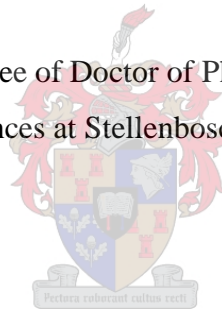# Negotiating Public and Private Identities: A Study of the Autobiographies of African Women Politicians

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis/dissertation, I declare that I understand what constitutes plagiarism, that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification. Date: March 2017

Dedication

To Leroy and the wo/manists in my family: My mum Tabitha Were, the indomitable woman who is unafraid to speak for herself; my dad Clement Were, a man who is unafraid of tarnishing his masculinity by nurturing strong women; my brother Dan, a gentle soul who mothers my ambitions in life, and my sister Irene, a passionate lady who never takes no for an answer. You recognised that this was a journey of self-discovery for me. Well, I learnt the art of patience.

Abstract

Negotiating Public and Private Identities: A Study of the Autobiographies of African Women Politicians

This thesis examines autobiographies and memoirs of fifteen African women politicians and former politicians. These autobiographies are considered as part of a distinct sub-genre: African political autobiographies by women. Specifically, it interrogates how the African woman's political autobiography represents the public and private subjective identities of African political womanhood. My argument is that the African woman's political autobiography is a site where public and private conceptions of African political womanhood are (de)constructed. In reading these texts, I focus on how a merger between (Western) modes of narration prevalent in traditional (and masculine) autobiography and African narrative techniques drawn from women's narrative practices in oral, visual, and written traditions (re)conceptualise the writers' identities. The women writers' discourses challenge the construction of womanhood in dominant ideological discourses like slavery, colonialism, apartheid, patriarchy, and religion, among others. These writings and my reading of them enter into conversation with African womanist (autobiographical) identity politics. In other words, I place African womanist perspectives of writers like Mary Modupe Kolawole and Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi in conversation with the women-defined practices voiced in these autobiographies in order to suggest ways of reading and writing the African woman's political autobiography. These debates allow us to consider how discursive practices as sites of knowledge production generate conceptions of African political womanhood that either silence or make visible African women's political agency. The study finds that hybridity of the African woman's political autobiography, its subject, and its discourse are in-between spaces from where the writers contest Western and patriarchal notions of womanhood that silence women's agency.

Opsomming

Vereenselwiging van die Publieke en Private Self: 'n Ondersoek na die Politieke Outobiografie van die Afrika-vrou

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die outobiografieë en memoires van vyftien huidige en vroeëre Afrika-vrouepolitici. Die outobiografieë word as 'n duidelik definieerbare genre gesien, naamlik outobiogafiese skrywe deur Afrika-vroue in Afrika – dit verken spesifiek die mate waarin vroue in Afrika se politieke lewensweergawes hul publieke en private subjektiewe identiteite weerspieël. Ek voer aan dat hierdie werke 'n terrein bied waar publieke en private begrippe van Afrikavroue ge(de)konstrueer word. In my leeswerk het ek veral aandag gegee aan die samesmelting van (Westerse) tradisionele (en manlike) outobiografiese vertellings en hoe Afrikavertellingstegnieke eie aan vroue se verhaaltegnieke in orale, visuele en geskrewe tradisies die skrywers se identititeite (her)konseptualiseer. Die vroueskrywers bevraagteken die konstruksie van vrouwees in die dominante diskoerse van byvoorbeeld slawerny, kolonialisme, apartheid, patriargie en godsdiens. Hierdie geskrifte en my benadering tot hulle betree gesprekke met die (outobiografiese) identiteitspolitiek van vrouemeagtigingskrywers. Met ander woorde, ek plaas die vrouebemagtigings-aspekte van Afrika-skrywers soos Mary Modupe Kolawole en Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi in gesprek met die praktyke soos deur vroue in hierdie outobiografieë gedefinieer om die interpretering en die skrywe van Afrika-vroue se politieke outobiografieë moontlik te maak. So 'n debat skep ruimte vir die oorweging van diskoerspraktyke, terwyl kennisgebiede wat begrip sal bevorder geskep word, veral dié wat Afrika-vroue se politieke stem òf verhul òf verhelder. Die studie bevind dat die hibridiese karakter van vroue se politieke outobiografiese werke, hul onderwerpe, en hul diskoers 'n tussengebied vorm waar skrywers Westerse en patriargale idees wat vroue se bemagtiging bedreig, kan aanspreek.

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Maps tell a lot, and so I draw my own.

Here is a network of the invisible connections that contributed to the success of this project. Behold the lyrics of my gratitude to:

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Asante, Helen, Jacky 1, 2, and Dosy, you made the stay bear-able, lent support, and bore my excesses. Tembi, my homie baba, and Lizelle, queen of words. We ate the junk, ran the tracks, gymed with resilience, and stuck together like the three idiots….

and to Nick,

You are the true definition of the saying that family is not by blood ties, but heart.

Contents

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

You may write me down in history
………………..
But still, like dust, I'll rise. (Angelou 1,4)

Contextualising the Study

The focus of this thesis is on a sub-genre that has not enjoyed particular critical attention: autobiographical writing by African women politicians – in other words, life writing by African women who serve(d) in past and present public office and exercise(d) some form of political authority. An important assumption drives this introductory and subsequent chapters, namely, that these autobiographies, published between 1961 and 2014, are fundamentally *hybrid*.[1] This hybridity is contingent on a range of circumstances, all of which are important to the conceptual substructure of my project. First, it arises as an effect of the convergence of two distinct narrative conventions: on the one hand, African practices of self-narration, and on the other, Western autobiographical practices. Second, the hybridity is consequent on a disruption of a well-established binary that seeks to relegate women to the private, domestic sphere and men to the public, political sphere – a binary that has been reinforced on the African continent by colonialism, apartheid, and Christian missionary activities and persists in the postcolonial moment. Indeed, all the autobiographies discussed in this thesis deliberately perform a femininity I term *African political womanhood* that fluidly traverses notions of public and private gender roles.[2] Third, they appropriate African concepts from oral archives to subvert the authority Western and patriarchal archives/discourses have conventionally exercised over women's voices and to foreground women's agency. The dialogic quality of these autobiographies is, in part, produced by the way in which they speak back to dominant discourses that seek to (mis)represent women – discourses that span the

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[1] For me, these texts comprise a sub-genre. I have considered including 'contemporary writing' as part of the title to this thesis, but issues emerged that problematize this framing, as I elaborate below. For example, some of the texts I have sourced during my research were originally published in other languages, not in English, thus, the group of texts I examine, published in English, is in my opinion ushered in by Sophia Mustafa's autobiography published in 1961.

[2] Although the term *African political womanhood*, like the African woman's political autobiography, might create the impression of homogeneity, and despite the fact these women are brought together by a shared identity as Africans, there are regional, religious, cultural and personal differences in terms of how the individual women politicians perform their African political womanhood. Further, my approach to Africa is not merely as a geographical entity but as a trope, an approach that makes it possible to elucidate the various ways in which African experiences are diverse and how this femininity is variously re-produced in different social, political, and cultural contexts in African histories.

entire historical period from precolonial to postcolonial times in Africa. This hybrid quality, then, extends beyond the precincts of coloniality and its aftermath in Africa and can be read as an effect of and a response to patriarchy. To narrate African political womanhood means to construct a hybrid femininity whose subjectivities are produced at the nexus between Western and African life narratives, and between dominant and subversive understandings of gender roles in different African contexts.

Consequently, this study conducts a *womanist* reading[3] of a range of autobiographies by African women who serve(d) as politicians, on the continent or elsewhere,[4] to interrogate self-representations of African political womanhood as a discursive construct that these subjects negotiate both in the hybrid narrative forms of autobiography (and memoir) and threshold spaces of the public and private. I focus on African women (former) politicians, women originally from Africa, whose genealogies depict a history of colonial subjectivity. These subjects have at some stage in their lives undertaken a (dual) career in legislative politics and activism. In other words, I interrogate the interplay between politics (of governance) as a career and politics as a way of life (personal as political). In this sense, my argument focuses on a sub-genre where the personal and the political are explicitly conflated. My research aims to contribute to the archive of life writing studies by examining an existing corpus of autobiographies in English[5] by African women politicians. I argue that the limited scope of published texts qualifies these women as pioneers in a field previously dominated by male politicians and that the very nature of subject representation they adopt projects the

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[3] The choice of African womanism in favour of feminism is deliberate for the following reasons: the term feminism, as I discuss in the theoretical framework, suggests a research paradigm developed in the 1960s in the West, where the domains public and private were well defined. However, the womanist epistemologies I draw on, pre-dated to time immemorial, approach the public and private as threshold spaces where African political womanhood becomes a layered identity whose interaction with conceptions of public and private is shifting and situational. It is these cultural specificities, which Western feminism does not address, that African feminisms offer a critique of and, in a way, which serve as justification for the use of womanism as an alternative African epistemology. By eluding the binaries that African and Western feminist discourses converse about, African womanism opens up opportunities for reading the concentric nature of African political womanhood and extending African women's autobiographical agency to oral cultures. In the course of this research, my reading will occasionally explore how these writers negotiate their identities in view of existing debates about gender in feminism and womanism.

[4] For example, I discuss the autobiographies of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, an African diasporic subject who served as a politician in the Dutch parliament.

[5] Nawal El Saadawi's autobiographies are translated from Arabic, while Ali's *Infidel* was translated from Dutch. I am conscious of debates about meaning and translation, but this is not the focus of my research. Suffice to say that the fact that these writers speak multiple languages suggests that their choice of language for first publication signal immediate intended audience (cultural specificity) which is then broadened with translation. Jacques Derrida's ideas in *EPZ Positions*, *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation: Texts and Discussions with Jacques Derrida* and "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?", provide useful insights in this regard.

predicament of African political womanhood, a femininity I view as rendered liminal by the complexities of negotiating identity in the performed (post)colonial and (post)apartheid public-private spaces.

I have chosen an array of texts for discussion in this project. From West Africa I analyse *This Child Will Be Great* (2009) by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf from Liberia; and from North Africa *A Daughter of Isis* (1999) and *Walking through Fire* (2002) by Egypt's Nawal El Saadawi. Autobiographies from Eastern Africa are: *Infidel* (2007), and *Nomad: From Islam to America: A Personal Journey through the Clash of Civilizations* (2010) by Ayaan Hirsi Ali from Somalia; *My Life's Journey* (2011) by Janet Kataaha Museveni and Elizabeth Nyabongo's *Elizabeth of Toro: the Odyssey of an African Princess* from Uganda; *The Tanganyika Way: A Personal Story of Tanganyika's Growth to Independence* (2009) by Tanzania's Sofia Mustafa; and *Unbowed: One Woman's Story* (2007) by Wangari Muta Maathai, *Mau Mau's Daughter: A Life History* (1998) by Wambui Otieno and *Days of My Life* (2013) by Grace Ogot – all from Kenya. From Southern Africa I study *Fearless Fighter* (2007) by Vera Chirwa from Malawi; *Madam Speaker, Sir!: Breaking the Glass Ceiling; One Woman's Struggle* (2014) by Margaret Nasha from Botswana; *Part of My Soul Went with Him* (1985) and *491 Days: Prisoner Number 1323/69* (2013) by Winnie Mandela, *A Life* (1995) and *A Passion for Freedom* (2013) by Mamphela Ramphele, *Call Me Woman* (2004) by Ellen Kuzwayo, and Emma Mashinini's *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life* (2012) – all from South Africa.

My research has revealed that despite Africa being a vast continent, there exist very few autobiographies by African women politicians available in the public space. To date, I have sourced nineteen autobiographies written in, or translated into, English by pioneer African women (former) politicians. This collection is part of the sub-genre of the African woman's political autobiography in English. Excluded from this scope are: Mali's Aoua Keita's *Femme d'Afrique. La vie d'Aoua Kéita racontée par elle-même* (1975) translated into English as *An African Woman. The Autobiography of Aoua Kéita Told in her Own Words*, Central Africa Republic's Andree Blouin – *My Country, Africa: Autobiography of the Black Pasionara* (1983), Emily Ruete Sayyida's *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar* (1907), and South Africa's Brigalia Bam's *Democracy More than Just Elections* (2015), which I traced late this year, towards the completion of my study. This late discovery as well as the publication dates signal the complexities I had to negotiate in my conceptual

framework (see footnote 1) and elucidate the difficulties I encountered in sourcing texts. Apart from their unavailability in many locales, poor marketing has confined access to localized reading publics. Further, there is no comprehensive catalogue of these texts, and most of those included in this study were brought to my attention by scholars who had read or heard about them.

In light of the selection identified above, I argue that the writing of these autobiographies is a political act that gives agency to diverse agendas such as environmental conservation, anti-fundamentalism, women's participation in politics, and the complexities of negotiating private roles of wifehood and motherhood, among many other subjectivities, for women in public space(s). By focusing on Pan African women political writers my aim is not to homogenise Africa or experiences of African women politicians, or even to posit this form of life writing against autobiographies by men, but to interrogate the myriad representational strategies African women politicians use to grapple with intricacies of identity construction as liminal subjects in hybrid space(s). In the same vein, the scarcity of written and published autobiographies referred to above should not be translated as the absence of life narratives or of African women leaders (politicians) in pre-colonial times, as I discuss later. Instead, the dearth is strictly limited to the written form, denoted by the term autobiography, whose existence in Africa has been assumed to be a colonial legacy, a debate I further pursue in this chapter. Due to the vast collection of texts included in this study (nineteen), this study will not delve into an extensive autobiographical criticism of the African woman's political autobiography. Instead, the study aims at suggesting and exemplifying modes of reading and writing the African woman's political autobiography. For that matter, my analysis of the selected texts is *limited to a review of a range of the narrative techniques and formal components of the hybridised African woman's political autobiography that might be used in reading and writing similar text in this sub-genre*. In the following section, I discuss the theoretical arguments underpinning my study.

Interpretative Frameworks and Points of Departure

My critical enquiry is centred on three aspects of the African woman's political autobiography: the form, its discourse/language, and its subjects' negotiation of identity in

public and private spaces.[6] The theoretical insights are therefore informed by autobiographical theory, post-colonial criticism, African womanism, and narratology. Since the autobiography is the space where notions of African political womanhood are contested, life writing criticisms are the underlying principles that govern the debate in this and subsequent chapters. My preference for the autobiography is best explained by the African womanist scholar Mary Modupe Kolawole's observation that "women's written literary texts, especially [auto]biographies, provide avenues for implicit and explicit gender conceptualizations" (*Womanism* 253). I elaborate on my use of the terms autobiography and memoir in this chapter's discussion of the autobiography as a hybrid form.

The autobiographical accounts in this study employ different modes of re-membering historical moments ranging from pre-colonial times to date. I read them as postcolonial literatures. Despite their cultural and geographical disparities and individual socio-political agendas, they recount the autobiographical subjects' shared experiences as women. Invoking Mariama Ba's sentiments on women's writing, I interpret these autobiographers' writing as voices that present varied concerns from different places about women's sufferings and their desire for liberation (qtd. in Nfah-Abbenyi 9-10), but also their struggles for self-affirmation. Capitalising on their national, ethnic, racial, and religious plurality among others, I envision their texts as threshold spaces with synergies that unify African women politicians. African women's autobiographies should then be read as hybrid spaces that are "cross-cultural, trans-national, translocal" (Alabi 36). I therefore read African women's autobiographies as a lens to "recover" women's voices silenced by history (Devenish 4). This partly explains why I conduct a womanist rather than feminist reading of these autobiographies.

An approach to African women politicians as journeying across public and private spaces created by Africa's political transitions facilitates a critique of them as subjects in process.

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[6] I use these concepts in the context of Peter Ekeh's definition of public and private. According to Ekeh, the terms public and private as Western categories do not adequately capture postcolonial African realities. This is due to the perception that "the private realm and the public realm [in their original contexts] have a common *moral* foundation" (92, emphasis in original). Instead of conceiving the African public sphere as one entity, as is the case in the West, he suggests that there are "two publics" – civic and primordial, with competing interests (91). Ekeh further postulates that the colonial experience has inverted the social spheres, some aspects of the private realm have been publicized, while various elements of the public realm have been privatized. It is these dialectics that my discussion in chapter two on public selfhood(s) and in chapter three on private selfhood(s) seeks to negotiate. Ekeh notes that "[t]he distinction between the private realm and the public realm delimits the scope of politics. Not all the everyday activities of an individual are political. To the extent that he acts in his household or practices his religion in his home, he is acting in the private realm" (91). For more insights see: "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement" (1975).

Although some African societies governed by patriarchy had distinct public and private spaces for men and women, there were exceptional circumstances during which some women were granted access to some (public) spaces reserved for men, such as public hearings. Debates by African women scholars such as Susan Andrade, Ada Uzoamaka Azodo and Ifi Amadiume reveal that while not all pre-colonial African women were afforded the "same" opportunities as men (Azodo 50), men and women's roles complemented each other. However, colonial and apartheid discourses exaggerated the gendering of these spaces by introducing the Western sense of public and private, relocating women to the domestic sphere (and homelands) and men to the public domain (and cities) to further their patriarchal/capitalist agenda. Some of the autobiographies in this study document such instances, henceforth, I envision the autobiographies in this sub-genre as counter-discourses to dominant power discourses generated by slavery, colonialism, and apartheid that enhances historical gender discrepancies in Africa by silencing the role of women in politics, and subordinating women "from a position of power and self-sovereignty to becoming man's helper" (Amadiume 201). In the post-independence period, Gwendolyn Mikell observes, as the state was being consolidated, women were mostly overlooked in the selection of political representatives, further pushing them from the public domain (3). Therefore, public and private in this thesis signify threshold spaces.

In the course of this thesis I show how African political womanhood navigates Western, patriarchal as well as womanist and indigenous African conceptions of womanhood and how these identities are performatively re-constituted in post-colonial public and private realms. As note earlier, for Ekeh, there are two public(s): "primordial" and "civic" (92).[7] The primordial public "is closely identified with primordial groupings, sentiments, and activities, which nevertheless impinge on the public interest" while the civic public "is historically associated with the colonial administration and which has become identified with popular

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[7] My use of public in this context is deliberately inclined towards Ekeh's definition, which is different from Michael Warner's. Warner identifies two meanings of publics. Firstly, he envisions public (and private) as heteroglots that display the multiplicity of human nature (58). In this regard, public is an imagined "cultural form, a kind of practical fiction, present in the modern world in a way that is very different from any analogues in other or earlier societies" (8). Secondly, he conceives of publics as environments in which narratives circulate; critical publics, such as a print public that comprises the text's readership, as well as the transnational public that comprises the autobiographical critical tradition, which, as Warner cautions, "may, however, be political in another or higher sense" (46). It is this latter sense of public, relating to audiences, that I adopt in my study. In this research, I defer to both Ekeh's and Warner's notions of public(s). For instance, I refer to Warner's strand of Public Sphere theory, specifically his concept "counterpublics"; smaller publics in tension with larger ones; related to a subculture. I use these views to explore how these postcolonial writers negotiate power relations from their alternate subject and citizen positions depending on the nature of discourse they invoke; dominant or subversive.

politics in post-colonial Africa. It is based on civil structures: the military, the civil service, the police, etc. Its chief characteristic is that it has no moral linkages with the private realm" (92). However, he does not extensively elaborate on the private sphere(s). Consequently, I consider private as women's issues that mostly fall outside the constitution of the agenda of public spheres. In view of Ekeh's observations about the nature of public and private spheres in Africa (see footnote 6), I envision the norms guiding what is considered 'proper womanhood' in terms of performing African political womanhood in these postcolonial texts as guided by what Ekeh calls a "[g]eneralized morality" of what society prescribes to gender performativity in the private and the public realms (92). By 'generalized morality', Ekeh means the moral ideologies that secure human behaviour so that "what is wrong in the private realm is also considered morally wrong in the public realm. Similarly, what is considered morally right in the private realm is also considered morally right in the public realm" and this aspect of the civic public makes it "amoral" (92).[8] As my analyses in the forthcoming chapters demonstrate, these conceptions of public and private have been adopted by various hegemonic social institutions such as patriarchy, nationalism, and religion to police women's gender performance to suit their institutional or ideological agendas. I suggest that in their capacities as threshold spaces, previously dualistic but now liminal, where residual indigenous and modern conceptions of womanhood struggle for affirmation, these autobiographies offer a critique of Western and patriarchal discourses. By occupying these liminal spaces, these writers continuously re-invent their identities in ways that counter their definition by hegemonic discourses. In this process, these autobiographies are "permeated by a dialogism through which heterogeneous discourses of identity are dispersed" (Smith & Watson *Reading* 81).

Theory of the autobiography interprets life experiences as historical milestones creatively composed through reconstructing memories (Indangasi 1993; Marcus 1994; Muchiri *Women's* 2010). The autobiographical process involves a search into the past by the self to reveal the present to a personal or external audience (Abbs 1974; Bloom 2011; Omuteche 2004; Muchiri *Women's* 2010) in order to inscribe oneself in history and protect oneself from the "destructiveness of age" (Abbs 16). The autobiographical tendency of inviting the reader

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[8] My use of the term ideology in this thesis defers to Ekeh's definition of it as the: "unconscious distortions or perversions of truth by intellectuals in advancing points of view that favor or benefit the interests of particular groups for which the intellectuals act as spokesmen" (94). In the context of this thesis, the term intellectual not only refers to the women politicians whose autobiographies I study, but also the proponents of nationalist and cultural paradigms that set the parameters of what womanhood means in different contexts.

to share the most intimate and embarrassing experiences of the author that relate to our own lives has an appeal to truth, albeit subjective, which incites us to reflect on ourselves (Conway 2004; Muchiri *Women's* 2010). The element of truth, defined by John Sturrock as "an intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding of the meaning of a life" (qtd. in Smith & Watson *Women* 13) is what makes the autobiography unique from fiction. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson identify the tenets of autobiographical theory as intention, history, memory, truth, retrospection, creativity, and voice. Autobiographical truth is measured by consistency, cohesion, the seriousness of the subject in their realistic rendition of events, and the courage and risk to talk about oneself.[9] In the African woman's political autobiography, truth is enhanced by incorporating oral narrations from custodians of history like grandparents and paratextual evidence such as letters, photographs, dedications, prefaces, speeches, dates (and tombstones) (Pascal 1960; Marcus 1994; Smith and Watson *Women* 1998). At the same time, truth can be contested by the silences, omissions, and contradictions in the narrative (Smith &Watson *Reading* 2001). The African woman's political autobiography, therefore, acts as site for identity re-creation as it is through its writing that the autobiographer performs their multiple identities within different publics that result in hybrid space(s). In view of the inter-relatedness of these authors' sense of selfhood to others, I characterise their selves as relational.

The notion of relationality as a woman's mode of identity construction and self-narration has been extensively researched by Smith and Watson, Carolyn G. Heilbrun and other life writing scholars. Smith and Watson examine the concept 'relationality' as a way of reading women's selfhoods. By relationality, they refer to the construction of identity as an act that relies on the self's interaction with the subject's other selves as well as other selves external to the narrating subject. They note that "one's story is bound up with that of another […] [so] that the boundaries of an 'I' are often shifting and flexible" (*Reading* 64). Susan Stanford Friedman in "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice" (1988), says that for a

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[9] While I recognize the truth value of these autobiographies, I am aware that the notion 'autobiographical truth' as an integral element of the autobiography has been contested by scholars such as Sigmund Freud and Paul John Eakin, among others. These contrasting debates seem to problematize issues of memory, truth, authenticity, etc. Truth in and of autobiography is therefore not just relative, but also highly subjective. A debate about truth therefore foregrounds questions such as: Who 'measures' this truth? In reference to this, Freud is recorded to have said that "[w]hat makes all autobiographies worthless is, after all, their mendacity" (391). Similarly, Eakin says that "the self that is at the centre of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure" and that "fictions and the fiction-making process are a central constituent of the truth of any life as it is lived and of any art devoted to the presentation of that life" (*Fictions* 3). Thus, "it is as reasonable to assume that all autobiography has some fiction in it" (*Fictions* 10).

black woman, "selfhood is inseparable from her sense of community" (qtd in Benstock 41). However, the collectivity of these autobiographies has been misconstrued in some quarters as indicative of the black woman autobiographer's lack of individuality and perpetual subordination. For instance, Stephen Butterfield in *Black Autobiography in America* (1974) notes that:

> The "self" of black autobiography […] is not an individual with a private career, but a soldier in a long, historic march towards Canaan. The self is conceived as a member of an oppressed social group, with ties and responsibilities to the other members. It is a conscious political identity, drawing sustenance from the past experience of the group. (2-3)

Friedman's portrayal of black women's autobiographical selfhood is, therefore, limiting; it robs the subject of autonomy. Quite the opposite: African women political autobiographers construct identities that depict the interface between alterity and group identity politics with women, blacks, and colonial/apartheid politics. Relationality thus facilitates a reading of these texts that examines how multiple voices and points of view collaborate in narrating 'herstories' that evade the danger of the single story. I will use Smith and Watson's conception of relationality to show how the writers' different "I's" – narrating, narrated, idealised, historical, and ideological – inform how they form and modify their "self-consciousness" (*Reading* 65). These multiple fictions of 'I' facilitate the narration of the autobiographical subject's story while enabling others' voices to be heard concurrently. In this regard, I concur with Nawar Al-Hassan Golley's views in *Arab Women's Lives Retold: Exploring Identity through Writing* (2007) that the autobiography echoes the traces of a collective struggle that are limited by the "autobiographical claims to truth and witness" (136). By appropriating metaphorical devices, the woman autobiographer refutes the insinuation that her individual utterance can be translated as "speaking for the other" (Golley 136). The writers narratively facilitate the emergence of other stories by evoking oral traditions derived from communal memory archives whose validity is irrefutable.[10] Rather

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[10] Jan Vansina in *Oral Traditions as History* (1985), presents oral traditions as a process and product of communal practices. Additionally, in "Oral traditions", Robert Cancel observes that the term oral traditions denote: "the verbal arts of a society and the creative activities that surround their production. It includes imaginative oral narrative, song, proverbs, riddles, and epics. It also designates the more 'realistic' verbal genres such as history, personal narrative, formalized speech, and informal daily speech that employs tropes or standardized explanations" (635).

than claiming to know or speak for the other, the woman autobiographer defines herself but the other's story "unfolds as in proxy to the numerous others within the autobiography" (Golley 136). Although such a rationale negates the construction of an authentic self, it gives the "authentic other" agency to emerge within the narrative of the woman political autobiographer (Golley 136). Further, I draw on Heilbrun's ideas about maternal relationality in life writing to interrogate how different notions of womanhood – motherhood, wifehood, widowhood, etc. – are negotiated in hybrid spaces. I also use the concept of "intersectionality" defined by Kimberle Crenshaw as "the various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color" (1244). However, in the context of this dissertation, intersectionality is not limited to representations of gender-based violence; rather identity negotiation. It brings into focus how multiple notions of gender, race, class, religion, political party affiliation, educational status, marital status, age, sexual preferences, etc., impact on African political womanhood in ways that create variations within this identity frame. I see the two concepts, relationality and intersectionality, as interrelated in terms of how these writers make sense of their own subjectivities by deferring to others' experiences within specific historical and social realities that shape their understanding of their selfhoods.

Indeed, Smith and Watson assert that "any effort to theorise [African] women should deliberate on the cultural fictionalization of 'woman' and how women autobiographers negotiate these gender ideologies in order to write their personal narratives" (*Women* 12). The subjects in this study are products of historical processes and hegemonic narratives, some of which Alabi identifies as "slavery, apartheid, colonialism, neo-colonialism, [and] sexism" (12). In recognition of the historical situatedness of these texts in the twentieth century post-colonial era, I conduct a post-colonial reading to highlight historical influences to the writers' construction of their political womanhood. A good starting point is to problematize the spaces in which womanhood is performatively re-constituted, as I believe that gender ideologies are highly spatialized. As Andrade elaborates, the public has a direct influence on the private and vice versa. Recent debates on gender in Africa suggest that the spatial categories of public and private are situational and context-specific, produced by the process of gendering the social sphere. In *The Invention of Women: Making Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (1997), the West African feminist critic Oyeronke Oyewumi critiques the imposition of Western modes of social organisation in Africa and homogenisation of social experiences in African societies. She views gender as a colonial social construct that has distorted the

Yoruba cosmology and notes that this "Western" concept "was not an organizing principle in Yoruba society prior to colonialism" and that the "social categories 'men' and 'women' were non-existent, and hence no gender system was in place" (31). Similarly, Stanlie M. James in "Mothering: A Possible Black Feminist Link to Social Transformation?" (1993), notes that "[t]he private/public dichotomy of gendered activities" is a Western ideology (47). It is, therefore, evident that African societies, though not homogenously so, held different conceptions of nme and women's identities before colonial and slave invasion.

Speaking with a Nigerian context in mind, the African womanist Ifi Amadiume stipulates in *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in African Society* (1987) that although patriarchy governed patrilineal and matrilineal societies, women were not necessarily confined to the private domain. She observes that by organising themselves into a strong women's movement, Igbo women a strong unified voice to vocalise their agency and the political capital to access power. In a research into the situation of women's leadership in African societies, Cheryl Townsend Gilkes talks about a "dual-sex political system" that encouraged women's public-life existence, explaining why West Africa has a record of some of the most powerful women political figures (44). Therefore, women took an active role in politics until colonialism disrupted their social structures. Amadiume and Gilkes's remarks suggest that the restructuring of African societies re-invented womanhood in ways that silenced women's political agency, limiting the potential of African womanhood. This silencing was accentuated in the post-independence era and Mikell documents the trajectory of the expulsion of the African woman from the political public sphere. She observes that:

> African women's struggle against gender asymmetry and inequality is often described in terms of the relationship between public and private spheres, or what we may call the "domestic versus public" distinctions in gender roles in Africa. Female subordination, often implemented through this domestic-public dichotomy, tends to be linked with sex roles and relationships in most parts of the world […]. In Africa, female subordination takes intricate forms grounded in traditional African culture, particularly in the "corporate" and "dual-sex" patterns that Africans have generated throughout their history. However, these gender relationships were exaggerated by colonial, Western, and hegemonic contacts. […] New concatenations of this asymmetry and inequality […] [are] sometimes present[ed] as customary, when, in fact, they are distortions of the African reality. (3)

Consequently, women political autobiographers inscribe themselves in the autobiographical genre to re-claim these (forgotten) women's histories and re-write the woman self in their autobiographies, which function as historical (revisionist) texts. The performance of womanhood in writing portrays how philosophical worldviews govern women's inclusion in and exclusion from public and private spaces and African gender discourses. These socially-favoured ideas of womanhood are often legitimised under the rubrics of culture. While I seek the different narrations of the subjects by the public and the private self, the greatest challenge in this study is that where African women politicians are concerned, there is no clear distinction between the public and the private.

Mary Modupe Kolawole has called for a critical examination of the link between gender and culture and criticises the tendency to use the term culture in "gender discourse as a catchall phrase" ("Re-Conceptualizing" 251). She suggests its globalization, dissociating its preconception in Western discourses as Africa-specific and pagan. Similarly, Trinh Minh-Ha has recognised the tendency of treating Third World[11] (native) women as others, an alternate group without agency and in *Woman, Native, Other* (1989), she calls this philosophy "otherness" (76). I argue that despite occupying prominent positions in the socio-economic ladder by virtue of privileged backgrounds or education, these subjects are nevertheless othered in (post)colonial and (post)apartheid public discourses. These women autobiographers therefore comprise a network of women who occupy threshold spaces because of the unity in forms of power negotiation – as repressed but also sovereign subjects – they narrate. These dynamics include: their representation in (post)colonial and (post)apartheid discourses as renegade women infringing on a male domain, and in Western and patriarchal discourses – as subaltern subjects – leading to their subordination in their own communities. This condition is what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak describes as "the woman doubly in shadow" ("Subaltern" 288). The question I then pose, is, how does African political

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[11] While I understand the dangers of using terms such as Native and Third World, I invoke them in this context to explicate how as counter-discursive practices they capture the dynamics of these women's identity negotiations as black (and post-colonial) women in Western patriarchal discourses vis a vis African womanist narratives. I also voice this term to indicate the awareness of post-colonial women scholars about their existence in the threshold position as known subjects who are at the same time knowers, a state of being that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak characterises as problematic selfhood, a term that I engage with in the theoretical section of this chapter. It is for this reason that chapter four specifically explores how African women politicians' autobiographies navigate the duality of their positionality as subalterns and as constructed by Western (and colonial) discourses, and sovereign subjects, or to cite Mahmoud Mamdani, notions of citizenship and subjecthood.

womanhood negotiate notions of subalternity? I suggest that in writing their autobiographies, African women politicians become writer-activists who give agency to other silenced voices. Their autobiographies become records of their individual (and communal) struggles for "survival and equality with other groups" (Alabi 2); stories that counter the representations of African women in Western discourses and by African men. By employing Spivak's concept of "subject-effect" ("Subaltern" 271), I pursue an understanding of experiences of African women politicians as subjects occupying a position "made up of the different strands […] interwoven and working with others like age, race, ethnicity, and the society where the individual lives, to produce the end-product that others see" (ibid 12).

The writers I study reject gender practices that define them and by narrating their stories, they are voicing women's experiences from their perspective as women. I characterise them as problematic selves in view of Spivak's observation in *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (1990), that:

> If one looks at the history of post-Enlightenment theory, the major problem has been the problem of autobiography: how subjective structures can, in fact, give objective truth. […] the Native Informant […] was unquestioningly treated as the objective evidence for the founding of so-called sciences like ethnography, ethno-linguistics, comparative religion, and so on. So that, […] the theoretical problems only relate to […] [t]he person who knows [who] has all of the problems of selfhood. The person who is known somehow seems not to have a problematic self […]. Only the dominant self can be problematic; the self of the Other is authentic without a problem, naturally available to all kinds of complications. (66)

In transcending subject-positions from known to knowing subjects, women political autobiographers constitute the body politic of marginalised subjects who are no longer ignorant of their oppressed position and comprise "the person who knows" (Spivak, *Postcolonial* 66). They then become the "othered writers" that Joanne Braxton in *Maya Angelou's I Know why the Caged Bird Sings: A Case-book* (1990) speaks of authors who, aware of their marginalisation by race and gender, give agency to women's experiences (4). I present two faces of the African woman politician: the public woman as a politician and the private/domestic woman as the political. I also borrow Akin Adesokan's idea of writer-activists to view these autobiographies as "a kind of political instrument seeking to reimagine

the ideas of socialist tricontinentalism" (156). I argue that the political environment with its stifling political correctness, limited audience, and demands for patriotism presents an unfavourable space for the African woman politician to make a positive impact, but that writing gives them the agency to express their vision without fear of immediate criticism across transnational boundaries. The autobiography thus becomes a translatory space where the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated" (Bhabha 2); a convergence point of differences that shows weaknesses in the thought processes of the old subjectivities.

In view of the declaration above that gender is a social category, what Kolawole contemplates in the phrase "[t]he invention of the African woman" (*Womanism* 3), I examine strategies used by the writers I study to problematize discourses that define their womanhood and how they recreate themselves in relation to these narratives. Do their accounts re-iterate womanhood or enact what Kolawole calls "ambivalent attitudes to the gender question in and about Africa"? ("Re-Conceptualizing" 251) This debate, therefore, deliberates on the theoretical standpoints about the woman question in Africa that each writer aligns with, which echo issues in African womanism(s) and feminisms(s). The aim is to interrogate whether indeed the authors conceptualise my idea of African political womanhood as an autonomous selfhood or (and) as a performance constituted through socialisation to subvert gender expectations, meaning it is performatively re-constituted. I recognise that though my reading purports to be womanist, the writers I study identify with different ideological epistemologies on womanhood. For instance, while some subjects like Saadawi identify with (radical) feminist debates, others like Ogot and Kuzwayo are positioned in African womanism. Operating on the view that the autobiographical subjects, discourse, and form of this sub-genre are hybrid, I examine how the narrators reinvent conceptions of womanhood, the autobiographical genre, and politics.

My deliberations on womanhood seek an interplay between Feminism[12] and womanism.[13] Of particular interest to me is how African feminism(s) and African womanism(s) shed light on

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[12] The Feminist movement was formed in the 1960s as a socio-political organisation by women to campaign for women's rights and liberate women from what they regarded as male and cultural dominance, consolidated in the institution of patriarchy. It has several strands. Radical feminism sees all societies as patriarchal and men as the source of women's oppression. It advocates for legislative measures to rectify women's inferiority in society. The movement has however been criticised for its association with intellectual white middle-class women. Marxist feminism views class as the source of social inequality. Unlike radicalism, it focuses on the economy as the originator of women's inferiority. It has been criticised for its inability to

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the political nature of African women's experiences. African womanisms inform experiences of ordinary women and those of African women politicians. As a political movement, womanism was first advanced by Alice Walker in 1983 to address black diasporic women's issues not tackled by feminism. Walker defines a womanist as someone who "appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility, and women's strength […] [and is] committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, men and women. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health" (xi). Womanism, therefore, seeks collaborations between men and women to address communal struggles, and challenges the distance created between men and women by Western feminism. Africana womanism, advanced by Clenora Hudson-Weems in 1994, is another type of womanism that interrogates "the co-existence of men and women [of African descent] in a concerted struggle for the survival of their entire family/community" (1).[14] Unlike Walker's womanism, Hudson-Weems' strand networks people of African descent in Africa and its diaspora. She is mainly concerned with the politics of naming an Afro-centred approach to womanist scholarship. In this study, I focus on African womanisms by Kolawole and Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi.[15] The two critics complement each other in the sense that Kolawole recognises both oral and written (auto)biographical accounts of ordinary and ruling women, literate and illiterate, as informing womanist epistemologies in Africa. On the other hand, Ogunyemi's womanist perspective considers black women's writing as an alternative space where womanhood is "produced [as] an exciting, fluid corpus that defies rigid categorization" ("Womanism" 63-64). Although she is speaking in reference to African novels, I appropriate her views on the personal as political to theorise African women's autobiographical representations. I complement these womanist perspectives with ideas of other African feminist critics including Abena P. Busia and Zulu Sofola, among others, to address African women's concerns. I seek to complement ideas of African womanists with those of African feminists as some of these scholars, like the writers

conceive of women's oppression outside the structures of capitalist production. Liberal feminism recognises the role of culture in women's struggles. This wave has however been criticised for its demand for gender equality as opposed to equity. The different theoretical standpoints between Western and African feminisms are textually indicated through writing the western version with a capital 'F' and the African variant, as Buchi Emecheta proposes, with lower case. However, womanism does not face such case-related dialectics in terms of stipulating a Western of African context.

[13] In view of the plurality of forms associated with either feminism or womanism, I refer to them as feminisms and womanisms concurrently to signal their plurality.

[14] Hudson-Weems claims that her conceptual framework was formed independently of Walker's womanism, but while the two differ slightly, they share some similarities.

[15] Although Kolawole and Ogunyemi also claim to have formed their theories independently from Walker's influence, Ogunyemi's strand is often viewed as an extension of Walker's views but in the context of the African continent. Kolawole is also associated with Walker, but more frequently with Hudson-Weems' views on sexuality.

I study, avoid being confined to one intellectual movement, thus oscillating between various theoretical stand-points. In fact, some of their views overlap, especially their views on the relationship between men and women. For example, the African feminist critic Filomina Chioma Steady notes that "[f]or [African] women, the male is not 'the other' but part of the human same" (8). This inter-relatedness between men and women that is at the core of African feminism/womanism was born out of a need for some African women to distance themselves from the radicalism of some Western feminists is reminiscent in Buchi Emecheta's view. For Emecheta, her identity as a woman and African are key to her theoretical insights because she sees "things through an African woman's eyes" ("Feminism" 175). She however bemoans the tendency of classifying anyone who volalises the plight of women as a "feminist" and towards this end, she revolutionarises this identity, saying, [b]ut if I am now a feminist then I am an African feminist with a small f" ("Feminism" 175). Another aspect of Feminism that Emecheta wishes to distance herself with is the implied dislike for men cited in radical feminist thought. Towards this end, she says:

> I love men and good men are the salt of the earth. But to tell me that we should abolish marriage like the capital 'F' (Feminist) women who say women should live together and all that, I say No. Personally I'd like to see the ideal, happy marriage. But if it doesn't work, for goodness sake, call it off. (qtd. in Kolawole, *Womanism* 11).

Emecheta's observations above highlight two issues that form the rationale for African feminisms' variance with (Western) Feminism: sexuality and marriage. However, Kolawole's womanism is more accommodating with regard to issues of queer sexuality. This concern has been raised in Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's cautionary note that feminism's tendency to foreground women's physiology as a mark of difference, in an African context, may create boundaries that can further marginalize women through the stereotypes it connotes. However, African feminism is not restricted to women's experiences in the domestic arena. Mikell's strand of African feminism, for instance, addresses women's subordination beyond the domestic sphere and theorises experiences of African political womanhood in ways that destabilise "indigenous African experiences and gender roles" (2) engender women. Though I focus on women's writing predominantly, I am hesitant to locate my study within a gynocritic tradition that seeks to establish a "female literary tradition" (335). Of contention, and addressed by the feminist scholar Nina Auerberch, is gynocriticism's positing of

women's writing against men. These polarisations create the impression of a "nostalgia […] for woman's separate sphere" (qtd. in Kolawole, *Womanism* 87), which contravenes African womanism(s)' search for unity between men and women. Further, Auerberch notes that gynocriticism valorises women as writers over a "feminist critique" of women's experiences (qtd in Deirdre xii). I extensively engage with womanist perspectives as I analyse the texts in the subsequent chapters.

Therefore, this study conceptualises the writing (and narration) of the hybrid woman's political autobiography as a multi-layered approach to identity performance. The first instance of performance refers to gender conceptualisation, which Judith Butler categorises as "performing of gender norms and performative use of discourse" (*Bodies* 231). This narrative process is a transformative progression through illocutionary forces, where speech acts with the preceding views of 'alter' and 'ego' transform an individual's understanding of the self (Lara 2), and results in self-translation. To achieve this, the autobiography employs different narrative techniques, defined by Homi K. Bhabha as a creative intervention in moments of narration that function as theoretical and methodological interpretative tools. I also explore performance in writing, to mean the "everyday act of telling a story [and] or the staged reiteration of stories" (Pollock 1). These 'oral' forms are layered with a wealth of knowledge rich in Africa's historic, linguistic, stylistic and cultural nuances. Della Pollock in *Remembering Oral History Performance* (2005) says that

> [o]ral historians and performance scholars/practitioners are increasingly discovering shared and complementary investments in orality, dialogue, life stories, and community-building or what might more generally be called *living* history. By which I don't mean reenactments or heritage theater exactly but the process of materializing historical reflection in live representation as both a form (a container) and a means (a catalyst) of social action. (1)

Towards this end, in this thesis I appropriate theories of the narrative to examine how the autobiographers represent certain notions of themselves through linguistic choices drawn from oral traditions and modern narratological reservoirs. In light of Mikhail Bakhtin's observations in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, I concede that performativity in discourse occurs either at the semantic level, which Bakhtin calls heteroglossia, or at the morphological level, resulting in hybridization (358). Therefore, the process of writing

autobiographies of African women politicians is in itself an "illocutionary act," (Lara 2) through anticipation, repetition, ritual, a congealing over a long period (past to present) – performativity as productive and not theatrical. In view of Evan Mwangi's observation that the writer's gender influences some specific choices such as themes, narrative perspectives, and intertextuality, I examine how orality and other stylistic choices favoured by the writers in this study reconstruct women's political subjectivities as products of history. From my preliminary research, I have established that each of the aforementioned lenses informs a different angle of my research. The assumptions theorise experiences of African women politicians as hybrid subjects concurrently negotiating liminal space(s) – textual, public and private.

