does not abandon politics, but is unhappy that having participated in the struggle for independence, the government has not treated her fairly. She defines herself as one of the many women who participated in the struggle for independence, suffering beatings and rape, but once Kenya attained independence, they were abandoned. She says, "up to this day women freedom fighters have been abandoned and neglected" (107). She emerges as a bitter woman who feels that her efforts during the struggle have been ignored.

In December 1986, S.M. develops high blood pressure and later dies when he is taken for treatment at the Nairobi Hospital. Immediately after his death, his brother Joash Ochieng informs Otieno that S.M. will be buried in their rural home in Nyamila. Otieno questions this decision because both she and Ochieng are aware that S.M.'s wish is to be buried in their farm in Upper Matasia, Ngong. When mourning relatives gather at Otieno's home, Ochieng incites them against Otieno and they start shouting at her, causing her and her children and friends to panic. One of her neighbours tries to calm Ochieng down but he

threatens Otieno. saying that he is expecting two busloads of his relatives to arrive at her house to attack her. She realises that the atmosphere is tense and could result in violence so she calls the police and instructs her watchman not to allow any more visitors into the compound. Ochieng has already indicated his readiness to go to court to force her to allow his family to bury S.M. in Nyamila so she asks him to leave her house, arguing that there is no need for them to mourn S.M. under the same roof yet they are disunited. Ochieng refuses to leave, saying that that is his brother's house and it is she who should leave. She threatens to sue Ochieng and his relatives for trespass if they do not leave her house and the police intervene when she tells them that she is the only surviving owner of the property on which the house stands. The disagreement marks the beginning of heightened animosity between Otieno and her in-laws, led by Ochieng.

The elders in S.M.'s clan, citing the requirements of Luo customary law, claim that the body of their kin has to be returned to his patrilineal home in rural Nyamila for burial. Otieno on the other hand insists that S.M. should be buried in Ngong as he had stated before his death. This stand off results in a six-month court battle between her and S.M.'s clan. The court grants S.M.'s relatives authority to **bury** his body in Nyamila but Otieno emerges as a courageous woman because she fights to protect her husband's wishes about his burial and her right to bury him as his widow. She explains that before S.M. died, he had warned her against attending his burial if it was not held in Ngong. When Ochieng wins the case, therefore, she stays away from the burial. She is bitter about the lies that Ochieng tells in court and about the ruling that denies her and her children the chance not only to mourn their husband and father respectively, but also bury him respectfully.

During the court case. Otieno begins to define herself as a Kikuvu because she sees her tribal identity as part of the reason her in-laws deny her a chance to bury her husband. She explains what she feels at that time saying:

Tribalism and mistrust had now crept in: I had become what my Luo relatives used to call me - Ukuyu (a Kikuvu). The estrangement became total when they all ganged up against me in court. The experience changed me. I had been innocent of having allegiance only to my tribe. I had not chosen my friends according to tribe. After my rough treatment at the hands of my Luo relatives and their clan. I found myself unable to communicate with members of the Luo community. (146)

In addition, S.M.'s death gives Otieno a new identity, that of a widow, and she begins her life as a widow in a difficult situation because of the court case. She realises that widowhood provokes courage in her so that she is able to bear the pain she feels. She succeeds in upholding her dignity as a widow because, by refusing to attend the burial, she denies her in-laws a chance to humiliate her further by making her appear as if she lacks in principles.

She employs the autobiographical voice to provide the public with the intricacies of the burial saga. She gives specific dates, names of witnesses and judges, pictures, and letters through which she seeks reconciliation with Ochieng. These paratextual elements create credibility in the autobiography. She takes us on a **step**-by-step journey of her experience

during the trial, allowing us to understand her experiences as she begins to define herself as a widow.

•Vlau Mau's Daughter affords her an opportunity to tell her own story and to correct what the public may have thought of the saga about S.M.'s burial through media reports and scholars' articles. She explains her reason for writing her autobiography:

Many books have been written about this case and some by expert authors. But I am writing as a layman, writing what I felt and what I still feel, not what people imagined went on in my mind. This is from my heart, regardless of what others may think. It is my experience, not fiction. It goes beyond mourning; it is history. I shall live with the memory that my private life was exposed and distorted by lies, even to my grandchildren. (167)

She implicitly refuses "expert" authors' definition of her, choosing instead to define herself as a principled and courageous woman. The autobiography describes her personal experience in her own voice and the narrative process gives her a chance to pour out her anger and grief, leaving her emotionally stable. We empathise with Otieno due to her experiences, but we notice her courage in dealing with her in-laws' injustices.

After S.M.'s burial, she continues to participate in politics. She vies for the Kajiado North parliamentary seat in 1992 with the hope that the elections will be free and fair. She is beaten up by her opponent's supporters and receives death threats during the campaigns

and. on the day of elections, some of her ballot boxes disappear mysteriously. She mentions the names of her political opponents and attackers by name, the most prominent being George Saitoti. the then Vice-president, against whom she runs in the 1992 elections. Her audacity to mention the names of powerful political figures defines her as a courageous woman.

Otieno closes her narrative by observing, from experience, that the advancement of Kenyan women faces hindrances on many quarters particularly politics, culture and religion. On the political front, she castigates women for not voting for female members of parliament despite being the majority voters in the country. She calls upon women to stop regarding themselves as inferior citizens and take up parliamentary seats saying, "the problem for us is that women like to talk about political empowerment, but they dare not join the fight when it is hot" (236). She adds that culture "is the greatest constraint on African women's advancement [and] if the rights of women are to be guaranteed, we must start with the basics of culture itself" (228). On religion, she notes that African women first follow their parents' religion and then change to their husbands' religion after marriage, "which constrains their freedom to choose and implies that women cannot decide their own destinies" (229). She defines herself as a liberated woman and believes she has a responsibility of creating awareness among women so that they may reject discrimination. She says of this responsibility that "it is the duty of those of us who have broken the barriers to work to create awareness in our less fortunate sisters, who have inadequate information, as to how and when they are discriminated against" (228). We

are therefore persuaded that her autobiography is part of her efforts to create awareness about the need for women's liberation.

Mau Mau's Daughter is a personal account intertwined with the history of Kenya. The title, which points at Otieno's history as a member of the Mau Mau, indicates her pride at having participated in the struggle for independence. This is the story of a courageous woman who faces persecution as she struggles not just for the independence of her country, but also for her independence as a Kenyan woman. She fights against cultural discrimination which denies her a chance to bury her husband and political hurdles which deny her a position in leadership. Her journey is difficult, but readers appreciate her consistent resilience. The term "daughter" in the title indicates her need to define herself not just as a Kenyan, but as a woman.

She starts her life as a daughter to her parents, who she describes as caring and who provide her with education and teach her to be disciplined. When she has problems with her in-laws after S.M.'s death, her parents support her and ensure that she maintains her stand about not attending S.M.'s burial. She marries S.M., changing her definition of herself from a daughter to a wife and mother. She takes care of her children, combining her work in the office with that of a mother, and ensures that her children are nurtured in a happy family. In addition, she maintains a friendly relationship with her husband, such that when he dies she feels abandoned. After S.M.'s death, she defines herself as a widow, and it is at this point that she realises that widowhood provokes courage in her,

which she needs to be able to console her children while at the same time protecting them and herself from her in-laws.

Otieno also defines herself as a politician, a responsibility that cuts across her life as a daughter, wife, mother and widow. She joins politics as a young girl supporting the Mau Mau during the struggle for independence and maintains her political involvement long after Kenya attains independence. Her involvement in politics causes her pain as she faces detention, beatings and rape as a Mau Mau. and when she vies for elections after independence, her opponents destroy her votes and beat her up. Her autobiography therefore portrays a woman who has had to fight against many obstacles but who emerges victorious.

Likimani's Fighting without Ceasing, published in 2005. tells the story of a woman's struggle to define herself both economically and professionally. The motif of persistence is consistent throughout the autobiography as Likimani struggles to fight for her own rights in marriage, politics, and business.

She begins her autobiography by describing her parents and emphasising on their Christian faith and value for education. Her father is an Anglican clergyman and she grows up in a mission centre. Her parentage and Christian upbringing are important for her because the Christian values that her parents instil in her as a child have a significant bearing on the disciplined person she becomes later in life. In addition, she describes her siblings, each one at a time, narrating their academic qualifications and marital status. In

so doing, her autobiography shows her belief in the importance of family. She grows up in a united family where her parents respect each other and act as role models for their children, which shapes her perspective about family so that when she does not get similar unity later in her own family, she walks out of her marriage. Thus, her family constitutes part of her fields of defining herself, initially as a daughter.

Born in 1925, she grows up during the colonial period and her childhood demonstrates the cultural conflict that Kenyans face during that time. Being the daughter of a clergyman and living in a mission centre alienate her from the traditional African practices of her community such as circumcision and religion so that "as a child I knew very little compared with other children who lived in the village" (17). Her curiosity and defiance of her parents' orders take the better of her and she attends a traditional circumcision ceremony, much to the fury of her Christian parents. She does not undergo circumcision due to her parents' faith, but she narrates the details she observes at the circumcision ceremony to show the significance of the rite among her people. In the act of narration, she discovers and exposes the confusion of the Christian converts at the time with regard to women's circumcision. Her statement reveals the cultural dilemma that she believes Kenyans encounter in the early colonial days: "although many so-called committed Christians dared not let anybody know it, in their hearts, they wondered how a girl could become a mature woman unless she was circumcised" (29).

She notes the conflict that occurs between Christian missionaries and Kenyans as the latter fight to hold onto their customs and explains that the rejection and humiliation that

uncircumcised girls face in the hands of their circumcised peers sometimes force Christian parents to circumcise their daughters in secret. She thus describes her childhood experiences to reveal the cultural conflict within which Kenyan children operate during the colonial period. Her upbringing sets her apart from other children who have the opportunity to undergo circumcision and participate in traditional dances, and it defines her as a Christian.

Likimani tells us about her relationship with her husband. Dr. J.C. Likimani, in the process looking into racial relations in colonial Kenya. J.C. is a qualified surgeon, but he faces racism from European doctors due to the colour of his skin. He opposes this discrimination to the extent of physically pushing a white doctor out of an operating theatre. The doctor's experience of racism helps Likimani to define herself as a black woman because she too faces humiliation on account of her race when government officials assess whether as a black woman, she would be able to look after a European's house and furniture. She realises the need to assert her worth as a human being regardless of her race such that when government officials deliver dilapidated furniture to her house, she rejects it. She narrates this particular incident to create a good image of her husband as a strong character of whom she is proud.

She narrates about her relationship with Likimani, thereby getting an opportunity to assess her growth as an individual, and her change from being just a daughter to a wife and mother. She marries a man who, due to his position as a doctor, gets frequent transfers, meaning that she has to move with him from one work station to another. His

frequent transfers and involvement with the people would easily relegate her to remain behind his shadow, but she takes the initiative to seek and express her independence. Towards this end, she learns Maa, the language of J.C.'s community, so that she is able to fit into their way of life. She reveals that she is an industrious person when she starts her own projects of making ghee, farming, and rearing poultry even though her husband ensures that she is well provided for. These projects reveal a woman who discovers the correlation between economic independence and self-actualisation.

She intertwines the story of her relationship with her husband with the history of Kenya particularly during the State of Emergency. J.C. is a Maasai, one of the Kenyan tribes which the colonial government considers loyal, and the authorities appoint him to provide medical care to Mau Mau detainees. Likimani uses his proximity to detainees to get close to them and help in smuggling letters out of the Isinya Detention Camp and secretly helps families to visit their detained relatives. Narrating her efforts to assist detainees by taking messages to their relatives helps her to define herself as a freedom fighter because she contributed to the struggle for Kenya's independence. Her actions reveal courage and selflessness because by assisting detainees during the State of Emergency, she works against the colonial government thus putting both her life and that of her husband at risk.

She tells us that her marriage is not a happy one despite the material comfort that she enjoys because her husband is wealthy and famous. She accuses him of infidelity, physical abuse, taking her for granted and taking their children to far-off schools without informing her. She says that she tries to put up with his wrongs to preserve her family and

her dignity as a married woman and a human being in the face of the society, but realises that the relationship is destroying her: "I lived a life full of frustration and loneliness. The feeling of helplessness and unbearable misery overwhelmed me" (90). She looks back at her missionary upbringing and discovers that it had not prepared her adequately for the challenges of married life because missionary education emphasises on spirituality and how to take care of homes but does not tell her "what to expect on the other side of the "fence" (95) referring to the marriage institution. The autobiography becomes an avenue through which she looks back at her marriage and recollects some of the factors that may have contributed to the strained relationship. In 1955, she realises that she needs to make a step towards redefining herself and she walks out of her marriage.

She looks at the role her relationship with J.C. plays in transforming her from a naive missionary girl to an independent woman who is ready to take control of her life. She explains that J.C. was older than her, and he married her soon after she completed her college studies so she had not had exposure to relationships. During the marriage, he leaves her alone for long periods without explaining where he is and she interacts with other married women, in the process learning how to deal with marital problems. She discovers that unity and communication in a marriage are more important than material wealth and confesses her envy at seeing her house worker enjoy time with his family, something she does not experience with J.C. Whereas on the one hand she narrates that she suffers physical abuse in the hands of her husband, on the other hand, she says that "gradually, I changed. I became tough, perhaps tougher than my husband" (91). This transformation leads her to make a courageous decision to leave her husband and the

material comfort of their home to protect herself from pain and emotional breakdown. She explains her discovery that by holding on to an unhappy marriage. "You can drive yourself into severe depression, and many women have done so. You can become ill, develop high blood pressure or even suffer a stroke due to tension and anger. You can be seriously hurt physically" (95). The shift to the second person pronoun indicates her refusal to be part of those who end up suffering in their efforts to uphold their marriage vows. Having discovered that her marriage is not working, she decides to leave her husband and live independently. Explaining her decision to protect herself from further hurt by walking out of her marriage she says. "I quit my marriage; I did not care what others said, it was my decision alone... In doing so, I acted like a decent woman, brought up in a respectable home. I walked out of my marriage with dignity" (90). After her divorce, she starts defining herself as a single and independent woman.

Likimani continues to use her husband's name even after she separates from him, and readers view this as a contradiction to her claims of independence. She comes across as a courageous person when she decides to leave her husband, but we perceive **insecurity** in her when she continues to use his name. She attempts to justify her continued use of J.C.'s name by explaining that it is possible to quit a marriage, but one cannot abandon family names. We are persuaded that even though she claims to have become independent, she still feels that she needs to have some kind of connection with her husband. As she seeks to define herself as an independent woman, she has to begin by asserting her dignity as a human being, which is what she does when she leaves her husband. She makes a personal choice that defines her need for independence of men and

personal pride in her own achievements. Her autobiography is an indication that she can make it in life independent of her husband.

When trying to find peace and independence, Likimani makes the difficult decision of leaving her young children in her matrimonial home when she separates from her husband. She defines herself as a mother, but shows the dilemma of motherhood vis a vis selfhood for women through a series of rhetorical questions that demonstrate her anguish as she prepares to end her marriage and leave her children:

I was bitter, hurt, disappointed, and above all missed my beloved young children. Yet, I was still determined to be relieved of the pain of my marriage. After all, what good did I do for my beloved children? What did I add to their lives? When they saw their mother crying, they would cling to my clothes. What pleasure did they experience when they saw their mother sad and miserable, passing by the dining table without joining them because of an unbearable tension between her and their father? (96)

She explains that her decision to leave her children is difficult, but we are persuaded that it is the only way in which she can discover herself as an independent person, able to define herself outside of her marriage. Her decision to walk out of her marriage reveals her discovery and assertion of her rights as a human being, regardless of her marital status. She talks about the problems that lead to the break-up of her marriage exposing intimate details about her relationship with her husband, particularly his infidelity with a

family friend. She bares her life to the readers and by sharing her marital problems, evokes empathy in the readers and wins their trust. Having shared in her pain, we understand her decision to walk out of the marriage despite her love for and obligation to her children.

Her first step when she leaves her husband is to look for employment. She gets a job as an Assistant Welfare Officer with the East African Railways and Harbours. She descends from the position of a senior doctor's wife to a railways worker who starts out by asking for bus fare from her colonial boss, Mr. Lay. At this point, she defines herself as a career woman.

She begins her new life as a divorced woman in Makongeni Estate, a location that is a far cry from the wealth she is used to. Her detailed description of her residence in Makongeni is a statement on the social and economic depths to which she sinks in her search for a new self. Yet, despite the lowliness of her room, she discovers peace, which has eluded her for the duration of her marriage. She captures her satisfaction in words such as "soundly," "relaxed," "sweet," and "freely" (103). She describes her first night as a divorced woman to reveal her realisation that she can begin her life anew despite the challenges, both social and economic. She says:

My first night at A2-door 4 was satisfying. I slept soundly. I felt very relaxed. I dreamed of many sweet ambitions and imagined what my future could be, as I stretched my legs freely on that New Year's Eve. There was no one to shout at

me. No one to threaten me: no face of hatred: no feelings of being unwanted.

(103-04)

As she recollects her initial experiences while working for the East African Railways, she captures the political atmosphere in the country. She leaves her husband during the State of Emergency and she explains how her ethnic background as a Kikuyu affects her efforts to get a house in a good neighbourhood because her tribe is branded as Mau Mau. After living in Makongeni for one year, she gets a better house in Ziwani. She mentions some of her neighbours in the new area, notably Mboya and Phoebe Asiyo, who are famous Kenyan politicians, to create historical truth for her autobiography and place her account in historical perspective. She describes her neighbourhood as humble compared to what she was used to when she was married to present herself as not overly concerned with material wealth, but her choosing to mention only these two neighbours reveals her vanity as she indirectly desires to be seen as having associated with renowned people, despite her social standing at the time.