Antecedents and Hybridity of the African Woman's Political Autobiography

As mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter, the African woman's political autobiography as a distinct sub-genre in Africa came into existence in the late twentieth century with the publication of Sophia Mustafa's autobiography in 1961. Prior to this publication, there existed a corpus of life narratives of African women leaders in the public sphere, in folklore of African communities, an argument I develop in the following section. This investigation is limited to memoirs and autobiographies of African women politicians, which I define in the context of this study as political autobiographies. The rationale for my preference of this term will be discussed below as part of the debate about the hybrid form. I now trace the development of the African woman's political autobiography by outlining the antecedents of the form and subject of this hybrid autobiography.

Antecedents

My research into the history of African women leaders has revealed that although African women ascended to positions of leadership in pre-colonial communities, the auto/biographies of very few (of them) are known today. With the exception of Egyptian women whose life stories were narrated in hieroglyphics, the majority of life narratives about African women politicians are incorporated into the folklore of their communities, often in the form of songs and (oral) narratives, subsuming them into folk culture (Clarke 1975; McKissack 2000; Sheldon 2005, Miller 1975; Jaques 1934). The renaming of African landscapes and power successions over the years has however concealed layers of these women's political histories, as each era's history has been overwritten by the succeeding reign of power. Additionally, as languages of primarily oral societies became extinct, so did the cultures and histories of those

communities, whereas what was captured on record was rewritten. Unfortunately, some of these surviving histories have been distorted, or forgotten. The few recorded histories of African women leaders are fragmented and dispersed across different disciplines such as history, anthropology, oral literature, religious studies. To my knowledge, as I mentioned, there is no comprehensive catalogue documenting these women leaders' (auto)biographies.

I now proceed to briefly trace the development of the African woman's political autobiographical sub-genre from the pre-colonial era to date. In view of Pollock's call for scholarly investigation into a "shared and complementary investment in orality, dialogue, life stories, and community-building" (1), I envision oral traditions as antecedents of the African woman's political autobiography. Adetayo Alabi calls these traditions oral autobiographies. He notes:

> [They] can take the forms of folktales, epics, witches' and wizards' confessions, religious testimonies, and praise poems. Human and animal stories are usually discussed as folktales. Since animals don't talk like human beings, folktales about them, like trickster tales about the tortoise, are biographical. Human folktales can be autobiographical or biographical. (7)

By establishing this quasi-historiography of the woman's political life narrative in Africa from antiquity to date, I seek to examine how continuity in the modes of representation between the oral and written forms of life narratives facilitate alternative ways of reading the African woman's political autobiography.

The modes of self-representations of African women politicians from North Africa and south of the Sahara differ slightly. Most narratives of North African women leaders that have been sourced to date (for example from Ancient Egypt, the Berber dynasty and Sheba kingdom) are available both in oral and written forms, the latter referring to hieroglyphics, both pictorials and ancient alphabetic inscriptions, on surfaces. These pre-colonial narratives from the north mostly tell of conquest and defeat, of love, birth and death, as well as of the mundane aspects of communal life. However, history recorded by the Roman Empire scribes foregrounded the victories of the Roman Empire while suppressing black (women's) history (Chauveau 2). Further, narratives about Egypt before the development of Egyptology downplayed the involvement of the Egyptian queens in leadership (Tyldesley 2). On the other hand, accounts of women from sub-Saharan Africa before colonialism consisted mostly of

oral forms, especially oral narratives and, in some cases, legends.[16] Unfortunately, improper or lack of documentation has rendered some of these life narratives subject to extinction or distortion, as well as romanticising them along gendered stereotypes. In the late twentieth century, however, a radical shift in documenting women's experiences in sub-Saharan Africa occurred as a result of colonialism and missionary influences like education. African women began to write their own life narratives. Most of these narratives were counter-narratives to and about liberation from colonialism, apartheid, and post-independence autocracy. Of value to my argument here is that African women's political autobiographies establish continuity with these pre-colonial life narrative practices through the claims they make to orality.

Hybridity in the African Woman's Political Autobiography

In this section, I aim to illustrate that the African woman's political autobiography is a hybrid text that presents different manifestations of liminality. The concept of hybridity has been defined by Bhabha as a middle ground between fixed identifications that results in a "third space of [cultural] enunciations (56), which not only gives rise to new meanings, social relations and identities, but also disrupts and subverts established entities (Bhabha 5). I use Bhabha's concept of hybridity to argue that the mixing of Western and African life narrative practices, understandings of (political) womanhood, linguistic and literary (stylistic) features, in the postcolonial African woman's political autobiography has given rise to notions of hybridisation. According to Bart Moore-Gilbert in Post-Colonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics and Self-representation (2009), this forms of hybridity destabilise dominant Western conceptions of life writing such as conventions of proper autobiography (while at the same time paying homage to the basic principles of life narratives) and those suggesting that the impulse to narrate the self is Western. Further, the re-making of English as a hybrid mode of self-expression through "linguistic experimentation and hybridisation" into a postcolonial language of expression (93). Bearing in mind Moore-Gilbert's views on traditional autobiography's "marginalisation of women's life writing" and non-conventional life narration processes (70), I conceive the postcolonial African (*woman's political autobiography*) in English as a subversive mode that represents African women's political lived experiences in ways that celebrate their dynamic identities and modes of (self-)expression. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha describes the liminal space in post-colonial literatures as a potentially disruptive in-betweenness. He further notes that "this

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[16] An example of a female legend is the story of Ahebi Ugbabe of Nigeria, and Mekatilili Wa Menza and Wangu Wa Makeri, both from Kenya.

interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (5). As a liminal space the autobiography, according to Hein Viljoen and Chris Van der Merwe, acts as a convergence zone that connects and constructs differences in subject-formation but "prevents" these performed "identities 'from settling into primordial'" oppositions (10). My study interrogates manifestations of liminality in subject-constitution in the hybrid form of these texts and its dialogic language, threshold spaces where African women politicians negotiate their complex sense of selves. I read the African woman's political autobiography as a post-colonial literary sub-genre that demonstrates the relationality and intersectionality of identities in hybrid genres, cultures and spaces, presenting a taxonomic display of thresholds, where strata intersect at different convergent zones, thereby portraying the concentric nature of African political womanhood. The African woman autobiographical subject intensifies this liminality by crafting a first-person life narrative that establishes continuity with oral modes of self-expression. She adds to this positioning by introducing women's voices into the autobiographical tradition through relationality, and non-verbal narrations like hieroglyphics and pictorials. Women politicians' autobiographies are hybrid texts and their identities are liminal. These notions of in-betweenness re-invent the traditional Western autobiographical genre by merging African modes of self-narration with the Western conceptions of autobiography, and the following section shows how this hybridization is achieved at the level of language, form, and subject constitution.

The Hybrid Form

This study recognises intertextuality between pre-colonial African and Western modes of life-narrative expressions embedded in the African woman's political autobiography in English. The autobiographical tradition has its roots in the West but was later appropriated in Africa, and the debates around what this genre entails capture the impasse between Western and African, masculine and feminine conceptions of its liminality. In the Western critical tradition, autobiography is generally conceived as a written form and, according to Philippe Lejeune, classified under life writing together with the memoir, biography, personal novel, autobiographical poem, journal/diary, and self-portrait/essay (4). Related to these forms are lyrical poetry (Weintraub 823), faction and autobiografiction (Alabi 3). In recognition of the integratedness between autobiography and biography, with their connotations of fact and fiction, Laura Marcus, in her critical work *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (1994), "denies the overlap and community between so-called fictional and non-

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fictional prose" of "(auto)biography" (148). To Marcus, therefore, life writings should be viewed as a hybrid form, "auto/biography", rather than by the oppositional terms autobiography, biography, and memoir, as "these forms repeatedly cross the artificial categories of fiction/fact, internal/external, individual/society, mind/world" (Marcus 148). Arising from Marcus' insight is the idea that a theoretical shift to auto/biography's hybridity will unearth the possibilities prevalent in the liminal spaces arising from these dichotomies. More recently, Thomas Couser in *Memoir: An Introduction* (2011) writes:

> [M]emoir is, [….] [s]ometimes […] used to refer to *any* account of the author's life, as if it is synonymous and interchangeable with *autobiography* […]. But *autobiography* and *memoir* can also be used to refer to subtly different kinds of self-life writing. In that case, memoir becomes in effect a *subgenre* of autobiography, a particular way of writing one's life. […] *Memoir* can also be used to refer to a narrative that is primarily about someone *other than* the author; used in this way, the term refers to a sub-genre of *biography, as distinct* from autobiography. (17-18)

In fact, many critics have argued that autobiography is a hybrid genre, as Marcus and Couser contend above. In light of the debates raised and invoked above and aware that the terms autobiography, biography and memoir in life writing criticism denote different life writing practices, I use the term autobiography to encompass elements of autobiography, memoir, and biography inherent in the African woman's political autobiography. This is a critical move that will enable me to unravel the possibilities of narrating and writing the hybrid nature of the African woman's political autobiographical self in the threshold space of the accommodating hybrid form, while avoiding the semantic debate that a search for a unified definition of life writing arouses. The term autobiography in this sense, then, acts as a "counter-discursive method of writing back to the definition of the genre" that excludes blacks' and women's voices from its imaginary (Alabi 4). Precisely, Roy Pascal in *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (1960) notes that political autobiographies are a grey area in life writing studies because they do recount some private autobiographical material about childhood and youth but also devote substantial space to their public political life, which is more communal and less personal, a characteristic of the memoir (6).

Unlike the Western-oriented conception of the autobiography that is grounded within the writing tradition and dates back to the enlightenment age, African autobiographical critics

view life narrating tradition as old as humankind that began with humans' ability to manipulate oral traditions. In *Telling Our Stories: Continuities and Divergences in Black Autobiographies* (2005), Adetayo Alabi views the association of the autobiographical tradition with writing as exclusionary in nature, since its emphasis on writing denotes a Eurocentric tradition that silences black oral forms of the autobiography prevalent in African communities such as oral narratives and oral histories (Alabi 4). Susan Anderson has also raised concerns about this focus on the written form because it assumes that "[t]he impulse to examine the history of the self, to turn systematic retrospection into art is a European one and the genre of autobiography is indigenous to Western, post-Roman civilization; only in modern times has it been produced in other civilizations" (398). Scholarship on African autobiography by scholars such as Elleke Boehmer, Meg Samuelson, and Jennifer Muchiri, among others, recognise the hybridity of the (African) woman's (political) autobiography. They conceptualise it as a Western written mode of inscribing an individual's account of the personal and communal experiences that are African in orientation and narrated in English, the coloniser's language. Despite these scholars' ground-breaking attention to some African women's political autobiographies, there is still a need to look at them as a sub-genre of life writing, and this is what I set out to do.

In *Review of African Oral Traditions and Literature* (2014), Harold Scheub advances an alternative way of researching oral traditions that deviates from conventional engagement with themes and language to focus instead on the structure. A return to orality presents the African woman's political autobiography with moments of artistic intervention to creatively narrate the private self without compromising the autobiographical subject through revealing potentially damaging information about them. Smith and Watson observe that:

> The meanings the autobiographer reads into her life are historically and culturally contingent. Telling her story, she negotiates—sometimes with little, sometimes with discerning self-consciousness—the cultures of subjectivity available to her, the discourses of identity circulating around her, and the narrative frames commonly used to tell stories. (*Women* 5)

What is discernible from Smith and Watson above is that women autobiographers appropriate a style of writing they are more comfortable with and that is less formal. I suggest that the informality of orature in women's everyday narrative practices endears women

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autobiographers to orality. Consequently, the South African woman politician Ramphele has defined her autobiographical process as "storytelling" (Ramphele, "Passion" 7). However, storytelling sessions by women are often considered a private enterprise confined to the domestic sphere, except for instances of exception in, for example, Xhosa culture with "*iintsomi*", a storytelling tradition performed by women, especially grandmothers (Mackenzie 349). Josepha Sherman in *Storytelling: An Encyclopedia of Mythology and Folklore* (2008), observes that "stories are told within private spaces by grandparents, parents and other family members, but also publicly by professionals" (xvii). The writing of these women's histories is a historical imperative, as they voice women's political agency, move women's narratives from the private to the public spheres, and transform women's everyday experiences as political. Traces of oral traditions in these autobiographies then act as a system of signifiers that "encode and legitimate gender ideologies under the rubrics of tradition, identity, culture, or custom, and [axes against which] to map out the intersections between gender representations and women's social lives" (Ogwang 288). They conceal some writers' political sentiments and intimate experiences in the face of patriarchal and public censorship. In so doing, African women politicians challenge some patriarchal myths that subordinate African women under the guise of "national identity or tradition" (Ogwang 288).

Inasmuch as writing gives women the agency to document their personal experiences, most women fear public scrutiny and ridicule. Jill Conway, whose research is on the Western autobiography, describes this dilemma as a power struggle since the autobiography was first constructed as a masculine form and women who inscribe themselves in this form are policed by patriarchy. She argues that while the Western male autobiographer finds no difficulty in talking about himself in his autobiography, his woman counterpart feels that she has no control over her destiny and tends to censor her own story (14). According to Shari Benstock, women's autobiographical writing is characterised as 'outlaw genres' and its subjects are located "between the masculine and the feminine" spheres (1). Being hybrid forms, their texts have to negotiate the grey areas between the 'proper' autobiography and the "illegitimate" forms such as diaries, letters, and memoirs (Benstock 2). She says that:

> When writing locates itself at the margins of genre or outside the limits of defined genre, or if the author is also marginalised (that is, if the writer is female, working class, black, Hispanic, lesbian), it serves as a kind of "limit case." Writing that works the borders of definitional boundaries bears witness both to repressive inscription

under the law of genre and to the freedom and dispossession of existence outside the law. Such cases–and women's autobiographical writings are exemplary in this–are difficult to define in terms of "theory". (Benstock 1)

Speaking about the gendering of narrative forms, Estelle Jelinek has noted that a common conception in autobiographical criticism holds that "male autobiography is more connected to a public world than is female autobiography" (qtd in Woodward 99). This study proposes that the hybrid African woman's political autobiography resists confinement to the Western form through appropriating African folklore. This incorporation of African folklore in African written forms including the autobiography has been interpreted as a link to African sensibility, culture, and worldview (Adu-gyamfi 104). While orality is not exclusive to African cultures, the writers I study make claims to orality as a way of Africanising the autobiography. They intertextually weave into their autobiographies a wide range of oral traditions ranging from oral poems (songs), proverbs, folktales, myths, legends, oral histories, recitations of family genealogies and dialogues, which I interpret as markers of orality in this form. As a stylistic intervention, these oral forms are infused into the hybrid woman's political autobiography at the level of form or content. In some cases, these forms are foregrounded and are easily identified, but not in others. I will illustrate and elaborate in greater detail how the stylistic/formal features of each re-invent the African woman's political autobiographical sub-genre when I do a close reading of the texts in the following chapters. This hybrid form hence exhibits traces of African language, speech patterns, oral forms and worldview.

Further, African women's political autobiographies hybridise their texts with oral traditions to gender the autobiographical genre. These writers encode their intimate experiences in oral forms that protect their privacy such that their symbolic value is understood by other women. Decoding the secretive language requires the reader to familiarise themselves with the social-cultural, geographical and historical context of that utterance. Most women are compelled into coding intimate experiences before speaking about them in public as patriarchal societies impose silence on women's private experiences in public spaces. Mary Nooter Roberts in "Secrecy in African Orature" (2004), sheds more light on the relevance of secrecy in African oral traditions. In her opinion:

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Secrecy is a powerful esthetic (sic) strategy underlying many forms of African orature. A dialectic of concealment and revelation is implicit to narratives, legends, proverbs, riddles, puzzles, songs, and praise poems—and to the visual arts related to these oral media. Exploration of the uses of secrecy in African orature lends insight into the ways secrecy embodies, protects, and selectively transmits knowledge in diverse contexts, including initiations and gender dramas, royal rites and performances, processes of divination and healing, and encounters with foreigners. (cited in *African Folklore* 818)

Nooter conceives secrecy as a tool to control knowledge, especially in a culture where men have acquired centrality as the custodians of knowledge. She perceives mastery of the different codes, in this case the imagery in oral tradition, as the narrative intervention preferred by women to exclude audiences that do not share their social vision and the social worldview informing the narrator's ideologies.

Orality, whether implicit or explicit, inheres the African woman's political autobiography. While such a sentiment might be considered essentialist, bearing in mind Walter Ong's concession in *Orality and Literacy* (2013) that "[w]ritten texts all have to be related somehow, directly or indirectly, to the world of sound, the natural habitat of language […] [w]riting can never dispense with orality" (8), I suggest that the African woman's political autobiography (un)consciously exhibits aspects of secondary orality that manifest themselves in writing. In this regard, Isabel Hofmeyr's assertion in "Orality and Literacy in Africa" (2004), that the application of oral forms in writing "must be invented anew through the artful management of linguistic style and register" (*African Folklore* 643), becomes crucial to my critical debate about hybridity in the African woman's political autobiography. Therefore, I term the autobiographies in this sub-genre as hybridised forms. She, however, cautions against reducing presence of oral forms in writing as proof of 'Africanness' and suggests an exploration of how these forms realise new potential in analysis of African written texts (Hofmeyr 643). Like Hofmeyr, the African folklorist Eileen Julien in *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (1992), notes that "the originality of the African novel [here, autobiography,] is determined by the extent to which they echo oral traditions" (10) as opposed to their mere presence in the written form and that when transposed into a different text, oral traditions acquire new meanings and fulfil "different" narrative tasks (Julien 47).

Nevertheless, she observes that not all African texts manifest the same characteristics or appropriate orality in the same way (Julien 41).

This thesis considers orality a literary device that introduces women-oriented narrative aspects of life narratives into the autobiography like storytelling, mentioned above. Eileen Julien notes that "aesthetic, cultural, and social needs [of orality in prose] are met by reference to and imitation or parodying the structures of oral genres" (ix), a unique approach that "accords writers more liberty [to re-produce genres] and assumes they are thinking architects rather than prisoners of a cultural heritage, [thus] it allows for richer, more complex [autobiographical] interpretations" (Julien ix). The South African literary critic Ksenia Robbe in *Conversations of Motherhood: South African Women's Writing across Traditions* (2015), identifies the re-invention of writing in South Africa. She says that black South African "culture and literature as a specific tradition [here the autobiography] is "distinct from both European and other African traditions" because of their appropriation of oral techniques (58). I envision hybridity in terms of the merging of oral forms in the African woman's political autobiography as a mode of re-inventing the autobiographical genre and, as I will show in subsequent chapters, an avenue to contest the masculinisation of autobiography, the gendering of history as a male prerogative, and the objectification of women in history.

The women writers I study extensively narrate the self as much as others. Some of the life experiences of other women that unfold alongside the personal narratives of the writers I study were at first narrated by the original subjects as anecdotes, gossip, rumour, or folktales, and occasionally inscribed in historical artefacts as pictorials, in hieroglyphics, or circulated by historians. These historians were in some oral societies referred to as griots or scribes in fairly literate communities like Ancient Egypt. Over time, these oral accounts became recognised as oral histories, narrated as biographical performances in the form of myths, legends, praise poetry, epics, songs and folktales. Julie Rak in *Negotiated Memory: Doukhobor Autobiographical Discourse* (2005) observes that when "alternative forms of autobiographical representation" turn the autobiographical genre into a "discursive field", its power as a hegemonic discourse enables minority groups to address issues of "ethnic identity, alternative historicity, and the relationship of a minor subjectivity to the ideas associated with being a nation" (2). In view of Rak's concession, my research interrogates the subjective identities that comprise African political womanhood and its manifestations in the related concepts of hybridity and liminality in autobiographical representations. Focusing on the

autobiography as my point of departure, I examine how notions of hybridity in relation to African feminist identity politics are negotiated through the autobiographical form, characters, language and content, which result in tensions of narration/self-representation between the private and public self. Since the research intersects multiple concepts (i.e. feminism, politics, activism, post-coloniality and autobiography), its plurality may threaten to blur the focus of the study. This presents challenges at the levels of scope, theory, and methodology. However, in this research I manage to overcome this challenge by elaborating on stylistic devices that espouse the liminality of space, subject, and form as new ways of reading and interpreting this genre of life narrative.

In the following chapters, I set out to examine the different ways in which the African woman's political autobiography, through orality and other narrative devices, provides new possibilities of representing the African woman's political autobiographer and her narrative. I demonstrate how the memoirs of African women politicians make a claim to orality through the appropriation of oral traditions (the verbal arts and performance), at the level of form, language, and content. The aim is not to naturalise these narratives as antecedents of African orality, but to argue for a continuity of these oral traditions in a revitalized way. Orality, therefore, provides the agency to articulate their personal experiences in different ways and a new way of writing themselves into Africa's histories, as herstories that become counter-discourses to the dominant discourses that (mis)represent them.

The Narrator as a Hybrid Subject

If in the postcolonial African context, the notions Africa,[17] woman, and public and private – as debated above – are inventions, how then can we characterise the African woman autobiographer? Womanhood is a politically-charged term that according to Nnaemeka is shrouded in "paradoxes" and "complexities" (*(M)othering* 8). The autobiographical subjects studied in this thesis seem to interrogate the different conceptions of what I characterise as African political womanhood that foreground both pre- (and post-) colonial conceptions of woman-being. The term womanhood is often contextualised by moralist stances that call upon women to uphold virtuosity and thus is often conflated with motherhood. For instance, the African womanist critic Protus Kemdirim, in his article "African Culture and Womanhood: The Issue of Single-Parenthood" (1998), contextualises African womanhood

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[17] V.Y Mudimbe proposes that the idea of Arica is a Western invention (1988), a meaning that is constantly negotiated in Africa's "re-inventions" by Africans (Mazrui 77) and its descendants (Mudimbe "Gnosis" 206).

within the practice of "bearing children" (454). In contesting such biological essentialist views, Nnaemeka delves into Igbo folklore to re-establish womanhood as a collection of "voices" that represent women's experiences rather than their maternity (*(M)othering* 6). I therefore read these texts as contesting a homogenous womanhood.

I consider these writers as cultural hybrids because of the multiculturalism that characterises their being: racially, ethnically, religiously, economically, and socially. The most predominant form of cultural hybridity that comprises their identity and informed my choice of them as study subjects is the controversy their occupation of the political public sphere in post-independence times evokes. In pre-colonial Africa, women took part in politics as warriors, queens, princesses, and covertly as advisers, among many other roles, but in the post-colonial era, they have been expelled from politics (and the public space). Those who are accepted are re-imagined as "honorary male[s]" (Ramphele, *Life* 180). The lack of concession on their status as public subjects, I propose, lies in the fact that genealogies of African women's leadership from the pre-colonial era are almost lost to the postcolonial public. However, some of these matriarchal legacies survive to date and are preserved in oral and written sources. For instance, Joyce Tyldesley (in *Cleopatra*) notes that despite a succession of violent political conquests, "Egypt's lengthy history was still writ large on her crumbling stone walls, but now no one could read it" (2). Recently, there have been efforts to reclaim these histories by documenting African women politicians' representations in history/public discourse on African (ancient) civilisation and they constitute (oral) biographies of some of the most powerful, and almost forgotten, African empires and dynasties. For instance, the oral histories of ancient Egyptian women rulers have been retrieved from tomb inscriptions, statues, oral poems, songs, written historical documents, myths, legends, tales, genealogies, historical timelines, photographs, and illustrations. My aim in re-constructing these genealogies is to establish an archive of oral and written modes of documenting life narratives of African women politicians and continuities in representations of African political womanhood.

Figure 1: Warrior - Queen Amina of Zaria[18]   *Figure 2: The Dahomey Amazons[19]*   *Figure 3: The Egyptian Goddess Isis[20]*

While African women politicians in the pre-colonial era are celebrated in African women's archives, the portrayal of some of them in Western (colonial) narratives is stereotypical. For example, queen Ann Nzingha, defined by John Thornton as a typical heroine of a legend or romance tale (25), is a controversial historical figure romanticised by some (Clarke, 1975:22-23; McKissack, 2000:7; Sheldon, 2005:181), and portrayed by others as a cunning opportunist who used dubious means to obtain and expand her power (Miller 205, 206, 207, 209). These contradictory representations of Nzingha belie the historical tensions in the historical trajectory of modern-day Angola. Other powerful women politicians in the (pre)colonial era include: Amina Sukhera, also known as queen of Zaria, a princess who ruled over the kingdom of Zazzau for thirty-four years (see Figure 1); Ahebi Ugbabe, the first woman warrant chief and Eze (king) in Igbo land; Seh-Dong-Hong-Beh, leader of the Dahomey Amazons, a women's army in Dahomey, presently Benin (see Figure 2); Yaa Asantewaa, also known as the Queen Mother of the Ejisu, whose image is often invoked as "an Asante patriotic heroine" (McCaskie 158), an image that has been sustained in the oral history of the Asante; and queen Ann Nzingha, popularly known as Amazon Queen of Matamba, a legendary woman leader who fought to assert her power amid social and political constraints in the Ghanian society; and the Modjaji, queens of the Lovedu nation, otherwise known as the Lobedu or Balobedu people, found in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The Modjaji are rain chiefs, whose genealogy is matrilineal (Jaques 377), legendarised as possessing rain-making powers and revered in South African public discourses (Meyer 102).

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[18] This image of warrior queen Amina of ancient Zaria, also known as the Zazzau kingdom of north-central Nigeria was obtained from the "Black History Heroes" blog and can be accessed at: http://www.blackhistoryheroes.com/2013/07/queen-amina-of-zaira-west-african.html.

[19] This photo showing the Dahomey Amazons was obtained from the *Atlanta Black Star* online magazine at: http://atlantablackstar.com/2013/10/29/10-fearless-black-female-warriors-throughout-history/.

[20] The image of the Egyptian goddess Isis is obtained from the "Mystic Medusa" blog, accessed at: https://mysticmedusa.com/2015/11/isis-the-goddess/.

Recently, in 2016, President Jacob Zuma recognised the Balobedu queenship,[21] which demonstrates an exertion of patriarchal control over women's leadership. The removal of women from the public space and their silencing in history is, therefore, a deliberate move to maintain the status quo of patriarchy instituted by colonialism. Some of the political legacies of these ancient women leaders are interwoven in the autobiographies in this study. By establishing continuities with pre-colonial women leadership legacies, the writers in this study problematize the identification of their political womanhood as transgressive in Western and patriarchal discourses and by invoking pre-colonial women leaders, they seem to suggest that African women have been leading even from before colonialism, and that their exclusion from the political arena in the postcolonial era is a discursive invention.

The Hybrid Language/Discourse

At the level of discourse, hybridity acts like an "illocutionary force" that bridges the moral and aesthetic (Lara 3) components of African women's political autobiographies, bequeathing them the persuasive power to change societal conceptions about gender performativity normalised by patriarchy. Speaking from a philosophical context, Maria Pia Lara observes that:

> [B]y entering into the public sphere and struggling for public recognition, emancipatory narratives mediate between particular group identities and universalistic moral claims, providing new frameworks that allow those who are not members of the group to expand their own self-conceptions and their definitions of civil society. (3)

Speaking in relation to political discourse, Kwesi Yankah argues in *African Folklore* that rhetoric in African societies is more often than not conceived as a male-oriented phenomenon, which women are not expected to practice (645). The African woman's political autobiography then becomes an aesthetically presented text that uses women-oriented narrative strategies, deliberately crafted to give agency to writer-activism. The tendency of autobiography to be subjective makes this genre the best medium to investigate the women subjects' psyche and the identity tensions between the public and private self of

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[21] After South Africa gained its independence in 1994, chieftaincy was recognised by the state as a parallel social institution, but the Balobedu queenship was not, despite its existence preceding colonialism and apartheid. For further information on the state recognition of this ruling structure, see: http://www.702.co.za/articles/13919/rain-queen-heir-masalanabo-modjadji-11-officially-recognised-by-president-zuma

the liminal subject in hybrid spaces. The political autobiography then becomes a manifestation of contentious speech acts that establish what is shared and what is distinct in these autobiographies. Even then, the autobiographical space still limits the degree of self-exposure as sensitive, and potentially embarrassing accounts may be damaging to the women political subjects' careers or reputations in the society. Such details are in most cases revealed in other media such as newspapers and radio/television broadcasts.

I view discourse in the hybrid woman's political autobiography as encapsulating historical experiences of African women politicians, and as being dialogic. I extensively discuss dialogism in chapter four. I also use the literary unit of the chronotope as a discursive paradigm to unravel the time-space relations of African women's political subjectivity. In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981), Bakhtin explores the different narrative intervention moments that the chronotope creates, which he calls points of intersection between time and space that bring about different meanings. According to him, meanings are culturally generated, hence "dialogized" (426). While Bakhtin develops the concept of the chronotope in relation to human existence in the early novel, I apply this framework in my reading of the African woman's political autobiography. I therefore conceive of the chronotope as a structurally constitutive narrative strategy that provides two moments of intervention for autobiographical criticism: first as a space where old and new forms of orality narrate cultures, characters and experiences; and second, as the metaphorical language that contextualises the history of invasion of cultures through globalisation, colonization, apartheid, slavery, etc. The public square chronotope then offers a transformative space for the African women autobiographers/memoirists to navigate public and private identities.

The suitability of the political autobiography for discourse analysis lies in the threshold spaces between public and private, as there are no clear-cut lines in (self)representations of the private and public selfhoods in the autobiographies I study. Bakhtin's chronotopic paradigm, however, unearths the potential of the form of life writing texts to enhance spatio-temporal meanings of African political womanhood. According to Bakhtin, the importance of literary subjects is "not only, and not so much, their internal chronotope [that is, the time-space of their represented life] as it is rather, and pre-eminently, that exterior real-life chronotope in which the representation of one's own or someone else's life is realized either as verbal praise of a civic-political act or as an account of the self" (Morris 186). As Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson in *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (1990) elaborate,

"what is essential to public square images of a person is the impossibility of anything that is in principle 'private, secret or personal, anything relating solely to the individual *him*self'" (393, Emphasis added).

Chapter Breakdown

Apart from this introduction (Chapter One), which outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework as well as the methodology, the thesis consists of three core chapters and a conclusion (Chapter Five). The guiding principle for the core chapters is rationalised by debates around the time-space relations of African public and private selfhoods as conceived by Peter Ekeh's re-definition of these terms, but in relation to how these ideas inform gender configurations as represented in the selected texts. The chapters engage with the dialectics of public and private, and their manifestations of hybridity. In each chapter a selection of texts is analysed because they serve as particularly good examples of the concepts explored in that particular chapter. Each chapter unfolds and explains its key concepts and method used. While I discuss the theoretical ideas and scholarly arguments that inform my argument in the introductory section to each chapter, the limitations of this project impel me to refer the reader back to ideas already discussed in this introduction instead of repeating definitions and theoretical contextualisation. I have incorporated several images from selected autobiographies and from public archives, particularly where these visual images recall writers' experiences more poignantly than (or are silenced) in writing, or where image (both in the autobiography and from public archives) and text complement each other in illustrating a point made in the autobiography.

In the next chapter (Two), I look at the public selfhoods of African political womanhood. I explore narrative techniques that represent African women's struggles in the political sphere. The chapter appropriates the concept 'Metaphors of Selfhood' first advanced by James Olney as a discursive framework to analyse various forms of women's political acts as 'historical consciousness' (after Laura Marcus) in six autobiographies by South African women politicians. This chapter is distinctive as it is the only one that focuses exclusively on works from one country. The guiding principle here is South Africa's unique political history: one that is informed not only by ideologies of colonialism but also by apartheid ideologies and the shifting political dimensions of the post-apartheid state.

In Chapter Three, I discuss eight autobiographies to examine the private self of African political womanhood. I debate about African women's struggles in the domestic arena and quasi-public, private spaces as denoted by Ekeh. The chapter adopts Smith and Watson's theoretical concept of 'Techniques for Remembering' to develop the argument that naming practices, the woman's body, genealogies, and the maternal figure feature as symbolic units through which the writers represent women's individual and collective struggles as political. The texts are from different geographical and cultural contexts but they are similar in foregrounding remembering practices as agential to private womanly experiences as political. The writers furnish particularly sound examples of how their encounters with various forms of women's oppression such as patriarchy, fundamentalism, cultural hegemony, and the power of the state influence their choice or narrative techniques to remember or forget women's experiences that give agency to non-nationalist discourses. The works suggest that women's struggles were/are silenced in public discourses of nationalism as they were/are deemed inappropriate as such public discourses.

The last analytical chapter (Four) focuses on five autobiographies, again selected from disparate geographical locations, a choice motivated by the predominance of dialogic narrative techniques such as metonymy, parody, etc., which significantly illustrate the fluidity of public and private identities. Further, these texts portray an exaggerated performance of public and private selfhoods in threshold spaces that exemplifies the bifurcated nature of African political womanhood as a hybrid subjectivity. The chapter therefore focuses on narrative techniques that foreground these alternate narrative positions as *sous rature*, a Heideggerian concept.[22]

I conclude this study in the final chapter (Six) to summarise my main arguments and key findings. I return to difficulties I encountered during my research – genre related – and outline the key finding of this study. I then suggest directions for future or underexplored

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[22] The phrase *sous rature* is a French theoretical concept propounded by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger and later adapted by the French scholar and theorist Jacques Derrida. In his deconstructionist epistemology, *sous rature* is defined by Derrida as "under erasure", a demonstration of the layered nature of language and linguistic representations (qtd. in *Of Grammatology* 89). In my study, I conceptualise *sous rature* as threshold dialogic literary devices such as metonymy, parody, etc., to show the many ways in which African political womanhood can be viewed as a paradoxical performance that undermines and, at the same time, re-contextualises both dominant and subversive public and private conceptions of womanhood in both indigenous African, (post)colonial/(post)apartheid, and Western discourses.

research topics. Lastly, I highlight my theoretical and methodological contributions to the African woman's political autobiographical sub-genre.

A Biographical Overview of the Political Nature of the Subjects under Study

In this section, I contextualise the political portfolios, party affiliations, and professional backgrounds of the selected writers, which serve as reference points in this thesis.

- Nnoseng Ellen Kate Kuzwayo (1914–2006) was a social worker and politician. She was chair of the African National Congress Youth League and was active in women's movements including the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA). In 1994, she was elected to Parliament under the ANC banner. Her autobiography won South Africa's CNA Literary Book Prize.

- Nomzamo Winfreda Zanyiwe Madikizela Mandela (1936–) is an African National Council (ANC) Party activist and is currently an ANC National Executive Committee member. She was briefly the First Lady of South Africa as wife of the late Nelson Mandela until their divorce on March 19, 1996. In 2003, she forfeited her parliamentary seat after being found guilty of fraud. She was also the ANC Women's League chair.

- Emma Mashinini (1929–) is a trade union activist and former general secretary of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa, CCAWUSA, a black labour union established in 1975 during apartheid as an arm of the anti-apartheid movement. Before forming CCAWUSA, she served on the executive board of the National Union of Clothing Workers (NUCW) for twelve years. When the ANC government came into power, she was appointed as a Commissioner for Restitution of Land Rights in 1995.

- Mamphela Aletta Ramphele (1947–) is a South African politician, academic, and medical doctor. She was a member of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) that spear-headed students' resistance against apartheid and is founder of the political party *Agang* – a Sotho word for 'Build'. She was the intimate partner of Steve Biko, a South African nationalist who was behind BCM thought during apartheid.

- Virginia Tiras Wambui Waiyaki Otieno (1946–2011) was a former Mau Mau freedom fighter, an anti-colonial movement in Kenya, and a key figure in the women's movement in this country. In 1997, she unsuccessfully contested the Kamukunji Constituency parliamentary seat as a member of the opposition party. She was also a

leader of the National People's Convention Party (NPCP) choir and executive member of the ruling party's women's wing, the Kenya African National Union (KANU).

- Mary Josephine Wangari Muta Maathai (1941–2011), was an outspoken Kenyan politician in the pro-democracy movement. In 2002, she became Tetu Constituency's parliamentarian under the National Rainbow Coalition party that removed KANU from power. Maathai was also active in the Kenyan women's movement as the chairperson of the National Council of Women, an elite women's organisation, and of its grassroots' counterpart, the Maendeleo Ya Wanawake (Women's Progress) Organisation. She is the founder of Mazingira Green Party, established in 2003 as an eco-friendly political movement.

- Grace Akinyi Ogot (1930–2015) was a Kenyan gender activist, nurse, and fiction writer. In 1983, she was elected as Gem Constituency's parliamentarian on a KANU ticket and was later appointed as the only woman assistant minister by President Daniel Arap Moi.

- Janet Kainembabazi Kataaha Museveni (1948–) is the wife of Uganda's current President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and First Lady of Uganda. She is Member of Parliament of Ruhaama County, former State Minister for Karamoja Affairs, and is currently the Cabinet Minister of Education and Sports.

- Elizabeth Nyabogo Bagaaya (1936–) was a model, is a lawyer, *Batebe*, and the princess of Uganda's Toro Kingdom. She is currently the legal guardian and chief adviser of the present King of Toro, her nephew Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV. She served as an ambassador and Minister of Foreign Affairs in President Idi Amin's government and as ambassador in President Museveni's government until her retirement in 1988.

- Ayaan Hirsi Magan Ali (1969–) is a Somali anti-fundamentalist. In 2003, she was elected into the Lower House of the Dutch Parliament under the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) ticket. In 2006, she resigned from politics as a House Representative when her Dutch citizenship was called into question, leading to the fall of the second cabinet of President Jan Peter Balkenende.

- Sophia Mustafa (1922–2015) was a politician, fiction writer, and gender activist. She served as a Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) woman parliamentary representative in President Julius Nyerere's government.

- Nawal El Saadawi (1931–) is a famous Egyptian radical feminist, medical doctor, and fiction writer. In 2004, she announced her intention to campaign for Egypt's presidency against President Hosni Mubarak but was forced to withdraw from the race in 2005 due to stringent measures instituted on her candidacy by the state.

- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (1938–) is an economist and served as Assistant Minister of Finance in President William Tolbert's government and as Minister in President Samuel Doe's government. She also worked for the World Bank, Citibank, and the United Nations' Development Programme. Currently she is the president of Liberia, serving a second term in office since 2005.

- Margaret Nnananyana Nasha (1947–) is the former first woman speaker of the Botswana National Assembly. She also served as a radio broadcaster, an Ambassador, Minister for Local Government, and Minister of Presidential Affairs and Public Administration.

- Vera Chirwa (1932–) is a political and human rights activist, founder of Malawi Center for Advice, Research on Rights (Malawi CARER), a civil rights organisation that offers awareness on human rights and paralegal services to poor Malawians, especially women. In 2004, she voiced her decision to contest the presidency but was not nominated by her party for fear that her political image was not well established in Malawian society.

CHAPTER TWO

Reconceptualising Women's Public Political Acts: The African Woman's Political Autobiography and Historical Consciousness

> African historiography, like modern historiography everywhere else, has of late had to deal with the problems of memory, remembrance, forgiveness and commemoration of the past – E.S. Atieno Odhiambo (Otieno xi)

Introduction

Unlike the Western Victorian and Edwardian autobiographies that put more emphasis on the individual life as a window to historical truth, the African woman's political autobiography presents individual lived experiences as a platform to espouse the personal and collective. The latter, in my view, is three-tiered, representing voices of the individual, the collective bodies that constitute identity politics such as maternal and political subjectivities, and the *national* biography. In "'… to Remember is Like Starting to See': South African Life Stories Today" (2009), Annie Gagiano observes that all (South African) autobiographies "contain family portraits and community stories [that] exhibit the socially embedded nature of the author's life" (261). My engagement with collective histories does not, however, imply that African writing is more 'collective' than Western writing. My suggested model has many complications. For instance, the fact that the narrators are women means that the collective autobiographical voice plays out somewhat differently than with male writers. In this chapter, I focus on five autobiographies by South African women politicians. The aim is to analyse how 'metaphors of selfhood(s)', first discussed by James Olney in *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (1972), explicitly or implicitly feature as narrative devices in each text. For my engagement with the idea of the public self, I draw on the notion of 'historical consciousness', a term suggested by Laura Marcus in *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (1994). I then proceed to argue that these discursive frames of metaphors can be read as establishing a chronotopic dialogic between texts that convey patterns of individual and entangled historical consciousness. The five autobiographies are: Ellen Kuzwayo's *Call Me Woman* ([1985] 2005), Winnie Madikizela-Mandela's *Part of My Soul Went with Him* (1985), Emma Mashinini's *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life* ([1989] 2012), and Mamphela Ramphele's *A Life* (1998) and *A Passion for Freedom* (2013). By focusing on autobiographies by South African women writers, I by no means suggest that these works function in a vacuum by virtue of their shared national location or that these are

the *only* texts in the scope of this study that can be read in view of historical consciousness; rather I use them as examples that illuminate my approach outlined above and the metaphors of selfhood I explain below. Furthermore, I view the history and consequences of what Smith and Watson call "state politics" (*Reading Autobiography* 166) - not only of colonialism but especially of *apartheid* and the women's (shared) lived experiences of this historical moment – as the key issues/tropes/themes binding guidelines for my choice of texts studied here.