After she leaves J.C. she is able to look for a job on her own and in 1958 she gets a scholarship that enables her attain further education in Britain. The opportunity to stay and study in a foreign country allows her to meet different personalities which she would not have managed to do within her marriage or back in Kenya. Explaining how her stay in Britain changes her she says. "Mixing with all those students; listening to them and discussing Kenyan politics with them was very enriching and I learnt a great deal. I became outspoken and very bold" (137). She cites her period of study in Britain as

pivotal in her definition of herself as a divorced woman. Interacting with people beyond her immediate community gives her more experience and sharpens her consciousness:

After my stay in Britain. I looked at life in a different way. I learned many things at the institutions I attended and more by interacting with other people of the world. I looked at life in a different angle. I built my confidence; I became bolder; I became more daring... I became tough too. (140)

The new character that Likimani develops while in Britain determines how she handles her life after that. As readers, we are persuaded that had she stayed on in her marriage, she would not have had the courage to look for employment or found it necessary to further her education. The confidence she gains helps her to handle the problems she faces later in her family, career, business, and politics. With her re-awakened sense of identity, she starts her life back in Kenya as a woman who is aware of and ready to fight for her rights.

She returns to Kenya in early 1960s and gets a job as a nutrition advisor with the Kenya Dairy Board. She later gets a broadcasting job with the Kenya Broadcasting Services, but resigns when after serving as the head of adult education in an acting capacity for two years, her seniors do not confirm her in the position. Instead, they appoint a man who has not been in broadcasting before. By this time though, she is wise and she has discovered her value as a human being. She is disappointed with her seniors' action, but she refuses to give in to self-pity. Instead, she decides that she will "never again write 'Dear Sir' for

any job. not for a government anyway" (153) and resigns from her job. She defines herself as an independent woman and her independence has prepared her to be able to take risks. With the confidence that she has gained over the years, and with the optimism with which she had walked out of her marriage years earlier, she sets out to establish her own business.

She discovers that although she needs an income, she does not need to depend on others to earn it. We admire her courage to leave her job rather than face the humiliation of training her boss, but we are also persuaded that she is rash due to the hurried manner in which she leaves her job, just like her marriage, without a second thought. Her decision to start her own business later serves her well as her company, Noni's Publicity, flourishes, but her decision to leave her job is hasty and she admits her initial regret openly. Her establishment of a company marks the beginning of her definition of herself as a business woman.

Her new independence and confidence come to the fore when she decides to vie for a parliamentary seat. She explains that she loses in the elections after her opponents deceive her supporters saying that she has pulled out of the contest. She does not mention the name of her opponent, but her claims of corruption during elections corroborate what Maathai says in Unbowed about the problems that women face while seeking leadership positions. After the elections, the Nairobi City Council nominates Likimani as a councillor. As she talks about her life as a councillor she exposes the corruption that goes on in the city council and abetted by government ministers. She describes how some

influential people take advantage of their positions to acquire houses in estates of their choice by evicting tenants already occupying the houses, while a minister interferes with a tendering process in the council and threatens to have Likimani sacked for opposing his actions. She reveals her honesty by refusing to watch silently as government officers engage in corruption.

Due to her outspokenness against corruption, when the councillors elect a new mayor, he drops her from the important committees in the city council. She appeals to the readers as a woman who selflessly fights injustices and corruption, often putting herself at risk so that others may get what they deserve. Through the autobiographical voice, she defines herself as honest.

Having gone through a difficult marriage, she uses the knowledge about marital relationships that she has gathered over time to help those who may be experiencing difficulties in their marriages. When women go to her with marital problems, ironically, she does not advise them to walk out of their marriages like she did. but to seek independence within the marriage and take charge of their families. Her advice to such women indicates that she has had time to look back at her life since separating from her husband and realised that a woman's self-definition has to begin from within so that the woman is able to overcome the hurdles she faces in life. She helps some women to get jobs, thus putting them on the path to economic independence and helping them improve their lives.

Her stimulus for defending her rights and those of others stems from the difficulties she experiences. For instance, her father bequeaths her a piece of land, but a rich man tries to take it away from her arguing that she is a woman and therefore not supposed to own land. She seeks legal help to enable her evict the man from her land and, although it takes six months and a lot of money to get her land back, she succeeds. When her husband dies, her step-sons share his estate between them, disinheriting Likimani's daughters yet they too are J.C.'s children. She tries to fight for her daughters to get part of their father's land, but her step-sons use corrupt means to acquire the necessary ownership documents and sell off the land. Hardened by the problems she has faced and embittered by her daughters' disinheritance, she works hard to acquire property for herself and her children, in the process discovering that she is a hardworking woman and a devoted mother. Her definition of herself as a mother pushes her work towards ensuring a comfortable life for her children.

Photographs are an important source of truth in the autobiography, and Likimani provides photographs of some of her property as proof that she has indeed acquired property in spite of the hardships she has faced, and to demonstrate the contrast between the room she occupied in Makongeni as an East African Railways worker and the house she lives in now in Nairobi's Loresho area. Her aim is to assess her growth since she left her marriage and having acquired property without her husband's help confirms to her that she has indeed become independent and succeeded in acquiring property of her own to bequeath her children without having to depend on that owned by her husband. She

therefore provides the photographs to demonstrate to the readers that her hard work has indeed paid off.

The title, Fighting without Ceasing, indicates her belief that life is a struggle and people need to be persistent in their efforts to realise their dreams. The motif of fighting holds the autobiography together as Likimani looks at the challenges she has faced in business, politics, career and family and defines herself as a fighter. She struggles to maintain her business hold with Noni's Publicity, opposes corruption in the Nairobi City Council, and struggles to get back her land when a rich man attempts to take it away from her.

The titles of several of the chapters in her autobiography bear the name Muthoni, her own name. These chapters are: "Let Muthoni be Herself." "Muthoni in Business." "Muthoni Quits Marriage," "Muthoni Goes to Britain." "Muthoni as a Broadcaster," "Muthoni Establishes Noni's Publicity," "Muthoni in Politics," and "Muthoni Nominated as a Nairobi City Councillor." Some of the other chapters bear the first person possessive pronoun "My." The repetition of her name in the chapters, the reference to herself in the third person, and the possessive pronoun "my" point to the nature of the autobiography in that this is her story and she is therefore at the centre of every event. In addition, the repetition helps her to define herself as a successful woman who sees the need to share the story of her life with the public.

She includes the dates of some of the events she talks about, letters, names of some of the people she associates with, and photographs in her autobiography as para-textual support

tor her narrative. Dates create historical truth for the autobiography as what she narrates can be verified, and other para-textual features such as letters serve to validate her claims. She provides seventy four pages of photographs showing members of her family, friends, and other people she has met in the course of her eighty years of life, in the process presenting what she believes is evidence about her success story. The photographs enable us to discover her showy personality. In the process of trying to present herself as an achiever, she provides photographs of some of the people she has helped, an act that portrays her as vain.

Owuor's My Life as a Paraplegic, published in 1995, is inspired by her paraplegia which acts as a catalyst for narration as she desires to share her experiences as a paraplegic. The autobiography relates her life before and after a bus accident that changes her life. The title of the autobiography captures the axis of her narrative as it focuses on the accident and consequent physical disability.

She indicates in the title of her autobiography that she is paraplegic, thereby inviting readers to look at life through the eyes of a disabled person. She elicits empathy in the readers and prepares them for the suffering she exposes in her story. She cultivates a kind of personal relationship with her readers from the beginning because by stating the kind of person she is in the title, she draws their attention to her physical state so that they empathise with her as they read the story. When we empathise, we imaginatively identify with the feelings and experiences of other people and respond as if they were our own. Chinua Achebe in "The Truth of Fiction" and Robert Katz refer to empathy as the ability

to get under the skin of another human being. This means that we get involved in the lives_of other people and we share in their physical and emotional movement, feeling their excitement and tension, yet we are not those people. Empathy helps us to understand the other person from within so that we are able to communicate with and accept that person. This is unlike sympathy in which we only pity the other person, but we lack imaginative identification with his or her suffering. The form of the autobiography is based on facts but the recollection and subsequent narration of one's life story calls for imagination and it is this imaginative quality that enables readers to empathise with the narrator. By its nature, the autobiography arouses empathy by engaging our imagination as we identify with the experiences of the writer as lived in real life. In the process of reading the autobiography, therefore, "we not only see: we suffer alongside the hero" (Achebe 144).

The form of the autobiography elicits empathy in the reader for the writer because the autobiographical voice offers a first hand account of experiences which enhances the cultivation of a rapport between the writer and the readers and contributes to a sense of immediacy in the narrative. In this light, we begin reading Owuor's autobiography with a sense of empathetic responsibility because the writer has alerted us through the title that we shall be looking at life through the eyes of a disabled person.

Her life story opens when the writer is at the prime of her youth. The title of the first chapter "In the beginning," has a Biblical allusion. It refers to the Biblical story of creation which Owuor captures in the epigraph "I praise you. oh Lord, because I am

wonderfully made" (1). The statement points to the Christian background within which she grows up. She begins the story of her life on a note of excitement on the night of a wedding dance in her village. The sound of drums and the description of the dance capture the beauty of village life as she remembers her life as a young and able girl. Her sister, Phoebe, tries to cajole her to attend the wedding dance but she is not interested in the village dances and she prefers to stay at home to complete her school assignments.

Owuor puts this incident about the dance at the beginning of her story to show her desire for academic excellence and to signal to the reader how much value she placed on education as a young girl. In addition, her missing the dance when most of her age mates in the village attend sets her apart from the others by showing that her interests are different from theirs. As we begin to read this autobiography, therefore, we have in mind a narrator whose life stands out as disciplined and committed to her education in comparison to others who she lives among.

She recollects her days as a young and able girl, pointing out the importance of one's limbs. When describing the dance at the opening of the story, she draws attention to the feet saying, "I listened as the music built up to climax and as many feet joined in the dance" (2). The synecdoche of "feet" points to dancing as one of the activities she cannot engage in as a paraplegic.

Telling us about her childhood, she narrates the story of Achiel, a character in an oral narrative. Achiel is bow-legged and has the largest eyes in the village. He is so lazy that

while other people work in the fields, he spends his time seated with his feet raised, but at meal times he eats fast and stares greedily at other people's share. One evening after supper, hot fat bums Achiel's big eyes and he becomes blind. She employs oral literature as a technique to recapture her life as a child and pass on a moral lesson about avoiding laziness, which points to her feeling that a bow legged person is much more advantaged than a disabled person. Achiel has the use of his legs, albeit bowed, but he is lazy and greedy, yet she, who has always been hardworking, is limited. In a way, she seems to subconsciously wish for bow-legs. She explains how, when a new house needed to be put up, "all able persons" (3) would participate and children would knead the mixture "with our feet" (3). Later, she describes how as a young girl she would help to fetch water for a relative who "could not walk" (3). She cites these incidents and focuses on the feet to indicate the value of mobility and independence.

She grows up in a traditional African society where roles are clearly defined along gender lines: "The girls and the women cleaned and cooked while the men grazed cattle, went fishing and also helped the women in the fields" (3). She talks about her own family to illustrate the division of roles by saying that while her father stayed away from home on a teaching assignment, her mother "remained at home to take care of the home and the children" (2).

As she grows up into a young adult, she sets herself apart from her agemates by choosing to concentrate on her education. She explains that although her shy nature prevents her from forming long lasting friendships with young men, her greatest hindrance to getting

into relationships with men is her fear of getting married while still young. Many girls in her village get married in teenage, but she is determined to complete school and be a teacher before getting married. Her ambition to acquire education goes against tradition because her relatives and other members of the community believe that if a woman goes on with her education she may not get a husband or if she does, her husband will have difficulties "managing" (7) her. The relatives' concerns relate to what she has told us about the gendered roles in her society, which expects her to be a good wife and mother, able to nurture her family. Her earliest definition of herself is that of a daughter and a woman, but she is determined to rise above the social expectations of this definition.

She pays tribute to her father by writing about the social expectations that he defies by educating her. She determined to acquire education regardless of her relatives and age mates' opinions, excels in school and later joins a teachers' training college. She defines herself as a hardworking and focused girl whose goal is to excel in her studies and get into the teaching profession, and she does not waver in her efforts to achieve her dream. It is while in college that she meets her future husband, Yuda. but she only marries him after completing her studies. She gives details about her relationship with Nicholas, one of her admirers, and Yuda to demonstrate to the reader how she handled men who may have obstructed her dream of acquiring education. Yuda and Nicholas are different in that while Nicholas takes advantage of his coaching lessons to express his desire to marry her, yet she is only sixteen, Yuda respects her education and visits her only on weekends. Her inclusion of Nicholas in the story helps her to define herself as a Christian who is deeply

rooted in her faith which is against pre-marital sex, and shows her determination to acquire education before getting married.

She recollects her experiences when she starts working as a teacher whose wish is to train students to value education. Her definition of herself as a teacher begins with a situation where some of her students prefer to be taught by her European colleague because they believe that a white teacher is superior to a black one. She knows that she has had to overcome several hurdles to become a qualified teacher and is therefore disappointed with the students' displeasure at being in her class. She takes this opportunity to impress upon the students the need to believe in themselves as blacks and disabuse them of this alienating misconception that the white teacher is superior to her. She tells the students:

Whoever thinks she will be disadvantaged in this class because the teacher is an African may leave right now. The door is open... Some of you believe that teachers who are whites are more intelligent and better informed than the blacks. I was quick to notice your faces frown: will you stand up right now before I pick you out? ... It's most important you realise that there is no black or white brain and those of you who think that such a thing exists, think themselves intellectually inferior. You are being educated so that you may teach your fellow Kenyans in turn. (48)

We note that this incident occurred in 1968. at a time in Kenya's growth as a nation when the society had just emerged from colonialism. The direct reproduction, as opposed to

narration, of her words to the students captures her indignation over her students' attitude towards her just because she is black. Her words to the students contribute to her definition of herself as a Kenyan.

She comes across as a disciplined person from childhood when she participates in communal activities, carries out chores for the elderly, ensures that she completes her school assignments, and keeps herself chaste until her marriage, a character trait that is evident in her adulthood. When she becomes a deputy headteacher and later a headteacher in Kisumu Girls' School, what strike her most are the low academic standards and rude students. That she gets embarrassed by students who have affairs with married men, yet she has just joined the school, says a lot about the kind of life she would want the students to lead and she makes a decision to instil discipline in the students. She says:

As I watched my students at Kisumu Girls School the first couple of days, I knew I had a great task ahead of me. I also knew I could not transform these students overnight but I decided to do what was within my ability. There was plenty. (50)

"When she begins her efforts to rid the school of indiscipline, she says that she acquires 'ugly nicknames' (50) from the students but the names do not deter her from her focus of creating an orderly school. She visits disco halls in Kisumu at night to pull out the students who she finds dancing there, much to the displeasure of their male escorts. She

notes that under normal circumstances, society may view her as overstepping boundaries, but she justifies her actions by stating that:

... the residents who had the students' welfare at heart appreciated my efforts greatly. Some parents were so happy with my firmness with their children that they went as far as bringing their unmanageable daughters to me to take care of.
(51)

The efforts she makes at maintaining the students' discipline show her to be a fighter: daring and courageous.

Having seen how early marriages hinder girls' education as her students "were living with men therefore having to play the roles of both student and mistress" (51), she sets out to save her students from this danger by constructing a hostel to accommodate the students within the school. She narrates her experiences in this school to show her efforts to make the students succeed, in the process showing her success as the school undergoes a tremendous transformation, recording a performance of only one failure out of the one hundred and twenty students who sit the final examination in 1976. She mentions the specific year, 1976, to authenticate her claims about her contribution to the change in the institution.

She faces more challenges as a school head, notably pressure from friends and relatives who expect her to admit their daughters even though they are not qualified to join the

school, an education officer who asks her to use school funds to finance the painting of his house, and an education officer who takes students out of school to serve as waitresses at his private function. The education officers are her seniors and therefore hope to intimidate her into submitting to their demands, but she stands her ground and chooses to do what she believes is right: She refuses to admit unqualified students thus creating enmity between her and her friends and relatives; refuses to steal from the school's funds to buy the education officer's paint; and suspends the student who insists on serving at an education officer's private function. She attributes her firm stance to her Christian conviction and defines herself as a disciplined and honest character. Narrating her success in overcoming temptations of dishonesty, the autobiographical voice presents her as a morally upright person. She mentions the corrupt and irresponsible education officers" names as a way of creating credibility for her narrative.

Her courage in dealing with challenging situations reveals itself again when she contests a parliamentary seat. She makes the difficult decision of leaving her teaching career, which she so enjoys, believing that as a politician she would be in a better position to promote issues of children's rights, women's education and rural development Her experience as a politician is short-lived because she loses the elections, but is glad to return to her teaching career.

In a chapter she titles "Changes." she recollects the circumstances that lead to a momentous change in her life. During a school mid-term break, she is involved in a bus accident in which she injures her spine, causing the paralysis of her lower limbs. Through

a flashback, she narrates the events that occur during the break from the time when she leaves her home in Nairobi to visit her father-in-law at Kamagambo and her sugar cane farm at Awendo in western Kenya to the time she sits in the bus for her return journey to Nairobi. She provides minute details such as specific time, the presents she gives to her father-in-law, the models of her and her husband's cars, visitors to her father-in-law's house, special lunch at the school and her thanksgiving prayer, and the colleague she offers a lift as a way of reliving her life immediately before her accident. She describes her day-long visit to her father-in-law to explore her relationship with him, thereby emerging as a caring daughter and the cleaning she undertakes in his house reveals her as a tidy person. The recollection of these details enables her to hold onto what she can remember of her life as an able-bodied person because this is her last weekend of being able-bodied. In addition, narrating the activities she was involved in just before the accident helps her to recall her life before she got paralysed and show that she was caring and hardworking.