As I have mentioned, the theoretical framework in this chapter defers to Marcus's concept of historical consciousness. In her autobiographical criticism, Marcus highlights various tenets of the autobiography including truth, intention, compulsion to write the self (ethics), introspection (which she views as determinants of conditions and limits of the autobiography) and history. My focus in this chapter is on history, precisely how the apartheid trope has influenced the narration of selfhoods in a hybrid sub-genre that makes claims to orality, and how the subjectivities constructed herein portray apartheid realities as key to identity reconstruction. I, therefore, seek an interplay between the autobiography as a historical process and as a product of history. As a process, the autobiography enables the narrators to demonstrate a gendered historical consciousness. It also re-imagines black women's public-life participation by re-defining political acts because it facilitates an interaction between the awareness of self and history, otherwise referred to as "consciousness" and "experience," whereby the former is "unitary", a subjective individual, and the latter is "relational" (Marcus 139). Marcus further conceives the autobiographical process as encompassing both autobiographical (self-consciousness) and historical consciousness (experience in relation to others). In view of Marcus' theorisation on 'historical (and autobiographical) consciousness', I embark on a reading of the African woman's political autobiography 'as history.' Specifically, I interrogate how the narrators negotiate power relations through demythologising biological and nationalist essentialist portrayals of women figures in the anti-apartheid movement within the chronotope of anti-apartheid struggle, drawing on Bakhtin's ideas discussed in chapter one. I make two concessions: firstly, that images of women appropriated in political repertoire in moments of crisis such as colonialism and apartheid essentialise women and silence their political agency. Secondly, that the utilisation of these images in the African woman's political autobiography as a literary device is a strategy through which African women politicians reclaim agency and make claims to nationalism and history, consequently to function as a demonstration of their 'historical consciousness'.

In the context of this chapter, I conceive 'Historical Consciousness' as inscribed through 'Metaphors of Selfhood' representing women's political experiences. This chapter's adaptation of the concept 'Metaphors of Selfhood' acknowledges Olney's intellectual contribution to its formulation in 1972 and further theoretical contributions of other life writing critics including Marcus. I, therefore, defer to Marcus' views on metaphors of selfhood in this thesis. For Marcus, the woman's autobiography is a site of experimentation for women where there exists "a privileged relationship between autobiographical writing and introspective mental processes" (69). She suggests a shift to the autobiography in interrogating historical consciousness "as it guarantees the identity of observer and observed" (69), especially in the recollection of collective histories. It is this mind/body criticism that Marcus refers to as "spatial metaphors" (75). She contends that autobiographical criticism "open[s] up dominant metaphors" (130) in specific times and spaces, "which cover some of the most problematic aspects of (auto)biographical representation" such as "the [auto]biographer's relationship to his or her subject, the place of the body in [auto]biography, and the temporality of the life as lived and narrated" (131). Marcus views the body in the autobiography, represented through "a network of metaphors", as a mirror of the prevailing images of the subjects in their societies (127). In view of her ideas then, I read women's subjective identities such as motherhood, widowhood, warriorhood, and sisterhood as devices that embody and contest biologically-essentialised gendered historical reflections.

The (anti)apartheid narrative is a hegemonic discourse in which black women are doubly-marginalised. This chapter proposes that despite a strong black matrilineal presence that existed alongside the patrilineal-oriented arms of the anti-apartheid struggle (the intelligentsia, the labour movement, the armed struggle, and the people's collective resistance to apartheid/colonialism), these women's political agency is often portrayed as furthering the political agenda of male nationalists.[23] Consequently, black women are essentialised in both the nationalist government myths and struggle for freedom myths for their reproductive capabilities as nurturers and as supporters of male political agenda. As such, the marked prevalence of black women in South Africa's nationalist movements – both the Nationalist and resistance agendas – in their various political significance as warriors, mothers, widows

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[23] I am conscious of the patriarchal and hegemonic nature of Nationalist politics in South Africa which affected white women, but my focus here is on the double marginalization of black women. I use nationalist here not in relation to party politics but in reference to resistance struggle ideals which aimed at national unification for all (a free country with equal rights for all) South Africans.

and sisters, is not reflected in equal proportions in nationalist narratives. I propose that despite the fierceness and shared anti-apartheid agendas by the narrators discussed in this chapter, these women remain under the clutches of patriarchal structures instituted by apartheid and patrilineal-oriented arms of the anti-apartheid struggle. Similarly, their political agency is silenced within the dominant racist and patriarchal nationalist discourses of the (anti)apartheid regimes. To reclaim their political agency privatised in the afore-mentioned discourses, I suggest that their texts performatively re-enact their public political acts as 'Metaphors of Selfhood'.

The chapter is divided into four parts, each presenting a debate on 'Historical Consciousness' through the framework of a particular metaphor of selfhood. The four metaphors – sisterhood, motherhood, political widowhood, and warriorhood – serve as analytical devices, derived from theoretical concepts discussed below. The aim is to debate how women's 'Historical Consciousness', as the writers' political agency, is narratively inscribed in the autobiography and how the metaphors can be interpreted as methods of self-representation to re-invent subject-positions of womanhood considered by patriarchy as private/domestic. This re-invention by the autobiographical subjects, as public myths of women's agency in the public sphere, comprise their ideas on 'African political womanhood'. I examine how these autobiographers negotiate "conflicting models of identity" (Smith & Watson *Reading* 169) due to the tensions between their private roles as mothers and wives, conventionally assigned the role of nurturers and carers of their families, and public identities as activists or leaders (Van Niekerk xvii). I now proceed to examine metaphors of selfhood as modes of self-narration through which black South African women politicians locate themselves in the public space in order to recount nationalism and history.

Metaphors of Selfhood: Sisterhood, Motherhood, Widowhood, and Warriorhood as Political Acts

As mentioned, I propose sisterhood, motherhood, widowhood, and warriorhood as such metaphors that, when deployed by the authors as narrative features and interpreted, indicate historical consciousness. The first metaphor under interrogation is 'sisterhood' and I locate my argument within Obioma Nnaemeka's African womanist paradigm. The second metaphor is 'motherhood', theorised by the Malaysian feminist critic Farzaneh Haratyan, which I advance as a framework to explore how South African women in politics contemplate their

positionality in nationalist public discourses. I then turn to the African variant of 'political widowhood', foregrounded by Ramphele as a performance of the memory of an absent national hero, and I complement my reading with criticisms by Natasha Gordon-Chipembere and Judith Butler on 'performativity'. Lastly, I discuss 'warriorhood' as a political act following on the theorisations by Meg Samuelson and Liz Gunner. I interrogate how each of the four autobiographical subjects, individually and as a representative group of women writers, deliberately (and implicitly) present these metaphors, and how the metaphors form a kind of discursive network suggesting a historical consciousness amongst black women during apartheid and across time and space.[24] Each discussion is introduced by an epigraph in the form of African proverbs, drawn from Zulu Sofola's essay "Feminism and African Womanhood" (1998), to frame the ongoing debate within African womanist epistemologies. Sofola advances a strong African womanist worldview that she posits against Feminism – a western system of knowledge production that she credits for the "*de-womanization* of African womanhood" (52). The womanhood she celebrates is associated with African womanist philosophies that are gender and class-inclusive. These epigraphs signify a link between the discourses around each of the four metaphors I discuss in view of African womanist ideals.

Sisterhood as a Political Act

   If the *Ada* (daughter) says that a day-old chick is a hen, so it is (Sofola 63)

Implicated in the above proverb from Igbo folklore is a womanist sentiment that recognises wisdom and assertiveness in women's speech in contrast to the patriarchal notion that a woman is "someone to be seen not heard" (Sofola 63). This epigraph is cited here to acknowledge the contribution of black South African women in the anti-apartheid struggle, silenced as 'minors' by apartheid laws. Further, it celebrates the intersectional power-struggle against racism, classism, and sexism waged by white and black men and women against various forms of social injustices. In this section, I examine how the notion of sisterhood in the context of autobiographies of Kuzwayo and Mashinini features as a narrative device that connotes a bond forged between ordinary women (and men) in the townships, establishing collective forms of resistance to apartheid.

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[24]Although I study these metaphors in relation to South African texts recounting colonialism and apartheid, I am not implying that these metaphors are only relevant to the selected texts or time-frame. They can be interpreted in the other autobiographies included in this study and other historical contexts.

In *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora* (1998), Nnaemeka examines sisterhood as a form of "power" that symbolises a collective bond of networking among people with a shared history of oppression (4). I am particularly interested in Julie Okpala and Elsie Ogbanna-Ohuche's idea of sisterhood as a tie that invites "men and women – irrespective of race, class, ethnicity, religious persuasion, and national origin" to collaborate in deciphering "issues related to women of African descent" (422). Consequently, I use sisterhood here as a de-gendered and de-racialised metaphor to read how, through communal initiatives, South African immigrants in the townships south-west of Johannesburg forged power relations that collectively acted as forms of resistance against racial, ethnic, class, and gender oppression during apartheid. Ironically, at its publication, Kuzwayo's autobiography was not acutely racialised despite the purveyance of racial segregation, unlike now, perhaps due to calls to decolonise the nation, which perhaps might explain why sisterhood at the time of this text's narration embraced intersectionality.

The notion of sisterhood is established across time and space in Kuzwayo's autobiography. *Call Me Woman* foregrounds instances that show how both men and women in the township chronotope of apartheid South Africa, living in the urban space, forged bonds in collective communal initiatives to survive the historical atrocities of apartheid in their shared experiences as blacks. Kuzwayo's autobiography narrates her experiences as a black woman living in apartheid South Africa, tracing her life from childhood before the institutionalisation of apartheid, through her migration to Johannesburg to her involvement in communal activism in her capacity as a social worker. Her story ends in the year nineteen eighty-four, ten years before the official end of apartheid rule in South Africa. The title of her last chapter, "*Nkosi Sikelel' i Africa*" (295), like the ending of her autobiography with the same phrase, which she translates as "God Bless Africa" (301), proclaims her hope for a better future for her country South Africa, and the African continent at large. The fact that Kuzwayo, like Winnie Mandela, was a social worker legitimises her insights about the social welfare of black South Africans living in the townships. I regard the issues she addresses in her autobiography as key concerns in 1985, the year of its first publication, as still informing post-apartheid realities in the independent South Africa of 2004, the year the text was re-issued. The communal bonds she narrates include accounts of men and women from different social classes, races, ages, and ethnic orientation that capture their resistance to apartheid. Although her autobiography is unbiased in its narration of communal collaborations between men and women in the struggle, she nonetheless demonstrates an awareness of the prejudices

of the historical archive that documents mostly men's experiences while women are (mis)represented. Consequently, Kuzwayo's autobiographical account pays more attention to narrating women's initiatives in the anti-apartheid struggle movements than those of men. As a metaphor of communal collaboration, sisterhood then attempts to revise history by archiving a panoply of women's individual and collective contributions to various womanist identity politics.

For example, Kuzwayo recognises the dedication of women like Debra Nikiwe Matshoba and Madikizela-Mandela, amongst many others, to the anti-apartheid struggle, who as blacks and women, were doubly marginalised by patriarchy and apartheid and derogatorily defined by apartheid laws as 'minors' and "Natives, […] Bantu, […] Plurals" (5). At the same time, Kuzwayo dedicates the last three pages of her autobiography to archive the role of black, professional and non-professional South African women who strived to establish order in their communities. These women, Kuzwayo notes, "had to fight very hard indeed to make a living for themselves and their families" (40). By focusing on collaborative initiatives by women detailed in the autobiography, I envision sisterhood as an analytical method that subverts narrative conventions that depend on men to historicise women. So, for example, she refers to Steve Biko's[25] wife Ntsiki Mashalaba Biko and his mother Alice Biko thereby yoking them into public discourses on Biko. Both women were silenced, by virtue of Ramphele's status as Biko's political widow,[26] in the larger narrative of the Black Consciousness Movement and exorcised from public memory about Biko. Kuzwayo, and indeed as Ramphele does, too, in her own memoir (*Life* 180), celebrates Alice as a mother and Ntsiki as a wife of a "fallen" hero. According to Desiree Lewis, and as I demonstrate in my reading of *Call Me Woman*, Kuzwayo introduces a strong "'feminist' angle" to her autobiography that "deals with the neglected importance of gender in anti-apartheid struggle" (41). In doing this, Kuzwayo historicises women's collective voices in communal and national organisations and their contributions in the struggle against apartheid. In this way, she esteems a political sisterhood of shared African experiences across age and class amongst black South African women under apartheid, a bond that forges a "common" African feminist/womanist politics in relation to apartheid subjectivities that celebrates the multiplicity of South African identities (Nnaemeka *Sisterhood* 5). When one considers the

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[25] Biko was founder and leader of the Black Consciousness Movement. He died in jail during his detention in 1977.

[26] I extensively discuss the concept of 'political widowhood' in the third section of this chapter.

role of women's political activities, in view of the examples discussed above, sisterhood then connotes women's forms of resistance against racism, patriarchy, and apartheid that calls for a reading of women's collective acts in search for economic and social liberation from institutionalised patriarchy.

Signalling women's collaboration as a strategy by which women living in the townships resisted apartheid's and patriarchy's control over them at the communal and family level, Kuzwayo's autobiography suggests a shift to women's groups as a space where social and political power can be harnessed. Although Kuzwayo narrates diverse forms of women's collaboration across different socio-historical spheres, this section focuses on her narration of communal women's collaborative initiatives such as the experiences of beer-brewing and beer-selling women (described as "Skokian" or "Shebeen Queens", as I discuss below) and other women's groups in Soweto. Officially designating South Western Townships of Johannesburg, Soweto is a black settlement scheme, a product of apartheid's Group Areas Act, that saw the displacement of black bodies from rural areas and areas reserved for whites only and their resettlement by the West Rand Administration Board in a designated space. According to Kuzwayo, this board was initially established to relocate "destitute black people in the district of Johannesburg, theoretically as staging posts, on their way to 'resettlement' in a black 'homeland'" (25), but these stop-overs became permanent abodes for the majority of townships, poverty and journeying are dominant motifs that embody the dis-locatedness of black bodies. In this spatio-temporal imaginary, women's groups served as a space where its members forged new identities outside the stereotypical imaginary of black bodies as an embodiment of poverty and perpetual trauma through economic empowerment via financial schemes such as loans, business ideas, entrepreneurial skills, and socio-political mobility in the ghetto. By so doing, Kuzwayo portrays women's groups like Imizamo Yethu, translated as "Our Efforts" (263), and Zamami Soweto Sisters Council as sites where women in the township negotiate(d) power within patriarchal institutions of gender, ethnicity, class, race, and religion. I read this as a network of collective historical consciousness. In this way, then, Kuzwayo foregrounds black women's agency in their participation in the struggle against apartheid.

By embracing sisterhood, Kuzwayo suggests a possibility of re-imagining South African women's collaborative efforts, alongside men, in the struggle as agential, deconstructing women's political acts as an appendage to male political agenda. She depicts women's

collaboration in women's groups as a form of power that I regard as a manifestation of how sisterhood, in its recognition of difference, facilitates dialogue between women enabling them to mediate crisis in their societies. For instance, Kuzwayo speaks of Zamani's "community self-help programs" (270) that attracted the interest of a group of white women from England led by Elizabeth Wolpert[27] who, having heard about the suffering of black women under apartheid, expressed a desire of fostering international co-operation across racial binaries between them and women in the urban townships through Zamani. This collaboration saw the promotion of social welfare in Soweto through community outreach programs. Wolpert also funded and produced the film *Awake from Mourning* (1981), which acknowledged the struggles of black women as unique and made them "visible as a group […] with growing community responsibilities" (272). This film was also meant to facilitate a "creative" form of cathartic healing by giving the actresses, who were women from Soweto, a temporary "escape [from] some of the destructive pain" of life in the township under apartheid (271). This association between Zamani and Wolpert's group not only brings to light a transnational dynamic in the struggle for women's liberation against apartheid, it also narrates other histories of the anti-apartheid struggle, contrary to the dominant narrative that focalises the struggles of (black male) South Africans within the continent. Kuzwayo thus constructs women's groups as sample model institutions that facilitate power negotiations by women who identify with women's group identity politics as sisters. I now turn to a discussion of how sisterhood facilitates a re-reading of the way black women's bodies give political agency to efforts by ordinary South Africans to contest the dehumanisation of blacks by apartheid legislations such as the 1913 Land Act and the 1950 Group Areas Act that confined black South Africans to specific spaces.

Focusing on a range of representations of Skokian or Shebeen Queens in Kuzwayo's autobiography, I read the black woman's body in the context of the chronotope of the

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[27] Elizabeth Wolpert, a white South African London-based film-maker returned to South Africa during apartheid to collaborate with black women in Soweto in communal initiatives in memory of Maggie Magaba, a black woman who had nursed her in her childhood. According to Griselda Pollock, Wolpert "translated that childhood debt into an alliance, a covenanting for social activist struggle which brought traditional strangers into political alliance" (83). Later, they established the Elizabeth Wolpert's Maggie Magaga Trust that Kuzwayo served as a trustee with other black women and thereafter, they formed the Zamani Soweto Sisters Council. In collaboration with Betty Wolpert, Elizabeth made the film *Awake from Mourning* (1982) featuring Kuzwayo, and *Tsiamelo: A Place of Goodness* (1983), two documentary films that were acclaimed in the diaspora for celebrating black women's self-help and communal initiatives. Wolpert also convinced Emma Mashinini to tell her story in the film *Mama, I'm Crying* (1986). For details, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPUUbYCk2KQ.

struggle against apartheid, as mechanisms for survival in apartheid ghettos.[28] Kuzwayo's autobiography contests the construction of the woman's body as intruder in the city-space by apartheid discourse. Her autobiography serves as counter-discourse to this dominant rhetoric and projects the migration of black women to Johannesburg as a social and economic necessity due to apartheid's destabilisation of the family unit and the coercion of men to move to the cities in search of work to pay taxes. Kuzwayo notes that women moved to Johannesburg from the homelands either in search of their men who were working in the mines or to look for employment to sustain themselves and their families. These women became the washerwomen, cleaners and nannies of the whites. However, due to scarcity of employment opportunities, some women became beer brewers and sellers or "Shebeen Queens" (31). Although later other women would voluntarily resort to this profession due to the economic value and power it bequeathed one in the community, at the time most became Shebeen Queens out of necessity and later as a practice of defiance. Kuzwayo's autobiography challenges a monolithic, moralistic view of the Shebeen Queen as a 'bad' woman. She formulates the identity of the Shebeen Queen as a complex process of identity negotiations. During the day, these women were mothers, housewives and friendly neighbours, but at night they worked as Shebeen Queens; women who elicited reactions of fear or revulsion, regarded as "immoral and undesirable" (32), from/in some community members and apartheid officials. This disparaging attitude directed towards Shebeen Queens emerges in this autobiography as a consequence of dominant patriarchal and racist ideologies that framed such women's liberal acts as immoral.

To foreground the political significance of the Shebeen Queen, Kuzwayo portrays these women as embodying the political anxieties of the apartheid regime. Not only was beer-brewing a prohibited practice during apartheid, but the sale of beer was also considered illegal. This is because the beer-drinking sites (or Shebeens) provided a space for communal gatherings where the people contemplated the current state of affairs, including politics, and it is for this reason that the apartheid government had forbidden any form of gathering by black people. Thus, brewing and selling beer signified a defiance of these laws. In running the Shebeens from their homes, Kuzwayo explains, the women turned these domestic spaces into zones of resistance against apartheid and other forms of patriarchal dominance. While

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[28] As Kuzwayo notes, Skokian Queens were later re-named Shebeen Queens "as the trade gained sophistication" (31). To avoid repetitions and for purposes of harmonisation, in this chapter I use the term Shebeen Queens to refer to both Skokian and Shebeen Queens. Like Kuzwayo, I capitalize the word to signify the (public) political essence of this selfhood.

urbanisation might have eroded certain traditions held dear by black people, the sense of community was sustained by the Shebeens, thereby fulfilling important roles in communal binding. Kuzwayo is cognisant of this cultural shift in women's roles and is empathetic towards the plight of the women. Rather than criticising the sexual liberties exhibited by some Shebeen Queens, she frames their experiences due to the historical realities of apartheid Johannesburg, a space constructed by apartheid ideology as masculine where black women (and men) featured as alien bodies and labourers. Kuzwayo deviates from a moralistic stance and suggests that the commodification of the Shebeen Queen's body as currency to attract beer-drinkers and/or to provide sexual gratification for men was in fact reconfigured by the women themselves to reclaim their bodies as sources of power, thereby liberating the black woman's body from the myth of victimhood in patriarchal and apartheid discourse to re-define it in their own terms. Kuzwayo depicts Shebeen Queens, within the chronotope of the struggle against apartheid, as powerful women in her community who embodied defiance to the Group Areas Act. These forms of self-employment resisted apartheid's attempt to regulate the range of economic initiatives that the black body could partake in. Although apartheid and community moralistic discourses portrayed these women as prostitutes, Kuzwayo inverts this negative perception of them in her contemplations to explain that the image of the prostitute was convoluted to serve the Shebeen Queen's interests as political capital, an identity they embraced with pride and one Kuzwayo even applauds as heroic.

In addition to Kuzwayo's presentation of the black women within the apartheid urban spaces, Emma Mashinini's autobiography *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life* ([1986] 2012), further discusses the treatment of women's activities in the urban township that endorsed a bond amongst women and served as platforms for black resistance, thereby forging a sense of sisterhood. Mashinini's autobiography is a historical rendition of the labour movement in the country's struggle against apartheid; the story of male domination in the workplace and at home, and black people's struggles with racial and class politics. The autobiography's historical significance is signalled in the preface through the observation that its re-issue in 2012 marked one hundred years after the formation of the African National Congress (ANC). I read her descriptions of, particularly, the role of *stokvel* groups as a metaphor of sisterhood. A *stokvel* is an informal gathering of women living in the same locale that offers them

financial and social support.[29] Though closely related to Kuzwayo's concept of women's groups, Mashinini's version of *stokvel* lacks the transnational dynamic that Zamani possesses. Further, while Kuzwayo deliberately politicises the activities of Zamani, the political significance of a *stokvel* is implied in their activities within the chronotope of the apartheid township. Mashinini joined a *stokvel* as a way of coping with myriad social pressures as a young wife and mother living in Soweto. For her and fellow black women living under apartheid, the church and *stokvels* offered a temporary respite from their social realities. She writes:

> The church was my one pleasure, until us working mothers got together and had what we called *stokvels*. A *stokvel* is a neighbourhood group that is very supportive, socially and financially. Many black women earn meagre wages and cannot afford to buy the necessary comforts of a home, so we set up these *stokvels*, where we could pool our resources. You have to be a member to enjoy the benefits of a *stokvel*, and they are properly run. (19)

Mashinini recognises the role played by *stokvels* in advancing black South African women's financial independence in the townships. She constructs these women as the backbone of their homes and societies despite apartheid's attempts to usurp their social roles. As Mashinini explains, she too joined a *stokvel* as a way of coping with and addressing her dissatisfaction with a husband who was dehumanised by apartheid and felt emasculated, like so many other men; a husband who transferred his anger against the political system onto his family, especially his wife.

The dynamics noted above are reminiscent in Mashinini's text where she credits *stokvels* for providing her with financial and psychological support during her first marriage to Roger, a

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[29] *Stokvel* is an Afrikaans word, popularised in South African public discourse on communal (economic) collaborations. Among black people the concept and practice is known as *e-stokvel* and Xhosa speakers sometimes use the term "*umgalelo*", which literally means "the thing you pour" – a contribution. At the root of the concept is the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. See: Mogobe B. Ramose's article "The ethics of *ubuntu*" in *Philosophy from Africa* (2002). I view the appropriation of the word *stokvel* by black women in Mashinini's text (in lieu of resistance to Afrikaans language during (and after) apartheid), as a possible form of resistance or a likening of their communal initiatives with almost similar collaborative acts among White Afrikaners for upward social mobility. It could also be an invocation of the extensive psychological domination of apartheid laws at that time, in view of Judith Lütge Coullie's conception of Afrikaans as "the language of *baaskap*" which literally means "mastery over" (207). Coullie notes that *baaskap* refers to white, mostly Afrikaners' dominance over other races. She observes that Afrikaans is a language that South African writers like Jacob Dlamini have come to associate with "nostalgia", especially in remembering the "colourful Afrikaans terms which township residents (including Dlamini's mother) relished in everyday conversation" (207).

man she describes as abusive and a spendthrift. According to Mashinini, her dire situation was exacerbated by what she describes as her husband's irresponsible financial behaviour:

> [O]ur men in those days, especially the uneducated ones, […] would spend all their money on clothes imported from America. Perhaps they were trying to maintain their dignity, which they felt was stripped from them in the terrible oppression we suffered, and they needed to look smart in those clothes, as if to say, 'Look, I'm so smart, I am human after all.' (12)

In the recollection, Mashinini acknowledges that the emotional trauma apartheid bestowed on the black man diminished his masculinity. This historical consciousness seems to influence her restraint in portraying her husband's lack of empathy for her own struggles. Mashinini contends that while black women struggled to re-adjust to apartheid realities, their men, particularly her husband, continued to languish in self-pity, nursing their bruised masculinities. However, instead of holding him accountable for his inability to support her in her own suffering, she subsumes his negligence as emanating from the cyclic nature of violence meted on black people by the apartheid regime. This reluctance to criticise the black man's insensitivity to the black woman's suffering under apartheid essentialises women and is a trend among almost all the South African women writers I study in this chapter. While I do not belittle the impact of apartheid's institutionalised violence on men, these women writers seem to suggest that women's trauma is less difficult to process than men's. It is for this reason that Mashinini joins a *stokvel* to access more financial aid.

Mashinini reiterates the role of the *stokvel* in financial empowerment and its social significance as a source of companionship for women in the townships. Women were often "lonely because their husbands tend[ed] to leave them at home when they [went] to soccer matches, or to the movies, or to taverns to have a drink with the boys" (19). Additionally, a *stokvel* served as a space in which women educated each other about current affairs, particularly the state of politics in apartheid South Africa. In an era during which any forms of gathering by black people were banned, the sphere of the home became a public space where women contemplated political matters. She notes that

> [a]fter the money has been collected, the women start conversing about current affairs, sharing their problems, which leads them to politics. And that is why African

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women are often much more politically aware than their coloured and Indian counterparts, who do not have the opportunity of meeting in such a way. (19)

Taking part in communal activities made Mashinini acutely aware of her position as a black working woman living under apartheid. These insights motivate her to fight for the rights of all black workers. Not only does she embrace her identity as a black woman and labourer, but she understood the importance for all to resist racial oppression. As a result, she became a renowned labour movement activist.

Apart from emphasising the role of *stokvels*, Mashinini's narrative goes further to expound on the concept of labour unions as another form of collaborative networking that focuses on experiences of black workers. Unlike the other forms of sisterhood discussed earlier, labour unions are presented as highly structured and as a national anti-apartheid struggle machinery. As a metaphor of sisterhood, Mashinini's philosophy of labour movements is de-gendered and de-racialised. To Mashinini, labour unions offer a neutral platform where collaboration between black and white men and women across international borders could merge to form a strong bond of sisterhood to circumvent apartheid's exploitation of black workers. She recalls an instance where amid the increasing pressure from South African industrialists to suppress black labour unions, the labour movement arm of the anti-apartheid struggle appealed to their international trade links to coerce the Nationalist government to intervene in the industrial sector and to stop employers from reintroducing the redundant "liaison committee system […] formed by the government in the 1950s to replace black unions" (37). Aware of the limitations of localised liberation movements in combatting the influence of apartheid policies on black workers, Mashinini recognises the concerted efforts between international trade organisations and South African trade unions in securing the rights of black workers. Speaking on behalf of the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA), she notes that "we were affiliated to international trade secretariats, so we had a very strong profile in world trade affairs" (47). These international labour unions coordinated a boycott of South African goods and the losses encumbered by South African industrialists, coupled with the persistence of CCAWUSA and other labour unions, saw the implementation of work-place policies that fairly improved the welfare of black workers through better pay, flexible working hours, and promotions, etc.

Although Mashinini's main concern is with the plight of black workers, her autobiography suggests sisterhood as a form of resistance to patriarchal control over blacks through collaboration with other racial groups or labour unions as a de-racialised phenomenon. Towards this end, Mashinini recalls how CCAWUSA was supported by significant white labour union figures like Morris Kagan, Ray Altman, Alan Fine, and Dulcie Hartwell – white men and woman who supported the establishment of a labour union for black workers. According to Mashinini, despite the existence of labour unions for white, Indian and Coloured South Africans, blacks were prohibited from forming a labour union. Further, the Group Areas Act prevented blacks, and CCAWUSA by extension, from renting offices in town, "so Morris rented [her] office in the name of NUDW [National Union of Distributive Workers]" (35). Speaking in relation to race and sisterhood, Okpala and Ogbanna-Ohuche acknowledge the contribution of whites towards "the emancipation of blacks" ("Black" 422). They argue that inclusivity is core to sisterhood because "despite color or nationality, problems faced by one group, directly or indirectly, affect other groups" (Okpala and Ogbanna-Ohuche "Black" 423). Sisterhood hence suggests an intersectional approach to African womanist research and towards this end, it seems Mashinini constructs Morris as a womanist, an embodiment of a deracialised collaboration between black and white South Africans in an ideal future society. This view is signalled in her autobiography in her account of the overwhelming presence of black people at Kagan's burial, who "sang *'Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*" (37). This song, traditionally a hymn that was adopted by the masses as a protest song in the struggle (now incorporated into the national anthem) was banned. It was illegal for these labour unionists to sing it in public. Thus, singing it at Kagan's funeral was a subversive act against the segregationist apartheid laws that forbade collaboration between white and black men and women from voicing their hope of a united South Africa. This song reflects the spirit of *ubuntu* that signifies an inclusive form of sisterhood.

In documenting the struggles of black workers, Mashinini focuses on black women, particularly black working mothers who, as the backbones of their families and societies under apartheid, encountered various forms of oppression as blacks (race), workers (class), women (gender), and mothers (culture). Her autobiography then voices how collaborations between men and women of different races in the labour movement contributed towards minimising the pain of black South African women. Mashinini identifies the motif of suffering in the chronotope of the struggle against apartheid as a shared experience by black and white mothers, saying that "white mothers have problems of their own, such as having to

see one of their boys leave to fight on the border" (45). However, while she highlights similarities shared by women of all races, she also notes that a woman's racial affiliation pre-determines the extent of her suffering. To this end, she says that although both black and white women suffer, "[their] problems [were] not the same" (45). She clarifies her position, saying that "white mothers in this country do not have to suffer anxiety over what we call breadline problems" (45), and she encompasses these "breadline problems" through concerns such as:

> [W]ho will care for the children when their mother goes to work? Who will pay the bills when the grandmother or friend cannot come one day and the mother must stay at home, even though she is not paid enough to be able to afford to lose that one day's money? Who will pay when she has to spend a day at the hospital waiting for an appointment? (45)

For Mashinini, it is these concerns that differentiate between the suffering of a black, working mother and a white (working) mother. Even though Mashinini's autobiography highlights the existence of class differences among the whites, noting several categories of women such as white bourgeoisie, middle-class and working women, she recognises that the racial predisposition of white working mothers secures their upward mobility in the workplace, better salaries and allowances, lighter working-load, and flexible working hours. To illustrate the contrary, she recalls an event from her days as a garment worker:

> Always, when I addressed those whites, I would have to stand. We wore a uniform for our work, and so I would stand there, in my blue overalls, with my hands behind my back. In all the nineteen-and-a-half years I worked at Henochsberg's I was never once asked to sit down. You just accepted that was the order of the day when you spoke to the white boss – standing, in uniform, hands behind your back, completely deferential. (30)

Here, Mashinini describes the disrespectful and dehumanised treatment of black workers. For this reason, and despite seeking help from the other labour unions, she emphasises that: "CCAWUSA was for black workers only, and [that] when[ever] I spoke for shop workers, I was speaking for black shop workers […]. Our insistence on CCAWUSA's black identity was important" because "this was vital to us as a group, to keep [black workers] together in

order to tackle injustice […]. It is hard for black workers in South Africa to identify with other workers' problems. Other workers are seen as human beings, and the black workers are seen as underdogs" (44). It is out of this historical consciousness that Mashinini lobbied for a "black union" (45), a social organisation to coalesce black workers out of a shared experience as victims of apartheid.

In the spirit of sisterhood, the discussion on these autobiographies presents the different ways in which Mashinini and Kuzwayo undermine and subvert apartheid and patriarchal myths about black women in the urban space; how their depictions of women's activities and resilience forge a sense of sisterhood as a metaphor of women's political agency under apartheid and beyond. The argument posits the two texts in a debate about collective forms of resistance against apartheid across race, class, age, and gender boundaries. The two writers, in my view, establish sisterhood as a de-racialised and de-gendered metaphor of public political selfhoods.

Motherhood as a Political Act
>   It is one's child that keeps a wife in the house of a wicked husband (Sofola 63)

This section examines maternal individual and collective subjectivities of African political womanhood as a metaphor that narrates mothering as a form of political agency in Kuzwayo's *Call Me Woman*, Madikizela-Mandela's *Part of my Soul Went with Him*, and Mashinini's *Strikes Have Followed Me all My Life*. Each of these women politicians has been labelled 'mother' in the context of a politically-charged moment in various stages of the struggle against apartheid.[30] The women selected for discussion in this section navigate dominant expectations of the "patriarchal institution of motherhood" (Rich 33) through their autobiographical narrations of mothering as a counter-discursive metaphor.

According to Adrienne Rich, motherhood as an institution is a practice that oppresses women by promoting the biological essentialist stereotype that their ability to reproduce has programmed them to be better carers and nurturers than men. Such conceptions oppress women's capabilities and mobilities outside their private roles as mothers, especially when

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[30] I exclude Ramphele from this discursive paradigm because, as I illustrate below in the section on political widowhood, she narratively embraces motherhood to reclaim her individuality and reinvent her private status as a woman as separate from her public role as Biko's political widow. However, the three women in this section embrace mothering to feground their public acts (in addition to the private).

transferred into the primordial public as mothers of the nation. In this public, their identities as women are homogenised as mothers, ignoring their individuality. Thus, mothering in this current debate is a counter-discursive metaphor to the dominant discourse of motherhood as it refers to those maternal experiences that Andrea O'Reilly describes as "female-defined and centred and potentially empowering to women" (2). In this section, I appropriate Haratyan's concept of "empowered mothering" (43) because she introduces the element of empowerment to mothering in a postcolonial context. I expound on this theory by detaching maternity from the biological act of conceiving and giving birth to a child to explore how South African writers' narrations of their maternal gender performativity intersectionally negotiates notions of womanhood and mothering across sex, race, and class.[31] My debate is cognisant of, and engages with, existing mothering discourses by Rich and O'Reilly as well as theoretical debates raised by African women scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins et.al who, though speaking in an American context, view the concept of "*activist mothering*" as a political act drawn from the communal aspect of African mothering and separate from the Western feminist ideas of mothering as biological and therefore oppressive (191, emphasis in original).

I view the autobiographies in this section as reflecting Catherine Acholonu Obianuju's idea of 'motherism' as an African womanist alternative to the patriarchal notion of motherhood. Obianuju defines a motherist as a "man or woman committed to the survival of Mother Earth as a hologrammatic entity" (3). In the South African context, the concept of motherism has been appropriated by Julia Wells to connote short-lived movements formed by women across the racial divide to reclaim their collective political agency. I also appropriate critical views by womanist critics like Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Obioma Nnaemeka. In this section, I seek an interplay between Obianuju and Wells' conceptualisations of empowered mothering to interrogate how Mashinini's autobiography explores individual and collective mothering practices as agential. As I deliberate on an African womanist approach to 'empowered mothering' as a mode of reclaiming South African maternal political agency, I locate my argument within existing criticism on this issue as raised by South African scholars including Lewis and Driver and converse with this scholarship by bringing together some of

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[31] However, inasmuch as I am detaching maternity from the biological, these autobiographers' narration of the self cannot be totally disambiguated from motherhood as biological. Indeed, they try to separate their identities as mothers from their subjectivities as black women under apartheid and as politicians but their identity as political mothers is also an integral part of them as biological mothers and that is why they feel some sense of guilt about not being there for their children during the struggle.

the writers they discuss separately into conversation to deliberate on continuities and divergencies in South African maternal politics.

I suggest that the writers in this section negotiate dominant ideas of motherhood as a practice to show how public discourses that frame them as mothers of the nation construct their maternal subjectivities. Lewis notes that the image of women as mothers of the nation is a "gender myth" that is often linked with prominent women to further nationalist ideologies on the liberation struggle (40). She argues that in the South African context, "[m]ythologies of mothering are often linked to representations of the nation or community as family" (40).[32] Cloete suggests that "nationalisms' propensities to use women as tools in evoking nationalistic sentiments" is based on a conception that their biological ability to reproduce can be translated into the public role of furthering nationalist ideologies (*Frontierswomen* 1). The three South African mothers I study in this section have been mythified in South African anti-apartheid public discourses as mothers of the nation due to their prominence in the public sphere, thus their gender roles as mothers have been utilized to foster communal collaboration. This commodification of maternity as political capital has been criticised by South African feminist critics as detrimental to women's political agency and their individuality. Not only are they silenced in official discourses, but their contributions to nationalist struggles are often subsumed as complementing male political agenda. However, when embraced by women politicians, these myths become a strategy of reclaiming women's political agency from the periphery of nationalist liberation discourses.

As a theoretical tool in this chapter, empowered mothering interrogates how Kuzwayo, Mashinini and Madikizela-Mandela, as mothers, reclaim their individual maternal subjectivities and contest their silencing in national histories. By signing their voices in the South African public memory through acknowledging their maternal subjectivity, their maternal voices attest to a historical consciousness about their political agency. According to Bronwyn Davies, "agency is the ability to recognize discursive constitutions of individual self and identity to resist, subvert, and change the discourses through which one is being constituted. It is the freedom to recognize multiple readings such that no discursive practice […] can capture and control one's identity" (51). I therefore conceive the three writers'

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[32] The invocation of women in (South) African nationalist discourses is however not only particular to black women, as discussed by Anne McClintock in *Imperial leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995), and Elsie Cloete in "Frontierswomen as Volksmoeders: Textual Invocations in Two Centuries of Writing" (1994).

narration of their experiences of mothering as agential as they make attempts to conceptualise their selfhoods outside their symbolic existence as mothers of the anti-apartheid movement. I discuss Kuzwayo's work first because I consider her autobiography as a map that contextualises the apartheid experience of motherhood in South Africa. Further, her autobiography recounts the beginnings of the township chronotope in the urban landscape as the site of the rise of mass maternal resistance against apartheid at the communal level. Therefore, mothering subverts nationalist patriarchal expectations of women to mother the nation.

Kuzwayo's autobiography is narrated in three parts: 'Soweto', a third-person narrative commentary about the political situation in (South) Africa and basically a biography of the people living in Soweto; 'My Road to Soweto', which narrates her personal story; and 'Patterns behind the Struggle', a retrospective account of how her identity has been portrayed in different images in South African public discourse, portraying her "individual" identity as linked to the "collective" black South African community (Smith and Watson, *Reading* 168). Thus as a product of history, I conceive Kuzwayo as a synecdoche of the political act of mothering in the context of the chronotope of Soweto, an urban township. The relevance of Kuzwayo's maternal consciousness has been intimated by Nadine Gordimer, who in the preface to *Call Me Woman* declares that "ELLEN KUZWAYO IS HISTORY in the person of one woman" (xi). Kuzwayo articulates South Africa's history in a distinct maternal voice couched with hybridised nuances of African oral traditions that gives nationalist anti-apartheid discourse a strong womanist stance. This hybrid historical consciousness of South African political womanist discourse has been applauded by Gordimer who observes, in the same preface, that "Kuzwayo is not Westernised; she is one of those who have Africanised the Western concept of woman" (xi). While Gordimer's sentiments border on essentialism, I echo her views that by inflecting her story with African textual modes and worldviews, Kuzwayo has Africanised the woman's political autobiography in South Africa. Perhaps, this alternative mode of historical retelling explains why Bessie Head in the foreword to Kuzwayo's autobiography says that "at the end of the book one feels as if a *shadow history* of South Africa has been written […] and that one has read the *true history* of the land" (xiii; emphasis added). By 'true history', I suggest that Head is celebrating an African womanist historical revisionism through the maternal voice that counter-discursively challenges what Nnaemeka has termed the "trope" of "nationalist discourse in Africa" often used by writers and critics alike to construct a female identity with

an "'"undisputed origin'" that I argue, suppresses women's maternal political agency (*(M)othering* 2).

Apart from signalling the maternal voice, the title *Call Me Woman*[33] also signals Kuzwayo's awareness of her maternity as a site of negotiating history. This title implicitly narrates the womanist view that maternity and its maternal relationality is a collective political womanhood with its own identity politics and ideologies. In Kuzwayo's case, her maternal political subjectivity is connoted as a process actualised in the process of her becoming a woman in the historical context of apartheid South Africa, if one is to consider the autobiography as a process of defining a self. Ksenia Robbe who discusses Kuzwayo's autobiography in *Conversations of Motherhood: South African Women's Writing Across Traditions* (2015), argues that Kuzwayo's title "opens up a dialogue" with Mtutuzeli Matshoba's short story collection *Call Me Not a Man* (1979), a title that "focuses on [experiences of] a black [male] migrant worker being victimised and dehumanised by the apartheid police" (231). Kuzwayo's title then not only joins other South African writers in foregrounding her individual struggles in the urban chronotope of Soweto, but also the collective voices of dehumanised black urban migrant workers, especially women. Thus, when she says '*call me woman*', she speaks not just for herself but also for other African women living in apartheid South Africa. In this way, Kuzwayo contests and navigates complexities of township subjectivities and presents black women township-dwellers as constrained by race, class, and patriarchy into a life of poverty that pushes them into a life of perpetual slavery, disillusionment and crime.

One of the consequences of migration due to apartheid laws that Kuzwayo bemoans is the collapsed family structure and, in her view, though arguably essentialist, the decaying 'African' moral values. In the same vein, however, she celebrates the strong South African women produced by the harsh realities of apartheid experiences and legislations, valorising women, some of them mothers, as the pillars of their families and communities. For example, she says that when families broke up due to forced migration "[t]he whole burden of looking after the homestead, livestock, ploughing and the family was shifted to the womenfolk in the villages" (14). This, and a host of other remarks by Kuzwayo, has prompted Driver into

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[33] *Call Me Woman*, as a woman's narrative of the South African township experience, qualifies as a womanist township autobiography as it reiterates the experiences of black men and women in resisting apartheid. It bears some similarities with Es'kia Mphahlele's rendition of black township experiences in *Down Second Avenue* (1959), a male township autobiography.

making a declaration I interpret as a womanist sentiment. According to Driver, contrary to the assumption that apartheid completely dehumanised all black people, *Call Me Woman* attests that during apartheid (and after) "women have not been [totally] debased" (Driver 230). In her writing, for instance, Kuzwayo shows that while women in her society, governed by patriarchy, were considered subject to men and relegated to the domestic arena, apartheid further accentuated their marginalisation. While Kuzwayo does not deny black South African women's discrimination by patriarchy, her sentiments above echo Gwendolyn Mikell's observation that dominant capitalist (and colonial) discourses re-ordered the social sphere in Africa, creating a distinct public and private sphere after Western social structures (3). In Kuzwayo's opinion, however, despite all intents and purposes, black women, characterised as "minors" (275) by apartheid laws, turned the notion of womanhood as weakness into a myth. She notes that

> [t]he black woman, who through the centuries had been viewed by the white state as unproductive in industry, as totally dependent on her male counterpart, as helpless, unintelligent to the point of being useless and stupid – the woman who much against her will had resigned herself to being labelled a 'minor' by the state – was suddenly plunged into a situation of accepting numerous roles of responsibility. Without warning, training or any sort of preparation, she became overnight mother, father, family administrator, counsellor, child-minder, old-age caretaker and overall overseer of both family and neighbourhood affairs in a community which had been totally deprived of its active male populations. (14)

She invokes women like Madikizela-Mandela, Charlote Maxeke and Debra Nikowe Matshoba as some of the women who fostered their strength by allowing their subjectivity as women to thrive. In this way, these women did not fit within the specifications of the colonial and apartheid constructions of women as weak and victims. It is for this reason that Lewis makes the concession that Kuzwayo "does not condone women's subordination to men" (41). Instead, Kuzwayo dismisses the notion of 'minor' in South Africa's apartheid discourse as characterising their womanhood. She does this by portraying the credulity of considering children below eighteen years and all women as minors, while declaring their sons as more superior to them "regardless of the disparity in age" (275).

In view of my observation above that dominant apartheid (and colonial) discourses disregarded black women's social value, I suggest that Kuzwayo reclaims her maternity and redefines it in her own terms to legitimise her right to narrate history. It is possible that Kuzwayo deliberately uses maternity as a narrative technique to voice her own and others' struggles probably because it establishes a degree of familiarity to enable her make sense of her shifting worldview. Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi acknowledges maternity as a "predominant framework of identity for women in African literature […] [as it] is so closely linked to understanding African women's lives and identities within their socio-cultural contexts" (35). In the last part of her autobiography, "Patterns behind the Struggle" (251), Kuzwayo recalls how shortly after her release from detention, and despite her earlier decision not to get embroiled in political matters again, she is convinced by Advocate Wentzel to testify in court on behalf of eleven students of Soweto arrested under the Terrorism Act. She describes the urge to help these children as inspired by her status as mother and social worker that spurred her to act "in the name of the black child" (256). While at court, she also finds herself getting more entangled in her defence of the Black Consciousness Movement and thereafter, one man, overwhelmed by her speech, remarks to her: "[y]ou are not an ordinary woman, you pleaded like a man, only a man could speak the way you did" (260). Although Kuzwayo is not critical of the masculinisation of her achievement, this statement is evidence of the "paradox" of womanhood (Cazenave 3), and exemplifies the assertions I make in connection with Ramphele's political womanhood in this chapter that women's triumphant exploits in the public sphere are often justified through identifying them as not-quite-women; almost men, a "rebellious" performance of womanhood that transgresses the boundaries subscribed as prescribing to womanhood (Cazenave 4). By unquestioningly voicing her comparison to "a man", a description that conforms to a dominant culture's portrayal of gender roles (Kuzwayo 260), Kuzwayo becomes complicit in preventing the realisation of the full potential of her political womanhood.

Further, Kuzwayo's autobiography proposes collective empowered mothering as a strategy to reinstate humanity in the townships. She recalls the communal solidarity exhibited by men and women following the June 1976 Soweto Uprisings when mothers and fathers came together to defend their children from attacks by armed policemen. This collaborative effort, also depicted by black urban township-dwelling mothers who came together to protect the infringement of their children's rights through pass laws, becomes a network of mothering acts in resistance against apartheid. Eva Hunter acknowledges this "non-biological sense" of

maternity in South Africa as implying a meaning beyond the biological process of giving birth and nurturing (62). Kuzwayo's autobiography thus liberates women's agency silenced by the binaries men-women intoned in anti-apartheid nationalist discourses by placing women's contributions to the struggle at the communal level on the same plane as men's, insinuating an equal collaboration rather than a hierarchical structure, echoing a "male-womanist" collective initiative (Lemons 49). Thus as a political act, Kuzwayo's maternal activism not only signifies her political agency but also a de-gendered subjectivity and framework. Also inherent in Kuzwayo's maternal activism is a challenge to the social categories girl/woman, where to be woman suggests maturity, wisdom, and capacity to execute agency within political discourses, excluding girlhood from the mentioned elements. Speaking in relation to this, Kuzwayo says that "women and girls in rural communities have always played a significant role in the growth and development of their families and communities" (73). Kuzwayo's autobiography plays a significant role in representing the "other familial roles for [black] women and girls" (Lewis 40). Her autobiography therefore constructs empowered mothering as inclusive of the political agency of women of all ages. She re-invents political womanhood as an inclusive paradigm that invites girls' contributions to its womanist epistemology. Kuzwayo's autobiography therefore attests to the de-gendering and de-ageing of mothering practices as a womanist imperative.

In its negotiation of the social nature of gender discourses, Kuzwayo's *Call Me Woman* portrays mothering as a process whose meanings are discursively re-negotiated in different spaces. In this regard, Judith Butler's theorisation of gender performativity has influenced my reading of empowered mothering as a framework that narratively navigates discourses of power that Kuzwayo negotiates between her representations of the patriarchal institution of motherhood and women's conception of mothering practices as political acts. Performativity as a theoretical concept has been defined by Butler as a "repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (*Gender* xiv). Some discursive units that bring this to the fore are the township and prison motifs, political metaphors that link conceptions of identity in the apartheid chronotope to time and space. In the first chapter of her autobiography, she poses the question: "Where is home for a black person in South Africa?" (4). She proceeds to elaborate as follows: "For Debra Nikiwe Matshoba […], home in September 1978 was the Johannesburg Fort, where she was in detention under Section 10 of the Terrorism Act, perhaps the most cruel of the security laws of the country" (4). Here, she

identifies Matshoba as a prisoner, an identity that is spatio-temporally produced within a chronotopic imaginary of the anti-apartheid struggle. She adds that "Debra has another home apart from Johannesburg Fort. She lived at Kagiso, an African Township in the Krugersdorp district in the western areas of Johannesburg. Kagiso is about 18 miles from Soweto and both these townships fall under the jurisdiction of the West Rand Administration Board, an extension of the government at local level" (6). Here, Kuzwayo re-images Matshoba as a black township-dweller, a racial identity she says the latter acquires by default by virtue of living in Johannesburg at a time when apartheid laws in South Africa designated black and white bodies to separate and distinct living localities. Thus a township-dweller is a subjectivity discursively produced by the spatial realities of apartheid legislations.

Nationalist myths that limit women's roles in the struggle to their gender are therefore situational and produced by historical discourses. For instance, due to Kuzwayo's activism as a social worker, she has been described by Margaret Daymond (2006) and Gillian Whitlock (2000) as "the Mother of Soweto" (ii) and "mother of Soweto" (3), respectively. These referential titles suggest that Kuzwayo's maternity is negotiated through re-enacting dominant conceptions of mothering and echo Butler's view of gender performance as "a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation" (191). However, while Kuzwayo seemingly performs expectations of patriarchal motherhood by sacrificing herself to the struggle thus fulfilling requirements of good motherhood, she also challenges social norms which stipulate that a good mother should dedicate herself to her children's welfare forfeiting her own needs, by abandoning her first husband and leaving her children behind to escape an abusive marriage. She recalls Matshoba's and her own maternity in ways that vary their mothering as performative acts individualised through their personal encounters with race, class, and patriarchy. These differences in maternal performativity prove that mothering is not a static subjectivity; rather an identity that can be revised, in this case, to achieve a womanist historical revisionism. I make this declaration in view of Butler's observation that "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" (*Gender* 25). By giving mothering agency, Kuzwayo re-invents Matshoba's and her maternal subjectivity as external

to the masculine anti-apartheid nationalist agenda, giving their maternity what Butler calls "performative agency"[34] ("Performative Agency" 149).

Like Kuzwayo, Madikizela-Mandela's autobiographies portray her maternal agency as a political act of resistance against dominant cultures, especially apartheid and the masculinised anti-apartheid African Nationalist Council movement. Her autobiographies *Part of My Soul Went with Him* (1985) and *491 Days: Prisoner Number 1323/69* (2013), retrospectively recount her experiences during apartheid. Both autobiographies are unusual in their presentation and I suggest that their narration is reminiscent of what Annie Gagiano describes as a "'life mapping' mode of writing" ("Writing" 12). *491 Days: Prisoner Number 1323/69* takes the form of a journal/diary/collection of letters, all of which give an account of herself as a black woman living under apartheid. Similarly, *Part of My Soul Went with Him* has been described by Anne Benjamin as 'unconventional' because apartheid made it impossible for Madikizela-Mandela to write and publish a book about her life. Orally narrated by Winnie, the book is edited by Benjamin and adapted by Mary Benson. I consider this autobiography as Madikizela-Mandela's 'oral' testimony. It combines other's people's oral testimonies on her,[35] letters, a personal account in prose, and historical facts. Shari Benstock notes that when forms of self-expression considered as 'female' such as letters (and in this case 'oral' narrations) are juxtaposed with the masculine form of autobiography, in the language of traditional life writing criticism, they are considered "illegitimate" (2). In view of Benstock's ideas, I argue that in merging both African and Western modes of narration as well as masculinised and feminised life writing practices, I consider Madikizela-Mandela's autobiographies hybrid. This hybridity allows Madikizela-Mandela to contest the marginalisation of women's life narrative practices and to locate herself in alternate subject-positions that textually perform her historical consciousness.

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[34] Butler's theorisation on the concept of performative agency builds on Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualisations on the deconstructive, hereby performative, processes through which seemingly stable (speech) acts or actions are (de)constituted ("Performative Agency" 147), thereby opening up other possibilities of understanding one idea.

[35] Madikizela-Mandela's autobiography allows voices of others to emerge in the form of twelve oral testimonies by: Nomawethu Mbere, "a school friend" (51); Dr. Nthatho Motlana, a "young social worker" (52;115); an anonymous interviewee, "a colleague" (52); Adelaide Joseph, a close family friend of the Mandelas (61); Sally Motlana, "an old family friend" (72;116); Zindziswa and Zenani; her daughters (91); Rita Ndzanga, "a fellow prisoner" in Pretoria Central Prison (105); Dr. Nthatho Motlana, (a different contributor from the one mentioned above) "the family doctor and guardian of the children" (130); Zindzi, a recollection of her visit to her father in prison (136), and Zenani, memory of her visit with her husband and child to her father in prison (143), so that they speak for themselves as they speak for her.

Part of My Soul Went with Him contemplates about Madikizela-Mandela's public image in South Africa's (anti)apartheid nationalist discourse. It explores how she features in black and white nationalist mythical representations of her maternity in her capacity as Nelson Mandela's wife. Through the prison motif as a discursive framework, Madikizela-Mandela negotiates her portrayal as political capital in black anti-apartheid public discourse to counter the dominant narrative of apartheid. However, as I discuss in this section, both discourses confine her womanhood within patriarchal configurations that limit her political agency. For example, in his tribute to Madikizela-Mandela in the introductory section of *Part of My Soul Went with Him*, Bishop Manas Buthelezi writes that she is "The Mother of Black People" (19). Similarly, in his creative work *The Cry of Winnie Mandela: A Novel* (2003), Njabulo Ndebele defines her as "Mother of the Nation" (86). These descriptions reflect the terms of Madikizela-Mandela's engagement in nationalist ideologies which, as I have suggested in the opening paragraphs to this section, limit women's capacity in nationalist struggles to furthering male political agenda. Perhaps this is why Benjamin in the editorial note to this autobiography says that Madikizela-Mandela's story is not "about herself […] but the struggle" (7). I question the invocation of 'mother of the nation' metaphor in nationalist discourses on Madikizela-Mandela as it restricts her political agency to nurturing the nation, seconding her role of mothering to male nationalist agenda. In fact, her autobiography challenges her essentialised maternity through various literary strategies, including the prison motif, as I discuss in relation to her warriorhood in another section of this chapter. I read this rhetoric of detention as a form of textual empowered mothering discourse that when invoked by herself, especially her recollections of her experiences in prison and as a detainee in her own home, liberate her maternity from attempts by institutional mechanisms to restrict her maternal activism to patriarchal imaginings.

As a gender myth, the mother of the nation metaphor that echoes patriarchal discourses on Madikizela-Mandela's motherhood signals a gender performativity that delineates an aspiration to perfect motherhood. Underlying this ambition to faultlessness is the expectation that a woman valorise the interests of her children while downplaying her role in the anti-apartheid political resistance to allow her husband's image to dominate her own. By signalling the reader to such ambiguous norms, Madikizela-Mandela's autobiography foregrounds various attempts by nationalist discourses to police her motherhood. With regard to the black nationalist movement, she says at first she was considered "a carbon copy of Nelson. [She] was no individual. If [she] said something, it was 'Nelson's wife' who said so

[but] [w]hen he was no longer in the picture (I so hate talking about myself!), the public began to say, [she] wasn't just a carbon copy as such; [she] had ideas and views of [ehr] own. [she] had [her] own commitment and [she] wasn't just a political ornament" (83, original brackets). What Madikizela-Mandela seems to suggest is that the black nationalist movement in South Africa has relegated political agency as a male reserve. Although the insinuation that she dislikes talking about herself might be a deliberate move to convince the public that separating herself from Mandela's agenda is not selfish, she nevertheless forges a subjectivity separate from her mythical image. It is while located in this liminal space that she voices some complexities of negotiating South African political womanhood. For example, she says that

> [l]ooking at our struggle in this country, the black woman has had to struggle a great deal, not only from a political angle. One has had to fight the male domination in a much more complex sense. We have the cultural clash where a black woman must emerge as a politician against the traditional background of a woman's place being at home! Of course most cultures are like that. But with us it's not only pronounced by law. We are permanent minors by law. So for a woman to emerge as an individual, as a politician in this context, is not very easy. (83-84)

The excerpt above demonstrates a hierarchized form of women's oppression in South Africa where black women are triple oppressed: as women in patriarchal cultural systems, as blacks, women, and as economically inferior subjects in South Africa. This might explain why Lewis conceives the "eulogising of women as strong mothers" or "superwo[men]" in the South African context as "an indication of women's status as 'first-class icons but second-class citizens'" (40). Madikizela-Mandela's observations also signal the reader to the generic nature of the political autobiography, particularly the oral nature of political discourse that delivers political insights in an equivocating manner as evident in the last sentence of this excerpt.

In negotiating her political womanhood, Madikizela-Mandela's first autobiography attests that the notion of empowered mothering is also antagonistic to the valorisation of corporeal maternity over its ideological value. For instance, she expresses a culpability for being an absent mother, evident in her declaration that "[i]t was not by choice that I spent so much time in prison but that did not stop me from having this enormous guilt that I had not played

my role as a mother. You can't stop asking yourself what comes first, the nation or your children. We had to choose the nation" (90). While this ritualisation of the good mother myth seems to fulfil a deeper political goal, that of critiquing the patriarchal conception of motherhood, it also reveals inner doubts about her social standing as a mother that conflicts her earlier ready acceptance as a political symbol. This then begs the question to what extent her autobiography merely performs her maternity to appease antagonistic camps that conceptualise womanhood. Is there a possibility that she deliberately portrays herself as an imperfect mother to situate her public role of mothering as distinct from her private mothering? I pose this question out of the awareness that patriarchal engendered notions of ideal and perfect mothering suppress women's individuality. Considering Madikizela-Mandela's intelligence and her political rhetorical prowess, I am wary of taking her political sentiments at face value. For instance, when narrating about her separation from her daughter Zindzi, she says that "I needed her physically […] I have given up everything to the cause – without any regrets of course – but at the same time you want a sense of belonging, you do need a home" (40).

I suggest that in negotiating her political womanhood, Madikizela-Mandela's identities emerge as layered and interwoven, at times conflicting with her individual subjectivities. Her autobiography testifies to personal experiences of a woman who displays bravery for withstanding separation from her family for the anti-apartheid struggle. It also extensively accommodates Mandela's vision of a rainbow nation that she might have taken the responsibility of narrating in view of his life imprisonment. For this reason, embracing her maternity accomplishes what Lewis calls "representations of the nation or community as family" (40). In this case, both Madikizela-Mandela's family and the symbolic image of the nation as a family become spaces where an ideal national imaginary is negotiated. The social significance of the family unit, I suggest, is to recreate the disintegrated South African society, fragmented by apartheid's separationist policies, into a wholesome unit. Madikizela-Mandela uses her family as a unit and representational category to demonstrate how apartheid affected the ordinary black South African. For example, she says that Mandela was so involved in the nationalist struggle so that: "you just couldn't tear Nelson from the people, from the struggle. The nation came first. Everything else was second. […]. I knew when I married him that I married the struggle, the liberation of my people" (39). The nation, at that time, was his first priority.

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Here, the writer is making the claim that South African identities are fragmented by nature of their apartheid and colonial socialisations. Using her traditional marriage ceremony as an example, she shows how Mandela's nationalist status prevented him from living a normal life. She, however, narrates her disillusionment with regard to this ceremony in view of her romantic expectations with a conciliatory tone. She says, this ceremony which was never finalised as Mandela had been urgently summoned to Johannesburg to attend a political meeting, marks the complex nature of their existence as nationalist figures: "So", she adds, "there never was any kind of life that I can recall as family life, a young bride's life, where you sit with your husband and dream dreams of what life might have been, even if we knew that it would never be like that" (65). By being associated with Mandela who symbolised the struggle, she automatically became the mother of the nation. She, therefore, narrates Mandela's story as an integral part of her own and at this stage of her autobiographical consciousness, her sense of self is in relation to Mandela. In her attempt to reclaim a wholesome selfhood, however, she only ends up valorising one aspect of her multiple selves at a time, so that the only comprehensive selfhood she narrates seems to be her collective identity. This submerges her individual self within her autobiography.

I also read the evocation of familial collaboration in *Part of My Soul Went with Him* as a way through which Madikizela-Mandela deconstructs nationalism as a masculine entity. According to Meg Samuelson, the family is a "patriarchal […] emblem of national citizenship" ("Home" 39) that becomes the space of negotiating nationalist ideals since in moments of national crisis, "the home […] [becomes] the 'inner sanctum' of nationalist identity, guarded and embodied by women" (Samuelson "Home" 32). By positioning herself as the interlocutor of this history in collaboration with others who share similar experiences with her, her autobiography becomes the biography of South Africa's apartheid.

The communality of *Part of My Soul Went with Him* is demonstrated in the onset through the title. The phrase *Part of My Soul Went with Him* establishes Madikizela-Mandela's autobiographical consciousness in relation to her husband Mandela and the ideology of the ANC, which Mandela stood for. She, therefore, embodies the nationalist movement's ideology for the independence struggle. The title also signals that the story is a confessional. The use of "soul" invokes a religious tone but also the entanglements of the narrator's identity to others. By juxtaposing soul with "him," the title positions the self in relation to an 'other', firstly God, secondly the subject's husband, Mandela, who was at that time serving a

life sentence on Robben Island, and thirdly the other South Africans who believed in freedom for all people regardless of race, sex, or class. "Him" therefore also refers to those who have been victimised by the anti-apartheid ideology, both men and women, white and black. Locating herself at the helm of this dehumanisation, Madikizela-Mandela says that she is the "symbol of whatever is happening in the country" (27). In this way, she represents her selfhood as a product of apartheid maternal relationality with both men and women who subscribe to an empowered mothering worldview. For instance, she portrays her political awakening in relation to her father, mother, and Mandela. Through recalling their experiences, Madikizela-Mandela represents her identity as intersectional to race, sex, and class differences that inform South African apartheid subjectivities. Although Madikizela-Mandela is sceptical of her ability to be more than a "political barometer" (26), her autobiography consciously undermines patriarchy, valorised by the apartheid regime, and its subordination of women, exploiting their labour with almost no returns; and at the national level it narrates the politics of home and land in South Africa.

Different representations of women's bodies in anti-apartheid public discourses are recalled and challenged in Madikizela-Mandela's *Part of My Soul Went with Him*. I conceive this writer's empowered mothering discourse as an attempt to reclaim her body from (anti)apartheid discourses where she is portrayed either as "Kaffir" in the political rhetoric of the apartheid regime or 'mother of the nation' in relation to her mythical significance in the (anti)apartheid movement (27). Her maternal voice narrates some of the mechanisms deployed by the Nationalist Government to minimise the spread of the anti-apartheid movement's ideology in Brandfort, Orange Free State where she had been resettled for detention. These strategies, especially the restriction on her movements, her seclusion from the rest of the black community, and her confinement within her home are imposed on Madikizela-Mandela's body. One of her visitors was even forewarned by the security forces that: "if ever you set a foot in her house, we will promptly arrest you and you will spend the rest of your life like her husband, whom we arrested and who is in prison for life" (26). While such threats were meant to ostracise Madikizela-Mandela, she says that they achieved the exact opposite as people began taking an interest in this "Soweto agitator" (36). She, therefore, narrates her banishment and house-arrest as representative of the Nationalist Government's attempts to prevent her political agency from spreading. She also frames her identity within the chronotope of the struggle to create a public image of the African National Congress (ANC) activists as symbolising black power. Thus she says: "[a]s time went on,

people came to know who we were and what the whole thing was all about – we never addressed the people. Little children started spontaneously giving the Black Power sign, that is how they greeted us when the police were gone" (26).

In addition to Madikizela-Mandela's autobiographies, Emma Mashinini's *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life* is another text which uses mothering as a discursive technique. As a womanist autobiography, Mashinini's maternal relationality is signalled by the recognition of her leadership role in trade union activism in apartheid South Africa by various individuals of notable repute in South Africa's anti-apartheid public discourse. For example, in the introduction to *Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life*, Gay Seidman says that Mashinini became "a national political figure, helping to unify resistance and to publicise the government's repression during a prolonged uprising" in the late 1980s (Mashinini xxx). Similarly, Jay Naidoo in the foreword to this autobiography observes that due to her prominence in the labour movement, Mashinini is often referred to as "Ma Emma" (xi). Of interest to me is how Mashinini appropriates maternity as a metaphor to narrate the experiences of black South Africans in the struggle and those of white sympathisers like Neil Aggett (who died in prison during apartheid). This maternal historical consciousness therefore serves as a technique that presents her multiple identities as politically agential to a myriad of social issues. She also portrays her maternity as a technique that voices her corporeality to subvert her mythical symbolic value as mother of the nation. In lieu of this, Mashinini's autobiography, through empowered mothering, discursively challenges mis-representations of black (women's) bodies in relation to labour practices as my discussion of *stokvels* in the previous section indicates.

In her recollections of contributions of the labour movement to the struggle, she situates both men and women of all races brought together by a shared interest as labour unionists, as partners in mothering the South African nation towards an equal society. As a writer, then, Mashinini vocalises herself as possessing motherist qualities of "love, tolerance, service, and mutual cooperation of the sexes" (Obianuju 3) as she works with other labour unionists across gender, racial, and class barriers. According to Obianuju, a motherist writer, man or woman, "is not sexist" but rather one who contests "a patriarchal, masculinist, dominatory perspective" (3). As a de-gendered framework, Mashinini's engagement with empowered mothering discourse posits men like her husband Tom, and the white male labour unionists like Morris Kagan and Ray Altman in the role of mothering within the discourse of the labour

movement. Mashinini remembers how during the initial stages of establishing CCAWUSA, her husband would be by her side, helping her to solicit members for the new black labour union. She says that Tom

> would help [her] out, either standing with [her] to hand out leaflets or driving [her] around to the various points before dropping [her] at work and then going on to his own work. He would sometimes be taken to the police station along with [her], but [they] kept on popping up the next day, at a different place, and a different police would come and take [them] away again. (39)

In the above extract, Mashinini arguably refigures their resilience (Tom and her) in soliciting union members as political acts of mothering instituted by their collaborative efforts as husband and wife but outside the domestic arena. This political act locates their agency in the primordial public, consequently the public discourse of politics. Consequently, their maternal activism celebrates the collective bond of maternity between men and women as a de-gendered experience. Thus her autobiography re-writes maternal activism in anti-apartheid nationalist discourse as a non-sexist institution.

Through her maternal experiences, Mashinini also gives agency to the trauma suffered by detainees and prisoners. For example, when in prison, Mashinini's inability to remember the name of one of her daughters, Dudu, demonstrates the psychological turmoil that detainees experience. Empowered mothering is the theoretical tool that focalises the trauma inherent. The title of chapter nine, "Dudu", reflects some of the emotional strain that motherhood exerts on women nationalists. Here, Mashinini recalls her inability to remember the name of her daughter as the worst part of her entire prison experience. She says that

> thinking about [her daughters'] faces, and putting names to them, I could see my second-youngest daughter's face […] and I just couldn't recall what the name was. […] I would fall down and actually weep […] because this pain of not being able to remember the name of my daughter was the greatest I've ever had. And then, on the day when I actually did come across the name – this simple name Dudu or 'Love' – I immediately fell asleep, because it was such a great relief. (92)

In the excerpt above, I regard Mashinini's reaction as displaying an unconscious guilt of a perceived failure at remembering her child, as motherhood and its relational aspects is an integral aspect of her subjectivity. Through the maternal voice, she presents her depression as a window into the state of her fragmented psyche, a deep fear of losing part of herself. The spatial motif of the prison is also a narrative technique that foregrounds the silencing of black people's subjectivity. Daniel Roux shows in his PhD dissertation "Presenting the Prison: the South African Prison Autobiography Under Apartheid" (2007), the ambiguity of the prison as a space to extract secrets from detainees, yet Mashinini is "rarely accorded a position to *talk from*" and that her subjection to a panoptical gaze robs her the capacity of "functioning in a meaningful, autonomous way in discourse" so that she emerges as a "mimicry of human attributes and desire" (173-174).

I suggest that Mashinini's psychological break-down, manifested in her inability to remember her child, is a projection of what Rich calls maternal "suffering of ambivalence" (21). This is a condition that expresses contradictory feelings of love and disillusionment for one's maternal status due to pressures exerted on one's womanhood by their maternity. Cheryl Walker regards the conflation of the categories 'woman' and 'mother' as "particularly regressive" (420). For Mashinini, maternal ambivalence results from an inner conviction of her inadequate mothering to her three daughters, evident in several scenarios in her autobiography, two of which I foreground. In the first instance, speaking with her step-daughter Nomsa in mind, she feels burdened by the selfless caring she and her house receives from her daughter due to her activist work and says that "[m]y fear is that by the time she raises her own family she will be exhausted, and all because of my 101 travels" (106). Inherent in this declaration, is the feeling that she has failed in her role as a wife and mother to nurture her family, relegating her responsibilities to her daughter. Here, she seems torn between exhibiting perfection in both the domestic and public spheres as aptly expressed earlier in the book when she says: "I know, though, that both my children [Molly and Dudu] were affected by my detention" (104). I suggest that Mashinini finds herself caught between a conflict of interests: she has to juggle between fulfilling her public role as political activist or private role as mother at the expense of her public activities. In view of my earlier indication and Nnaemeka's observation that in postcolonial discourse "womanhood" has been conflated with "motherhood" (*(M)othering* 103), a deliberate move I suggest to further the interests of patriarchal motherhood, it is relevant that motherhood be examined in relation to but as a separate entity from womanhood.

Mashinini attempts to reclaim her womanhood from motherhood by portraying her public and private selfhoods as interrelated but concentric in nature. This mode of identity performance, I propose, enables Mashinini to reconcile her conflicting selfhoods without necessarily having to align herself to one position. This is narratively demonstrated in the following declaration: "But the love those children showed to me! I think back to how I never had time to love them, to show them, to physically show them that love, and then I look at the love they show to me, and I know it must have been there, and they noticed it in me, and I am so thankful" (105). However, (and unlike Madikizela-Mandela) Mashinini does not overtly show recognition of the cultural roots of her dilemma as culturally engendered. This form of cultural dis-entanglement is perhaps best understood within Walker's concession that in the South African context "motherhood and patriarchy are not [always] seen [as] necessarily […] linked" (421). However, it is also possible that she consciously avoids making these connections out of a mis-placed desire not to exoticise and stereotype her culture. Could it then be that this phenomenon is textually embedded in the unsaid? For this matter, I recommend the consideration that Mashinini situates herself between the two identities – mother and woman – to portray the entanglements between womanhood and motherhood. In this regard, I concur with Driver that Mashinini successfully disentangles with her mythical symbolism by locating herself in a "space between 'mother' and 'woman'" (250). In so-doing, Mashinini challenges biological essentialist definitions of womanhood conflated with motherhood and debates that do not trouble the gendering of motherhood furthering the perpetuation of patriarchal gender stereotypes concerning motherhood.

I juxtapose Kuzwayo, Madikizela-Mandela and Mashinini's portrayals of motherhood as complementary histories of black South African women's contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle. The three writers echo African womanist calls to celebrate motherhood; thus their empowered mothering discourses celebrate collaborative efforts by men and women of all races to contest the essentialisation of women in nationalist myths by extending the roles of nurturing and child-rearing, gendered as women's role. These writers demythologise patriarchal motherhood discourses that confine women to the domestic arena, characterising this space as private. In this way, the domestic arena is reproduced within the political arena to restrict mothers' political agency.

Widowhood as a Political Act

> The strength of a man is in his woman; [t]he burden of a husband is carried on the wife's shoulder, not on her head; she quickly drops it when it becomes too unbearable. (Sofola 63)

The debate in this section is informed by the metaphor of 'political widowhood' as theorised by Mamphela Aletta Ramphele in "Political widowhood in South Africa: The Embodiment of Ambiguity" (1996), as a framework for reading widowhood as a political act. Political widowhood is celebrated in re-memberance of 'fallen' male heroes. Although Ramphele's version of political widowhood bears similarities with its utilisation in the Victorian age,[36] her Africanised version symbolises women's political agency. It deliberates on the plight of African women who have (had) intimate relationships with influential men in historically-charged political regimes like apartheid. Ramphele notes that "political widowhood reflects the appropriation of certain women's bodies as part of the symbolic armour mobilized by political movements in the contest for moral space following the fall of heroes in the struggle for power" ("Political" 101). In this chapter, I suggest that as a cultural commodity, the concept political widowhood in Ramphele and Madikizela-Mandela's autobiographies invokes contested discourses of South African political womanhood, and bears semblance to what Louise Green calls "a resistance to the contemporary reifications of the everyday" (174). The dualist womanist and patriarchal conceptions of political widowhood re-produce "social meanings of the societies and cultures through which they circulate" (Green 175). To explicate this concept as a political act constitutive of the performance of African political widowhood, I derive examples from experiences of Ramphele from her first autobiography *A Life* and Madikizela-Mandela's first autobiography *Part of My Soul Went with Him.*

In the South African context, Ramphele imagines herself as Steve Biko's political widow because of her co-optation in furthering Biko's political ideologies and her association with his memory in South Africa's anti-apartheid archive after his death. In South African anti-

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[36] The concept political widowhood is not exclusive to Africa and Laura Marcus in *Auto/Biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism and Practice* (1994), recognises its reference to Queen Victoria in the Victorian era where: [t]he language of monuments, statuary, epitaphs, widows, effigies, waxwork and corpses pervades biographical and autobiographical discourse and testifies to the tension between a posthumous memorialisation of a life and the attempt to grasp the 'life' as it was lived" (94). Its original context relates to Queen Victoria of England's public performance of mourning for her late husband Prince Albert, and her performance was interpreted as a blue-print for proper widowhood to be emulated by women in paying respect to their departed men.

apartheid political discourses, Biko is publicly celebrated as key in conceptualising the Black Consciousness Movement (hereafter BCM) ideology in South Africa, and while Ramphele aided in this conceptualisation, her contribution is not acknowledged in public discourse. In her autobiography, Ramphele situates herself in the history of the BCM and embodies her contribution to the Nationalist struggle as a black woman intellectual in this movement and the collective students' resistance against apartheid. As a writer-activist, she is aware that "[t]here is a sense in which intellectual work is not regarded within activists' circles as *real* work. Activist intellectuals often have to engage in other activities to justify their credibility within these circles" (*Life* 165-6). Accordingly, Ramphele concedes, "[t]he best-placed activists in many historical settings seem to be those who combine a spiritual and a political base" (*Life* 108). She suggests that a balance between the two publics is the key to good activism in response "to the circumstances of their time and place" (*Life* 111). In her autobiography *A Life*, Ramphele refers to Biko's death as "the death of a dream" (*Life* 135) and reiterates the activism of the BCM through positioning herself in partnership with Biko to allow this dream to live on in her. I suggest that she claims authority of experience as one of the main contributors to the BCM intellectual thought to further Biko's political ideology, making her body the archive in which Biko's memory and the BCM ideology are enshrined. What she is castigating here is the mythification of her body as a tomb for Biko's memory at the expense of her individuality and political agency, so that her body is only a memory of Biko. In my view, the BCM thought has survived Biko due to Ramphele's continued engagement with this philosophy and that his status as a national hero and anti-apartheid legend excels posthumously through Ramphele's intellectual work thus turning their intimate relationship into public discourse around which the BCM philosophy is circulated. Although she is critical of the public significance of political widowhood, she nonetheless, almost counter-intuitively, embraces this position to further her political interests.

For instance, Ramphele embrace her political widowhood to reclaim her position in the BCM movement, which she has been excluded from as a political widow. She does this by recalling her professional and individual everyday experiences. She not only publicly acknowledges her position as Biko's mistress, but also as the mother of his children. In her recollection of their relationship, she romanticises their union and although she occasionally expresses remorse for the pain that his wife Ntsiki might have suffered, she venerates him and even makes excuses for him when obviously both she and Ntsiki were hurt by his unfaithfulness, a fact she briefly mentions in *A Life*. It is her ready acceptance of Biko's attitude to his

women's feelings that I find quite problematic. I propose that Ramphele deliberately claims her public widowhood status to promote herself as Biko's ideal political widow as opposed to Ntsiki. She points out the ambiguity of the patriarchal of (political) widowhood and expands it to accommodate women not legally or culturally tied to political male figures through marriage, as well as those like Madikizela-Mandela whose husband was incarcerated indefinitely and due to her role in furthering Mandela's political ideologies while in prison, she has become "a symbol" of the struggle against apartheid (*Part* 27). In this sense, Ramphele's concept of "political widowhood" is, therefore, metaphorical. The two women monumentalise their intimate partners, Biko and Mandela, through propagating the continued existence of their men's images in their absence. According to Ramphele:

> The symbolism of political widows extends beyond those whose partners/spouses have died in a struggle. It also includes many women who lived as 'widows' during the long periods of their spouses' imprisonment […] Political widowhood is a particularly ambiguous status. (*Life* 101)

Since political widowhood is sustained by constant association with a dead person, it performs two functions. First, by inheriting the political currency of the dead person, it raises the widow's public political profile. In *A Life*, Ramphele notes that the political widow plays a "public role" of reincarnating her husband, especially if he was a political hero; the "fallen man" (180). She adds that: "[The] political formation naturally wanted to make as much political capital as possible out of the death of a comrade" (*Life* 106). In Ramphele's context, she represents her political widowhood in the South African context as a form of cultural capital that enshrines memories of Steve Biko's contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle. Secondly, however, political widowhood disciplines a powerful political woman figure by constraining her political agency from overpowering her male partner's agency. According to Ramphele, patriarchy's discomfort with her prominent "public persona" leaned towards her maternity as a way of putting her in a place it deemed proper for her, under the guise of giving her the "respectability" she demands (180). For example, she notes that following the death of Steve Biko, newspapers and magazines published articles with titles such as "Biko's lover: banished and pregnant" and "the mother of Steve Biko's son becomes UCT [University of Cape Town] executive" (179), foregrounding her maternal bearing as Steve Biko's widow at the expense of her professional and activist subjectivities. Being a political widow, there is always the risk of the fallen hero's memory overshadowing the agency of the

person keeping it alive, namely, the political widow. Ramphele exists in the precarious position between these two states. As Biko's political widow, she is expected to comply with the continuous mourning that widowhood recommends, which might put her in a marginalised position, especially as a politician with her own agenda. She maintains that the compulsion to generate a definite title for a widow of a deceased male political figure "signals society's anxiety to re-establish its own equilibrium by symbolically removing her from the liminal unknown to the luminal known where social tools exist to deal with her" (179). It is for this reason that Ramphele criticises her limitation in the South African memory archive as an embodiment of Biko's political ideologies at the expense of her individual political agency.

In her criticism of the practice of Political widowhood, Ramphele argues that the "political widow" ceases to be an individual woman, but rather "the ultimate honorary *man*" (*Life* 180, my emphasis). The trouble with this notion of "honorary male" for Ramphele is that it robs the woman of her individuality and her accomplishments (*Life* 180). Coincidentally, she observes, this is almost always the case when the woman is a successful public figure in her own right yet she is expected to mimic the deceased's lived life totally and completely. She berates society's efforts to explain this transgression – of a successful woman in her own right – by inferring the woman's success to a male figure in her life, hers being Biko and Madikizela-Mandela being Mandela. Thus even after their death or divorce, the men's images in the public sphere always become a rationale for the woman's success. Ramphele adds that: "A most effective way of establishing this male connection is through the status of widowhood. A widow's status cannot be seen independently from that of the man to whom she is connected" (178-9).

Although ordinarily Ntsiki (or Alice, Biko's mother) would have been legally linked to Biko's political activism as is the case with Madikizela-Mandela, the two have been expunged from his public memory, probably because political widowhood is not automatically acquired. To be a political widow, one must have been highly involved in the struggle for her to be elevated as a tomb or monument of the dead hero. One's conversion into a political widow is therefore dependent on their ability to further the political agenda of the fallen hero. In this regard, Ntsiki's or Alice's abilities to uphold Biko's political legacy is debatable, especially since unlike Ramphele (and Madikizela-Mandela), they were not deeply entrenched in the anti-apartheid struggle. Having been educated, politically vocal, and Biko's

mistress, Ramphele gained "the dubious status" that she calls "a political widow who could never be" (178), a phrase that signals Ramphele's awareness that though in the South African political public sphere she is accepted as Biko's political widow, outside this public, it is Ntsiki who holds the right of recognition as Biko's widow. Ramphele, who embraces her status as Biko's political widow, changes its meaning so that she moves from the periphery as a mistress to the centre of Biko's public life by initiating a debate against

> the fact that if one is not formally married to a man, one cannot technically be called his widow. But for a variety of reasons, some women, who have shared special intimate relationships with men of prominence, become associated with them in almost the same ways that widows are associated with their deceased husbands. (*Life* 116)

In other words, one's claim to political widowhood is inherent in an exhibition of elitism, a quality that since neither Ntsiki nor Alice Biko possessed, bequeathed Ramphele the sole rights to identification as Steve Biko's political widow. Therefore, Ramphele's political widowhood suggests a degree of intellectual marginalisation in the sense that Alice and Ntsiki Biko's education/class deficiencies secluded them from any association with Steve Biko's political legacy in the South African political public sphere. Though unsuccessfully, Ramphele attempts to breach this hierarchisation of black female subjectivities and she, therefore, re-invents the concept of 'wife', baring its gender-specificity (175) and explores the enigma of controversial "political widows" such as herself and to an extent Madikizela-Mandela, who she says arouses curiosity in the public sphere by occupying a tenacious space as the 'wayward' ex-wife of South Africa's most revered freedom fighter. Additionally, Ramphele's choice to embody this myth despite her criticism of its limitations suggests a deliberate attempt to further her own political agency through highlighting her current political significance, thus she manages to reclaim her individuality from her symbolic objectification.

Unlike Ramphele, whose political widowhood arose following the physical demise of Steve Biko, Mandela's arrest and life imprisonment on Robben Island rendered Madikizela-Mandela a political widow. However, unlike Ramphele, the former's political widowhood is controversial. As Mandela's political widow, Madikizela-Mandela flouted societal conventions by allegedly dishonouring her husband's memory through engaging in extra-

marital affairs. These conventions are mourning rituals that per Ramphele, govern the performance of political widowhood. She says that the institution of widowhood is governed by. These norms and regulations prohibit, among others, seeking sexual pleasure in the absence of one's partner. However, Madikizela-Mandela is said to have disregarded these societal expectations. This 'transgression' of mourning rituals facilitated her being shunned by her community, who regarded her as a traitor of the liberation struggle, disregarding her earlier sacrifice towards the liberation movement. Madikizela-Mandela refutes these claims of adultery in her autobiography, disqualifying them as malicious rumours. She gives an example of a newspaper article with the heading "Finding a man in Mandela's house" (84), and maintains that this affair, intimated in South Africa's public discourse, is mere propaganda. Although she was celebrated as Mandela's political widow despite allegations of cheating, after Mandela's release from prison, she was shunned from public discourse regarding the liberation. I suggest that this was because she was no longer needed to keep Mandela's image alive. For deviating from the image of the ideal 'mother of the nation' she is punished by being expunged from the national rhetoric of liberation. Thus after Madikizela-Mandela's divorce from Mandela, she is omitted from the ANC narrative and subsequently from his will. While the alleged affair(s) have relegated her image in South Africa's memory archive to negative connotations, viewed through what Chielozona Eze terms as "feminist empathy" (311), Winnie's experiences might be judged less harshly within the historical realities that produced her womanhood.

The South African society's reaction to Madikizela-Mandela's supposed infidelity is glaringly different to Nelson Mandela's exploits with women, as exemplified in *Part of My Soul Went with Him*. For instance, whereas Madikizela-Mandela's public and private acts are convoluted and used to discredit her political womanhood, despite his flirtatious nature, abandonment of his first wife, and neglecting Madikizela-Mandela as young wife, Nelson Mandela's public and private experiences are demarcated. Thus his abandonment of his first wife, neglecting of Mdikizela-Mandela as a young wife and his flirtatious nature do not seem to have an impact on his political manhood, which is highly celebrated in the South African public sphere and exaggerated almost to what Noel Solani terms as the myth of a "saint" (42). In her autobiography, Madikizela-Mandela recalls how she was abandoned as a young wife by her husband, whose prominence in the struggle at that time compelled him to put the nation before his family. Yet, it is only Madikizela-Mandela who is reprimanded by society for daring to engage in intimate relationships while her husband languished in prison under

life imprisonment. I read Mandela's reluctance to forgive what Solani terms as Madikizela-Mandela's act of "infidelity with Dali Mpofu, her lawyer at the time" in the context of his generously extended forgiveness to the Nationalists to ensure the success of a rainbow nation as an attempt to reclaim his masculinity and political agency (48). Speaking in relation to a widow's sexual propriety, Ramphele whose autobiographies expound on theoretical ideas on political widowhood, observes that a political widow's "relationships are supposed to be shaped by, and flow along the contours of, her late husband's relationships. His friends and comrades become her friends. So too his enemies become hers" (*Life* 180). With Ramphele's views in mind, it becomes evident that by 'betraying' her husband, the embodiment of black freedom from apartheid, Madikizela-Mandela's private act had been transformed into a negation of what the black community stood for, implying that forgiveness had to come from the people, not just her husband. As his 'enemy' she had become the people's foe. Perhaps this explains why Mandela felt compelled to "[explain] to the nation" in front of Television cameras his reasons for divorcing his wife (Solani 48). In this way, the relations in the Mandela family unit become allegories of national struggles. This national solidarity was evoked during Mandela's public announcement of his separation from his wife in the company of ANC's president Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu, described as "one of the stalwarts of the ANC who served with him life imprisonment at Robben Island" (Solani 48). The show of solidarity by these masculine figures of the nationalist movement suggests a moralist approach to female sexuality.