This remembrance is significant because it suggests why a quarter of Owuor's autobiography covers another life other than what the title intimates. While the title indicates that the autobiography is about her life as a paraplegic, the first quarter of the narrative takes us through her childhood and youth as an able-bodied person and is very crucial to our understanding of her as a paraplegic. She takes us through the longer part of her life by narrating it in three chapters while the bulk of the narrative covers only a few years of her paraplegia, but her reference to her past as an able-bodied person helps us to understand and empathise with her as a paraplegic.

After visiting her father-in-law and her farm, she boards a bus at Kisumu to take her back to Nairobi. When the bus makes a stop at Kisii to drop off some passengers, she requests the driver to wait for her as she goes to answer to a call of nature. She notices that the driver's breath smells of alcohol when he speaks to her, asking her to hurry. Their journey continues but the driver suddenly starts speeding and loses control of the bus, causing it to overturn and roll several times. The impact causes her to be hurled outside through the shattered bus windows. She describes how the rescuers at the scene of the accident place her among the dead and she remains with the corpses until the bus driver "saves" her by biting her and causing her to cry out thus drawing the attention of the rescuers saying:

I was seriously injured and as a result I became unconscious. Fate caused me to be placed amongst the dead who are normally the last to be attended to. I remained with the corpses on that cold dreary night until 1 a.m. When the dead were finally being ferried to the mortuary, a man who had come from the neighbouring village heard someone crying. By my side was the dead bus driver. At the moment of breathing his last he had chewed into my wrist which lay close to his mouth causing me to cry out. His teeth were still clenched onto my hand as he lay dead. The police had to literally tear my flesh to release me from his grip. (81)

The description of this encounter startles readers into feeling the pain she suffers right from the beginning of her journey. It is as though the driver has her in his grip right from

the time he grips the steering wheel at the beginning of her return journey to the time he dies. She describes how the police release her wrist from the dead driver's teeth, indicating that her rescue is nothing short of miraculous considering that the rescuers have already declared her dead.

She begins the chapter by reconstructing the bus driver's thoughts through imagination, which helps her to recall the circumstances that led to the accident and her consequent disability. She builds and presents the mental state of the driver saying:

"Why can't I stay awake?" He wondered, shaking his dull head..."Come on man, you had better stay awake, this road is treacherous." he reprimanded himself as he negotiated a tricky curve. "I really shouldn't have sipped that frothy stuff." he moaned regretfully. (68)

Her imaginative reconstruction of the driver's condition is her own way of relating to the accident and it contributes to the artistic quality of her autobiography. She is aware that the driver is drunk and confesses her disgust with him for taking alcohol yet he is driving. She says, "Why did he have to drink with such a long drive ahead of him?" (79). The reconstruction, through imagination, enables her to distance herself from her pain as it suggests her view that if it were not for the driver's drunkenness, perhaps she would not be a paraplegic.

She creates suspense in the story by capturing the driver's condition at the beginning of this chapter. Her initial description of the accident is in only three words. "Bang! Crash! Bang!" (68) after which she narrates the events that occur during her school mid-term break. This leaves readers in suspense as they anticipate the accident and the consequent changes in her life. The words "Bang. Crash. Bang." indicate impending calamity. In addition, the description of the accident builds up tension in the story and the suspense indicates her apprehension especially after discovering that the driver is drunk. She says of the driver, "panic and fear gripped his heart" (68) and of herself, "fear gripped my heart as the bus swayed from side to side" (79). She personifies fear, thus indicating her anxiety at the time and enhancing suspense in the autobiography and keeping readers alert as they look out for the expected catastrophe.

Yet, even as Owuor tries to imagine what may have happened just before her accident, she realises that she does not condemn the driver or blame him altogether for the accident. Her portrayal of the driver is that of a remorseful man who regrets his actions albeit too late. She portrays the driver as a victim of circumstances, in this case drunken driving, and empathises with him as he tries to retain control of the bus. That she identifies with the driver's regrets and in a sense absolves him of blame invites the reader's empathy towards her and the driver as they face the impending accident and especially as we later learn that the driver dies in the accident. She examines her feelings about the driver through narration, and in the process realises that she is forgiving and non-judgmental. This trait is consistent with her Christian principles and it evokes

empathy in the readers. She comes across as a person with a kind heart; able to forgive the driver yet he has caused her disability.

Immediately after the accident, she is comatose for a month and she narrates the events that occur during that period as related to her by her friends and relatives. Since the autobiography employs a first person narrator, she cannot tell us about events that occur while she is comatose. She overcomes this limitation by admitting her reliance on other characters to fill in the missing details. She says, "I relapsed into a stuporous state for several hours and then into a deep coma for a month. All that transpired during that time was related to me later" (80).

Narrating her experiences just before the accident, she emphasises on her hardworking nature and independence by explaining that:

I loved my home being very clean, and I was yet to find a domestic worker who could do things exactly as I liked them. I cherished my independence. Whether I had assistance or not, I normally cooked all meals, did my own washing and completed other random tasks in the house. (69)

She comes across as very particular about her home and sets standards about how her home should be. Before leaving Nairobi to visit her farm, she cleans and cooks to ensure that her family is comfortable while she is away and once she arrives at her father-in-law's house after a long journey, she cooks and cleans for him too. Her reminiscences of

her ability prior to the accident help her to realise the challenges she faces due to disability as she has to depend on her family and employees to carry out household chores that she would easily have handled if it were not for paraplegia. Her description of these activities evoke empathy in the reader since we have discovered her hard working nature and therefore identify with her when she narrates such memories from a wheelchair, no longer able to perform such tasks for her loved ones.

Her detailed description of the extent of her injuries rouses the readers' mental images so that we easily feel her pain because we can "see" the injuries. She says:

I had fractured and dislocated my spine at the first lumber vertebra. I also had serious head injuries... my face had a series of cuts. A deep cut that was on the right side of my face next to the right eye was stitched and bandaged that night. My upper teeth were chipped and broken. (81)

This description, coming so soon after a detailed account of how she has spent the weekend helping her father-in-law at home and on his farm, indicates her frustration with her limited mobility. She now defines herself as a paraplegic and we empathise with her because before the accident, we have seen her as a strong and hard working person. Faced with a life-threatening accident, she becomes vulnerable because she cannot change her paraplegia. As a paraplegic she explains that she finds comfort in her Christian faith and confesses to us that this is the time when the words of Psalm 23 make the most sense for her:

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me to lie in green pastures and leads me besides quiet waters. He restores my soul and guides me through paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I will fear no evil, for you are with me. (83)

Her remembrance of these words makes her autobiography an avenue through which she defines herself as a Christian and shows that her faith does indeed have a role to play in her life because it gives her hope when she is hurting. Her words create autobiographical truth for her autobiography in that they show a consistency in her profession of the Christian faith, and by reproducing the Biblical words in the narrative, she discovers the peace that her faith gives her after the accident.

At the close of the chapter titled "Changes." we discover that change does not occur only in her physical condition but also in her family. At this point in her narrative, she explores the transition that occurs in her life as she loses her old, able-bodied self and takes on a new identity as a dependent person. She elicits the readers' empathy by quoting her husband's words directly to indicate her discovery that her accident is indeed the beginning of change not just for her but for those related to her. Narrating how she is flown from Kericho to the Nairobi Hospital, she describes Yuda's reaction on seeing her when the plane carrying her lands at Wilson Airport saying:

The group moved towards the plane and on seeing me, my husband gave a loud

mourn, saying, "Oh no! this cannot be. My mother has just died and now my wife is dying. Who will take care of my children?" With these words, he collapsed into a deep shock. (84)

Yuda is shocked by her accident and by reproducing his words directly she shows her realisation that her roles as a mother and a wife may be hindered by paraplegia. Her ability to recollect Yuda's pain at seeing her injuries reveals her compassionate nature as she empathises with his distress yet she is the injured one.

She describes her feelings after regaining consciousness and in the process assesses the changes that have occurred in her life. She becomes aware of her immobility by observing the limitation of the space she occupies in the hospital while lying on a bed, unable to move. She says:

Very gradually I fully regained consciousness. I was out of danger and therefore I was moved from the intensive care unit to the surgical ward in the same hospital. My world was only that which was within the scope of my sight. I lay on my back and often stared at the white ceiling above. (86)

This description gives an image of her new self as a paraplegic and indicates the emptiness she feels at the time. Talking about the injuries on her body, she describes herself as "a terrible sight, a total alien to those who had known me earlier" (87). These words carry more weight when we consider that at this point she has not had a chance to

look at herself in the mirror. The repetition of the extent of her injuries and the added details serve to reaffirm her discovery that her life has indeed changed and she is no longer the able-bodied person she was before the accident.

Owuor tells us about the distress she experiences during visiting hours in the hospital due to the shock that her visitors display on seeing her and confesses that. "I often felt that these times were too long and wished they could be shortened" (87). Taking us into her confidence through the autobiographical voice, she confesses the anguish that some hospital visitors sometimes arouse in her. making her discover that, lying on that hospital bed. she looked as if she were dead. She receives what she describes as "a stream of visitors" (87) but observes that despite visiting her in large numbers, these people do not offer her the encouragement she needs.

She does not tell her visitors how she feels about their attitude perhaps because she would not wish to hurt their feelings like they hurt hers. Instead, telling readers about the situation eases the pain for her. The hospital visits reveal that she is thoughtful and discovers her courage in being able to put on a brave face yet she is hurting. She is able to confide her painful memories in readers, thus winning them to her side and creating credibility for the narrative because she demonstrates her trust in them. Yet, she is writing for the public so even as she confides in the readers she is criticising those people who cried by her bed and who she could not have reproached then.

Her description of Yuda as having a "depressed sunken face" (88) and her daughter's tears when they visit her in the hospital create empathy in the readers as Owuor depicts the pain her family goes through faced with a disabled wife and mother. Her description of the effect their visit has on her shows their helplessness and her own agony at seeing them suffer so. Through the autobiographical voice, she describes the emotional toll her illness takes on Yuda and the children and empathises with them saying that their suffering "tore the cords of my heart" (88). She almost forgets that she is the sick one and starts feeling their pain thus revealing her ability to empathise with others even when she is suffering too. We discover that she is compassionate because even though she is in pain, she is able to extend herself to others and share in their pain. In the process, she reveals to herself that paraplegia hinders her role as a wife and mother and she is vulnerable because this is a situation over which she has no control.

Narrating her stay in the hospital, she informs readers that what she needs is not pity, but understanding. She mentions the medical personnel who aid her transition from a state of hopelessness to acceptance by name to thank them for the help they offer her. Her inclusion of these members of staff in her autobiography helps her to recall her period of recovery and define herself as a disabled person because they help her realise that she needs to look forward to achieving her hopes and desires and avoid self-pity. In addition, she calls on readers to appreciate the medical personnel's work as she explains that these doctors and nurses "dealt with me as an individual with feeling, hopes and desires" (89). These people's kindness aids her as she learns to discover and accept her new identity as a paraplegic.

She describes her stay in the hospital in detail thus ensuring that readers move with her step by step. She provides a chronological order of events on a normal day in the hospital informing us what happens at each hour of the day, an effort that enables her to look back and examine the period she spent in the hospital. This way, she takes us on her journey as she learns to live as a paraplegic. She discloses her discovery of the effects of the spinal injury to us and confesses her initial frustration with her lost independence:

Not until the last few months in the hospital did I fully comprehend the consequences of the spinal injury. I was constantly laid in different positions by the nurses as I could not turn on my own. Later when I could take food orally I would be fed. I could not lift any limb of my body, and this was very frustrating. Though I could feel the sensations in my hands, my lower body was as though alienated from me. I didn't even feel as though I still had a pair of legs. (90)

She describes her feelings and informs us about her distress soon after discovering that she is a paraplegic, enabling us to empathise with her because she has taken us along in her journey back to the events leading to her disability. Her realisation that disability brings about dependence as she cannot do anything for **herself** including such basic tasks as brushing her teeth and bathing makes her anxious about how she would cope with her new dependent self. She demonstrates this anxiety about assuming a new identity as a paraplegic through an interior monologue:

How would I spend the rest of my life on my back? Who would do these tasks for me when I left the protective walls of this hospital? What would become of my teaching career? Who would bring up my children and take care of my home?
(92-93)

This series of rhetorical questions demonstrates the fear that she experiences once she begins to define herself as a paraplegic. Even in her pain, she is not just worried about herself, but about her students and her family, which reveals her selfless character. She has to re-learn how to eat and write, emerging as a patient and courageous person in an ironical and pitiful situation because she has been a mother and a teacher before, training others how to eat and write, but now she is the one being trained. Initially, as she slowly recovers the use of her hands, she sees herself as helpless, but with time she manages to feed herself and this rekindles her hope.

The form of autobiography has a certain emotional quality as writers bare their feelings and we see such emotion in Owuor's words as she pays tribute to Yuda for taking care of her family. She notes his appearance when he visits her in hospital and says of him:

The burden he was carrying was evident all over his face when he visited me. I was his greatest problem and responsibility and I thank God for him. Without him I hate to imagine how the situation would have been. (95)

She demonstrates that she is aware of her husband's difficulties and empathises with him. a virtue that readers admire and reciprocate by empathising with her too. In a way, she seems to be appealing to readers to empathise with Yuda for the responsibilities he has to bear. She mentions how her young son's unkempt appearance troubles her when he visits her in hospital to reveal her anguish at her inability to take care of her husband and children, thereby illustrating that her identity as a paraplegic detracts from her identity as a wife and mother.

Her time to leave the hospital draws near and she discovers that she is anxious about leaving the hospital and living as a dependent person. She discloses this anxiety through rhetorical questions saying, "Would I ever walk again? Was there any hope for me? How would my children respond to my disabled self? Would I ever fit back into the roles of a mother and wife?" (95). Introspection helps her to evaluate her feelings about her disability and discover that the possibility of dependency fills her with fear. The questions indicate her mental torment during this period and lead her and the readers to discover that although she has been a strong and courageous person before the accident, paraplegia makes her vulnerable.

She provides a detailed account of a home visit that the medical staff arrange for her as part of the preparations for her discharge from the hospital. Readers anticipate joy as she prepares to visit her home for the first time in months and therefore identify with her disappointment when she realises that she cannot access her house unless it is restructured and access ramps constructed to accommodate her wheelchair. Her narration

of this visit helps her to discover that as a paraplegic she is not only different from her former self, but from other people too. and that they will treat her differently because of her disability. She realises that Yuda too considers her different from him when, after realising that their house cannot accommodate her wheelchair, he does not say anything to her. She expresses her disappointment in him saying. "Yuda would not even comment on the problem to me as though my physical disability had affected my ability to communicate" (98). We empathise with her in her distress because she is at pains to explain that although she is physically disabled, this has not affected her mental ability and she can reason with other people.

She realises that Yuda is not ready to start life afresh with a paraplegic wife and confirms his unpreparedness when he fails to pick her up from the hospital on the day she is discharged. Readers empathise with her when she says that she "felt dejected and rejected" (101). Yet, even in this situation, she attempts to understand his actions saying, "it was all too clear: my husband was uncertain about how life would be in the house with me as disabled as I was" (101). Yuda does not turn up at the hospital, even three days after her discharge from hospital, but she pardons him saying:

I understood Yuda's fears. He had shouldered immense responsibilities all the while I was away. He was under stress physically, mentally and emotionally. I tried to picture his present state of mind with my imminent homecoming and I knew why he was afraid. I did not misinterpret his failure to pick me from

hospital as a cruel thing for him to do. As I was fighting my battles, he had his to deal with as well. (119)

Evidently, Owuor is disappointed in her husband, but as a Christian and a loyal wife, she protects him from judgment by outsiders, in this case the readers, by finding a way of exonerating him. Her attempt to understand what Yuda is going through reveals that she is compassionate and empathetic. She is able to momentarily forget her own disability and extend herself to feel Yuda's pain. She confesses her feeling of dejection and rejection to the readers, thereby evoking their empathy.

In her new self as a paraplegic, she struggles to uphold the character of a good wife, able to take care of her family. She maintains that her physical disability has not affected her ability to function as a wife who can cook, clean and serve guests, and is therefore upset when some of her in-laws suggest that she allows Yuda to marry a second wife. Having been with her from the beginning of her journey as a paraplegic and having seen the difficulties she has faced, readers understand when she eventually speaks her mind to these relatives saying, "Why are you asking me for permission for my husband to remarry? Will I maintain the wife for him? When you say that the new wife will be my helper, does it mean I will share a bed with her?" (139-40).

She narrates her exchange with Yuda's relatives not only to show the challenges her new identity presents, but also to inform the readers that she is performing the duties of a wife. The last question she asks her relatives, "What can't I do for my husband that you want

this new wife to come and do?" (140), is her implicit way of assuring the readers about her sexual ability and thus validating her earlier assertion about her ability to function as a wife. Revealing such intimate details about herself shows that she is a courageous person who is bold enough to share intimate details about herself with the public. The circumspect language she employs to explore her sexual ability shows that she is modest in her response even though Yuda's relatives have offended her, which is consistent with her Christian faith, and which therefore contributes to the autobiographical truth of her autobiography.