The nation's desire to punish Madikizela-Mandela lies in the logic that as Mandela's wife during the anti-apartheid struggle, she was what Gordon-Chipembere designates as an embodiment of "the public sense of grief and loss of the fallen hero" (15) and Madikizela-Mandela's actions contravened this ideal. Thus Mandela had to punish her because to forgive her and re-institute their marriage would be a public indication of dishonouring the sanctity of black resistance against apartheid. For Ramphele, a political widow who flouts social conventions is a danger to the ideology of nationalism. She, therefore, suggests that society is compelled to punish "[a] non-subservient black woman [as she] is by definition a transgressive – she is the ultimate outsider" (*Life* 181), a negation of patriarchal control over female sexuality and political agency.

Despite the two women's unique experiences as political widows, there are similarities in terms of their personal encounters with this metaphor as a public myth. Their experiences

attest to my earlier view that political widowhood was constructed by South African nationalism to further its political ideology in instances where its heroes had been incapacitated to continue with the struggle, as was the case with Biko and Mandela, but at the expense of the women's selfhoods. While Ramphele is in her own right an accomplished public figure as an intellectual, activist, and medical doctor, she bears the burden of representing Biko's memory, described by Gordon-Chipembere as one of South Africa's apartheid "heroes" (15). I contrast the pious image of Ramphele as the ideal political widow who has shunned relationships with men following Biko's death and remains unattached to date, with Madikizela-Mandela's 'sexual' exploits that render her a fallen woman. Madikizela-Mandela's sexual liberties become the ultimate threat to Mandela's masculinity and the ANC's ideology. Her identity performance contrary to patriarchal expectations of political widowhood then resists the passive state of embodying and monumentalising a 'fallen hero'.

To Ramphele, therefore, society's tendency to fit the widow in her husband's shoes is a form of "social control of women who may be too independent for the comfort of existing social structure" (*Life* 180). By controlling the public activities of the widow, Ramphele argues, the political widow's personal agency is frustrated by "those sponsoring her role" (*Life* 180). She argues that if the widow's mandate conforms to the goal of her 'sponsors' then she "continues to enjoy the patronage that comes with the role" (*Life* 180). However, if she departs from their agenda, more so attracting public attention, she risks losing society's support – even her "public status" (*Life* 180). The alternative therefore for most political widows, she says, is a re-negotiation of "the terms of [their] engagement with public affairs" (*Life* 180). Ramphele, however, says she came to learn that this compromise "tends to come at a cost to [her] independence as an individual" (*Life* 180). In *A Life*, she notes that:

> In summoning him [Biko] to my side, society chooses to forget the multi-dimensionality of the relationship I had with him as colleague and fellow activist, and only dwells on the aspect which presents me as an instrument of his nurture and bearer of his son. My comments are not intended to deny the important role Steve played in my personal life, but to pose the question about the extent to which that relationship has become a marker on my body to enable society to relate to me. (180)

Ramphele's observations above highlight ways in which political widows subtly criticise their objectification as nationalist mythical figures. She then implicitly furthers her own political agenda beyond Biko's symbolic value as a nationalist. The swallowing up of her private relationship with Biko by the anti-apartheid nationalist movement enacts what Ekeh describe as "[t]he publicization of the private realm", which he defines as "the conversion of private activities and resources into material for the public realm" (91). Aware that her political widowhood has engulfed her private selfhood, Ramphele crafts a selfhood aimed at salvaging what Lewis terms as her "individualism" (*Life* 42), by separating her motherhood from the public significance that Madikizela-Mandela's identity has seemingly succumbed to as a nationalist myth by her own proclamation.

Despite attempts by her community to overwhelm her with the task of representing Biko, Ramphele manages to retain part of her personal selfhood. The maternal voice she adopts, therefore, serves as a narrative strategy that marks Ramphele's individualism. On the contrary, Madikizela-Mandela is engulfed by her political widowhood and she notes that:

> I have ceased a long time ago to exist as an *individual*. The ideals, the political goals *that I stand for*, those are the ideals and goals of the people in this country. They cannot just forget their own ideals. *My private self doesn't exist*. Whatever *they do to me*, they do to the people in this country. *I am and will always be only a political barometer*. (26, my emphasis)

While the statements above seem like a declaration of selflessness, they emerge as a self-involved portrayal of the self since, for instance, she chooses to see herself as a political barometer and has not always been so despite her claims. The emphasis on the individual self through the pronoun 'I' which she mentions three times, the possessive pronoun 'My', and the self-address 'me', show her awareness of the agential power she wields. Thus as she says that her 'private self doesn't exist', she is counter-discursively acknowledging there is a self she knows of, which she inadvertently claims by default and summons into being. This speech not only demonstrates Madikizela-Mandela's negation of her subordination to the symbolic value as Mandela's body memory, but also performatively re-enacts her individuality within her public myth as Mandela's political widow. I choose to read the implied self-martyrdom evident in her speech as a rebellious act that denounces the subordination to the memory of a male hero that the patriarchal institution of political

widowhood calls for. She manipulates language in that while she appears to negate her individuality, in actual sense, the phrasing in the above extract indicate her defiance of political discourses that patronise her, thus she upholds her autonomy. This separation of the individual from their mythical status has also been successfully achieved by Ramphele who forges her own political and historical consciousness as part of, yet separate from that of Biko. Ramphele has earned her own right to fame in the public space as a medical doctor, academic, and her own political party, *Agang*, which she established, and when the public chooses to forget these achievements, her autobiography serves as a reminder of these milestones.

I propose that these two political widows invoke their intimate partners to negotiate their own identities, especially since they do not show any initiative to divorce their public images from these men. For example, even after her divorce Madikizela-Mandela retained Mandela's surname, hyphenating hers with his, while Ramphele has remained at the centre of Biko's public memory. In their own unique ways, these women perform national obeisance but disobey social norms that patronise their sexuality. For example, Ramphele flouts social conventions pertaining to morality by publicly declaring her relationship with Biko, who at the time of their affair, was married. Thus while Ramphele's performance of her political widowhood observes societal expectations of her role as Biko's public memory, her resolve to fulfil her own desire to seek sexual pleasure signifies an ability to separate her public and private selfhoods. Ramphele's last chapter "Stretching across Boundaries" sets to authorise this separation of the public and private, where Ramphele locates herself and other women she narrates outside the patriarchal-ordained gender roles in the private sphere thereby acknowledging their individuality. By enabling voices of women and blacks as marginalised groups that have been silenced by the dominant discourses of patriarchy and apartheid to emerge alongside their own through their autobiographical narration, Ramphele and Madikizela-Mandela by extension, exhibit their autobiographical (and historical) consciousness. For instance, while Ramphele and Madikizela-Mandela are key in the perpetuation of nationalist myths of Biko and Mandela in their capacity as political widows, the representation of their political agency in literary criticism as individuals is very wanting, with the exception of accounts of Madikizela-Mandela's excesses in discourses of the TRC. Additionally, while Robbe, who recognises "under-representation of black women on the literary scene" (3) discusses Ramphele, Mashinini and Kuzwayo's autobiographical writing, Madikizela-Mandela's autobiography is, however, missing and this begs the question as to

why her voice is not allowed to enter into conversation with other women yet she is a key figure who held together the anti-apartheid movement.

Political widowhood is, therefore, reminiscent of the prison motif. Ramphele uses this device to identify herself with other South Africans in the struggle against apartheid. She notes that the banning order "was expressly intended to isolate activists and consequently render them impotent" (92). She cites Winnie Madikizela-Mandela as one of the most pro-active female intelligentsia in South Africa who was constantly under state surveillance to contain her 'seditious' activities allied to the ANC (93). Ramphele's account of Biko and their joint contribution to the struggle through BCM is in conformity with Madikizela-Mandela's activism on behalf of Mandela and the ANC. Ramphele also acknowledges Madikizela-Mandela's struggles and narrates how the government frustrated Madikizela-Mandela by making it difficult for her to practice as a social worker, especially since her profession depended on "government employment" (94). By evoking Madikizela-Mandela's activism and suffering under banishment, Ramphele is voicing the struggles of other black South African women whose husbands had been imprisoned for political activities and whose wives and girlfriends had to suffer in isolation separated from their families and communities as a punishment for political dissidence.

Warriorhood as a Political Act

   A soldier with a mother does not die at the warfront (Sofola 63)

This section examines how Ramphele, Madikizela-Mandela, and Mashinini embody their militancy in the trope of warriorhood as a subjective experience of political womanhood in South Africa. In their repositioning of black women within the history of the armed struggle against apartheid, these women demonstrate their historical consciousness of the complexity of negotiating the precarious positions of what Samuelson terms as the "paradoxical" disfigurement of the woman's body in war discourse ("Disfigured" 834). The literary configuration of the warrior is, therefore, a discursive unit through which these writers represent their literal and ideological militancy in the 'battle-field' of struggle against apartheid. Thus, I discuss both the literal act of warriorhood and war as a trope constituted through the metaphorical signification of textual contestatory acts as militancy. My reading of women's political agency of warriorhood draws on ideas of two South African scholars: Liz Gunner whose theoretical criticism hinges on orality, and Meg Samuelson's criticism on

South African women's wartime agency. I also defer to Lynda Spencer's insights on representations of women's war encounters.

My analysis of political warriorhood is cognisant of the invocation of women's bodies in nationalist myths to further nationalist agency but also as a subversive weapon. I therefore echo Grace Musila's concession that the (woman's) body is an "experiential site of both oppression and acts of resistance" ("Motherhood" 50). While these three writers may not have necessarily been military cadres, their actions elsewhere in the chronotope of anti-apartheid or their representation of this struggle exhibit militancy. An engagement with this concept, however, presents an array of challenges. Firstly, *Umkhonto We Sizwe*, a Zulu term translated as the Spear of the Nation and popularly known as MK[37] has largely remained a covert movement associated with crimes against humanity and very few people came or come out to declare their membership. However, in her second autobiography, Madikizela-Mandela mentions "[her] husband's military attire" that suggests his affiliation with the armed struggle (*491* 7). MK was formed by the radical arm of the ANC in exile after the Sharpeville Massacre on the twenty-first of March, nineteen sixty, which involved a series of police shootings of blacks in Sharpeville, one of the townships in Gauteng, South Africa. Thereafter, MK constituted the armed struggle in South Africa. However, this armed struggle is constructed in nationalist discourse as masculine and black. This portraiture silences the contributions of women and non-black participants in the armed struggle. Secondly, although she is the only woman who bears the closest association with MK by virtue of being Mandela's wife and one of the prominent figures of ANC, the writing of her autobiography at the height of censure in South Africa might have been compromised because her association with MK would have been detrimental to her well-being. However, she hints at her association with the armed struggle when she says that her exposure to German philosophies made her believe that "[her] own struggle [was] to be won by means of blood and iron" (49). Her warriorhood as a MK member is therefore indeterminate. The writers discussed here represent the historical consciousness of black women militant figures in the South African struggle for independence and acknowledge the white women they narrate as their comrades.

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[37] For a detailed history of MK see Howard Barrell in *MK: ANC's Armed Struggle* (1990), and for more details on the cultural and political significance of the term MK, see SA History online: http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/umkhonto-wesizwe-mk.

The brief background of South African women as militants furnished above, then, forms a basis for embarking on an exploration of Madikizela-Mandela's militancy in relation to physical and ideological warriorhood. Specifically, I interrogate her engagement with the land question and its appropriation into anti-apartheid ideologies and her (implied) identification with MK warriorhood. In other words, my discussion of warriorhood pertaining to Madikizela-Mandela's two autobiographies explores how she figuratively curves her militancy and responds to her portrayal in South African public discourses of the anti-apartheid struggle. The writer locates herself in the paradoxical position of victim and subject, possibly to indicate the oscillation of her selfhoods between her embodiment as a nationalist symbol and her individual political agency. Her second autobiography echoes Peter Ekeh's observation that the civic public is amoral while the primordial public is governed by moralistic ideologies and philosophies (discussed in the introductory chapter). I view the government as comprising the civic public, and the anti-apartheid movement before independence here as the primordial public. The amoral nature of the civic public is captured by Madikizela-Mandela's conceptualisation of the struggle as a "match" in which "[t]he referee [the Nationalist Government] wants [her] side to lose, and he goes out of his way to break [her] side. No rules and regulations have to be observed by his side whilst [her] boxers are forced at gunpoint to observe rules and regulations" (*Part* 9-10). Here, the tensions between the two publics become nuanced especially by her identification of the state as the masculine symbol of the colonial Empire and herself as a symbol of the black continent. Ann McClintock refers to the racial and sexual undertones that pervades such a discourse the *political* order of empire (4, emphasis in original). This language of militancy is extended to her journal entries where individual 'soldiers' are identified by numeric codes like "No 7" as opposed to being identified by their real names so that in case the journals are confiscated, her secrets remain intact (*Prisoner* 18).

I also read Madikizela-Mandela's representations of anti-apartheid discourse as a manifestation of the dualism of female militancy. This multi-facetedness is evident in the following statement: "I am a living symbol for whatever is happening in the country. I am a living symbol of the white man's fear", where she sees herself as both a public myth and a powerful individual (*Part* 27). In her conceptualisation of her public selfhood, she does not envision herself beyond the public essence of her being. Furthermore, I echo Partha Chatterjee's call, in *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections of Popular Politics in Most of the World* (2004), for the need to distinguish between "real" and "formal" citizenship (4).

Although Madikizela-Mandela's narrative is framed in a colonial (apartheid) as opposed to the postcolonial (poat-apartheid) era that Chaterjee's theory focuses on, the two contexts bear similarities. She is possibly the most elusive subject because while she initially crafts her citizenship by associating her belonging to a civil society, she does not resist her incorporation into a nationalist myth that transforms her into a "governed" body with seemingly no agency (40). I, therefore, suggest that it is from this liminal position that she is able to negotiate both the primordial and civic publics. If Madikizela-Mandela is aware of what McClintock recognises, that "[a]ll nationalisms are gendered, […] invented and […] dangerous" in the sense that they expose certain bodies, especially women's, to discursive violence (352), it is possible that the former deliberately avoids portraying herself as a stable subject in self-preservation.

In my view, Madikizela-Mandela is conscious of the moral guidelines that govern the primordial public of the anti-apartheid struggle especially the need to sustain the mystery of the black nationalists. For instance, in one of her journal entries, dated May 28, when her interrogator asks her if she feels she is "chosen" by God to lead, she tells him: "I deeply resent the indirect insult on my national pride and my husband's" (*491* 33). Although Mandela's name is not mentioned the by interrogator, her conceptualisation of him as part of her soul implicates him in her personal experiences. However, when Mandela ascends into leadership after independence, he is unable to accept that part of Winnie's political role might have actually exceeded his control, thus he distances himself from her. According to Lynda Spencer in "Writing Women in Uganda and South Africa: Emerging Writers from Post-Repressive Regimes" (2014), the male soldier in the struggle discourse represents an "unambiguous" masculinity "whose heroic sacrifices during the war entitle him to the citizenship of the nation" after war (22). Contrarily, women militants are often dislocated from the public sphere and re-located within the domestic sphere or a deviant public image that curbs their militancy. By highlighting these polarities in her autobiography, Madikizela-Mandela foregrounds the gender biases in discursive practices of warriorhood. These nuances emerge in her autobiography as two conflicting aspects of her selfhood – the warrior and the nurturer.

To illustrate, Figure 4 (below) in this thesis, appearing as image 2 in her first autobiography, is a photograph of Madikizela-Mandela standing behind a fence. This image, demonstrates an attempt by the Nationalist Government to reinstate Madikizela-Mandela to a state of

"normalcy" within the domestic sphere (Samuelson, "Disfigured" 852). I then consider imprisonment as one way through which the Nationalist government re-genders the society by re-inventing public discourse to re-capture the conventional imaginary of women as "domestic subjects" (Samuelson, "Disfigured" 841). Thus when Madikizela-Mandela recalls what detective Swanepoel told her during her interrogation while in prison: "[y]ou know, people think Nelson Mandela is a great man, they think he is in prison because he wanted to sacrifice for his people. If I had a wife like you, I would do exactly what Nelson has done and go and seek protection in prison" (101), she challenges a practice that attempts to re-define her femininity within a male, and patriarchal understanding of who a woman should be and how she should act.

Figure 4: Winnie Mandela banished to Brandfort, 1977[38]

Alternatively, Madikizela-Mandela imagines her political womanhood as not only agential, but also a war against various forms of women's oppression. For this matter, I read the first image appearing in her first autobiography, though not captured in this thesis, in which she is lifting her right fist into the air in a sign of power at Hector Peterson's funeral, "the first victim of the Soweto riots" in 1979 (113),[39] as a visual technique that contests her marginalisation in (anti)apartheid discourses. This image conveys the notion that she is a communal warrior taking part in agitating for the rights of black children exposed to violence by the police at the 1976 Soweto Uprising. Gunner, who notes the gender shifts in the "trope of the warrior" in South Africa, aptly suggests that South African political discourse before Mandela's release was "dynamic" but following South Africa's independence the warrior image has receded to represent male nationalists and expresses hope for a de-gendered approach to this image especially in orature ("Remaking" 28). As I will show in the course of

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[38] This photo, which also appears in Madikizela-Mandela's autobiography, has been obtained from: http://www.masnews.co.za/_borders/imagesCA103ZO2.jpg and is the property of Mallo images.

[39] The gesture for raising up the fist in demonstration of power is often accompanied by the utterance "*Amandla!*", a Zulu and Xhosa term that means power.

this thesis, Ramphele manages to effect this transition by evoking maternal discourses. Unlike Ramphele, Madikizela-Mandela's recourse to orality as a mode of remembering the construction of apartheid subjectivities is performed through reiterating her father's memories and, as I will shortly demonstrate, effects a certain historical narrative that also silences women militants from its imaginary.

In *Part of My Soul Went with Him*, Madikizela-Mandela intones that discourses of the (anti)apartheid ideologies lie in political myths that though derived from black and white South Africans' folklore, are biased in their foregrounding of men's militancy. For example, her account of the "nine Xhosa wars" is actually a history of the Eastern frontier wars, originally called *Kaffir* wars[40] as told to her by her father. She says that:

> [H]e [her father] taught us about the nine Xhosa wars. Of course we had textbooks, naturally written by white men, and they had *their* interpretation, why there were nine 'Kaffir' wars. Then he would put the textbooks aside and say: 'Now, this is what the book says, but the truth is: these white people stole the land from our grandfathers. The clashes between white and black were originally the result of cattle thefts. The whites took the cattle and the blacks would go to fetch them back.' That's how he taught us history. (47-48, emphasis in original)

The history she recalls here is her father's revised rendition of the frontier wars fought in the region now known as the Eastern Province, predominantly amaXhosa territory. The cultural syncretism achieved by merging Western educational methods with indigenous oral education systems is a strategy employed by her father, a teacher of History and Music, who turned the classroom into a performance space where various oral traditions, that informed his people's identity, were passed down to the children contrary to the dictates of Bantu education. By renaming the wars Xhosa as opposed to *Kaffir*, she is revising the history of the Frontier Wars, re-imagining the Xhosas as key participants in these wars. This bias towards the Xhosas, despite other black people's roles in these wars, might be because she says she learnt this history from her father, who taught them this history to equip them for the life outside the homelands and the future where racial prejudices were nuanced. Thus, she says,

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[40] The origin of the word Kaffir (or kaffer) is Arabic, and it denotes one who is not a believer (of Islam). The term was however re-contextualised as a derogative and racist term in apartheid and appropriated by the Nationalist discourse to normalise the portrayal of black South Africans as uncivilised.

> I became aware at an early age that the whites felt superior to us. […]; you tell yourself: 'If they failed in those nine Xhosa wars, I am one of them and I will start from where those Xhosas left off and get my land back' [...]. Every tribal child felt that way. That was the result of my father's lessons in the classroom. There is an anger that wakes up in you when you are a child and it builds up and determines the political consciousness of the black *man*. (48, Emphasis added)

It is this anger that fuelled the freedom struggle as well as created a basis for the ideology behind the anti-apartheid struggle that Biko and the Mandelas advocated for. While her father's historical rendition highlights the intersectionality of South African identities with race that encumbers the identity crisis then and today, it is lacking in its acknowledgement of women as citizens and participants.

For example, her father's version of pre-apartheid history shows a prevalence of male historical figures such as "Piet Retief", "Shaka", "Dingaan", and "Mandela" as the key figures who dominate South African political folklore. However, in this historical reminiscence, women like Nandi, the mother of Shaka the Zulu warrior are silenced. These male figures are so dominant that even Madikizela-Mandela's declaration of a hope for a future, hybridised South African society cannot escape this masculinity. This patrilineal influence emerges in Madikizela-Mandela's declaration that "when a descendant of Piet Retief – a Piet in Brandfort – and a descendant of Shaka and Dingaan – a Mandela – start to get to know and like each other and to think that their future can only be a common one, maybe this is a sign of hope", yet she makes no mention of women in this context (43). Nevertheless, she redeems herself when she uses her autobiography to subvert the silencing of women within the narrative of the (anti)apartheid armed struggle. Through embracing her image as a female militant, she is re-inventing herself and other women (and men) as militants. However, while Madikizela-Mandela acknowledges few women historical figures such as Helen Suzman, Helen Joseph, Barbara Waite, and Adele de Waal, there still remains a great chasm of historical women personalities. By facilitating the voicing of these women's struggles, she debunks the portrayal of the militant struggle as a black(-male)-only affair. For instance, she says that the De Waals suffered for associating with her. She regards the De Waal family as "very brave" for their continued support of her, especially since "[a]s a result of our friendship, Adele was ostracised by the white community" (42) and her daughter Sonia

fell ill due to the harsh treatment from the community (42-43). The punishment of Adele by her society reflects her society's control over female individuality/autonomy as a way of enforcing discipline over them (291). The desire to punish female militants can best be understood as an exhibition of the portrayal of the materiality of the female militant's body in nationalist discourse on the liberation struggle as bodies that do not "matter in the same way" (Butler *Bodies* 4) as male militants. I therefore interpret Madikizela-Mandela (and the women's) self-positioning as militant(s) a strategy to voice white and black men's and women's militant agency in the struggle. Her awareness of the culture of silencing of gender in public discourses foreshadows that the future South African society, with its united rainbow nation myth, may have no room for women, as was the case back then.

Despite the influence of her father's patriarchal worldview on her young consciousness, Madikizela-Mandela is able to recognise even as a child the gender biases in her society, thus she begins to inculcate a militancy against misogyny. For instance, she notes that her mother's desire for a son to succeed her husband as chief made her "crazy for a boy" to such an extent that Madikizela-Mandela, the fourth child, felt as if she was unimportant. This sense of rejection influenced her decision to "prove to her [mother] that a girl is as much of value to a parent as a boy" (47). It is at this age that her desire to lead is borne, which she sets out to fulfil in the future. Further, her persistent attempts to resist patriarchal norms and frame her own identity makes her the proverbial woman warrior. As she matured, her militancy too became more pronounced and while at school, she notices that her father was regarded as less of a man amongst the white male teachers. She notes: "I could see how shabby my father looked in comparison to the white teachers. That hurts your pride when you are a child" (48). Writing in retrospect, she envisions herself as fulfilling this promise she made to herself as a young woman. She becomes the 'Mother of the Nation', however problematic such a concept is, and a political activist in her own right. She therefore portrays her militancy through her various encounters with the Nationalist government in the anti-apartheid struggle as an activist, prisoner, and detainee.

In the first chapter of her first autobiography, 'My Little Siberia', she begins her narration by recalling events leading to her banishment in Brandfort, Orange Free State. She was banished because of her participation in the anti-apartheid struggle and especially because she was Mandela's wife. This attempt by the Nationalist Government to curtail her activism by uprooting her from Soweto, where her political mythology strengthened black people's

resistance efforts despite Mandela's imprisonment, however, made her even more resilient. She is intuitive in her observation that "I am of no importance to them [the Nationalist government] as an individual. What I stand for is what they want to banish. I couldn't think of a greater honour" (26). Here, her self-aggrandising attitude is nuanced and it reflects her revolutionary public image that challenges the Nationalist government's attempts to curb her political agency. Instead, she becomes even more determined to help the black women in the Orange Free State to enjoy the privileges that white women have been privy to for a long time. According to her, "Bantu" women were required to purchase goods through tiny windows designated for them in supermarkets, but when they saw her go inside to buy, they began exploring the interior of the supermarket (27). Knowing that she was a mystery, no one dared to interfere with her; rather, white women who were shopping would walk out until she left. Since she knew black women would have been chased out in her absence, she says that "I would deliberately take an hour to get whatever I needed – [even] if it was only a piece of soap – and I enjoyed seeing these women waiting outside" (27). By interfering in everyday women's experiences, Madikizela-Mandela is re-inventing warriorhood to suit he own context. In Brandfort, her symbolic militancy becomes a physical one when she says that "[l]ittle children started spontaneously giving the Black Power sign, that is how they greeted us when the police were gone" (26).

Another way in which Madikizela-Mandela performs her militancy is to dress in traditional garb, which can be viewed as a non-verbal performance of her resistance to apartheid. The traditional Xhosa dress she wears appearing in the photo on the cover of her first autobiography and which she also wore in court during Mandela's 1962 trial are a form of resistance against Western cultural imperialism.[41] Speaking about her choice to demonstrate resistance against apartheid through dress codes, Madikizela-Mandela says that:

> I was banned from wearing my traditional dress [see figure 5 and 6 below] – we women all pitched up in our traditional dresses, it inspired people, it evoked militancy – but I was only allowed in court on condition that I never wore traditional dress. […]. So I started wearing the traditional colours of the ANC. […]. During a court case in 1977 for instance, when I was being cross-examined, the prosecutor said, 'Mrs

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[41] See figure 12 in chapter seven, "We Couldn't Stop Our Children", in *Part of My Soul Went with Him*. This photo is however not displayed as one of the images in this thesis.

Mandela, can you tell this court why you have come dressed in the colours of the banned African National Congress?' (87)
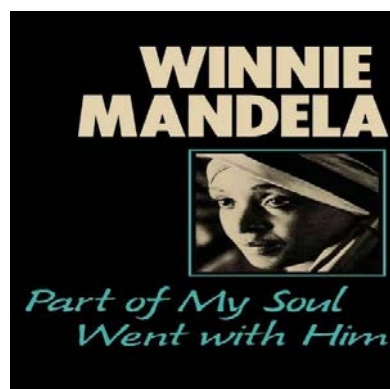

Figure 5: Winnie in Traditional Xhosa dress[42]   Figure 6: Book cover showing Winnie in traditional attire[43]

As she exemplifies in the extract above, the Nationalist regime expected her to dress in less-intimidating clothing to render her a commoner and to disabuse her of the power that her military regalia bequeathed her. Traditional outfits remove her from this category of women in need of protection, she becomes the protector. Image 11 in chapter seven of *Part of My Soul Went with Him* (not displayed in this thesis), demonstrates this challenge to social control. In this image, the upper part of her body is framed in a simple attire complimented with traditional Xhosa ornaments and captioned as: "Winnie in traditional dress in Brandfort, 1978" (np). She also appears in a traditional attire in image 12 of the same first autobiography (also not displayed in this thesis) with the caption: "Winnie in front of Palace of Justice, 1962 at Mandela's trial" (np). Despite the fact that Mandela was found guilty and imprisoned after this trial, Madikizela-Mandela sustained his legacy in his absence as his political widow, therefore reinforcing her militancy. She writes:

Many people here [in Brandfort] had never heard of the African National Congress. They had never heard of Nelson Mandela. Here now is a living symbol of what they have been kept away from, of what they kept being warned against […]. They have reached a stage now where they realize they no longer have any place for me in the country – they [Nationalist government] honestly don't know what to do with me. (28)

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[42] This image, obtained from: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2351653/Nelson-Mandela-health-Winnie-Mandela-insists-iconic-leader-fighting.html shows Madikizela-Mandela in traditional Xhosa dress. This black and white photograph has been described as Nelson Mandela's favourite photo of his wife while in prison for 27 years.

[43] This book-cover image is obtained from:
http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/70067.Part_of_My_Soul_Went_with_Him

I interpret Madikizela-Mandela's insistence on traditional African wear as a contestation of the Nationalist government's attempts to deprive her of the power that such clothing afforded her and as a rebellion against their efforts to relegate her to the domestic space wearing ordinary clothing.

All these acts of militancy that Madikizela-Mandela narrates in her autobiographies show her desire to define herself as a militant, and her name is a referential point of this identity. It portrays her as a warrior against the anti-apartheid struggle and in the war against patriarchy. She says that "My African name 'Nomzamo' means in Xhosa 'trial' – those who in their life will go through many trials" (50). She adds that her father named her Winifred, which she later changed to 'Winnie', as a reminder of the resilience of the Germans to attain industrialisation and not succumb to defeat (49). This militancy is still evident in her current behaviour as it was evident in the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) proceedings from which Madikizela-Mandela emerged as a perpetrator of violence. This transition of Madikizela-Mandela's images in public discourses from one of the "great heroes" of apartheid, as she is described by Bishop Manas Buthelezi in her autobiography (20), to a perpetrator of injustice against her people as emergent in the narrative of the Stompie murder, show that she remains an enigma in the history of South Africa's (post)apartheid eras and in cultural frameworks. Thus in the period after apartheid, and following her divorce, she is represented in the media as a disgrace to the democratic movement of the ANC government. Due to her repetitive flouting of social conventions, she remains the most controversial political woman figure in the anti-apartheid narrative. It then seems that patriarchy's need to retain the status quo in the public domain results in the configuration of female militants as 'wayward' or 'transgressive.' Having discussed Madikizela-Mandela's performance of embodied militancy, I now proceed to examine Mashinini's corporeal warriorhood.

As a warrior of the workers' movement, Mashinini's warriorhood is a physical act. I regard her as an embodiment of black workers' militaristic resistance to apartheid for her "contribution to the labour movement […] in the pursuit of social justice" (xii). Mashinini embodies female militancy by writing her experiences in the leadership of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA), established to protect the rights of black workers under apartheid. As such, she is known by the alias "Tiny Giant" in public discourse of the labour movement in South Africa (xii). Mashinini's narration shifts between the singular 'I' and plural pronoun 'We' in an attempt voice her own and other black

workers' struggles for survival. By moving from 'I' to 'we', her narrative assumes the testimonio genre, which embodies communal struggles. Testimonios are, traditionally, nationalist or political in outlook, orientation and construction and they largely focus on women's struggles during revolutions (Huber 643).[44] This is a trait that Mashinini's autobiography shares with the other texts studied in this chapter. She represents her personal experiences as similar to those of a larger community of black South Africans marginalised by apartheid.

One such representation of Mashinini's militancy is manifested in her recollection of her prison experience following her arrest by the Nationalist government for her labour union activism. In chapter six, 'The Arrest of a Commie', she remembers how in the course of her detention under Section 22 of the Terrorism Act, she learnt that in agitating for workers' rights, not only was she a threat to the status quo established by apartheid, but also a "nuisance and a trouble maker" who had now joined a list of people who the government regarded as a threat to its capitalistic ventures in their war against "communists" (60). In writing her prison narrative, Mashinini faces a new struggle, described by Roux as "an anxious struggle to avoid being drawn into the prison's modes of self-disclosure", which devolve a subject to a dehumanised state that robs them of their agency (21). For example, although in prison, she turns her new identity as detainee into a position of power that enables her to withhold speech so as to protect other labour unionists outside and their role in the anti-apartheid movement. While being questioned about her labour union work she is fed anti-Communist propaganda to coerce her to talk out of fear that someone had betrayed her. Instead, she says: "I know I never had the opportunity to complete my education, but *they* [prison wardens] were very stupid, I must say" (80, emphasis in original), always trying to find 'truth' even when "there was nothing to give away" (81). Emerging from these statements is Mashinini's growing consciousness of the power she wields in observing silence. In her narrative, the multiple 'I's she embraces fragment her selfhoods such that the implied voicelessness that the silence suggests is counter-balanced by her autobiographical narrative that gives agency to her marginalisation as a black woman prisoner. The tone of her autobiography also creates the impression of a willingness to acknowledge other people who shaped her conviction of the philosophies she adheres to thus her identity appears as though it is in the process of becoming rather than complete. By choosing to foreground her silence

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[44] This genre found prominence in Latina critical tradition, especially as a methodology for conducting research on communities with racial disparities.

and fragmented selfhood as her chosen agential technique, she represents her experiences in alternative ways to the "*confessional*" mode that dominates South African (men's) prison writing (Roux 27, emphasis in original).

Further, Mashinini speaks back to the subjection of black women under multiple violent acts as workers and at home by husbands who displace their psychological anger on their wives in physical abusive ways. For example, she says that "the problem of the working mother [is]: you are divided. You are only working because you have to. […] at work you [are] thinking of the children, and at home you [are] thinking of the job, and then you had this extra person to think about – a husband" (16). She views South African black women's existence as a continuous struggle against hegemonic structures like apartheid and patriarchy that exercise patronage over women's bodies. She acknowledges the women's agency when she comments that "black women gained from this and learned to develop resourcefulness, and talents and skills, and trained themselves to become truly competent" (24). A demonstration of these women's survival tactics emerges in her accounts of *stokvel* activities (discussed above) and the spirit of communalism that existed among neighbours. For instance, she says that her immediate neighbour, who had a white employer, was "able to bring leftovers of sandwiches from the rich children, and as she had no children of her own she would pass those leftovers to me. And so we sustained each other, woman to woman – a woman-to-woman sustaining" (20). I read this collaboration as a realisation of women's power that challenges women's multiple marginalisation. As such, Mashinini incites her audience into reconsidering how the conceptualisation of black women's bodies in relation to labour presents a female subjectivity that portrays women as powerless. Her invocation of her configuration as a 'Tiny Giant' in the labour unions' public discourse, as Jay Naidoo advances in the foreword to this text, might be a dialogic technique through which she counters her portrayal as not quite human – albeit metaphorically, re-defining her relationship to the labour movement in her own terms.

Whereas in Mashinini's text warriorhood is corporeal, militancy in Ramphele's case is a textual technique she uses to forcefully rescript women's political agency. In this section, I mostly analyse her second autobiography *A Passion for Freedom* (2013) but also refer to modes of self-writing in *A Life* (2005) to draw attention to shifts. I argue that her second autobiography's approach to post-apartheid womanhood is an experience akin to imprisonment, and her representation of these dynamics echo a condition that Roux describes as the "depoliticisation of imprisonment after apartheid" (233). I read the term

depoliticisation as suggesting the dissociation of imprisonment from politics of governance. In *A Passion for Freedom,* she attempts to contest the idealistic representation of women in war narratives by re-structuring women's everyday struggles within a matriarchal system and stages her political agency within the African cosmological background of orature. The prefix 're-' in refocusing, re-scripting, retelling, reshaping, re-membering, among others, becomes a textual technique to forcefully bring women and their (oral) narratives back into focus and to re-script women's narrative military agency. The invocation of public acts of memory archived in orature is part of the nation's collective historical remembering that I consider integral to her identity construction. I view these elements of orality through which her autobiographies narrate her collective historical consciousness as constituting what Gunner calls "symbols of folk culture" ("Remaking" 20). I suggest that when used as inter-texts in the woman writer's autobiographical re-enactment of nationalist discourse, these oral features function as narrative strategies that re-establish women's agency within liberation nationalist discourses. One of these oral elements that Ramphele foregrounds is storytelling. She says that in the context of apartheid South Africa,

> [s]torytelling is a historical imperative. […]. This is particularly so for women, especially black women. Women have to find a script, a narrative to live by, because all other scripts are likely to depict them in roles that fit the conventional stereotypes. Storytelling is also an urgent project for black women in South Africa where so much forgetfulness is willed upon people. (7)

What stands out in the extract is that women imagine militancy in different ways and Ramphele advances storytelling as a method to resist conventions: life writing, warriorhood, political womanhood. In light of her witticism and insightful perceptions, I suggest that her texts are written with what Sarah Brouillette calls "postcolonial authorial [and womanist] self-consciousness", which relates to common conceptions held by the writer and reader(s) that influence a text's reception (7). In this case, I propose that Ramphele's writing is based on a set of assumptions, including the belief that the reader is aware of South African indigenous knowledge systems that inform her treatment of storytelling and praise poetry as a demonstration of her maternal predecessors' political agency; their historical consciousness.

For example, in chapter one of *A Life* titled "My Roots", as she recalls her paternal grandmother's oral praise poetry performance in her childhood, she says, "[n]ever one known

for false modesty, my grandmother always ended the praise-singing by acknowledging her own central role in the extended family, as a 'jack' that lifted all implements, large and small" and then Ramphele reiterates the praises in her own indigenous language, Sotho (11). Perhaps more interesting is her observation that her grandmother's performance often attracted the participation of her entire neighbourhood. Her narrating 'I' shifts in perspective from a granddaughter to an academic when she says, "[a]s Harold Scheub has correctly observed, African oral tradition in this form is able to distil the essence of the human experience and offer it in memorable form to help shape future relations and actions" (11). Thus she is recognising older women as having initiated historical revisionism through orature, even before literate modern women scholars like herself contemplated doing it in writing. Although the concept 'postcolonial authorial self-consciousness' if often discussed as a reactionary element to exoticism, as Graham Huggan and Brouillette advance it, I wish to delink it from exoticism for two reasons. First, as Doseline Wanjiru Kiguru rightly comments, writers sometimes strategically incorporate stereotypes about Africa(ns) to "reflect a writing that is conscious of its marginality", and she calls this technique "de-exoticisation" (133). Having said so, I am convinced that Ramphele invokes orality not necessarily to de-exoticise her text, but to establish continuities with womanist modes of historical consciousness, in view of Mary Modupe Kolawole's assertion that "information on African concepts of womanhood, gender ideologies and philosophies, that [define] gender relations and constructions [are] stored in oral literary genres", of which praise poetry in Ramphele's society is one of it ("Re-Conceptualizing" 253). Like Kolawole, I read these examples of womanist contestations of gender constructions as proof that African women were conscious of the non-representativeness of gender even before the global feminist movement.

Furthermore, I propose that Ramphele's declaration of storytelling as an alternative way of retelling history suggests a militant re-scripting of narratives that re-situate black women into the (post)apartheid nationalist discourse. This militancy captures the mundane aspects of women's lives that would ordinarily be subsumed as apolitical. I view her notion of militancy in re-membering women's struggles under apartheid as characteristic of what Mathilda Slabbert calls "commemorative reminiscence [that goes] beyond merely the political" ("Cultural" 56). The 'We' that Ramphele is referring to is the collective identity of black South African women, whom she views as dislocated subjects by virtue of their omission from history, and it seems, from the autobiographical tradition in South Africa. Ramphele

also refers to storytelling as a mediator of the crisis of colonialism, its successor apartheid and the disillusionment of post-apartheid in South Africa. She observes that "[s]torytelling is part of the struggle to transcend loss" (8). This loss foregrounded here seems to refer to multiple issues, for instance: women's visibility in the public sphere before colonialism/apartheid, the loss of the autobiographical subject's individuality as advanced in the previous section, and the more explicit loss of lives, property, and identity as a result of apartheid. Storytelling hence enables Ramphele to separate the individual from the communal as implicated in the title of her first autobiography *A Life* – which, in my view, is a narrative technique that attempts to reclaim her individuality and women's voices from the margins. Thus orality becomes a mode of expression that allows women's voices across generations to rescript their agency.

Through appropriating storytelling as a womanist mode of re-inscribing black women's voices in history, Ramphele reimages South African women's apartheid subjectivities as comprising an alternative selfhood that contests "conventional stereotypes" about womanhood (7). She acknowledges the existence of women's voices in public discourse on (pre)apartheid South Africa and says that "[t]he important women in my life have shaped my life through texts that have come my way in the form of praise poetry […]. They chanted and ululated at occasions where celebration was called for, and also had the courage to sing the praises of fallen heroes" (8). The singing of praises is a re-enactment of praise poetry, an oral tradition that serves as a way to celebrate South African legends, who as Gunner notes, are often masculine. Gunner considers this form of remembering "a contemporary form of cultural production" in modern South African political discourse ("Remaking" 22) and I interpret Ramphele's decision to remember herself and other women in praise poetry a form of historical revisionism. Consequently, Ramphele suggests storytelling as a method of inscribing South African women's voices in history. This methodology contests the patriarchal mode of historicising the past that silences women's agency in the public space. Orature therefore repositions women in the South African public discourse of anti-apartheid struggle. Ramphele says that "in transforming their [women] stories into the written word, [she is] paying [her] dues for the rich milk [she] drank from them" (8). By facilitating the emergence of other women's voices that came her way alongside her own story, she recreates herself via orality, particularly praise poetry and storytelling, thereby establishing continuity with pre-colonial and pre-apartheid modes of black women's historical consciousness.

A woman political autobiographer, says Ramphele, faces the burden of memorialising a communal historical consciousness due to "selective memory" mostly in war narratives where the writer has to narrate traumatic experiences of others (7). She notes that "it is so easy to rewrite history for one's own benefit" as opposed to the preservation of communal memory (7). These communal stories then become archival material of the social histories of (post)apartheid South Africa. I read Ramphele's concession above as her awareness of the enormous task of representing women's voices that have been silenced in a new historical era where being a woman means being erased from public discourses. The alternate locations she situates women in as silenced yet vocal, suggest the need to search for spaces where women's agency thrives, and oral traditions and women's autobiographies are some of the spaces she recommends. Ramphele's observations above fit within Kolawole's paradigm of "*Arere* ideology*", which Kolawole advances to explicate the duality of women's voice(lessness) ("Re-Conceptualizing" 256). This ideology is derived from the "*Arere* metaphor" that according to Kolawole, "presents the dilemma of African women's attempts to speak out and assert themselves in a cultural cosmos that still sometimes considers women's vocality as an anomaly even in the most enlightened space(s)" ("Re-Conceptualizing" 256). Ramphele therefore characterises her autobiographical act as 'storytelling' because this oral technique allows for very intimate experiences of the self and other to unravel concurrently. Storytelling as the most preferred mode for retelling the self and other women allows multiple voices to reveal their experiences and all are assembled in one narrative but without taking credit for other people's creations or betraying other people's intimate details. Ramphele declares that women narrating their experiences through this mode is "an urgent project for black women in South Africa where so much forgetfulness is willed upon people" (7). Storytelling for Ramphele is then a "script" that black women specifically appropriate to break free from social conventions "because all other scripts are likely to depict them in roles that fit the conventional stereotypes" (7).