We note that while Owuor provides details about her conversation with the relatives who suggest the idea of Yuda marrying a second wife, she is silent about what Yuda has to say about this subject. Her silence paints her husband as a victim of circumstances with relatives "nagging" (140) him to marry another wife. Her description of her relationship with Yuda after her accident persuades us that she lives in fear of rejection from him, which is part of the vulnerability she experiences as a paraplegic. This may suggest why she does not criticise him directly in the autobiography. She explains that she has to discover herself anew as she learns how to relate with her husband as a paraplegic:

Like a new wife I had to learn how to relate with my husband once again...though I was physically limited, I took my share of household responsibilities and took charge of the home in his absence. Too often paraplegic wives became defensive making it increasingly difficult for their already suffering husbands. (145)

Her statement about the behaviour of some paraplegic wives indicates her belief that she is part of a larger group and she narrates her efforts to preserve her marriage in an attempt to serve as a model to other paraplegic wives. Her use of the plural "wives" creates a distance between herself and other paraplegics to indicate that she knows better how to deal with a spouse and she is different from other paraplegic wives. She paints an image of herself as being in firm control of her marriage as a Christian woman. She presents her commitment to save her marriage as one of the elements that have contributed to what she perceives to be the present stability in her marriage.

She describes how she takes her share of household responsibilities in spite of her disability and is satisfied when Yuda eventually accepts and communicates with her, yet he had earlier been unable to talk to her concerning her inability to gain access to her house while on a wheelchair:

We would spend time talking and he was able to consult with me concerning any issue that was bothering him. He gradually learnt to look beyond my disability to my potential. He accepted me the way I was and this greatly improved my self esteem. (144-45)

This statement shows her desire for Yuda's acceptance in her early days as a paraplegic. The moment her husband accepts her as she is, she gets encouragement to accept her new self and is able to smile at relatives who express surprise at finding her doing household chores. After securing her husband's acceptance of her disability, she feels inspired to

begin a new life and even starts the process of returning to her teaching career. Her exploration of her quest for acceptance leads her to discover the vulnerability of the disabled as they use the society's parameters to define themselves. In the process, we discover that her paraplegia detracts from her self esteem and it is only after Yuda accepts her that she is able to accept herself as a paraplegic.

Owuor defines herself as a voice of paraplegics. She shares her experiences not only to define herself as an individual, but also to depict paraplegics as a group of people whose condition and consequent challenges the society does not understand. She calls upon readers to empathise with her, and hence with other paraplegics. She confides in the readers some of the most harrowing situations in which she has found herself, in the process arousing their empathy. For instance, she describes an incident where, soon after leaving the hospital, she has diarrhoea while in bed and since she does not wish to bother anyone, lies on the mess until her husband comes from work to clean her up. Later, she faces more difficulties when some people who had sold their farms to her return to the farm because they know she is incapacitated and so cannot travel to the farm to send them away. We see her compassionate nature when she forgives and allows them to keep cultivating the farm, which is consistent with her Christian faith and which therefore contributes to the autobiographical truth in the work.

She narrates her physiotherapy sessions at the spinal injury hospital and incorporates the stories of other paraplegics in her autobiography. She narrates the stories of these paraplegics in an attempt to make sense of her own situation alongside others like her and

to demonstrate to the reader that "spinal injury can occur to anybody" (173). Narrating her experiences alongside those of other paraplegics offers her a kind of emotional therapy because while relating other people's stories, she unconsciously confronts her own fears and weaknesses, confrontation which is necessary for her rehabilitation. Sharing her story with others, and listening to other paraplegics' experiences, she learns to appreciate that there are others who have suffered more than she has and this contributes to her emotional acceptance of her disability. She says:

There was a feeling of oneness as people with similar suffering and plight opened up to each other. In fact when I heard of some of the patients' experiences I concluded that I was not as unfortunate as I had imagined. (126)

In a way, she becomes empathetic, allowing herself to be enjoined in the experiences of other disabled people. In the process, as she listens to other paraplegics, we feel that if we had problems she would listen to us too.

She empathises with other paraplegics while retelling their stories, revealing that she is a compassionate person who takes the responsibility of informing the public about the plight of the disabled. The autobiography is an account of an individual's life, but her narration of other people's stories helps her to situate herself as part of a group and discover that she is not the only one facing difficulties and that there are other disabled people whose situations are worse than hers. Narrating the different incidents such as accidents and beatings that have led people to become disabled, she demonstrates that the

disabled desire to lead normal lives like they did before disaster struck, but since they cannot reverse their condition, what they require is kindness and understanding from the society. She employs the image of dark clouds to capture the sense of bleakness that sometimes characterises the lives of disabled people and their need for kindness by saying that "a kind deed in a day of a disabled is like a ray of sunshine through dark clouds" (179).

In the chapter "Understanding Paraplegia." she takes her role of a teacher to educate the public on paraplegia. This chapter is unique because while the autobiography employs the often subjective first person narrator, this chapter reads like an educative paper, employing an objective narrative strategy that is detached from the writer. She contextualises the chapter and explains its inclusion in the story of her life by indicating her ignorance about this condition at the beginning of the chapter. She says:

It was not until my legs were paralysed after the accident that I learnt what spinal cord injuries involved... it is therefore very important that everybody be informed about paraplegia in the simplest form possible in order to understand the disabled members of our society. (102)

She defines paraplegia and explains some of its causes and consequences, using both medical register such as "idiopathic," "reflexia," and "vasomotor control" and ordinary language to express her understanding of the condition and to convey this information to readers. In addition, she provides visual aids in the form of diagrams to enhance the

reader's understanding of the condition and explains the type of diet that paraplegics require. In the process, her autobiography becomes her teaching aid for the society as it enables readers to discover the experiences of the disabled and teaches them to treat the disabled with empathy instead of pity. Her objective is to teach not just the public, but paraplegics too. She shifts from the first person narrative voice but reminds us that she belongs to the group under discussion by saying that "I learnt a lot about my condition" (106) so that we keep in mind that she speaks with the authority of experience. Therefore, as she describes what paraplegics experience, she defines herself too and readers are able to understand her. The shift in narrative strategy allows her to distance herself from what she narrates so that she is able to express some of the suffering she experiences objectively without a feeling of embarrassment or unnecessary exposure which may cause her pain.

She discusses the experiences of the disabled, in the process disclosing some of the problems they face such as sexual dysfunction and depression in such a way that we do not need to ask her whether she has faced them as an individual. Narration helps her to define herself as a paraplegic, and one among many who experience these problems and, although she does not discuss these problems explicitly, by mentioning them, she allows us an opportunity to understand her difficulties as a paraplegic. In addition, she is able to express her feelings about paraplegia while keeping a distance from herself as an individual. She stirs empathy in the reader through the plural form when she explains:

Paraplegics are often filled with self pity. This is particularly so when rejected by family members and employers. Any wrong done, however minor, is interpreted as an expression of hatred. They feel despised by others and often say people are looking down on them. (112)

She distances herself from the emotions she describes, thereby explaining paraplegia objectively. Through the third person plural pronoun "they," she discloses her true feelings by including herself in the collective term "paraplegics." The plural form implicitly indicates that she has experienced the rejection she mentions, but she would rather protect the identity of those people who have made her feel rejected.

Her discussion of paraplegia objectively not only serves as a reminder that she is a narrator and character at the same time, but it allows her to teach all members of the society about relating with disabled people arguing that "everybody in society has the right to participate or contribute to nation building to the best of his ability" (113). She uses her own experience to demonstrate that the disabled should work towards independence and high self esteem, their emotional turmoil notwithstanding. In a tone that depicts the role that she takes as a teacher in this section of her narrative, she addresses the disabled authoritatively saying:

It is the disabled people themselves who must make positive effort to educate the able-bodied and establish empathy... for example if a child shows curiosity about

your wheelchair, ignore the presence of whoever is there and explain why you cannot walk and that the chair serves as your legs. (113)

She uses the plural pronoun "they" in this chapter to refer to the disabled and include herself as part of this group because she sees herself as a representative of their plight. She narrates her story as a means of raising the public's awareness about paraplegia so that the society may be prepared for such eventualities and know how to treat the disabled. When educating the reader about paraplegia, she shifts from the first to the third person pronoun to allow her an opportunity to take on the role of a teacher. This shift is significant to her definition of herself as a paraplegic because it enables her to speak to herself and thus learn to accept her paraplegia as she speaks to others about disability.

She describes how she went back to her teaching career in January 1984, arguing that "though the disabled persons may not be physically able to do most things, they are mentally and intellectually capable of doing anything a person on two feet can do" (133). After returning to work, she has to fight a battle similar to the one she had fought years before when she had faced discrimination from students due to her race. This time round, she faces rejection due to her disability as her students doubt her teaching capability, but she trains them to look beyond her wheelchair and listen to her as a teacher.

Her courage and determination to make the best of her condition by teaching puts her forth as a role model to other paraplegics. She explains in detail all the suffering she encounters such as falling over in her wheelchair, rejection from fellow teachers, and

sabotage by the school administration to demonstrate that returning to work as a paraplegic is not easy, but can be done. She says that she gets discouraged by the hardships she faces when she resumes work and even contemplates resigning, in the process evaluating her status as a paraplegic teacher and realising that she has overcome difficult situations. She gets encouragement from her doctor who tells her that she should not allow other people to frustrate her, which renews her spirit and she continues teaching. Looking at her students* results at the end of 1987, she is excited at what she refers to as a "miracle" (165) because all her students have passed. Narrating this experience helps her look back at her success and realise that in spite of her physical disability, she is still an able teacher.

She regards her autobiography as a testimony and employs the autobiographical voice to share her struggle as a paraplegic with the world. Towards the close of her story, she revisits the various steps she has taken in her life to explore her past and demonstrate what she has achieved in her life, both before and after the accident. She discovers that even with her new identity as a paraplegic, she has been able to take up her responsibilities as a teacher, wife, and mother, the success of which she attributes to God and her Christian faith: "I can boldly say that God has carefully and lovingly planned and worked out my life... I rest the future yet to unfold on him who not only created me but loves me" (194).

My Life as a Paraplegic begins and ends with a note of hope and encouragement for paraplegics. Owuor begins her story with a verse from the Bible. "I praise you, oh Lord.

because I am wonderfully made." (1) which indicates a paraplegic at peace with her condition. At the end of the narrative she states that she has learnt to take each day as it comes and to trust in God who "clothes the lilies and feeds the sparrows" (206).

This autobiography is therefore not just Owuor's way of educating the public, but an avenue through which she defines herself as a daughter, wife, mother, teacher and a paraplegic. The act of writing this autobiography becomes therapeutic for her as she shares her pain with the reader long after the accident. Most importantly, through this story, she hopes to arouse the empathy of readers as we share in her feelings and experiences. She shares her experiences and presents them in detail to authenticate her story since readers identify with first hand experience and trust the first person narrator.

Mv Life as a Paraplegic is the story of a courageous woman who defies the challenges of paraplegia to live her life to its fullest. It portrays woman who defines herself as a voice for the disabled and this definition becomes, as Lionnet Francoise says in relation to the autobiography as a possibility of emancipation, "the source of rebirth and reconciliation, the mode of healing for the narrating self" (Autobiographical Voices 192). Owuor's confidence in her abilities and her capacity to extend herself to others are some of the greatest strengths of her autobiography. Her courage and honesty in exposing even the most intimate experiences in her life as a paraplegic wins her readers' trust and admiration.

At the end of the story we feel that we have had a sense of genuine participation in her experiences even though we only identify with her mentally and not physically. In

addition, we feel that we have aided her therapy by "listening" empathetically to her story. She defines herself as a valuable human being and our empathy helps her retain that positive identity and her self-respect. The autobiographical voice enables her to accept herself as a paraplegic while learning how to deal with her disability

The title of her autobiography attests to the fact that it is motivated by humility and an honest desire to reveal how disability causes her dependence and the need for empathy. She may not have walked out of her marriage to prove her independence like Vluthoni or averted the erection of a building in Uhuru Park like Wangari. but we see her achievements at very important levels - in school, at home, and in her own life - and her honesty and humane nature are what endear her to us.

The writers examined in this chapter place value on women's need for independence and self-expression in their search for self-definition and they demonstrate that writing autobiography is a step towards achieving the two. Their autobiographies are motivated by their efforts to seek personal identity. Warah's autobiography is an examination of history and the freedom of assertion of identity: Otieno's looks into the courage that widowhood provokes in her; Likimani's describes the independent life that her divorce brings about; and Owuor's depicts the dependence and empathy disability occasions. The process of narration enables them to assert their identities as they voice their stories in public. This chapter has examined how the female autobiographical voice defines the woman and asserts her identity.

CONCLUSION

In this study we have examined the female autobiographical voice in independent Kenya. As a genre, autobiography represents the expression of individual authority in the realm of language. We ground the concept of female selfhood on the recognition of the historically generated differences between men and women. The study discovers that being a narrative voice, the autobiographical voice is the major cohesive device in the narratives, credibility of which is enhanced by the narrator-character of the autobiographical subject.

We discover that the female autobiographical voice echoes all other voices in the society. Women have a sense of collective identity which sometimes becomes a source of strength and transformation. They use the power of language in narration to combine the individualistic and the collective identity so that they reflect both the unique and the shared experiences of their lives. In the process, the autobiographical voice helps them to re-write history by expressing their personal history in the framework of collective history.

Women's autobiographical voice seeks to break cultural confinement and silence imposed by traditions. This is because the story of a woman's selfhood is inseparable from her sense of community. Instead of seeing themselves as solely unique, women explore their sense of shared identity that exists in tension with a sense of their own uniqueness. This is because the representative aspects of the women's experiences are

more significant in the making of a communal female identity than those that mark the narrator as unique. Women therefore develop a dual consciousness - the self as culturally defined and the self as different from cultural prescription. This consciousness points to the role of the autobiographical voice as a tool for self-exploration and discovery.

The study discovers that while men are concerned with national, political and historical issues, women are able to concentrate and write about their domestic and personal lives. Female autobiographers powerfully demonstrate how "small" familial and domestic realities impinge on the large questions of the nation-state. Their narrative modes are often modest, private, hidden, and intimate because the female autobiographical voice is an effort to recapture the self, to know the self through consciousness.

Among the subjects that concern women are homes, girlhood, childbirth, motherhood, nurture, children, marriage, divorce, widowhood, single-parenthood, mother-daughter relationships, disability, emotional and economic independence, women's education, their criminal, political and economic marginalisation, oppressive religious and cultural practices, their resistance to oppression, and role in national development. Women pay attention to and illuminate the fine details of the society which men neglect. The female sensibility makes women deal with the emotional aspects of life which men find too trivial or plain to warrant narrative space. In this light, we discover that the female autobiographical voice narrates a woman's life and past, representing a "feminine" sphere of life in all its aspects. In addition, the study demonstrates that "femininity" itself is not

intrinsic in women's consciousness, but it plays a role in individual women's lives and leads them to express themselves through the autobiographical voice.

We find that the Kenyan female autobiography narrates the story of the struggle for independence from a female perspective. This narration helps to fill in some of the gaps left out by male writers when talking about the struggle. Kenyan male autobiographers tell the story of the struggle while focusing on the seemingly "larger" and more "significant" issues concerning politics and the male presence in detention camps and the forests. These male writers ignore women's contribution in the struggle and the female autobiographers step in to correct this oversight by describing the various ways in which women participated in these efforts.

The study demonstrates that in the female autobiography, there is an ongoing identification of the daughter with her mother. The significance of mother-daughter relationships is useful in understanding the self in women's autobiography because daughters often define themselves from the perspective of their mothers. Autobiography therefore becomes a literary reflection of the realised self. This coming-to-knowledge of the self constitutes both the desire that initiates the autobiographical act and the goal toward which the autobiography directs itself.

The study finds out that autobiographers set out to seek their identity and the autobiographical voice enables the woman to explore her identity and define herself. The female autobiographical voice expresses the woman's social vision as she addresses

social issues by putting herself at the centre of the narrative. We find that the autobiographical voice reveals not only the interests of those who produce autobiographies, but also the concerns of those who read it because the two live in the same society. Through the autobiographical voice, an individual puts the interactions of the self and the society into a narrative, thus inviting the public to share in the experiences.

The female autobiographical voice carries the educational motif in women's autobiography. Female autobiographers view themselves as examples to other women and they believe that their lives are worth sharing. In addition, the narratives under study reveal that egoism and pride are resident in the autobiography, however polite the intentions of the autobiography may be.

We find that while male autobiographies place the self at the centre of events and display inflexible ego boundaries, in contrast, women represent the self in relation to others and their view of the world is characterised by relationships. The female autobiography places women characters at the centre to highlight their sensibilities by privileging their voices and worldview. It is an effort towards finding an independent voice for the woman. Women have to deal with and reject the stereotyped labels placed on them by the socio-cultural setting in which they write. The female autobiographical voice thus becomes an attempt to obtain a self-designated label, their identity and self-definition. The study demonstrates that the female autobiographical voice is positioned within discourses that construct truth, identity, and power, and these discourses produce a

gendered subject. For many women, access to autobiographical voice means access to the identity it constructs. Through this study, we find out that the female autobiography is an important component in the study of writing self in Kenya.

The study discovers that the Kenyan female autobiographers are atypical and do not represent the conventional Kenyan woman. All of them appear to be fighters with an abrasive quality, which we discover through the autobiographical voice, and part of the implication of this trait is disjointed families. In addition, we are persuaded that some of the female autobiographers use the autobiographical form to advance another agenda other than self-revelation.

We discover that the autobiography is a way of accepting one's past experiences and learning from them as the narrative act shapes raw experience. This process positions the I-narrator above the narrated I, the experiencing self, whose development from a state of ignorance to consciousness forms the main narrative of the autobiography. The autobiographical act combines different time levels and thus different I's, which the first person narrator controls as this narrator is able to describe his or her development through the autobiographical voice. This research demonstrates that the experience of reading the autobiography directs our own lives as the autobiographical voice leads readers into thinking about their own lives.

The study recommends more systematic study of the autobiography in Kenya focusing on issues of genre, history and narration. An intense study of the male autobiography in

Kenya would serve to shed light on the nature of this genre, and demonstrate the similarities and differences between female and male autobiographies. In addition, a comparative study of this form of writing in Kenya and other regions would contribute greatly to the field of autobiographical studies and fill this knowledge gap in literary studies.

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