Consequently, Ramphele presents storytelling as a womanist technique of dealing with trauma and inscribing public and private agency of womanhood as historical. She views the autobiographical act as a "transcendence" that goes beyond remembering the "past" to forge a new imaginary for women besides the patriarchal construction of womanhood within the domestic sphere (9). She re-invents herself as constitutive of an African political womanhood contrary to her construction as a 'honorary male' (discussed above). She re-interprets her configuration as a honorary man as a manifestation of the South African public's short-

sightedness of an alternative African political womanhood, which manifests as an anxiety that polarises all public against a dominant African political masculinity. Instead, she suggests that African political womanhood should be explored in its own right as a femininity that Ramphele characterises as an "alternative female destiny" (9). In performing this political womanhood, she envisions herself as a model of this transcendence, and imagines herself as a representation of the idea of 'transgression' that is applied to women who engage in politics. Ramphele thus makes claims to political womanhood, consequently historical consciousness, through constructing storytelling as an "illocutionary force" (Lara 2).

In conclusion, stories of these three writers are an enactment and contestation of women's 'political warriorhood'. Their autobiographies are spaces that converge historical meanings of militancy such as MK's activities, and the writers' performance of their resistance to apartheid dramatise ideological militancy. Their autobiographical representations show that the changing societal perceptions of women in war and afterwards reflect patriarchal biases to women's existence in the public sphere and the 'battle-field'.

Conclusion

On the basis of Marcus's criticism of "historical consciousness", I surmise that the African woman's political auto/biography demonstrates autobiographical and historical awareness of their contexts and the process of inscribing the self and other. In this chapter, I focused on five South African autobiographies. While they document different historical time-frames in South Africa, pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid, most of the first editions dwell on the period before the official end of apartheid. It is for this reason that Ramphele, Mashinini, and Kuzwayo re-issue their autobiographies post-1994 to document events not narrated in their texts. In *A Passion for Freedom*, Ramphele added a chapter '*Agang*' that narrates her life in legislative politics, a section that is missing in *A Life*. However, Madikizela-Mandela's *491 Days: Prisoner Number 1323/69* (2014), is not a re-issue, but her own writing unlike in the first text where she only narrates her experiences to a writer. I interpreted the autobiographers' narrations of their apartheid experiences in reference to four metaphors of selfhood deliberately and covertly appropriated as narrative strategies, which suggests that these autobiographies historicise black women's agency in the apartheid struggle. The next chapter examines how the private self is inscribed as political through memory.

CHAPTER THREE

"Re/Signing the Private Self": Reading Methods and Modes of Personal and Collective Remembering in the African Woman's Political Autobiography

Memory, like wine, grows mellow with time. The impurities settle into deep forgetfulness. Body becomes mind transparent, and I can see things to which I was blind (Saadawi *Daughter* 2)

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed metaphorical features that narrate the African woman political autobiographer's public selfhood, that I characterised as a demonstration of their 'historical consciousness'. This chapter reads women politicians' 'private' experiences as political in eight autobiographies by six African women politicians. The aim is to examine how 'techniques for remembering', a concept first discussed by James Olney in *Memory and Narrative: The Weave of Life-Writing* (1998), and further developed by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001), serve as textual devices that deliberately and tacitly show how everyday women's experiences in the private sphere are politicised in each text. I will debate that these discursive frames for remembering can be viewed as creating networks between autobiographies which exhibit fragments of modes of personal and collective remembering in the private(-public) act of autobiography, 'private' domains that exist outside the public political sphere, and public spheres like politics from which women are expunged, a process that Peter Ekeh describes as "the privatization of the public realm" (91).[45] The eight autobiographies are: Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's *Mau Mau's Daughter* (1998), Wangari Muta Maathai's *Unbowed: One Woman's Story* (2007), Grace Akinyi Ogot's *A Life* (2013), all from Kenya; Nawal El Saadawi's *A Daughter of Isis* (1999) and *Walking through Fire* (2002) from Egypt; Ayaan Hirsi Ali's *Infidel* (2007) and *Nomad: A Personal Journey through the Clash of Civilizations* (2010); and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's *This Child Will Be Great* (2009) from Liberia. Although the writers are from (and narrate their lives in relation to) different national/regional locations in East, West and North Africa, these specific texts narrate a shared experience of (post)coloniality that has resulted in diasporic migration and multiculturalism, rendering them hybrid subjects. Further, these texts serve as examples of

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[45] Ekeh describes the privatization of the public realm as the "'sublimation' of politics in which what is traditionally private swallows up the public realm" (91). Although Ekeh's theorisation (after Wolin) is not directly related to identity configuration, I extend his theory to a discussion of identity-formation.

how women negotiate memory in their narratives through relationality. While the same issues feature in the other texts already discussed, the chosen autobiographies foreground women's encounters with cultural practices whose epistemologies resonate with African womanist debates on the personal as political.

The private sphere invoked in this chapter refers to socially constructed spaces where secrecy is exerted on women by individuals and institutional frameworks that silence and normalise social injustices against women. In other words, private in this chapter connotes the autobiographical process and female experiences that due to their inability to further African nationalist ideologies or male political agenda, are privatised in the public domain of formal politics as personal, hence apolitical. I will argue that the epistemologies of these personal and collective memories are in tandem with oral narrative techniques. Together, they act as subversive textual strategies to dominant discourses of patriarchy, dictatorial regimes, fundamentalism, and colonialism, etc. that oppress women and silence their voices as private thus apolitical. Although I consider patriarchy a key instigator of women's oppression, I do not by any means imply that all men are responsible for women's suffering. Rather, my African womanist reading of these texts de-genders patriarchy to re-evaluate how women are complicit in instituting female oppression and, consequently, how some men are rendered vulnerable by patriarchy. As a precursor to the textual analysis, the chapter draws on three conceptual ideas: Jane Marcus's notion of "re/signing of the [Private] Self" (114), Elleke Boehmer's concept of "*Symbolic Grammar*" (70, emphasis in original), and Smith and Watson's idea of "techniques for remembering" (*Reading* 16). While the concepts '*symbolic grammar*' and 're/signing the private self' inform the debates on private selfhood, the notion 'techniques for remembering' functions as a methodological guideline. Below is a brief outline of the theoretical framework.

I consider acts of remembering (and forgetting) as techniques (Smith and Watson *Reading* 172) that serve in the autobiographies selected for discussion in this chapter as thematic units for re/signing female everyday experiences as political in the selected texts and I focus on particular techniques listed in the next sentence. These narrative techniques are: naming practices, genealogies, the maternal figure, and the female body, which I consider symbolic grammar that inform social and cultural conceptions of private selfhood. These details of their lived experiences, I argue, can only be represented in a space outside the domain of their political careers as the masculine nationalist discourse does not cater for individual women's

experiences. The alternative space for African women politicians, in this case/chapter, is their autobiographies. By narrating the personal as political, these writers voice women's experiences in the domestic arena and beyond deemed private and silenced in masculine nationalist public discourses.

The autobiography, as suggested by Smith and Watson, is one of the "'technologies' of memory" (*Reading* 17).[46] As a 'technology' for negotiating notions of (private) selfhood, the African female political autobiography presents an array of memories through which the writers navigate their struggles as women outside the political arena. Autobiographical memory recreates the subject's past instrospectively and retrospectively thus it is both a process and product. Olney in *Memory and Narrative* (1998) discusses two models of memory prevalent in the classical autobiography of Augustine's *Confessions*: "archaeological" – spatial or memories in stasis, and "processual" – temporal, changing meanings like names (19). Speaking in relation to Olney's models of memory, Smith and Watson in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001), debate that

> techniques and practices of remembering change. How people remember, what they remember, and who does the remembering are historically specific. A particular culture's understanding of memory at a particular moment of its history makes remembering possible for a life narrator. (*Reading* 17)

Olney's ideas inform the differentiation of memory archives into personal/private and collective. Smith and Watson observe that private memories are accessed 'archaeologically' in physical objects such as photographs, food, "heirlooms and family bibles" (*Reading* 16), and 'processually' from intangible temporal elements like "family reunions where people gather to remember, re-enact, and reaffirm the family's collective past" (*Reading* 16-17), names, places and smells. I regard private 'techniques for remembering' in this study as personal and collective memories that enable the autobiographer to forge her subjectivity relationally to family, friends, and intimate relationships with husbands and partners. I consider acts of remembering a strategy to negotiate private aspects of african political womanhood in the female political autobiography. Kathleen Woodward in "Simone de

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[46] Adapted from Foucault's concept 'technologies of selfhood'.

Beauvoir: Aging and Its Discontents" (1988), views identity as a conscious "performance" by a subject, re-created through remembering (98). The categories individual and collective memory are intertwined and facilitate a reading of a panoply of modes through which the female political autobiographer constructs the private self as socially-produced. Shari Benstock in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings* (1988), regards ordinary female struggles as comprising the embodied experiences of the private self. Benstock suggests that autobiographical writing "raises issues of the 'private' in terms of the 'self'" and how the self is "opened to question in the self-positioning act of writing" (1). I argue that an engagement with the ordinary is a re-invention of the "'self' and its [cultural] private status" (Benstock 1). Of most significance to this chapter is how the "'private' situate[s] itself in terms of the 'public'" (1), and how this positionality facilitates a negotiation of embodied experiences of African (political) womanhood.

The chapter views the process of 'resigning of the private self' in the autobiography, a concept advanced by Jane Marcus in "Invincible Mediocrity: The Private Selves of Public Women (1988), as a metaphorical return to the traditional view that female life writings narrate women's private experiences. However, I will argue that the writers' identification with the private self is a deliberate move to politicise the private sphere and contest different forms of oppression normalised by cultural customs or practices such as marriage and belief systems of traditional and religious affiliations, that is, marriage, and religious practices within the domestic sphere. I will demonstrate how the writers selected for discussion in this chapter raise awareness against these injustices through a symbolic grammar, discussed below, that traces the epistemology of historical injustices against black women (and men). I will show that through this grammar, the autobiographers reveal the different manifestations of patriarchy by naming, narrating, and enacting its indicators, and subverting its "dominion" over them in remembering and forgetting (Anderson 164).

In *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* (2005), Boehmer advances the concept symbolic grammar to suggest a female rhetoric that includes what has been defined by Iris Marion Young as an array of "vocabularies for articulating womanly experience" (4). As I will show, when used in the selected autobiographies, this female lexicon contextualises female embodied experiences within feminist epistemologies and historical events. Drawing on ideas of African womanist scholars such as Mary Modupe Kolawole and Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, and feminist scholars like Young and Adrienne

Rich among others, I will examine how lexicons used in the selected literary representations in this chapter map out epistemologies of domination and subversion on and by women. This conception of language as a 'grammar' of political ideology was first propounded by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (2006), who adapts the word grammar to refer to a "genealogy" of nationalism in postcolonial states (163). Anderson uses the concept 'grammar' to trace the "lineage" of nationalism in the postcolony, focusing on how the grammar in "colonial ideologies and policies" was "deployed" from its inception in the mid-ninenteenth century and re-invented in three institions of power in the colony: the census, museum and maps which, according to him, "profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion – the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry" (Anderson 163-164). The gendered nature of colonial grammar has been noted by Ann McClintock in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995). She writes that "black degeneracy" was "usually incarnated in [sexual images and bodies of] women" (9-10). In the (post)colonial context, these female imaginaries were transferred from the public/political into the private/domestic spheres and re-invented by religion, marriage, and culture into ways of policing women and their bodies, which the autobiographers identify as sources of female oppression. To subvert the power of these dominant discourses, the writers discussed in this chapter craft a counter-grammar in relation to four key symbols: naming, the maternal figure, genealogies, and the female body, through which they politicise their everyday experiences.

As I will show, the autobiographers remember specific events from their past to negotiate their "positionality" in relation to questions of representations of the 'ordinary' aspects of African political womanhood (Smith and Watson *Reading* 145). These personal and collective experiences recollected by the writers are relational to other black women (and men).[47] Here I use Smith and Watson's theorisations of the concept of relationality to examine how these writers' private selfhoods are influenced by experiences of others. Furthermore, I employ Heilbrun's considerations of maternity as relational to examine how multiple maternal ideologies are embraced by the authors to navigate alternate social worldviews in the selected autobiographies.

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[47] In chapter one, I explained in detail how concepts of relationality inform my study.

As earlier noted, African women's political autobiographies re/signify everyday female experiences as political. Marcus in "Invincible Mediocrity: The Private Selves of Public Women" (1988), views autobiographical writing by women in public space as multiple performance acts. Marcus considers autobiographies of public women private in that they "represent a re/signing of their names in women's history" (114). The autobiographers in this chapter performatively re/sign from the (public) political sphere, where their non-nationalist discourses are silenced. They then locate their private discourses in the public-private space of autobiography where they politicise their experiences privatised in the political sphere or in the domestic arena. They retract their names from public nationalist discourses where they exist only as public myths, and re-write themselves in alternative spaces, immortalising themselves in what Marcus calls the "private collective world of women [and male-womanist] readers" (114). This act of defection from the public domain to the private is, in my regard, the return to traditional autobiographical practices. Unlike in the previous chapter where I examined women's struggles to enter male public discourse, here I interrogate a return to the personal, in view of what Marcus terms as "the inability of that [masculine] discourse to include their voices in its history, the necessity of the return to the personal" (114). Drawing on Marcus' notion of 're/signing', I explore resignification of the self in the selected texts. Additionally, I will show how the writers re-invent the private act of the female personal narrative into alternative spaces, what Michael Warner refers to as "subaltern counter-publics" (57) where they negotiate the politics of women's everyday struggles. I have structured my debate on how memory contests and produces cultural conceptions of womanhood, from theoretical insights outlined here as well as additional critics with whom I converse in the remainder of the chapter, such as Obioma Nnaemeka and Kolawole, among others. Techniques for remembering are socially produced and acts of remembering/forgetting by these autobiographers contest and re-configure everyday experiences of African women as political.

Naming, Genealogies, Maternal Figures and the Female Body as Techniques for Remembering

Drawing on Marcus's notion of re/signing the private self I focus on naming, genealogies, the maternal figure, and the woman's body as "private rituals" for remembering (Smith & Watson *Reading* 16). As *symbolic grammars*, I recommend the four private rituals as methods of reading modes of personal and collective remembering in the African woman's

political autobiography. Firstly, drawing on Cloete and Gunner's theoretical views on naming, I examine how naming practices invoked in autobiographies of Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno and Maathai deliberate on the place of women in familial, communal, and national 'public' archives in Kenya. Secondly, informed by Boehmer's views on genealogical archiving, I explore how by re/signing their private selves in physical and ideological genealogies, Ogot and Sirleaf contest the marginalisation of women and indigenous people in official 'oral' and written archives. Thirdly, in view of Toni Morrison's views on re-memory and paying closer attention to its influence on re-membering maternal relationality, I interrogate how maternal figures in autobiographies by Saadawi and Ali features as a narrative strategy through which the writers define the self. Fourthly, guided by Elizabeth Grosz's conceptual ideas on embodied subjectivity, I analyse how Saadawi and Ali's autobiographies re-conceptualise black women's bodies as sites of re-evaluating female embodiment. These four techniques for remembering become womanist discourses that resignify the private selfhoods of African women politicians as political.

Naming Practices as a Technique for Remembrance

> [A] sense of belonging […] is established through a multitude of references to place and to the names of homesteads and individuals, forebears, friends and foes (Gunner "Names" 118)

In this section, focusing on autobiographies of Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno and Maathai, I examine how the name as a 'signature of the self' functions as a discursive framework through which the writers re/sign their private selfhoods. The former's full name is Mary Josephine Wangari Muta Ma(a)thai while the latter's is Virginia Tiras Wambui Waiyaki Otieno Mbugua and I will explain in detail how they come to possess all these names as the debate unfolds. The latter's surname is hyphenated into a compound noun in recognition of her maternal, paternal, and cultural roots, which I view as culturally inscribed in her various names. I interpret the name as a signifier of attempts by dominant discourses like patriarchy and colonialism to define the woman. The writers contest dominant symbolic grammars that generate discourses around the name as a male-defined site of identity formation and re-invent themselves anew. They resist the practice of self-identification through paternal lineages and underscore their womanhood through re-invented metaphorical grammars that make claims to a matrilineal heritage. The names that define these autobiographers therefore have symbolic value in public discourses about them and inform their historical, cultural, and

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social selfhoods. The naming practices I discuss focus on personal names, titles of autobiographies, political movements, and names of places and spaces. I begin with how Maathai's autobiography narrates forms of myth-making generated around names and how these inform gendered practices.

Maathai's autobiography *Unbowed: One Woman's Story* (2007) recaptures her struggles against attempts by patriarchal institutions like the state, colonialism, Christianity, politics and marriage to re-invent her as a 'proper' woman. She explores the notion of the self within Kenyan history by re-defining herself through naming practices. She embraces or rejects names given to her in the course of her life either to approve of subvert social and cultural practices that encompass her political womanhood. One narrative device that signals these negotiations is the title of her autobiography *Unbowed: One Woman's Story*. This title is adopted from an anecdote in her autobiography that narrates how mothers of political prisoners as political actors maintained resilience in seeking the release of their sons from prison. She describes their assertiveness as a strength that made them to remain "unbowed" until their sons were released (222). By appropriating this word as the title of her autobiography, Maathai establishes relationality with other mothers who are struggling to free their children from different forms of oppression. Not only does it voice her spirit of resilience, but also the efforts of Kenyan women in the struggle for independence from colonialism to the post-independence disillusionment. Further, the title signals a maternal voice which is relationally established with her mother and other Kenyan women. To be unbowed is thus to embrace motherhood and struggle to conserve nature and democracy for the future Kenyan children. Consequently, motherhood for Maathai is not tied to one's ability to bear children, but the desire to see the nation, her community, and society prosper. Motherhood is then linked to non-partisan patriotism to the nation. The writer thus creates this title as a nexus between nature, culture and politics. The title also signifies Maathai's resilience against Christianity's effort to re-define her. Lastly, this title represents Kenyan women's collective action through grassroots movements. Unbent by patriarchy's attempts to confine them within the private space, they remain unbroken by the state's endeavour to disrupt their various empowerment initiatives. I therefore read this title as symbolising her (inter)subjectivity with struggles for restoration of democracy, human rights, and nature conservation in Kenya.

The politics of identity inherent in naming practices that Maathai voices reflect the dynamic challenges that her political womanhood experiences in the matriarchal-patriarchal society she hails from. While her claim to leadership is frowned upon in the postcolonial (patriarchal) Kenyan civic public, it is legitimised by the matriarchal background of the Kikuyu people's foregrounded in the womanist epistemology of the Kikuyu myth of origin, reflecting what Mathilda Slabber and Leonie Viljoen describe as "*mythical motifs as creative device*" ("Sustaining" 135). This myth recaptures a nostalgic past of female dominance to advance an attitudinal change about female leadership. The myth further contests and re-writes gender stereotypes about Kikuyu women propagated by patriarchal gender discourses to oppress women in the private sphere. This is evident in Maathai's autobiography where she foregrounds female figures in her community's genealogy from a matrilineal perspective. In this myth, God created Gikuyu and Mumbi, the Kikuyu ethnic community's primordial parents who are akin to Adam and Eve, who had ten daughters but no sons. Out of the ten daughters, ten clans that constitute the Kikuyu nation were born. Her retelling of the myth reads as follows:

> Together, Gikuyu and Mumbi had ten daughters – Wanjiru, Wambui, Wangari, Wanjiku, Wangui, Wangeci, Wanjeri, Nyambura, Wairimu, and Wamuyu – but they had no sons […]. When the time came for the daughters to marry, Gikuyu prayed to God under a holy fig tree, *mugumo*, as was his tradition, to send him sons-in-law. God told him to instruct nine of his daughters – the tenth was too young to be married – to go into the forest and to each cut a stick as long as she was tall. When the daughters returned, Gikuyu took the sticks and with them built an altar under the *mugumo* tree, on which he sacrificed a lamb. As the fire was consuming the lamb's body, nine men appeared and walked out of the flames. Gikuyu took them home and each daughter married the man who was the same height as she was, and together they gave rise to the ten clans to which all Kikuyus belong. (Even though the youngest daughter, Wamuyu, did not get married, she did have children.)[48] Each clan is known for a particular trade or quality, such as prophecy, craftsmanship, and medicine. […]. The daughters made the clans matrilineal, but many privileges, such as inheritance and ownership of land, livestock, and perennial crops, were gradually transferred to men. It is not explained how women lost their rights and privileges (4-5).

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[48] Maathai, through the myth of Gikuyu and Mumbi, is deconstructing marriage as the pivot of female identity and the negative attitude directed to women who have children outside wedlock

The myth retold here explains the epistemology of Kikuyu matrilineality that informs her strong character and that of Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno. The matriarchal roots explain the desire for self-sufficiency demonstrated by these writers, and it is this knowledge that drives Maathai into conflicting situations and to success.

In view of the womanist ideology that Maathai foregrounds above, I envision her definition of herself through the technique of naming practices as a discursive subversion of patriarchal discourses that constrain women's individuality. Thus, her autobiography gives agency to female voices oppressed within the marriage institution. For example, while her postcolonial patriarchal society views her status as a female lecturer and her level of education (doctorate degree) as a threat to her husband Mwangi's masculinity and a sign that she is not a proper woman, her account of the myth of Gikuyu and Mumbi countersigns this patriarchal narrative by showing the ten daughters of Mumbi as performing a womanhood not stipulated by patriarchal conventions. Arising from Maathai's contestation of proper womanhood, Florence Ebila characterises Maathai's autobiography as "protest literature" against the state's attempts to define her womanhood and chastise her criticism of the former President Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi's governance (145). Ebila's inference to Maathai's text is framed around an instance in *Unbowed* where the writer recalls how the president described her as an "[im]proper woman" who meddled in government affairs (196). The 'official' speech was delivered to the public in Uhuru Park in Nairobi, one of the spaces that Maathai re-members as a site symbolising freedom for Kenyans, and the day, 12 December, known as "*Jamhuri*, or Republic Day" is a historical day when Kenyans mark their independence from Britain (196). The president recommended that "if [she] was to be a proper woman in 'the African tradition' – [she] should respect men and be quiet" (196). What stands out for Ebila, and I concur, is that this attack on Maathai's womanhood was performed in a space and time that signify citizenship and sovereignty for Kenyans. Of further significance to me is the blurring of boundaries between the civic and primordial publics and notions of private that the president's speech enacts. In this way, Maathai deliberates on various dynamics that names negotiate in issues of representing female political identities.

Hence, Maathai's autobiography invokes the slanderous connotations that her name is linked with in the grammar of improper womanhood in Moi's public discourse. In this way, she critiques the state's policing of women's sexuality and identities. She portrays the Kenyan

patrilineal society as designed to imagine male agency outside the domestic sphere and women in the home. Further, she notes that the state's control over the public and private domains has produced a society in which everyone is another's guardian of their sexuality. The state is the master dictator of the standard of what comprises appropriate masculinity or femininity. Thus when her husband, Mwangi Mathai, decides to divorce her for not fitting within societal stipulations of proper wifehood, she relates that the media took over the responsibility of informing the public that she was "too educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn, and too hard to control" as a wife by her husband (146). This portrayal of the middle-class educated Kenyan woman as improper reveals the tensions in the public sphere that according to Maathai, is choreographed by middle-class Kenyan men as inclined towards a masculine image. Perhaps aware of these politics of gender, Maathai discredits the media reports as a misrepresentation of Mwangi's sentiments, deliberately twisted to publicly humiliate her and punish her for "challenging the authority of [her] husband" and to caution other women not to exhibit too much independence (146). She, therefore, interprets the media's attitude towards her as representative of a masculinised press that sees a woman as the sole bearer of the responsibility to sustain a marriage. However, she criticises Mwangi's decision to publicise their marital conflict, a move she views as his attempt to justify to the society that he was a strong and 'proper' man who can 'discipline' his wife. She contests this move by refusing to "accept the inevitable recrimination from the public" that she was an adulteress or the one to blame for Mwangi's decision to divorce her (144). She invokes her divorce case in her autobiography to expose the patriarchal nature of the Kenyan legal system. For instance, she says that the grounds for her divorce, that is her abusive behaviour (cruelty) and "adultery" (145), were based on prescriptive accusations by her husband. She then says that these allegations levelled against her by Mwangi would never have been proven beyond any reasonable doubt, yet they were the grounds on which she was divorced despite her unwillingness to be divorced. When she questioned the judge's decision, she was punished for challenging the court's authority by being arrested and imprisoned for six months. Maathai criticises this legal system's bias against women through textually vocalising her ordeal. She refuses to be renamed an adulterer, which she associates with a patriarchal gendered grammar of slander for non-conforming women. Her narrative therefore crafts a womanist discourse that condemns social injustices against women while enabling her to voice her own experiences in a tone that she deems fair to her.

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After her divorce, faced with an official demand from her ex-husband to relinquish his name, Maathai deliberately demonstrates an unbowedness by changing her name from Mathai to Maathai. The name Maathai then reflects her resilience, invoked by the title of her autobiography, unlike the submission to conventional notions of womanhood that the name Mathai demands. She reflects the dilemma of being forced to disengage with an identity with which she had established her professional and social achievements, i.e. as an academic and activist as a struggle that faces many other women. Her frustration is evident when she notes that, "I'm not an object the name of which can change with every new owner" (147). She further declares,

> I had resisted adopting his name in the first place! As a way to deal with my terrible feelings of rejection, I got the idea of adding another "a" to "Mathai" and to write it as it is pronounced in Kikuyu. And so I became "Maathai." The extra syllable also signified that although a part of me would always be connected to Mwangi and his surname, I had a new identity. Henceforth, only I would define who I was: Wangari Muta Maathai. (147)

This refusal becomes her own discursively-produced symbolic grammar that not only rejects her definition by patriarchal norms, but also the legal system. In this way, Maathai employs naming practices as a technique of negotiating power in relation to marriage. By re-naming herself, she resigns her identity, Mathai as a wife, and re/signs it as Maathai, an individual woman with agency. Re/signing herself then becomes more than a process of self-definition, it is also a way to re-affirm her political womanhood. She describes herself – Wangari Muta Maathai – as "what [she] should always have been" (96), a comment that reflects her self-consciousness and resistance towards definitions of the self by 'others'. I now shift to Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's autobiography to discuss how the name as a site of re-membering re/signs the private self.

To present my argument on the name as a site of identity performance in Wambui Waiyaki Otieno's narrative, I build on critical perspectives advanced by Elsie Cloete on the former's name. Thus my engagement with Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's autobiography on this issue (naming) is supplementary to factors not addressed by Cloete. Her autobiography *Mau Mau's Daughter* (1998), narrates her contestatory acts against the influence of patriarchy over institutions such as widowhood, ethnicity, motherhood, and marriage that render women

vulnerable to oppression. As a marker of the narrator's identity, the name Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno, by virtue of her public roles and struggles against various forms of oppression, presents a "well known" (Cloete 65) subject in the Kenyan public sphere in terms dictated by the subject herself. This name performs cultural syncretism and is, therefore, a site of identity transformation and contestation, especially gender constructions. I consider the name Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno a symbol of the social meanings that this name invokes – socio-cultural philosophies and ideologies that are produced by discursive practices like religion, colonialism, and patriarchy. Cloete notes that "[n]ames and titles can become very deliberate, carefully considered acts" that in my view, produce notions of womanhood and group identity politics (66). For instance, each signifier in the writer's comprehensive name Virginia Tiras Wambui Waiyaki Otieno Mbugua invokes a different historical milestone she has experienced in her life. The name Virginia is a Christian name, which signifies the writer's colonial and Christianity encounters. As she explains, when she joined secondary school, she was re-named Tiras, which is her father's name, by her British teacher Miss Brownly, due to her teacher's inability to comprehend how a matriarchal name like Wambui can gain prominence over the Christian version Virginia or her father's name Tiras. She is re-named "Virginia Tiras" and her maiden name 'Wambui' is ignored (29). Consequently, she rebelled against this re-naming by refusing to answer "yes ma'am" when addressed by the name Tiras (29), an event marks her first struggle against patriarchy and colonialism. By rejecting being defined by someone else, she takes ownership of the identity-marker she likes which is her maiden name, Wambui. This decision indicates a resistance to hegemonic cultures like colonialism, Christianity, and patriarchy, even at a young age. She prefers being associated with the matriarchal figures Maathai identifies, rather than being daughtered to a father, the symbolic patriarch. As a result, she was characteristically called "rude" (29). This experience partly explains her reluctance to being mothered by the patriarchal and colonial discursive practices of Queen Victoria's Empire.

The matrilineal choice Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno makes, identifying herself as daughter of Mumbi, embodied by the name Wambui, suggests a deliberate choice to be a daughter of a mother rather than father. From this powerful and agential position, she re-members both her maternal and paternal lineages in her autobiography to sign 'forgotten' women like the nameless mother of her clan's patriarch, her great-great-great grandfather Hinga, into history. For example, she notes that Kikuyu oral history officially begins with Hinga but it fails to mention his mother whose courageous efforts saved his life. She is simply known as "Nyina

wa Hinga" or "mother of Hinga" and the anomaly of silencing her identity has resulted in a historic gap that describes her people as descendants of "the Waiyaki line" rather than the "Kaputiei lineage" (11), where Kaputiei refers to the nameless mother's clan name. Even then, this clan name, Kaputiei, is also patrilineal, a factor that shows the perversity of patriarchal patronage in her society. She intones that familial and communal archives are primordial publics where patriarchal histories thrive while women's experiences are privatised and marginalised. Once published, autobiographies are public sites and by re/signing women's stories into these public histories, Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno is conducting a womanist historical revision. Thus the writer does not totally escape the patriarchal patronage that shrouds her identity. Her historical rendition of Kenya as a nation begins at the family level with the story of Hinga. In narrating the silenced history of "Nyina wa Hinga", Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno allows the heroine of her family, whose history is archived in the Maasai people's matrilineal oral tradition to (re)emerge (11). She reverts to the oral archive and incorporates the names of women in this genealogy. In this way, she establishes a counter-narrative to the patriarchal narrative that valorises the names of their first-born-sons. She reiterates:

> I find it to be very discriminatory that a person is referred to as 'son of Mr. so-and-so.' I prefer that people be referred to as 'son or daughter of Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so,' except in cases of single parenthood. Because of this belief, I will show both sides of my family as I write about my genealogy. (11)

Consequently, she narrates both sides of her family tree and details ancestral charts of paternal and maternal lineages. This genealogical chart, complemented with photographs and anecdotes, constitutes her womanist genealogical narration. She demonstrates her awareness of the silencing of women's histories and voices in the oral archive and history of the (post)colonial struggle for independence. She also reconstructs this genealogy as a folktale, inserting Hinga's mother into the legend that is of a prophetic nature, denoted by the title of her first chapter, "the coming of Kumale Ole Lemotaka, or Hinga" (12). In doing so, she conveys her womanist agenda of writing against traditions that exclude women from their children's identity.

Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's (womanist) historical revisionist agenda is implied in the discursive device of the title of her text *Mau Mau's Daughter: A Life History*. This title

signifies a link between Kenya's precolonial, colonial and postcolonial histories as sites of memory where female notions of selfhood transit and translate the self and others within and beyond national boundaries. In itself a genealogical map, the title suggests how Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's identity was discursively produced by discourses of the anti-colonial movement in Kenya and the subsequent authoritarian regimes of Kenyatta and Moi. What seems problematic is the fact that, despite her feminist agenda, she chooses to identify herself as a daughter rather than mother of the Mau Mau ideology, an association unlike trends evident in the autobiographies discussed in the previous chapter. I interpret this signing the self in the title as a daughter of this movement as an act to de-gender it so that Mau Mau becomes mother and father.

Furthermore, by including Waiyaki as part of her name in this narrative, she ratifies her warrior-image and signals her association with paternal strength and power. I interpret her decision to embrace the name Waiyaki as opposed to Tiras as a deliberate act and also perhaps a desire to distance herself from the weakness signified by her father who was nick-named 'Karinde'. She explains:

> My father was Wathoni's first son. Her second son, Mugo, was sickly and died. Her third son, Gichuhi, died soon after birth. For this reason she was very possessive of my father, her only surviving son […]. My grandfather Munyua wa Waiyaki sensed Wathoni's attitude and started to dislike her son. He was nicknamed 'Karinde,' meaning the hidden one. (Later, my father would file a case in court giving people six months in which to stop calling him Karinde or face a jail term not exceeding six months). (20-21)

In this recollection, she revises the details of her father's mockery in society and inadvertently reveals an implied, albeit partial, belief in his fickle masculinity. Her own sense of warriorhood that leans towards Waiyaki's public imagery is legitimised by the anecdotes she recalls about Waiyaki's legendary exploits to resist the British Empire's Captain Lugard's attempts to confiscate the land of the Kikuyu. In Kenyan oral traditions, the name Waiyaki denotes a powerful Kikuyu legendary leader, also the writer's grandfather. According to Cloete, Waiyaki was a controversial "Kikuyu warrior purported to have waged war against the neighbouring Maasai and the British, the latter later exiling him from Kikuyu land and, it is alleged, burying him alive head first" (67). This oral history is recorded in the first chapter

of her autobiography where Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno narrates it as part of her genealogy and family history.[49] I view her nuancing of Waiyaki's status as King a technique to foreshadow her future leadership subjectivity. Both names, Wambui and Waiyaki, also identify her as a Kikuyu, one of Kenya's largest indigenous communities.

The inclusion of Otieno, her husband's surname, in her full name endorses her activism for widows' rights in the post-colonial era. Silvano Melea Otieno (hereafter SM Otieno), was one of Kenya's most famous criminal lawyers. After his death, the ensuing battle over his remains placed his wife at logger-heads with the state and the Umira Kager clan of her husband, exposing the ethnic politics and evils of the autocratic regime of post-independence Kenya and the poor state of women's rights in the country. Otieno's burial saga, which according to Cloete, "has generated over a dozen books and articles on the subject [where] details of Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's domestic and public life, as adduced from court evidence, hearsay and communications with her, are given" (67), became part of public discourse in Kenya following Otieno's family and clan's decision to contest his will to be buried in his Nairobi farm as opposed to his ancestral home. What began as a family conflict became state business when the government, then under the leadership of President Moi, interfered in private matters and issued a public statement supporting Otieno's clan's decision to bury him in Siaya. Later, this came to be interpreted as the state's misuse of power. I interpret the state's extension of its power into the primordial and private domain as a blurring of the public-private boundaries and the indeterminacy of the stability of citizenship or subjecthood for hybrid subjects like Wambui Otieno in the postcolonial context.

To challenge the state's, and patriarchal society's, interference in her personal and private life, the autobiographer also invokes the name "Msaja", which she acquired during the struggle for independence to conceal her identity as a Mau Mau warrior (37). This name not only represents her militancy during the anti-colonial struggle and celebrates other ordinary women's contribution to the anti-colonial struggle, but it also captures her headstrong decision not to succumb to the state and Umira Kager clan's manipulation to conform to the standards of womanhood set by them. She explains that Msaja "is a Baganda word that means

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[49] Waiyaki is rumoured in some Kenyan public discourses as having been a sell-out of his people, though Kenyan official history and his family oral history portray him as a heroic mythical figure who resisted colonial rule. I consider these non-official versions of truth as important in Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's self-exploration, as they contain what Grace Musila in *A Death Retold in Truth and Rumour* (2015) calls "social truths" (Musila *Death* 7).

man or mister", a nickname given to her by the Mau Mau fighters due to her fame of strength and bravery "as a man" (92). Apart from re-membering her political activism, this name is also a reminder of the trauma she experienced during her tenure as a freedom fighter. Msaja is also a nick-name that her husband SM Otieno often evoked in acknowledgement of her strength. The use of Msaja in her reminiscence about her inability to bury Otieno's body, juxtaposed with her innovative honouring of his wish by setting up his monument instead and carrying out a burial ceremony on their farm, an act that portrays her resilience towards patriarchal acts that attempt to subjugate her political womanhood. She recalls how her husband, anticipating this conflict after his death, warned her friend Rahab Wambui, saying:

> Msaja [Rahab], you know Mr. [meaning myself][50]will have a lot of problems when I die. She will have a lot of problems from my relatives and the Kager clan […]. I come from a very bad tribe. I come from a very bad clan. If they deprive you of the right to bury me, do not pass Westlands, do not attend my funeral at Nyamila [his ancestral village], for if you do, I will kick the coffin, come out, and fight you and all those who would be accompanying you and then go back to my coffin and die, for dying I must die. (134-135)

In this extract there are two references to 'Msaja'; first in reference to the writer's friend who is a metonym of the women's movement in Kenya and second to the writer, who is portrayed as masculine. This image evokes her militancy as a Mau Mau warrior, and it foreshadows her unwavering strength in the war she wages against two strong patriarchs – the Luo community and, by proxy, the state.

Finally, Mbugua is the name of her second husband and it countersigns the patriarchal society's biased dictates in terms of marriage norms. Her marriage to Peter Mbugua in 2003 mainstreamed in Kenyan media and public space. In this discourse, she was portrayed as a 'she-roe' and transgressor for marrying a younger man; at the age of 67, and Mbugua was 25. The 42-year age difference became a point of national debate in which Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno was criticised for transgressing social and cultural norms. She portrays her marriage as a challenge to society' easy acceptance of men's decision to marry anyone of their choice while establishing stipulations that restrict older women from marrying younger men. In a

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[50] The words in square brackets appear this way in the original. This stylistic interruption clarifies that Mr. signifies her and not her husband.

media interview, she explained that she wanted her marriage to liberate Kenyan women from the patriarchal supposition that a man can marry a younger woman, yet the reversal is frowned upon.[51] To conclude the debate in this section, I have examined the name as a syntactic unit that embodies African women's ordinary struggles as political. Naming thus encodes a plethora of histories and memories. It is a site where women negotiate patriarchy, history, and identity.

Genealogical Archiving as a Technique for Remembrance

> [O]ne of the first moves generally made by the African leader-autobiographer in presenting [oneself] as a model national subject is to position himself [sic] within a tightly woven *genealogical network* (Boehmer "Male" 77, emphasis in original)

A debate about remembering /forgetting women in Africa as a trope calls for an examination of narrative strategies that resignify individual and collective private selves while capturing a multiplicity of African female political subjectivities. Grace Ogot and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf too re-construct their identities from genealogies of their families, communities, various institutions, political movements, and nations. My reading of genealogy as a technique for remembrance in this section seeks the interplay between the self and other, individual and communal, with regard to the question of African female political subjectivities and their (un)belonging in contested spaces and places. Here I classify genealogies, both personal and collective into two basic categories: ancestral and philosophical.[52] The former constitutes family, clan and communal lineages that form the background to "the leader's origins and socio-historical context" (Boehmer 71), while the latter, also called "ideological", narrates the trajectory of the nation's history, through which the female writer relates her experiences in the domestic arena towards the nation as "nationalist in [strictly] filial terms" (Boehmer 75). As my discussion shows, these histories, in their capacity as maps, trace trajectories of grammar that discursively produce notions of private female political female subjectivities. I view the revised genealogies as womanist epistemologies that re/signify women's everyday struggles as political in the private space that is autobiography. In deliberating about the

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[51] For more details, see the video on: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2qf118.

[52] This concept of genealogy follows the mode of argumentation that bears semblance to the works of Friederich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault. In this section, ideological genealogies question the development of knowledge epistemologies of the (post)colonial gendered woman following what Foucault calls the archaeological method.

works of symbolic grammar in negotiating notions of African (political) womanhood, I now turn to Ogot's autobiography, *Days of My Life* (2012).[53]

Ogot negotiates patriarchy by seemingly performing a complicit African (political) womanhood in narration that she nonetheless subverts through the symbolic grammar of the poetic discourse she draws on from oral traditions, sources that foreground women's agency. I focus on three sources she narrates in her text: her family's Luo lineages, political songs featuring her, and *Song of Lawino*, a poem written by the Ugandan poet Okot P'Bitek. I argue that these intertexts deliberate on the complexities of her negotiation of a hybrid female identity. I begin by focusing on the genealogical narrative of her familial and communal ancestry. I propose that Ogot appropriates the praise poetry to negotiate the position of women in her patriarchal family history and conceptions of womanhood in Kenyan public (political) discourses. As noted in chapter one, songs have a coded language that facilitates the voicing of women's struggles in the political sphere, family and community or patriarchal society. It seems that songs for this autobiographer function as tools of protest against various forms of social injustices. These songs vary in discourse and they range from religious hymns to labour, patriotic, political and activist songs like *Song of Lawino*,[54] an oral poem that is an activist song. By referencing these songs, Ogot generates a language that voices her activism against gender injustices and her sense of self.

Although in Ogot's society it is the paternal lineage that is often archived, she re-invents these remembering practices by reconstructing the maternal lineage from her paternal side by furnishing a chart with both men and women ancestors. Apart from this chart, she also recites both her maternal lineages. She notes that her patrilineal ancestral lineage begins with the migration of her paternal ancestors from Uganda in pre-colonial times. This history serves the function of myths of origin. It suggests timelessness and her narration resembles the oral storytelling technique. For instance, she explains:

> My father, through my grandfather Onyuna, traced his ancestry back to a famous and respected hunter called Le […]. Their descendants, now led by Le, had settled in Alego Kaluo on arrival from Uganda, where they claimed relationship with the larger

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[53] See biographical detail in chapter one page 35.
[54] Oral songs are also sometimes referred to as oral poems.

Palee group in Acholi. These are the ancestors of the Kale who form the dominant clan in modern Asembo. (2)

By establishing links with the Acholi of Uganda, Ogot is not only suggesting a Pan-African citizenship based on an indigenous African conception of nationalism, but she also links her womanist epistemology with the gender activism that, as I discuss shortly, she advances through the philosophical worldview of the Acholi legendary character Lawino. She recounts her maternal lineage as follows: "My mother was referred to by those who knew her as well as 'Nyar Otoyi' (the daughter of Otoyi) or 'Nyar Kagwa' (the daughter of the Jo-Kagwa) […] a proud people who claim to have come from Pubungu in Western Uganda where they were known as Jok'Arua" (6). Further, at the beginning of her story, she says that she wanted to write two biographies to honour both her mother and father, which shows she equally values both. Instead, she incorporates the narratives of her mother and father's into her autobiography, writing about them in one chapter, to emphasise the centrality of both to her selfhood.

The relationality the author establishes with her family members whom she discusses above is related, but separate from her political and public subjectivity. Her narration of both maternal and paternal genealogies is a political act that turns these family narratives from their private-private status in the familial archive, into a private-public entity in the public space of her autobiography in accordance with Peter Ekeh's paradigm of publics and private. Contrarily, the political songs referring to Ogot's political womanhood that I discuss below show how in a patriarchal society, the public political selfhood is gendered, creating disparities between political manhood and womanhood. In this case, Ogot's political womanhood, essentially public, is translated into a private identity, and manifests itself as a private-public notion of hybridity. The songs she narrates indicate this ideological shift towards the perception of political womanhood in Kenyan public discourses. In "Mama to Oromo Telo (Mama Grace is qualified to be a leader)" (253, brackets in original), the juxtaposition of "mother" and "leader" suggests society's conflation of the writer's motherhood and womanhood in the political sphere (concepts discussed in chapter two), thereby transferring the public's expectations of motherhood into her performance of her political womanhood. These assumptions in terms of her gender roles are presented in the line: *Pinyawinjopako ni Ogot mama toorormotelo/Teloni to oromokodi* (252) translated in the text as: "The public is praising your leadership qualities/That you are the one qualified to

lead" (253). This is not to say that her society's positive attitude towards women's potential to lead as individuals is not appreciated, as is suggested in the declaration: "*Be ung'eyo Gem okolore/Gem okolore, dwarotero Mama,*" or "Do you know Gem [Ogot's constituency] has changed/Gem has changed, and want to elect a woman" (251). The cultural change implied here signifies an ideological shift in the Luo people's social vision, to signify that the idea of women's leadership, previously unimagined in this community, is now being contemplated and experimented with.

Apart from being appropriated into nationalist mythology as a mother, Ogot is also invoked as a daughter in another song composed in honour of her by the Erick Opalla choir. She is praised as: "*Nyar Asembo gero Gem*" which she translates as: "The daughter of Asembo [who] is developing Gem (283). Other names linked to this portrayal as daughter of the nation include: "*Nyar Kabondo*" or "The daughter of Kabondo" (283/4). The relevance of this imaginary to womanist politics is reflected by the statement "*Nyar gi Sophie kuodowichwo*" or "The sister of Sophie is ashaming men" (283). It seems then that Ogot encodes women's concerns with the inclusion of these songs in her narrative to afford her poetic license to subvert the patriarchal order. As a sub-genre of oral traditions, songs could be more appealing to women as it generates a performance space where women are allowed the liberty to make claims that they would otherwise feel constrained to make in the political sphere.

For instance, Ogot includes Okot P'Bitek's oral poem *Song of Lawino* as a medium to express her displeasure with patriarchy's prevailing dominance over women. This song is about Lawino, described by the African scholar Taban Lo Liyong as an "Acholi princess" whose husband, Ochol,[55] is a Western-educated man whose education shifts his thinking from what Lawino holds culturally dear to her (99). Lo Liyong explains that in this poem, "Lawino is absorbed in making her cultural case" in defence of traditional practices that Ochol has abandoned (99). In the extracts that Ogot incorporates in her autobiography (122-123), Lawino laments about her abandonment by Ochol when he immerses himself in his studies, followed by her desertion in favour of Clementina, a city woman. Ogot's use of Lawino's voice in this inter-text is ambivalent. It could mean that she attempts to air her own views as an educated, modernised woman who associates with, modern women like

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[55] In Song of Lawino and in Lo Liyong's article, Lawino's husband's name is spelt as Ocol, but Ogot spells it as Ochol. In this chapter, then, I invoke Ogot's spelling of this name.

Clementina. It is also probable that, as is the case in many African communities, she is directing her views through oral channels to claim the legitimacy of authenticity that oral traditions contain. By couching her political messages in orality, I debate, Ogot enables the womanist voices of traditional women like Lawino living in the modern society to talk about their struggles and conflict of interests with Westernised women like Clementina. However, in a strange twist, Ogot, aware that her society's expectations of proper womanhood might find her association with Clementina uncomfortable, cleverly resigns from this imagery and re/signs her voice in Lawino's, thereby locating herself in-between the traditional and modern ideals of womanhood connoted by Lawino and Clementina concurrently. I suggest that the oral poem *Song of Lawino* serves as a medium in this autobiography that awards Ogot a platform to lament her own struggle to come to terms with her hybrid identity as a woman who embraces both traditional and modern conceptions of womanhood.

In the stanza that Ogot invokes, Lawino tells the absent Ochol: "Husband, now you despise me/Now you treat me with spite/And say I have inherited the stupidity of my aunt/Now you compare me with rubbish pile/You say you no longer want me /Because I am like the thing left behind/In the deserted homestead/You insult me" (122). Lawino then proceeds to inform her kinsmen how her husband has left her for a modern woman, Clementina, who Lawino describes as a white woman's clone. To Lawino, it is the modernity that Clementina represents that has made Ocol (and other modernised African men) forget their roots. Lawino's portrayal of Clementina, particularly her red hot lips, that according to Lawino, resemble "the wild cat that has dipped its mouth in blood" (123). Of Clementina's rouged face, Lawino says they "[resemble] the wizard getting ready for the midnight dance" (123). These descriptions are, in my opinion, metaphorical representations of modern standards of modern womanhood that have replaces the indigenous conceptions of womanhood that Lawino represents as diminishing (123). Through Lawino's voice, then, Ogot is demonstrating the intricacy of her disadvantaged position as a hybrid subject embodying aspects of both Lawino and Clementina. The crude remarks that Lawino makes here would ordinarily make her appear jealous and her claims against Clementina as defamatory that should be treated as a bitter woman's ranting. Yet, by appropriating this specific text, Ogot is contextualising the dilemma of the indigenous African woman within the (post)colonial

setting, whose way of life has changed forever. I now turn my focus on Sirleaf's text and its recollections of genealogies.[56]

Apart from Ogot, I also analyse how Sirleaf's autobiography re-presents issues of belonging through tracing familial, communal, national, and ideological genealogies. Her autobiography *This Child will be Great* (2009), retells Liberian people's struggles with civil war and repressive regimes and links the grand narrative of slavery in America with the everyday stories of the indigenous Liberians. I propose that this autobiography initiates dialogue between two lexicons: 'Congo people' (hereafter Americo-Liberians) and 'Country people' (hereafter indigenous or native Liberians) that I read as symbolic grammar reiterating the tensions of Liberian (un)belonging.[57] I recommend that in tracing the genealogies of these discursive practices, Sirleaf achieves what Sally-Ann Murray in "Writing like life? 'Life-like' Relation, Femaleness and Generic Instability in Small Moving Parts" (2014), calls the "destabilising" of meanings inherent in discursive "forms" (72). Consequently, I propose that Sirleaf's political womanhood is reminiscent of what Murray calls "femaleness as limit and possibility" (Murray 72). I then consider her autobiography a revised womanist version of Liberia's official history as documented by the Americo-Liberians.[58] Declan Kiberd concedes that in periods of nation-building, "autobiography in" the nation is co-opted as "the autobiography of" the nation (qtd. in Samuelson "Maternal" 227). It serves as an excellent example of how Liberians negotiate tensions of (un)belonging against the complexities of

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[56] Sirleaf was awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkol Karman for advocating for a peaceful struggle to secure women's safety and their right to participate in peace-building. For more biographical details, see chapter one.

[57] While the Americo-Liberians are referred to as Congo people, the indigenous Liberians are considered to be "country people" (Wesseh 1). The term Congo people is a disputed phrase because of its derogatory and racist undertones. According to Atty Phillip N. Wesseh in "What Is This Divisive Issue of 'Country People' and 'Congo People?'" at: http://allafrica.com/stories/201501090868.html, it is not clear whether Congo people are "those with English names, or those who are light-skinned in complexions'?" or if Country People are those who bear "what is considered as native names such as […] Kollie, Wesseh, Sirleaf" among others (1). He therefore observes that the persistent identification of people by their names and skin complexion is faulty because not all Liberians who bear names of (ex)slaves are Americo-Liberians, and a good example is Sirleaf's father. In the same vein, not all light-skinned people are Americo-Liberians. Sirleaf herself is one such example, just like her mother, of German parentage, is another.

[58] The Americo-Liberians are Liberians of mixed heritage. Originally, they are descendants of the Slaves in America and were repatriated to Liberia around 1700, a time when slavery was abolished in America, and became settlers in Liberia. Some were resettled in Sierra Leone, and others in Liberia. The Liberian repatriates were however to fully acculturate and according to Sirleaf, who dedicates the prologue and first chapter of her autobiography to explain these historical milestones, chose to retain aspects of American identity, thus the name Americo-Liberians.

their contact with trade, slavery, colonialism, consequently their hybrid subjectivities.[59] These experiences conversely inform how Sirleaf and other Liberians continuously re-frame their identities in relation to the collective entities of family, community, and nation across time and space. I, therefore, interpret Sirleaf's personal struggles as narrated in her autobiography as a reflection of the changing cultural dynamics and their impact on the autobiographical subject's identity constructions.

While Sirleaf's personal account of Liberia's history is highly subjective, I consider her autobiographical truth as reflecting a certain womanist worldview that contributes to her society's identity politics. My concession arises from Smith and Watson's observations that "[t]he 'inside,' or personally experienced, self has a history. While it may not be meaningful to an objective 'history of the times', it is a history of self-observation, not a history observed by others" (*Reading* 5). Theorising on identity performativity, Smith and Watson suggest that a writer's account of herself should be taken as her truth because "only the life narrator knows […] her subjectivity" (*Reading* 5). Basing my deductions on the autobiography's "subjective 'truth'" (Smith and Watson *Reading* 11), I explore how re-membering as subject-formation is culturally-determined by a milieu of ideologies and philosophies drawn from Sirleaf's publics. Consequently, I interrogate how Sirleaf re-members herself and other indigenous Liberians as citizens and subjects. This autobiography, therefore, is in my view a site of negotiating personal and collective/national memories.

In her narration, Sirleaf situates her political career within her family history of political leadership, and constructs a genealogy of leadership in support of her political competency. She says that "[her] paternal grandfather was a Gola chief of great renown […]. It was because of his renown that [her] grandfather was sometimes visited by Hilary Wright Johnson, Liberia's eleventh president" (9). Sirleaf adds that: "[her] father's dream was to become the first native speaker of the House […]. He was well thought of by President Tubman, who not only appointed [her] father to many foreign delegations but often visited our house" (17). The writer also constructs her story in such a way that her early life experiences frame her choices towards a career in politics and activism. To accentuate this destiny narratively, Sirleaf situates herself and her autobiography within the epic form to de-

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[59] Liberia is often regarded as one of the two African nations, the other being Ethiopia, that were not colonised. However, according to Sirleaf, the repatriated slaves from America, whom she identifies as Americo-Liberians, colonised the indigenous groups that they found in Liberia.

gender the historical archive and the autobiographical genre. I then envision the epic form in this autobiography as reinforcing the image of Sirleaf as a female version of a griot, what Ogunyemi calls "the griotte" (*Africa* 3).[60] The role of Sirleaf as a griotte is to expose and challenge patriarchal cultures that silence women's historical and political agency. I suggest that she appropriates the epic form to perform this historical revisionism because as Smith and Watson note "we learn cultural uses of remembering, how certain ways of remembering are expected, acknowledged, valued" (*Reading* 16) from communal practices. Speaking in reference to an old man's prophecy at her birth that she will be "great", Sirleaf translates the wording of the prediction into the title of her autobiography. Helene Cooper views the foretelling included in the autobiography as the writer's ironic expression of her disparate living conditions at that time. Sirleaf says: "My mother and sister and I used to laugh whenever my mother told this story […] because at many of the junctures in which she recalled the words of the wise old man my life seemed anything but great (7). As a metaphorical device, the retrospective echoing of this greatness is reminiscent of Sirleaf's expression of her awareness of an underlying pressure to redeem other women. As Cooper observes:

> But all across Africa, women dearly need for this woman to be great. They need this feisty, grandmotherly technocrat to succeed, to show the enormous potential of a continent that can be great too if only it can figure out a way to capitalize on the strength of its women. And she, too, is well aware of what she is carrying on her shoulders—the aspirations of women and girls across all of Africa, and indeed, across the third world. (48)

Sirleaf also narrates her autobiography in the epic tradition, notable in West African societies a historical, political, and cultural tool that inscribes adventures of 'great' men as history and communal biographies to position herself as a female leader and historian. The epic form, in this context, contests the classical autobiography's idea of a white masculine subject, the norm that historical consciousness was the reserve of griots, themselves men, and the idea that contemporary female political womanhood is transgressive. She demonstrates hybridity

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[60] According to Ogunyemi in *Africa Wo/man Palava: The Nigerian Novel by Women* (1996), the griotte is a "feminine form" suppressed by the term griot (3). The essence of this term is a deliberate reclamation of African women's political agency from masculine discourses that purport to advance women's plight. In this way, then, she says, the woman writer as a griotte participate in various public discourses "like men, while remaining true to their womanhood" (*Africa* 4).

and contests her obscurity in history as a woman by appropriating the narrative embedding technique that combines the modern form of the autobiography, like in the classic autobiography, with the epic oral form. The epic is not exclusive to African cultures and exists in the Western literary culture, for example the epic of Gilgamesh, the Iliad, Beowulf, and the Odyssey, to mention but a few. The adaptation of the epic into the female political auto/biographical form with its chronotopic implications lays out a platform for the female writer to craft an image that represents her dynamic self beyond normative cultural stipulations. It therefore goes to say that women memoirists make a claim to orality because the informal channels through which most women in Africa share intimate aspects of their lives are oral.

In Sirleaf's text, narrative emplotment enables the narratives of Americo-Liberians and that of the indigenous peoples to unfold dialogically to the official history of Liberia as narrated by the Americo-Liberians. Sirleaf observes that official discourse on Liberian nationalism is linked with American nationalist symbols like the flag, seal, and motto. In Liberia, these metaphors, "often seen as symbols of exclusion and division" were declared by Americo-Liberians "too historically sacrosanct to be tampered with" (69). As such, Liberian subjectivities are often constructed in relation to Americo-Liberian conceptions of identity. Sirleaf suggests that a Liberian sense of becoming is negotiated in terms of belonging or not belonging to standards set by Americo-Liberians. Smith and Watson note that remembering is normative and that "[w]e learn techniques for remembering", implying that people are conditioned since childhood into patterns of remembrance. These patterns, they say, are culturally determined and part of this induction process includes "who is charged with remembering and what kinds of memories they are charged with keeping" (*Reading* 16). The validity of this statement is evident in Sirleaf's autobiography where she demonstrates how the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous peoples of Liberia have been historically programmed to remember themselves and constitute their collective identity along racial and ethnic indices.

For instance, Sirleaf narrates how at school she and her fellow students were taught to remember "the past of the nation" (Smith and Watson *Reading* 19) as an American-Liberian past. The history books recommended by the state were written from the perspective of Americo-Liberians, such as Doris Banks Henries, an African American woman married to a Liberian. Sirleaf notes that Doris' portrayal of Liberia in the tales and narratives she collected

excludes indigenous Liberians from public memory. In one of Doris' imaginaries, Liberia is said to have "sprang forth from the un-named, unexplored, uncivilized forests of West Africa in 1822" (59). Indigenous Liberians in Doris' historical rendition of Liberia are featured as villains who were a threat to the well-being of the settlers. Her version of an oral history in a tale she wrote about the legendary Fort Hill battle of 1 December 1822 reads as follows: "the courageous settlers were outnumbered and on the verge of being overwhelmed by the barbaric Africans until a woman named Matilda Newport fired a canon with her pipe" (59). To monumentalise this history of the Americo-Liberians, Matilda Newport Day was made a holiday until Liberians began to question the truth of this narrative, after which it was abolished. Later, when Sirleaf joins Harvard for further studies, she begins to question the reliability of the Liberian 'official' history after encountering in the library the Africa of the past: its empires before slavery interrupted with the "development and political evolution of West Africa and scattered its people into small, autonomous ethnic communities that were far more easily dominated than an empire would have been" (59). Sirleaf's autobiography therefore narrates the genealogies of these silenced voices and revises Liberian history. She recreates Liberian subjectivities along racial, ethnic, class, and gender schemas and re-imagines Liberian selfhoods as multiple and complex. These intersections result in the multiple 'I's that constitute her subject-positions in relation to the Americo-Liberians, Americans, the British, other male and female Liberians, and the rest of Africa. These subject-positions situate her as the narrator of a series of events that historically constitute Liberia, such as the repatriation of slaves to Liberia, the colonisation of the indigenous peoples by the Americo-Liberians, the declaration of independence and the nation-formation project, the civil war, and the ascension of Sirleaf into power. Through evoking oral traditions, her autobiography provides a space for indigenous people's voices silenced in the Americo-Liberians' account of history to narrate their collective history. Oral traditions as narrative techniques act as "collective forms of cultural remembering" (Smith and Watson *Reading* 17). Orality therefore legitimises claims to nationalism by the indigenous groups. Conscious of the silencing of the indigenous voices in the Americo-Liberians' account of history, Sirleaf demonstrates how Liberian history was constructed in favour of Americo-Liberians who were in power. She therefore identifies with her indigenous roots, and situates the history of indigenous Liberians as located in the geographical entity of postcolonial Liberia before the arrival of the ex-slaves.

By remembering Liberia's collective memories, Sirleaf explores politics of belonging in the country and situates identity as a central motif in her autobiography. In *Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere* (1998) Maria Pia Lara presents the argument that feminist narratives appropriate strategies that bridge the moral and the aesthetic to influence their societies to questions forms of female oppression that have been normalised by slavery, patriarchy, and colonialism. I argue that the epic is a precursor of the African political autobiography. In "A Review of African Oral Traditions and Literature" (1985), Scheub advances an alternative way of researching oral traditions that deviates from a conventional engagement with themes and language to focus instead on the structure. Scheub notes that "the epic and its hero are the predecessors of the African novel" (1). Although his reflections are related to fiction, I extend his argument by saying that the epic is also the precursor of the African woman's political autobiography. Sirleaf could be seen as reimaging herself as an epic heroine who bequeaths her personal maternal subjectivity the power to narrate history in the oral repository where female agency is celebrated. As an epic hero, she seeks a balance between her alternate subjectivities in her autobiography. Through the appropriation of the character of the epic hero, her voice fluidly traverses the private and the public spheres across time and space.

The patriarchal nuances in the grammar of Liberian motherhood elicit in Sirleaf ambivalent feelings towards her biological maternity; while she loves her children, her husband and society's expectations of motherhood constrain her political womanhood. For instance, although she loved her children, she says that "mothering" them and doing low-paying minor jobs was not satisfactory to her (33). To subvert the dominant discourse of motherhood, maternal relationality in Sirleaf's autobiography is creatively located in familial and maternal "communities of memory" (Smith and Watson *Reading* 20). From this position, Sirleaf challenges expectations of maternal purity, that she considers as rendering her politically vulnerable in a patriarchal society. Boehmer, writing about the role of women in nationalism, notes that "[the mother] is there at the beginning of the lives of individuals and nations [...] [i]n various nationalist mythologies and, more recently, in the matriarchal yearnings of dispossessed women seeking their own place in nations and in history" ("Motherlands" 3). For Sirleaf, the maternal voice is the device she uses to contest the controversies surrounding her affair and other rumours concerning her in the public domain to prevent instances of her private life being used to discredit her leadership potential.

Further, Sirleaf uses maternal relationality as a textual strategy to narrate how Liberian women navigate the tensions of their hybrid subject-hood. She views Liberian women as mothers of the nation, who heal the rift in the country caused by divisive racial and ethnic politics and war. For instance, she recalls Ruth Sando Perry, the self-declared "'hard as steel'" grandmother who was chosen to chair negotiations between two warlords, Alhaji Kromah and Charles Taylor, and succeeded where men had failed before (209). Accordingly, it was Perry's presence there as a woman and arbitrating between two dominant masculine figures that disarmed the men into "submitting into the election process" (210). She also applauds the efforts of Liberian women who were the "real force" behind her election into presidency as they wanted to be protected from rape and wanted clean water for their children (264). During the civil wars these women had worked towards arbitrating the warring factions. Through re-grouping themselves into female organizations like the Mano River Women Network for Peace they had "labored and advocated for peace throughout" the West African region (271). Maternity also invokes women's complicity to violence. When war broke out in the streets of Monrovia, following Samuel Doe's violent coup, Sirleaf witnessed a revolution by market women who had for a long time been living under suppression. She saw these "market women taunting those they felt had oppressed them for so many years: the members of the elite class", chanting in Liberian vernacular English: "Congo woman born rogue, native woman born soldier!" meaning that just as the Americo-Liberian or "Congo" women had birthed the corrupt leaders who had led them for a century and a half, the children of the native women were the "soldiers" who had freed them from bondage. In this euphoria Sirleaf too was called a "[r]ed-faced stupid woman! Congo woman!" (124). Sirleaf was also rebuked as an "old, dry, red, funky woman!" troubling "Pape" Doe (145) by his soldiers because she resisted Doe's whims and was considered traitorous. When accusations of her being a 'Congo Woman' came up during her campaigns, she inverted the slander by narrating her family history to the crowds.

The communal practices Sirleaf interrogates show cultural biases against women based on gender norms. For example, during her divorce proceedings, like in Maathai's case, she is portrayed as an adulteress in public discourse. This grammar of prostitution, which she says was spread by the media, intruded into her personal life and was "devastating" to her psyche (145). She felt "stripped naked" and dehumanised by the media's attack on her womanhood. Further, Sirleaf says that discourse on divorcees is derogatory and she resented being branded a woman whose husband "was getting rid of [her]!" (145). According to her, it is women who

normally bear the blame for failed marriages and as a public figure, she has to work harder to safeguard her political career from the negative publicity that comes with being a divorced woman who had an extra-marital affair. She also says that marriage is a question "commonly asked of [single] women who succeed in the professional or political world" including herself (313). In her study *Reinventing Womanhood* (1979), Heilbrun notes that "treachery [and] adultery" are sometimes "the only means available [of resistance] to competent women imprisoned within the walls of 'motherhood" (154). By subverting the good woman discourses of the marriage institution and motherhood, Sirleaf then contests her society's attempts to police her womanhood. Her autobiography then suggests that moralist discourses that define women by their pre-conceived gender roles, especially as mothers and divorcees, police their sexuality and stifle their individuality from existing independently from patriarchal ideals.

This section explored how practices of remembering and forgetting embedded in cultural archives produce gendered cultural histories that are considered histories of families, communities, and nations. The debate concludes that genealogies are socially constructed and an evocation of the silenced narratives that should form part of these genealogies reveal cultural and gender notions of belonging. The writers extensively engage with forms of national remembrance in informal sites like family histories and histories of consensual social movements that are otherwise considered mediocre. These memories complement official histories because these events are intertwined with moments of national crises. The autobiographers thus celebrate initiatives by maternal figures and mothers in their family histories and communal pasts as sites of power. These maternal histories celebrate an institution that has sustained not only great male leaders but also women in leadership, which has often been silenced in (post)colonial histories despite an oral archive that celebrates female leaders. I now discuss how the maternal figure serves as a technique of re/signing the African woman politician's private self.

Maternal Relationality as a Technique for Remembrance

> We no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African mother whom, in his anxiety,
> man confuses with mother Africa. (Mariama Ba qtd. in Schipper 50)

This section examines how maternal relationality serves as a narrative technique in the autobiographies of Nawal El Saadawi and Ayaan Hirsi Ali to facilitate remembering of the

ordinary experiences of African women. The aim is to interrogate how (grand)daughters resignify women's private experiences as political. Daughterhood is a subjectivity, which according to Ogunyemi, is a "source of power not fully explored, politically" (*Africa* 46). First established as a feminist methodology in the West, maternal relationality has its roots in the views of Woolf who observes that "[w]e think back through our mothers if we are women" (76). I apply this technique of maternal relationality in an African womanist context to interrogate how ordinary women inscribe their agency in the reading (and narrating) publics of the private sphere of autobiography through (de)linking with maternal relationality. I explore how the writers I study think back through (grand)maternal figures to establish how maternal memories inform their historical and cultural conceptions as women. In this section, I term the narrating voice of these 'children' as the filial voice, in this case, belonging to a (grand)daughter. I then suggest that the womanist filial voices of these (grand)daughters rely on maternal relationality to access and confront events that shape them, but of which they have no first-hand experience, to perform what Toni Morrison calls acts of "re-memory" (160). Morrison uses this concept to explicate the process by which multiple memories are re-membered. In this chapter, 're-memory' applies to processes that I read as enabling Saadawi and Ali to recall legacies of dominant cultures that suppress women, and womanist counter-discourses that re/sign women in public memory. This process narratively realises a transformation of the authors' self-awareness from conceptions defined by dominant cultures to those generated by the women themselves. I now turn my focus on maternal relationality in Saadawi's texts.[61]

Saadawi uses different narrative techniques to establish continuity between herself and maternal figures in her two autobiographies *A Daughter of Isis* and *Walking through Fire*. One such technique, filial voice, shows her awareness of a power inherent in the relationality she establishes with female members of her family and community, what Caroline Rody characterises as "history-as-daughter's rememory" (106). Her filial voice collaborates with her paternal (great)grandmothers' voices in remembering their marginalised family history (as peasants), within which lie memories of women whose stories are omitted from public discourses. In recognition of the partiality of historical narratives, Saadawi says that

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[61] Saadawi writes about her disillusionment with Egypt's fundamentalist, patriarchal and political autocracy. In her Arabic culture, a female child's surname is often linked with the father's name through the prefix 'El', to mean 'daughter of', hence El Saadawi. However, in this chapter I refer to her as Saadawi, mainly because she deliberately de-associates with her father and defines herself through her mother as a sign of respect for her wishes.

"[w]omen have an unwritten history told orally by one generation to the other" (*Daughter* 75). While she does not verbalise this omission here, her documentation of the stories of her paternal grandmother Sittil Hajja and paternal great-grandmother, the "woman from Gaza" (*Daughter* 48), might as well be conceived as "calling them back into being" by venturing into the oral archive (Gunner "Names" 123). This recollection of maternal figures in Saadawi's autobiographies signifies a symbolic resistance to patriarchal cultures. What is interesting in Saadawi's work is that she associates very strongly with the poor maternal figures of her paternal side who are peasants, unlike her maternal noble relations. While her maternal women relations also suffer under patriarchy, I focus on her recollection of her paternal matrilineal figures, except for her mother, as these emerge as central to her identity conceptualisation in both texts.

These memories of her (great)grandmother(s) act as the bridge to the womanist agency that Kolawole identifies as inherent in ordinary experiences of women and located in the oral repository of their communities. These oral narrative techniques give Saadawi's autobiographies a shift from the personal to the communal, thus relational. Through intertwining her voice with that of her grandmother, Saadawi rememories these forgotten women through whom she paints a more nuanced self-portraiture that is contextualised in herstories. This "summoning up" (Gunner "Names" 123) of her female relations' memories from the 'tombs' of history also functions as a social critique of the Egyptian society. For example, through the filial voice of young Saadawi, we learn that it is Sittil Hajja who facilitates the remembrance of memories of her grandmother, the 'Gaza woman' whose original name we later learn has been forgotten in history, and her experiences overshadowed in her family's genealogy by those of their family patriarch, Al Saadawi. She reclaims the name of this 'forgotten' matriarch by remembering it as "Habasheya", which means the Abyssinian woman (*Daughter* 26).

The associational link of these maternal figures to places, first Gaza, where it is assumed her great-grandmother came from, and secondly Abyssinia, a geographical zone in ancient Egypt that belies a history overwritten by various conquests, echoes what Gunner calls reiteration of history through "rewriting of the land and its names" ("Names" 123). In resignifying her paternal (great)grandmother's experiences, Saadawi invokes a grammar of conquest over the Egyptians, especially peasant women like Habasheya, that highlights the suppression of women's stories in public discourses to valorise accounts of men and war. According to

Pauline Homsi Vinson: "El Saadawi presents us with an alternative matrilineal world through the oral, peasant culture of her paternal grandmother […] [as] an alternative history, one of defiance and survival of the subaltern in patriarchal, class cultures" (90). The stories of Saadawi and her (grand)mother(s) are, therefore, a synecdoche of other Egyptian women's experiences. By writing these stories, Saadawi shifts the site of historical telling from the public to the private space of autobiography, where female subjectivities move from the margins of history to the centre.

That Saadawi learns how the power dynamics of sex and gender stifle women while sitting "on the threshold of [their] home" (*Daughter* 29) is significant for various reasons. First, it unravels the complexity of re-memorying; Saadawi acknowledges the cohallenge of relying on others' truths to recount the past. Secondly, the threshold as a space of narration also signifies a process of unlearning repressive cultures and relearning female-defined practices. In Saadawi's recollection of past events, it is her paternal rather than maternal grandmother or her mother who acts as the bridge to the inaccessible past and I believe it is for this matter that she refers to her by various names and not one comprehensive one. One of these names is "Al-Hajja Mabrouka" (*Daughter* 19). 'Al-Hajja', according to Vinson, denotes "one who has undertaken the religious pilgrimage (al-Haj) to Mecca" (*Daughter* 90-91), and I read this title as a symbolic device that might be construed as corresponding with the journey motif reminiscent in Saadawi's autobiographies. I read the indeterminacy of her grandmother's name as a textual strategy used by the writer to signal the unreliability of re-memorying as a factual truthful account of events she did not experience herself as the writer of her aut. Further, by expressing doubt over the reliability of her grandmother's tales, Saadawi inadvertently admits to instances of fictionalisation in her autobiography. By reiterating these women's lived experiences across time boundaries from tales told to her by her grandmother Sittil Hajja, also known as "Al-Hajja Mabrouka", she celebrates the heroic deeds of Egyptian women as far back as oral traditions have archived them (*Daughter* 19).

From her grandmother's historical rendition, Nawal – the adult – begins to understand why her childhood self-consciousness was at one time or another biased towards either of her parents depending on the gender conceptions she was exposed to what her adult self now identifies as cultural misogyny. As a gender activist, she dedicates a greater part of her autobiographies to recalling how women in Egyptian society were marginalised by institutionalised violence for merely not being born male. Saadawi recalls how her father

would narrate their people's resistance to the British occupation in 1919, addressing her brother only to notice her when he wanted water or to ask her to help her mother set the table (*Daughter* 67). The gendered discourses she incorporates here from her maternal and paternal figures become a textual technique to negotiate gender biases and to inscribe herself as agential. While in her father's stories she is a marginalised addressee, it is in her maternal familial discourses that her individuality is pronounced and she vocalises other women's agenda. Thus it was from her paternal grandmother that she learns that when the British "[o]ccupied Egypt in 1882," her father's mother, then two years old, and 'the woman from Gaza', collaborated in rebelling against the British as peasants "carrying their hoes" (*Daughter* 73). Further, Sittil Hajja celebrates 'the Woman from Gaza's' defiant move of slapping the chief guards for beating her son that earned her the praise as "a woman worth twenty men", but having humiliated the headman, she lost her life (*Daughter* 74). These stories about Sittil Hajja and the woman from Gaza are some of the unwritten herstories "told orally by one generation to the other" through which Saadawi learnt of her maternal predecessors' heroism (*Daughter* 75). She celebrates her great-grandmother's strength by portraying her hands as big, "bigger than that of the village headman, of the king, bigger than that of [her] father or [their] own Lord Muhammad, or [their] Lord Abraham" (*Daughter* 75). Although these praises might be viewed as blasphemous, I read them as figuratively deployed by Saadawi to critique the valorisation of monotheist patriarchal male (mortal and mythical) figures in both Christianity and Islam. These praises then pay tribute to a womanhood that exceeds all conventions, which she puts on a pedestal hierarchizing it above renowned transcendental male figures. I therefore read the title *A Daughter of Isis* as the writer's conscious choice to associate herself (and other women) with an Egyptian goddess (see figure 3 in chapter one) as opposed to her father as culture demands. The title is, therefore, a counter-discursive technique that subverts patriarchal practices of defining the self. It is for this reason that I refer to her as Saadawi to signify an identity she crafts on her own. Hence, implicated in the author's name, Saadawi, is her shifting awareness as she negotiates her identity through her 'mothers' and father's names.

Saadawi relates that through writing and taking part in revolutionary struggles, she has "fought against history, [and] struggled against the falsification [of her identity] in official registers" (*Daughter* 30). To demonstrate how her identity has been falsified, she narrates that her full name in the "official register" is Nawal Al Sayed Habash El Saadawi (*Daughter* 28), yet her name "Habash" is erased by the state until her arrest by President Anwar Sadat's

government when it is resurrected (*Daughter* 29). As she reiterates, this signature of her selfhood that purports to represent her individual identity is a paternal identity that the state and society imposed on her. She also says that by obliging women to take their husbands' names upon marriage, their individual names lose centrality in their identity. For example, although her mother bore nine children, upon her death, Zaynab, her mother's name, "was buried with her, [and] is [therefore] lost forever" because only the man has the right to pass "his name to the children, [and] [bestow] legitimacy and honour on them" (*Daughter* 4). By writing, she reclaims her past and place in Egypt.

The application of the concept rememory in Saadawi's texts also addresses how she deals with memories of her mother, what Rody calls the "poetics of motherlove" (108). She narrates retrospectively how, even as a child, she identified herself through her mother whom she "loved" more than her father (*Daughter* 1) but was taught to relinquish this bond and instead to identify herself through her father's name, an act that nonetheless failed to completely erase her mother's memories from her consciousness. She says, "It was my mother who taught me how to read and write […]. The first word I wrote was my name, Nawal […] [i]t meant a 'gift' […] [t]hen I learnt my mother's name, Zaynab. I wrote it next to mine. Her name and mine became inseparable" (*Daughter* 1). Saadawi's conception of the inseparability of her name from her mother's reveals the relationality of her selfhood to her mother, and this is expressed through the aesthetic pleasure their sight gives her as well as "what they meant" (*Daughter* 1). For Saadawi, the link between mother and daughter makes her whole and it symbolises life. When her father erases Zaynab's name as part of Saadawi's identity and replaces it with his name and tells her that "it is God's will", she feels violated (*Daughter* 1). Her father's actions make her lose her love for him and the God "who removed [her] mother's name from next to mine, who abolished her as through she did not exist" (*Daughter* 1). Saadawi then begins to doubt a God, described by her father as "just" and who promotes misogyny, can represent the interests of women (*Daughter* 1). For instance, she reiterates how "in paradise a man is promised seventy-two virgins for his sexual pleasure but a woman is promised no one except her husband that is if he has time for her, and is not too busy with the virgins who surround him" (*Daughter* 4).

As she matures, however, Saadawi begins to forget that her mother introduced her to writing. She begins to identify more with her father, although subconsciously she retains a level of individuality. For Smith and Watson, "the struggle with [traumatic] memories […]

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necessitates the return again and again to those incomprehensible moments in the past" (*Reading* 22). These memories include "the metaphorical and literal dimensions of language itself" (Smith and Watson *Reading* 22). While in school, Saadawi, who deems herself "in love with the letters of the language, with its words" writes a story called *Memories of a Child Called Sa'ad* as a school assignment, critiquing her society's patriarchal conviction that religious knowledge was man's prerogative. However, her story receives harsh criticism from her teacher, especially her depiction of heaven as "tyrannical" (*Daughter* 215). She is deemed a nonbeliever and of fickle faith, and her ideas are interpreted as "distorted" and "strange" for having "occur[ed] to a girl [her] age" (*Daughter* 215). This critique of her writing suggests a belief that religious knowledge is preserved only for men. When she is awarded a zero percentage for her efforts, Saadawi feels disillusioned and begins to have dreams of "zero written in red ink as though it were a condemnation to death," a dream that signifies her fear of failure in creative writing, her real passion (*Daughter* 215). However, she shows conformity with patriarchal norms by accepting that at that time, her father's approval of her writing was more significant than her mother's ready acceptance and praise of this novel that had been awarded a zero (*Daughter* 216). I suggest that this criticism of women who contravene societal norms and the zero she was awarded for her story is resonated in the title of her book *Woman at Point Zero,* which echoes her perception of patriarchy as suppressing women's voices and freedom.

One way in which Saadawi sustains her mother's individuality and highlights Zaynab's agency is through invoking Zaynab's marital experiences that demonstrate her willingness to act outside social strictures. For example, although living in a patriarchal society dominated by masculine ideologies, Zaynab defies cultural norms and prevents Saadawi from getting married at the age of ten, as custom demanded. This way she defends her daughter's right to education, which would be undermined by marriage. She also confronts her husband's reluctance to allow Saadawi to go to school in Cairo and tells him that "Nawal has her wits about her. I trust her. You can throw her in the midst of fire and she'll come out unscathed" (*Daughter* 156). The sentiment, "throw Nawal in the fire and she will come out unhurt" (*Daughter* 1), is adapted into the title of her second autobiography *Walking through Fire* as a marker of her strength. According to Saadawi, her mother's constant reiteration of this belief exorcised fear from her since childhood. In retrospect, the writer now realises that although a housewife, her mother's noble background accorded her the leverage to bargain against some aspects of patriarchy. Despite the "class differences" between her parents, the couple

choreographed their own rules within their domestic sphere that determined each one's "roles in the balance of power at home", treating each other with "mutual respect" (*Daughter* 156). What is peculiar here is Saadawi's admission that by choosing to operate outside societal norms, her father became an exception in their society and her mother one of the lucky few. She describes him as kind, considerate and helpful to his wife, a man who did not blindly follow the teachings of the Quran, especially regarding polygamy. Nevertheless, Saadawi is realistic and acknowledges that social norms still controlled Zaynab's life because as a married woman, her "husband's home" was the only space where Zaynab could exercise some degree of freedom, yet in this space, patriarchal norms still bequeathed a man power over his wife, even if her was as liberal as the writer's father (*Daughter* 6). One way in which she retains her mother's individuality is by pointing out Zaynab's willingness to "leave him rather than sacrifice her self-respect and pride", and this is the ultimate portrayal of her strength (*Daughter* 6).

Zaynab's death from breast cancer symbolises for Saadawi the finality of their separation and the end of an era. As she ages, Saadawi's "yearning" for her mother intensifies. Memories of her mother, suppressed, begin to reemerge, and she finds herself mumbling a tune from a children's song that they used to sing together, whose words she could not comprehend no matter how hard she tried. This memory is unbearably painful and the thought of recalling Zaynab's death makes her "shrink" into her clothes as she used to as a child back then, "ashamed of being poor" but now "ashamed of [her] old age" (*Daughter* 47). Within this context, by admitting to her feelings of shame, Saadawi also seemingly suggests her complicity in enforcing forgetfulness of some memories of her mother. Zaynab's death, therefore, symbolises a regret of a lost past, a nakedness that even the clothes she can now afford cannot conceal.

This conveyance of loss through writing is translated into nostalgia for her mother, a mood that pervades her autobiographies. Therefore, Saadawi seeks other stimuli that evoke memories of Zaynab such as "smell", which transcend time, space, and the absence of the mother's body (*Daughter* 30). Memory, say Smith and Watson, "is always implicated in materiality […] of sound, stone, text, garment, […] or the materiality of our very bodies" and it is evoked by "smell, taste, touch, sound–and encoded in objects or events with particular meaning for the narrator" (*Reading* 21). Saadawi remembers the "odor of her [mother's] milk" and of the smell of foods she cooked for them. These memories bring her mother

within her grasp, and she, therefore, embraces her as part of herself. She writes: "The smells of my mother's body is a part of me, of my body, of its spirit, of the hidden strength I carry within me" (*Daughter* 4). She also recalls the sound of Zaynab's voice to guide and protect her. Here, Saadawi allocates Zaynab the role attributed to fathers and poses a challenge to the gender roles instituted by patriarchy that attribute protection and guidance to men. Saadawi also deliberately associates God with her mother and recalls how she likened her mother's voice to "the voice of God" (*Daughter* 4). In re-situating Zaynab closer to God than her father, Saadawi is re-evaluating religious practices in Egypt that have repressed female agency from public memory.

Maternal nostalgia in Saadawi's narratives is also applicable to her remembrance of her paternal grandmother whom she describes as the window to her past. The link between the female autobiographer and her maternal figures has been recognised by Viljoen, who observes that "in representing the (m)other, the self is implicated ("Mother" 153) and in acknowledging these relational selves, Saadawi uses her (grand)mother as "pretext", defined by Viljoen as "the reason or excuse for her own writing as well as [invoking] *the writer* of the texts preceding her own" (Viljoen "Mother" 153, my emphasis). While Viljoen uses text to refer to a written form, I relate text to oral traditions. For Saadawi, including the voices of her (great)(grand)(m)other(s) in her writing is a process that generates a hybrid discourse. By using orature as intertexts in her autobiographies, the narratives engender multiple voices. It is through this complex process that she comes into adulthood as a hybrid subject. Her old-age voice is aware of these nuances, and it expresses the immediacy of inscribing the self and maternal other in history to defy their permanent silencing in history, were she to die before re-memorying their stories. Here, my use of re-memory, as opposed to retelling, is deliberate. The first instance connotes the emergence of dual voices where the other tells their own story, while the second denotes speaking on behalf of.

Saadawi writes about her own aging to signify physical weaknesses that her failing strength embodies, which she contrasts with her mental strength. Consequently, the older Nawal defies age by recalling her grandmother's strength. She compares her "big" feet to those of her paternal grandmother Sittil Hajja (*Walking* 48). Using feet as a metaphor of resilience through which she likens herself to Sittil Hajja, she symbolises their perseverance. She also views her posture as steady as her grandmother's gait and recalls how Sittil Hajja would carry herself head high, shoulders and back straight in a defiant gesture to her low social stature.

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Here, rememorying the (grand)(m)other is a technique through which Saadawi celebrates maternal figures alongside her own individuality, avoiding what Viljoen defines as "compromising [one's] own subjectivity" ("Mother" 153). However, while the writer's memories of her grandmother are readily available, she finds it difficult to retrieve certain memories of her mother. For Saadawi, then, writing is the channel though which she gains access to her mother. It is the voice that gives agency to the re-memory of her own experiences as well as those of the women in her family and her community.

How then does she reclaim these forgotten memories? What stands out from Saadawi's autobiographies is a network of entangled memories through which she gains entry into different times and spheres of reality, thus her autobiographies manifest "'[r]ememory' as trope" (Rody 101) of accessing 'forgotten' memories. This interwoven narration, merging past and present, self and other, allows rememorying of multiple narratives concurrently and symbolises the author's conflicting state of mind. Thus, for instance, when she recalls her mother's bodily image, from a childhood perspective, she refers to her as a deity, the goddess Isis:

> [H]er head held high, a woman full of pride, a goddess like ISIS, a halo of light around her head, like a full moon, a silvery crown that the ancient Egyptian goddess wore above her brow. When I watched her move it taught me to be proud[;] to dream of better things, of a place for myself in this vast world. (*Daughter* 4)

Movement or transition is central to this recollection. Zaynab's head is depicted as a symbolic transformation from a physical to spiritual state of being. Saadawi immortalises her mother into a figure of transcendental truth. This memory also re/signs ordinary Egyptian women's power in their maternal experiences, re-enacted in the juxtaposition of the memory of Isis suckling her son with Saadawi's memories of the smell of her mother's breast milk. By imagining Isis's silvery crown on her mother's forehead, Saadawi re-crowns her mother's strength and pride and indexes her as a metaphorical "descendant" of Isis or Isis's mother "Noot" (*Daughter* 4). Additionally, she compares Sittil Hajja and her paternal great-grand mother 'Habasheya to "the goddess Nefertiti or Queen Hatchipsut" (*Daughter* 48) to revise history and to celebrate motherhood as an important form of power that has produced great male and female leaders throughout time. By linking her (great)(grand)mother(s) to powerful (mythical) female figures from Egyptology, Saadawi not only resurrects their memories from

the peripheries of history and the patriarchal constraints imposed on motherhood, she also succeeds in upholding their subjectivity. This narrative act appropriates and reinvents the myth of Isis resurrecting her son Osiris. Similarly, Saadawi compares herself with Isis and the powerful maternal figures aligned with her to evoke the names of women obliterated by marriage or by being historically linked with powerful male figures, as is the case of Isis and Osiris. In this way, all women of her clan are deified. She re-defines herself through this maternal relationality by boldly signing her filiality (daughterhood) in the title of her first autobiography as *A Daughter of Isis*. Further, in naming herself as one of the daughters of a powerful goddess in Egypytology, Saadawi again challenges her society's religious (Islamic and Christian) perception of God as male. The womanist narrative act of remembering through (grand)mothers shows recognition of agency amongst women who despite existing in a patriarchal society, still deploy private memories as womanist epistemologies of signing their private selves into public discourse(s) in autobiographical acts. I now proceed to discuss maternal relationality in Ali's two autobiographies.[62]

Unlike Saadawi who defines herself by identifying with and celebrating her maternal figures, I suggest that Ali, whose two autobiographies this discussion now turns to, reiterates her (grand)mothers' experiences to craft a selfhood contrary to their womanhood that had supplicated to religious and patriarchal norms. In her 1999 lectures published as *Women's Lives: The View from the Threshold*, Heilbrun observes that "[f]or most daughters, mothers evoke what Aristotle recommended as the ideal response to tragedy: pity and terror. That is, pity for the mother's condition, and terror that one might resemble her" (61). Ali's works echo Heilbrun's sentiments in her resistance to Islam and patriarchy, as the title of her first autobiography, *Infidel*, signifies. Maternal relationality for Ali then becomes a technique for remembering these ideals of womanhood to reject (such as those displayed by her (grand)mother) and those notions of womanhood to embrace (like Oriana Fallaci's, discussed below). It symbolises her fear of Islamic beliefs that call for submission to patriarchy.

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[62] Ali's *Infidel*, her first autobiography, documents her early life in Somalia and her family's exile to Saudi Arabia, then Ethiopia, followed by Kenya, and her escape from an arranged marriage. While in Germany enroute to Canada to meet her new husband, she detours to the Netherlands where she acquires political asylum. Her second autobiography, *Nomad: A Personal Journey through the Clash of Civilizations*, is a nostalgic reflection on Hirsi-Ali's life in America, her re-union with her family and her return to Kenya (the temporary home where her family is based) and Somalia (the country of her birth). The expression of her loneliness in exile and a desire to return home, however problematic such a yearning might be, demonstrates her rootlessness.

In her two texts, Ali addresses social and cultural practices that suppress Somali women's agency, especially those informed by religious dogma. Basing her arguments on information she obtains from Somali public discourses in Somalia and its diaspora, she traces cultural practices that repress Somali women's agency. What makes her autobiography unique from Saadawi's is that while both writers narrate their stories as diasporic subjects on self-imposed exile, Ali's exile is layered. At first she is forced to flee with her family from President Siad Barre's wrath, but later she exiles herself to escape a forced marriage. Her first exilic subjectivity reflects the experiences of a multitude of Somali citizens who, like her, are in exile to escape the political instability and war in Somalia. Ali thus portrays Somalis as yearning for the pre-war Somalia. This search for an ideal, yet illusory, home is evident in Ali's nostalgic re-membering of 'home' while in the diaspora. In an attempt to grasp this elusive home, she subconsciously retrieves from her diaporic surroundings symbols that represent a sense of belonging. These memories of the past are triggered by sights, smells, or tastes that remind her of experiences back home; recollections that are mostly tied to her mother's and other Somali women's daily activities – like cooking for their families – as well as their endless struggles against poverty and for survival while in exile. The mundane experiences recalled are therefore success stories of women's small victories.

How then does Ali use maternal relationality in a positive and informative way? I propose that an alternative mode of establishing maternal relationality that is beneficial to women that Ali advances is the celebration of women's achievements, both the spectacular and mundane. For instance, Ali ties the success of a Somali man, Farah Goure, whom she identifies as her clan's patriarch, to his wife, Fadumo's hard work as an *angello* (a Somali pancake) seller. Fadumo is described as an extremely independent woman who helped Goure to make his fortune and even when he married other wives she did not cause havoc. Instead, she welcomed them and told them to "earn [their] own money [for] the money he married them with [was] hers" (100). Here is Ali's version of this oral history:

> One day, walking through the market, Farah Goure saw a young woman about his age making *angello,* cooking the pancakes on a charcoal brazier on the ground, rolling them up with sugar and butter, and selling them to passersby. He walked up and down smelling the *angello* and she called to him […]. Farah Goure and this young woman started listing their ancestry, as Somalis always do. Both of them [belonged to the] Osman Mahamud [clan] […]. He asked what she was doing in Kismayo […] and

Fadumo said, "I told my parents I would leave to make my fortune and this is what I did. I have an *angello* stall but one day I will buy a truck. You can start an *angello* stall, too." [He] said, "Of course I can't, I'm a man". (*Infidel* 99)

She further explains how the couple reached a consensus. Each day Fadumo would make Farah breakfast while he "apprenticed himself to a transporter […] [a]nd after a year or so of making *angellos* and renting trucks and trading between Kismayo and Mogadishu, [they] bought their first truck. Then they bought another, and a real *angello* stand, with employees" (*Infidel* 99). According to Ali, several versions of this narrative of Fadumos's she-roism were "told and retold" to Somali children "and each time it became more romantic, Fadumo braver and wittier and Farah even more enchanted with her" (100). I read Ali's retelling of this oral history as a womanist revision of a story that has become the oral history of the Osman Mahamud clan in exile. Ali's re-memorying of Fadumo's story is a strategic move that challenges the patriarchal conception that women are irresponsible and "should not be allowed to govern or accept public offices" (*Infidel* 131), an observation she makes to defend her political career. Additionally, by locating Fadumo in the public memory of her clan, who were at that time living in Nairobi as refugees, Ali defines herself as her clan's (oral) historian.

Having positioned herself as her community's oral historian, Ali thus ventures into a revision of her communal history. She delves into her people's oral repository to re-write her clan's maternal figures back into the male-dominated accounts that represent her people's official history. In this case, Ali's filial voice becomes the narrative technique that recollects her clan's collective memories, specifically through the voices of women. By invoking the voice of her grandmother, Ibaado, Ali claims the right to narrate her clan's past that probably is out of her reach. I then suggest that Ibaado's voice augments Ali's credibility as a narrator of her maternal predecessors' experiences. For instance, as children, her brother Mahad, younger sister Haweya, and Ali, were told stories by Ibaado that shaped their worldview. One such narrative, is a fable of a "lazy" nomad whose children kept on being devoured by an ogre because of his ignorance and lack of initiative to search for more pasture (*Infidel* 5). As this story is narrated, Ali's grandmother recalls the experiences of Somali's nomadic pastoralists that Ali and her siblings have been detached from as urban subjects. The story also inducts the writer and her sister Haweya into gendered expectations of Somali womanhood. For example, she tells the two girls that a woman should always practice caution and not trust

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easily. Most oral narratives that Ibaado shares with her grandchildren are about strong, "brave women" to make the children feel safe in the company of their mother and grandmother in their father's absence, following his imprisonment by Siad Barre, as I discuss in the next section (*Infidel* 9). Her grandmother's voice is, therefore, a strategic narrative intervention that subtly historicises the Somali pastoralists' lives. Ali's recollection of this tale is not coincidental. Throughout her autobiography she signals that she lives a nomadic life-style and has learnt through experience why a woman should be careful. This nomadic identity is explicated in the title of her second autobiography, *Nomad*.

The role of maternal discourses in re-membering women within alternate female-defined (oral) publics has also been interrogated by Ali. Amadou Kone states that "oral tellers demonstrate their virtuosity in recalling a long chain of ancestors and that such detail anchors the [autobiographical] hero to a concrete world" (qtd. in Julien 55). Ali learns about the powerful female figures in her clan from the lineage Ibaado teaches her to recite, thus she acknowledges her grandmother's contribution to her re-memories. In the opening pages of chapter one in *Infidel*, Ali begins with the phrase: "Who are you?" (3). This question, we later learn, was posed by her grandmother who had been teaching her about her lineage. Her induction into the oral art of remembering her clan's trajectory in time is a painful process into which she is initiated by Ibaado as they sit under the *talal* tree. The symbolic value of this tree in Ali's historical account is its resilient ability to grow in the desert and here it signifies her grandmother's and Ali's unwavering strength against many repressive forces including multiculturalism.

Though Ibaado interprets Ali's recital as a sign of her mastery of her roots, the rhetoric of clannism in Ali's chants make her aware of the technicalities that compound the Somali clan-system, which Ali seemingly assigns the blame for the incessant inter-clan wars that have turned most Somalis into migrant subjects. As she chants, Ali traces/re-memories both her matrilineal and patrilineal roots within some of the most influential clans in pre-war Somalia. Eileen Julien in *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (1992), observes that "[t]he emphasis on birth and destiny suggests the importance of origins in determining life goals and possibilities" (Julien 55). I suggest that Ali recalls the leadership genealogies of her forefathers to foreshadow her ascension into the ruling class when elected into the Dutch parliament. Initially, during her recitals she would declare: "I am Ayaan, the daughter of Hirsi, the son of Magan" (*Infidel* 3). However, as she grew up she extended this to include

matrilineal lineages thus: "I am a Darod, a Hirsi, a Macherten, an Osman Mahamud. I am of the consort called the Higher Shoulder. I am a Magan" (*Infidel* 3). Speaking in relation to these maternal clan figures, she intones a class bias in archiving female maternal figures because the consort mentioned had to be a wife to a powerful man, in this case the clan leader, while the paternal figures did not necessarily have to be a leader. This gender bias to women's individuality emerges in Ali's concession that although children were encouraged to memorise their mother's bloodline, this was purely for purposes of hospitality and not identity-formation as "a child belongs to the clan of his father" (*Infidel* 4). This oral narrative technique, I argue, gives her the power of a collective maternal voice, through which she historicises ordinary women like her (grand)mother and Fadumo.

As an anti-fundamentalist, Ali re-memories from her childhood point of view her mother's experiences that motivated her to denounce Islam, becoming an infidel. She takes issue with societies that have co-opted Islam to legitimise patriarchal dominance over women, such that chauvinism has been conflated with religion and super-imposed on culture. Citing her mother's experiences in Saudi Arabia as an example, Ali makes the concession that an Arab male in Saudi Arabia, albeit a child, has more rights than an adult female. Her mother Asha, who finds herself living in this 'holy' city in exile, is restricted by Sharia law from walking outside her house without a male chaperone. Ali says that to Asha's chagrin, and in the absence of her husband who was co-ordinating the resistance movement against President Siad Barre at that time, while in exile in Ethiopia, her mother finds herself continuously dependent on her ten-year-old son, Mahad,

> to act as the legal male guardian for her whenever our father was away, which turned out to be most of the time […] to decipher the world for her, to protect her and us, though he was only ten. Sometimes he heard the Saudi men say lewd and ugly things to Ma such as "slave" and "black" and failed to interpret to Asha to protect her. Much was expected from him by his father and little affection given to him, although he was only a child. (*Nomad* 43)

I suggest that the recollection of the myriad memories, like the one above, that recapture instances of policing women under the pretext of religion, is a neurotic expression of the writer's fear of succumbing to the same fate as her mother.

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This title, *Infidel*, is therefore a counter-discursive technique that represents Ali's defection from Islam into atheism. Some of her personal reasons for abandoning Islam are inherent in her declaration that: "*Allah is full of misogyny. He is arbitrary and incoherent. Faith in him demands that I relinquish my responsibility, become a member of a herd. He denies me pleasure, the adventure of learning, friendships*" (*Infidel* 35, emphasis in original). To be an infidel is, therefore, her ultimate show of defiance against dominant cultures, a shocking event that propels her parents to coerce her into returning to Islam. Unlike her mother who is motivated by a sense of responsibility grounded in fear that as Ali's mother she will be punished by Allah in the afterlife for her daughter's sins, her father coerces her to return to Islam to uphold his religious and patriarchal standing in his society. Accordingly, she writes, "[l]iving as a western woman meant that I had shed my honor; I wore western clothes which to him was no better than if I walked around wearing no clothes at all" (*Nomad* 7). However, although she values her parents' opinions of her, she does not reverse her decision to revoke Islam.

At the end of her second autobiography, Ali, seemingly having understood the person she now wants to be (separate from her (grand)mother), expresses her desire to be a mother. In the last chapter of her second autobiography *Nomad*, titled "Letter to my unborn daughter" (*Nomad* 263), she includes a letter in conversation with Oriana Fallaci, another female critic of Islam. Fallaci urges Ali to "start thinking about having a child of [her] own before it is too late" (*Nomad* 264), a reminder to Ali that motherhood can be a choice, an experience re-defined by women with different symbolic values to those crafted by the patriarchal institution of motherhood. Fallaci invokes motherhood as a reminder of women's need to re/sign their memories in alternate bodies, those of their children, in the face of their mortality. Thus she sees motherhood as a potential experience of immortalising a woman. Fallaci relays her sadness to Ali for having missed out on this opportunity, so that in her old age she craved motherhood but could not conceive after a miscarriage, thus she had to confront the inevitability of her future loneliness. What is interesting in terms of these women's individuality is that both are unmarried. Furthermore, as they converse through Ali's writing of their earlier conversations – oral and written, the latter makes a conscious choice about the gender of her child. [63] Unfortunately, Fallaci's dream is not fulfilled as she

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[63] Although Ali bore son instead of a daughter after the publication of this autobiography, she does not begrudge this fact but says that she will mentor her son to make informed choices about his life, suggesting that she will

loses her child through a miscarriage. To remind herself of this loss, she writes *Letter to a Never Born* as a memorial to her dead child, which inspires Ali to have her own baby and prompts her to write her own letter, of which the title is foregrounded in her chapter heading, to her unborn child. This is a significant move for Ali, a woman who throughout her autobiography eludes motherhood and only hints at it towards the end of her second autobiography. For Ali, then, maternal relationality is a technique through which she expresses her view that "motherhood is a choice" (*Nomad* 264). Ali however notes that this choice is only open to few women like herself who are fortunate. I hence surmise that Ali re-memories Fallaci's story to demonstrate attempts by women to reclaim motherhood through making informed decisions concerning reproduction outside of the hegemonic and traditional constructions of motherhood as an institution.

To conclude this debate on maternal relationality, I surmise that the linking of Saadawi and Ali's selfhoods to their maternal predecessors through relationality is a process through which notions of filiality are re-invented in the context of African womanist epistemologies. For these two women writers, thinking back through their (grand)mothers facilitates their negotiation of notions of oppression and liberation. However, re-membering (through) the other also raises another set of challenges. The writers in this section encode memories of events they did not experience as re-memory and recapture stories of dead maternal figures whom they identify with as post-memory. Speaking in relation to Eakin's concept of 'autobiographical ethics', Viljoen asserts that "[n]o discussion of autobiography which involves the biography of an 'other' can avoid questions around the ethics involved in representing that other" ("Mother" 152). The two autobiographical subjects show through their self-representation and representation of others that re-memorying poses instances of exaggeration that trouble the notion of absolute truth in reference to autobiography. This is especially the case when the intricate relationship between the mother and daughter is explored and the latter represents the former as is the case with Sittil Hajja and Habasheya, calling for instances of deliberate fictionalisation. The various oral forms the writers choose to re/signify their selfhoods demonstrate the multiplicity of maternal images and their roles in history emerge. The debate establishes that re-membering is both an individual and collective processes through which history is revised, de-deconstructed, and de-gendered.

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teach him to be respectful of other realities. For details, see "Ayaan Hirsi Ali: From Muslim 'Infidel' to Mother, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/ayaan-hirsi-ali-from-muslim-infidel-to-mother/article542380/.

The Female Body as a Technique for Remembrance

> The body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural, and geographical inscriptions, production, or constitution. The body is not opposed to culture, a resistant throwback to a natural past; it is itself a cultural, *the* cultural, product. (Grosz 23, emphasis in original)

The writers in this section use the body as text to show how body portraiture conforms to given specific cultural scripts. They use body memory to negotiate dominant and subversive cultural parameters of womanhood and reproduce new bodily meanings in autobiographical representations. I return to the autobiographies of Ali and Saadawi, because they extensively narrate the processes of black women's embodiment. The aim is to explore how these writers, through their writing, address the presences and absences of the disfigured female body in public discourses, i.e. the discourses of nationalism, patriarchy, and religion. This calls for a refiguring of the female body and resigning its cultural symbolic value in the counter-public private space of autobiography. Consequently, I draw on the literary and women's studies critic Elizabeth Grosz's concept "embodied subjectivity" to examine autobiographical representations of women's corporeality and how their self-embodiment re-invents African womanist conceptions of the female body (22). The theory positions itself between alternate dichotomous body politics that polarise bodies into binaries like "*body-mind* and *sex-gender*" (Viljoen 100, emphasis in original), and from this in-between position, it "refuses reductionism, resists dualism, and remains suspicious of the holism and unity implied by monism" (Grosz 22).[64] The focus on embodiment is important in this debate as it traces trajectories of ideologies that embody women's corporeal experiences to their historical and cultural contexts and, as Viljoen has noted, the body is "produced in and through certain cultural concepts" ("Body" 100). In relation to the cultural specificity of body politics, 'embodied subjectivity' therefore unearths how the female body is written and narrated in the private space of autobiography. To analyse how the autobiographies re-make the female body, I complement Grosz's views on embodied subjectivity with theoretical insights by Boehmer, Smith and Watson, Susheila Nasta, Viljoen, Young, and Ketu Katrak, among others, who deliberate on the representations of the female body. These scholars, from within and outside Africa, have debated how the corporeal, female body, represented in

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[64] Within the context of corporeality, monism bears semblance to the Bakhtinian concept of monologism, i.e., a dominant language that purports to be all-inclusive. Grosz views monism as preventing the dialogic potential of resistant cultures and voices.

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autobiography, embodies gender-based trauma in life writing by women from across the globe.

I argue that the different concerns related to shame and honour that Ali raises are embodied in the notion of female virtue, an ideal pegged on the female body's purity. Indian feminist scholar Katrak observes that "[a] politics of the female body must include the constructions and controls of female sexuality, its acceptable and censored expressions, its location socioculturally, even materially, in postcolonial regions" (xi). Ali explores the significance of shame and honour on Somali womanhood at different narrative levels like form, and subject-formation, and gives agency to them by linking female epistemologies couched in orality with western ideals. It is her negotiation of these two paradigms of knowledge-production that I interrogate, tracing the development of her consciousness from childhood to adulthood and its influences on her political womanhood.

As already alluded to in the previous section, Ali was born in Somalia during the leadership of President Siad Barre. This historical fact partly serves as a background to the refugee grammar that describes Somali subjecthood, thus, a motive for the writer's search for identity – literally and figuratively. This homelessness is encapsulated in the title of her second autobiography *Nomad*. "Nomad" implies the writer's physical movement across space and time; of her self-awareness as a migrant subject as endorsed by the phrase "Clash of Civilizations" in the sub-title of *Nomad*. The centrality of nomadism to her self-identification is encompassed in her declaration that "[a]ll my life I have been a nomad. I have wandered, rootless. Every place I have settled in, I have been forced to flee; every certainty I have been taught, I have cast aside" (xiii). Her use of 'certainty' seems to refer to all the social values and hopes she has been socialised into before fleeing. The question then, is, how possible is it to 'just' cast these values aside? What choices does she then make in her journey ahead?

This dislocatedness is narratively exposed in chapter two, "Under the Talal Tree", through the perspective of Ayaan the child (19). The significance of this performative space, geographical and textual, has been explored in the previous section as a threshold where the writer and her siblings (un)learn notions of home and belonging from tales told to them by their grandmother Ibaado. However, in this section, I focus on the writer's growing awareness of her (grand)mother's inability to accept responsibility for some of their choices.

For instance, she says that in her household, "*Afwayne*" (*Infidel* 19),[65] would be blamed for every misfortune, including Ali's father, Magan's arrest due to his political dissidence. She notes that her father's absence re-establishes her mother in a new demanding status as a single parent. As she reminiscences about her family's survival tactics under *Afwayne's* rule, she is able to grasp the irony inherent in the discourse of honour. For instance, Ibaado, who nurtures her grandchildren's consciousness by shaping their worldview, especially with regard to honour and virtue, calls the government soldiers sent by the state to confiscate Asha's illegal goods "Sons of Prostitutes" (*Infidel* 22). This insult not only belittles the soldiers, but also their mothers.

The term nomad in Ali's second autobiography further signifies the collective nostalgic predisposition of her family (and other Somalis) as refugee subjects in their search for a 'new' home. It signals the state of unbelonging of many Somali refugees forced into exile due to various reasons, including the clan war-fare that has ravaged Somalia. Forced to migrate from Somalia to the diaspora, and in the case of her family, a constant movement across places and spaces between Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Britain, Netherlands, and America, etc., they perform a yearning for belonging with a sense of urgency that gradually renders the idea of home, in view of their rootlessness and convoluted sense of nationhood, a fantasy rather than reality, a performance of nationalism that Ernest Patrick Monte characterises as a "fallacy" (98). I make this concession for two reasons. First, and as Ali elaborates, the concept of nationalism in Somalia is impinged one one's clan affiliation, suggesting a fractured nationhood. Secondly, she informs us that a clan can only gain respect if it upholds its honour. Considering her declaration that honour is embodied on a "girl's virginity", the notion of (be)longing proposes an aspiration rather than an achievement (*Infidel* 6).

Ali's autobiography outlines the problematics that such an idea of national belonging pegged on men and women's culturally-engendered moralistic roles underscores. For example, she shows that despite the liberal Magan's agreement with Asha against circumcising their daughters, Ibaado, in her self-appointed capacity as guardian of the young girls' honour, ignores Ali's father's wish that his daughters not be excised. So, in the absence of Asha, she performs the ritual on the writer, her brother and sister. Ali notes that while she and her

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[65] Afwayne is a colloquial reference given to President Siad Barre by his public and it means "Big Mouth" (*Infidel* 19),

brother Mahad recovered physically, Haweya "was never the same afterward" (*Infidel* 33). Later, when Ali's Dutch Citizenship was revoked, Mahad would inform a *Zembla* show reporter that she had "never been excised" as a way to "save" his and the clan's "face" (*Infidel* 338). A documentary was aired on this show titled "The Holy Ayaan" framing Ali as a liar, sparking a parliamentary debate that would lead to the retraction of her citizenship, her resignation from political office, and migration to America (*Infidel* 340).[66]

I propose that this desire for what might have been an ideal childhood textually manifests in the first two chapters of her story as nostalgia for her paternal figure, realised in her statement: "I used to try to imagine my father when I was little" (*Infidel* 19). In her fantasy, Magan appears like a modern-day messiah of his people, and a man who she notes that "for many, Abeh [father] was a symbol of the battle against president Siad Barre's military regime, [because] […] [he] had dedicated most of his adult life to overthrowing that regime" (*Nomad* 8). However, as she grows up, she begins to realise that Magan's 'heroic' deeds were at the expense of her mother's freedom and the potential unique womanhood she might have experienced as an uncircumcised girl. I read the writer's introspection about her desire for a father-figure in her entire oeuvre, and the Somali people in the diapora's reliance on her father as a national patriarch, as a portrayal of a nomadic relationality born out of a prolonged life in exile that has inculcated in them the need to return 'home'. Her portrayal of her father comprises an example of a hegemonic category of masculinity that stands out from the rest of masculine identities identified by Robert William Connell elsewhere, which due to space limitations, I cannot delve into.[67]

Further, Ali presents the marriage institution as a private-public space where religious and patriarchal worldviews police women's bodies. From Ibaado's account of her marriage to a man called Artan, Ali learns that compelling women to uphold honour stifles their subjectivity. According to Ali, her (grand)mother's society awarded men all the privileges in choosing a wife. The criteria to be met were based on her ability to maintain her new family

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[66] Additionally, Ali heard "rumors that Rita [a Dutch government official] was planning to retract [her] citizenship" (*Infidel* 334). When the issue of her citizenship turned political, she was informed that she would be acknowledged as a Dutch citizen on two conditions: that she uses the name Ali and drop her other names, and to admit that she had "lied when [she] called [her]self Ali" (*Infidel* 334). Ali finds both conditions problematic as far as her identity is concerned as a migrant subject. In my view, Ali's motive for recalling these events is self-preservation, especially in her declaration that the campaign for the revocation of her citizenship incited her to craft her personal life story.

[67] For extensive details on Robert William Conell's views on masculinities, read: *Masculinities* ([1995]2005).

and clan's honour rather than her individuality. First, Ibaado's father had to be "a man from a good clan, with a decent reputation" and only then would Artan focus on Ibaado's own qualities. To be considered a suitable bride, Ibaado was expected to possess as be "hardworking, strong young and pure" and, despite her reluctance to stay married to Artan, Ibaado is told to accept her "destiny" (*Infidel* 7). Further, men married their fathers' youngest wives to "save" a "dowry" and "trouble" lest she seeks sexual pleasure with other men outside the dictates of her family's say (*Infidel* 7). Artan, who saw himself as the custodian of his daughters' honour, would scout for grazing fields with "no young men" to threaten the virtue of his daughters and sexuality of his "young wife" (*Infidel* 8). These cultural values became part of Ibaado and Asha's socialisation into patriarchy, perhaps why the two women envision themselves as its custodians. Thus, when Asha migrates to Aden, Saudi Arabia, before marriage, regardless of her lack of "parental supervision", she polices herself to prevent "gossip [travelling home] that she Asha Artan had behaved improperly" (*Infidel* 10). Due to her rigid moral stance, she becomes condescending of Somali girls in Aden who flirt with "Somali men who chewed *qat*" and is unwilling to respect their personal choices (*Infidel* 10). In contrast, Asha aspires to be seen as a devout Muslim. She begins to pray regularly and to wear a hijab, for she felt that the veil "protected her from those leering men, and from the feeling of vileness it gave her to be looked at that way" (*Infidel* 11). The honourable womanhood Asha performs is described by Ali as "*Baarri*"[68], but which she translates as "pious slave[ry]", a gender performativity that aims for the highest status of purity (*Infidel* 12). According to Ali, *Baarri* designates a faultless life Somali women are encouraged to live to receive God's reward in their afterlife. She notes that while being *Baarii* gives the woman's family praise for the woman's "heroic submission", she suffers under her husband's family's mistreatment of her, hoping that she would eventually be "appreciate[d]" and treated as "a fellow human being" but this is never realised (*Infidel* 12).

The views that Ali expresses about her mother's gender performance show that indeed, as Butler suggests, gender is performatively re-enacted rather than being a fixed essence. I maintain that Asha, Ibaado, and other Somali women's identities in Ali's autobiographies are constructed through performance in writing and their lived experiences.[69] As an infidel, Ali

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[68] Ali further notes in *Infidel* that being a *Baarri* is a learnt trait that is passed from mothers to daughters and it encourages the culture of silence among women who are expected to endure pain, humiliation, and suffering as a show of honour and strength (12).

[69] For more details on Judith Butler's views on gender as performance, see: "Gender Trouble, Feminist Theory and Psychoanalytic Discourse" (1990).

draws on anti-fundamentalist and womanist/feminist resources to reject such expectations of womanhood and her subversive criticism of her mother's *Baarri* status is evident in her observation that were Asha in the desert she would not have prayed as "women weren't expected to" (*Infidel* 10). I surmise that Ali sub-consciously performs a womanhood that distances itself from Somali conventions, and I echo Butler's observations about embodiment of womanhood in saying that performances of the nature exhibited by Asha and Ali are never wilful, deliberate or freely chosen (Butler "Gender" 324). Ali also seems to question the legibility of the religious command that women completely cover themselves and notes that in the desert, her grandmother's community – also Muslims – especially men, were unfazed by the sight of women's arms or their breasts while feeding babies, thus, she disputes the claim that the need for women to completely cover themselves is a divine intervention. Ali views the veil as a symbol of "mental slavery" because in her view, it "deliberately marks women as private and restricted property, non-persons (*Nomad* 16). Her argument is that the veil sets women apart from men and apart from the world; it restrains them, confines them, grooms them for docility" (*Nomad* 16). For her, the veil constricts women's "vision" and "destiny" (*Nomad* 16). She calls the veil "apartheid […] of the sex" (*Nomad* 16). What inspires her to question her cultural and religious contexts in this way, I suggest, is her multiculturalism that has rendered her a hybrid of Somali and Western liberalism, an ideological stance she adopts by separating herself from other Somalis and their worldview.

Ali seemingly suggests that the reason why there exists a deep commitment in Somali women to uphold honour, lies in the social practice of socialising women about this role since their infancy. However, to assume that women entirely conform to what they have been socialised into could, in a way, silence women's agency in negotiating and subverting such cultural teachings. Instead, I propose that she locates herself in-between these viewpoints and presents women's roles as guardians to women's virtues – especially young girls' virginity – as perpetrators of patriarchal dominance over fellow women. For instance, while living in the city before migrating from Somalia, Ibaado adopts the mantle of protecting her granddaughters' virtue and is reluctant to let them out of her sight to protect them from "harm and sin" (*Infidel* 30). As a young girl, Ali's first induction into womanhood is a lesson about upholding honour, which she embodies. During one of the story telling sessions held with her grandchildren, Ali speaks of Ibaado telling them that "if a girl's virginity is despoiled she not only obliterates her own honor she also damages the honor of Magan, uncles, brothers, male cousins" (*Infidel* 6). In recalling Ibaado's views, Ali echoes a strong womanist stance against

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patriarchal practices that police female sexuality. However, rather than apportioning blame to men, she refigures her grandmother as the symbol of patriarchy in her family. The shift in re-evaluating patriarchy in Africa is a womanist sentiment, expressed by Kolawole in a call to move away from representing "women as tragic victims caught between traditional strings" ("Self-Representation" 2). Ali also echoes an African womanist stance that critiques the objectifying of women's bodies as embodying honour but also potential "catastrophe" or evil (*Infidel* 6). The message inherent in Ibaado's cautionary note might, therefore, be subsumed as signalling the importance of female virtue. At the madrassah, however, Ali's consciousness, highly nurtured by Ibaado, begins to devolve as she learns that there is an alternative category of girls who were uncircumcised and called "*Kintirleey*", meaning "she with the clitoris", girls who were treated like the scourge (*Infidel* 30). To make girls "pure", then, their genitals would be cut out, a practice sustained and "justified in the name of Islam", especially by women who felt that uncircumcised girls would "fall into vice and perdition, and become whores" (*Infidel* 31). As she notes, although it is mostly women who uphold this culture, "Imams never discourage the practice [for] it keeps girls pure" (*Infidel* 31). For these women, female circumcision forms a "chastity belt" that secures a girl's virginity, ensuring that she remains 'pure' until marriage (*Infidel* 31).

When Ali falls in love during her temporary sojourn in Somalia as an adult, her family is scandalised by her open admission of possessing feelings of love. According to her, it was "shockingly un-Islamic, un-Somali to fall in love" and such matters could only be "gossiped" about by observers until the "boy's family asked your father and then you were supposed to cry" (*Infidel* 127). Soon after returning to Kenya, Magan notifies Ali he has arranged a marriage between her and Osman Moussa, a man Magan preferred over Ali's chosen love. The latter tells Ali that "[she] was going to give [him] six sons [and] be a home for all the Osman Mahamud [clan]" (*Infidel* 172). He criticised Somali women brought up in Canada for being "practically whores, drinking alcohol, going to discos not covering themselves and sleeping with white men" (*Infidel* 172). For him, these girls were "out of control" and unfit to be "the mother of his children", unlike Ali, the daughter of Hirsi Magan, the "devout" Muslim (*Infidel* 173). However, Ali, who describes him as "an idiot", is unwilling to accept to be his wife but she is nevertheless forced to marry him by Magan (*Infidel* 173). When Magan married her off against her wish, Ali felt her "father had robbed [her] of [her] youth and [her] body, propelling [her] into the life of a wife and a mother -responsibilities [she] was not ready to assume" (*Nomad* 161). In this regard, she makes the observation that "the

Muslim father's authority over his daughters is comparable to that of a feudal sovereign over serfs. As Ali elaborates, for many Somali men, marriage transfers the authority of disciplining and upholding a woman's honour to the girl's husband, and ultimately to his father. A wedding is a pact between men implying mutual assistance and debt in the future" (*Nomad* 163). On her way to Canada to meet her husband, she escapes to the Netherlands where she obtains refugee status. Despite several attempts by her family and clan to re-unite them, she remains adamant and Magan cuts ties with her. This is very significant, especially in the way Ali challenges 'the norm'. Her narrative takes an unexpected turn. She positions herself as a subversive agent resisting culturally-embedded male control over women's sexuality/bodies.

Accordingly, when Ali becomes a Dutch politician, one of her chief motives is to create awareness about the plight of Muslim women, who she envisions as oppressed by patriarchy-engineered religious laws. She appears on TV criticizing Islam's suppressive acts, particularly "honor killings" of Somali (and Islamic) female migrants by family and community members who supposedly felt the women had dishonoured them (*Infidel* 296). As a result, she receives death threats. Voicing the struggles of these women was part of her political agenda but the fact that most Dutch citizens were removed from this reality made her task very difficult. She observes that in the Netherlands, political correctness was actually hampering her freedom of speech with regard to her true feelings about her religious beliefs and that "many well-meaning Dutch people have told [her] in all earnestness that nothing in Islamic cultures incites abuse of women, that this is just terrible misunderstanding. Men all over the world beat their women" (*Infidel* 307). In addressing what she saw as Islam's subjugation of women, she says that "if a man's women stray from submission they damage *him*: his good name, his authority the sense that he is loyal and strong and true to his word" thus the neurotic desire to control women's gender roles and sexuality (*Nomad* 15). However, this cultural practice packaged as a seemingly mundane aspect "restricts women's choices [as they] are bound to obey and bound to chastity and shame by Allah and the prophet and by the fathers and husbands who are our guardians" (*Nomad* 15). She views this subjugation as a commonality between all women be it in London or in Africa, a general summation that overlooks other women's partiality to her stance.

For instance, while Ali views western societies as "free", she is un-empathetic towards the difficulties her fellow Somali (women) face in their attempts to acculturate in the diaspora.

Particularly, she is unaware that the communalism she views as a negative trait is an important element for a people who, traumatised by war and a possible extinction of their cultural values, are reluctant to relinquish what is familiar to them. Thus, just as her step-sister Sahra is desperate to hold onto Islam in London, Ali too is anxious to leave Islam and embrace modernity, or in this case, the reprieve from a perceived cultural oppression that Englishness promises Ali. Her dismissive attitude towards others' sense of freedom manifests when she notes: "I forced back the urge to share with my younger half sister (sic) [Sahra] the merits of Enlightment philosophy, the basis for Western freedom that for her was just at a short walk away" (*Nomad* 17). The discomfort that Sahra's image evokes in Ali might be due to its demonstration of the former's unbelonging to the various cultures she has adopted. Further, Ali is anxious about Sahra's appearance in a "*Jilbab*"[70] because it serves as a "strange kind of mirror" that reminds the writer of her fundamentalist experiences in Nairobi before her 'enlightenment' (*Nomad* 17).

Ali also uses the female body as an activist tool to create awareness about Muslim women's struggles. Using the medium of the TV documentary *Submission: Part One* (2004) as an activist act, Ali creates awareness of the extremism in female oppression. She says that this title is symbolic of how women's "submission to Islam causes many other kinds of suffering" (314).[71] The documentary, written by Ali and produced and directed by Theo Van Gogh, is in English but with Dutch sub-titles. It expresses Ali's views "about the relationship of the individual and Allah" (313). Ali comments that the script was formatted as a prayer "to bring about dialogue with Allah" (313). She recaptures some of the scenes as follows:

> I pictured a woman standing in the center of a room. In the four corners of the room, four women depict restrictive verses from the Quran [see figure 7 below]. The woman in the middle of the room is veiled, but her veil is transparent […]. The transparency is necessary because it challenges Allah to look at what he created: the body of woman. On her torso is written the opening verse of the Quran, the "Sura Fatiha," which every Muslim is required to recite first, at every prayer [….]. The camera pans to the first woman, who tells Allah she has obeyed all his injunctions, but she now lies in a corner, bleeding. She has fallen in love, and for that she has been flogged [see

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[70] A jilbab is an Arabic word that refers to a long and loose-fitting garment worn by women to conceal their bodies in accordance with Islamic teachings of the need for women to observe decency.

[71] After being aired, the producer of *Submission*, Theo Van Gogh, was tragically murdered by a fundamentalist, an incident Ali recalls in *Infidel*.

Figure 8 below]. She ends, very simply, with the sentence, "I may no longer submit."
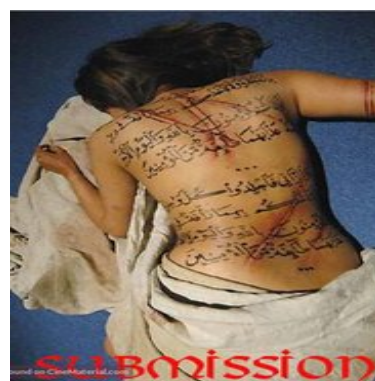(313-314)

Figure 7: A scene in the documentary featuring three of the four women[72]

Figure 8: Film poster showing the flogged woman[73]

Pucherova argues that Ali's narrative "[r]adically […] links the Somali violent patriarchy with Islam, for which she has been the target of death threats and subject to controversy" (6). When Ali shows some of her colleagues this documentary before it is aired, she is disappointed with one of the Liberal Party leaders' remark that she "couldn't [find] a better looking chick" (*Infidel* 135). This response, coming from someone Ali thought was liberal and 'enlightened', makes her to realise that her decision to use the woman's body as an activist's tool may not after all transcend the objectification of women even in Europe. This claim is compounded by her observation that another party member "thought it was unfortunate [their] actress was half naked" (*Infidel* 135). I read the invocation of this view by Ali as a tacit concession that both the Somali and Dutch societies are yet to understand how the woman's body functions as a site of retrospective reflection about women's abuse. Having elaborated on how notions of honour and virtue inform the performance of Somali (Islamic) womanhood, I now turn to a discussion of how Saadawi negotiates identity construction by deploying body as text.

Similarly, Saadawi addresses issues of embodiment that pertain to Muslim women. However, unlike Ali, I view her conception of notions of female embodiment as more nuanced in cultural practices that are not necessarily tied to Islam the way Ali's renders Somali

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[72] This image from *Submission: Part 1* is obtained from a public site: http://www.altfg.com/film/submission-on-italian-tv/ that acknowledges the copyright of photo: Dutch Public Broadcasting Network (VPRO).

[73] The image of *Submission: Part 1* film poster was released to the public domain by the Dutch Public Broadcasting Network (VPRO). I have copied it from a public site:
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0432109/mediaviewer/rm370608896.

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womanhood. Like Ali, Saadawi extensively addresses the themes of honour and shame in relation to female circumcision as a practice to preserve female virtue. Her narration of the plight of different women reveals the plurality of patriarchy, but it also de-bunks the myth that patriarchy is instituted and implemented only by men and against women.

Saadawi conceptualises the aspiration to beauty as a form of bondage. She evinces how her mother and aunts would endure endless pain in the name of beauty. She recalls her mother's endless efforts to ensure that "[h]er skin was soft and smooth and no hair showed on it [and] [i]f it grew she removed it before anybody had a chance to see it" (*Walking* 153). The near-obsessive desire to maintain an outward image of perfection is further endorsed by her description of how her mother padded her chest to the shape breasts after her double mastectomy. This way, says Saadawi, Zaynab felt that "she could still show two breasts like all women, walk with the pride of her full femininity as a woman" (*Walking* 158). This is a very problematic ideology for Saadawi, who is a qualified medical doctor. However, she empathises with her mother because she understood the pressures of her society. Upon Zaynab's death, Saadawi becomes the defender of her mother's honour by shielding her mother's defaced naked body from the eyes of her aunts, her mother's sisters, and other curious observers. She writes: "in their eyes, I could read what they were unable to conceal, a gloating happiness, an un-wholesome curiosity to see what normally is not seen, as a burning desire to examine my mother's private parts" (*Walking* 158). What Saadawi seems to suggest is that inherent in this mystery to glimpse the altered female body of one of their own was a hunger to understand the "mystery" of female sexuality, from which these women had been denied knowledge of since infancy (*Daughter* 87).

In relation to these cultural and patriarchal ideals of the perfect body, Saadawi explains that her own physicality did not conform to social conventions on femininity and she was often 'othered' in the eyes of her mother of father's families. Throughout her life her physical stature has been a focal point of her identity and a source of ridicule by men (and women). Her "dark complexion, [was considered] the sign of poverty in [her] family, [her] tall stature, [her] big mouth, [her] protruding teeth and [her] developed muscles, undesirable in a female body" (*Daughter* 154). She was unlike her sisters who had "white skin, soft, rounded fleshy curves and tender brown or honey colored eyes […], the accepted models of female beauty" (*Walking* 281). However, she learned to celebrate features such as her height to symbolize her power and to intimidate men, especially potential suitors, who would have otherwise

infringed on her freedom to pursue a medical and writing careers. As a young girl, she was also socialised into gendered notions of womanhood. She was encouraged to play with dolls despite her interest in aeroplanes. The dolls were often given to her while toy aeroplanes were handed over to her brother to play with despite his disinterest, and he often treated these planes with contempt. Her desire to break free from these social restrictions permeates her young life. She dreams of flying, exploring "lands unknown to [her]" (*Walking* 278). When she shares these aspirations with her grandmother, the latter warns her that such "[was] not a dream for small girls". She was supposed to "dream of a bridegroom and a beautiful wedding dress" (*Walking* 279). Dreams are recalled by Saadawi to narrate her femininity as existing in a threshold space. These dreams voice the unfulfilled wishes and desires of a girl desperate to transgress social norms, who wishes to reclaim her rightful place in society. Dreams add to the nostalgic mood of the narrative. Saadawi uses dreaming to challenge gender norms that infringe on her dreams to venture into the public domain, and to communicate her inner conflict about what it is and what ought to be a 'proper' woman. One anecdote conveys this conflict. While on a flight from America to Egypt, the air hostess calls Saadawi "my beautiful lady", a compliment that leaves her stunned but pleased (*Walking* 281).

Further, Saadawi makes a conscious effort to distance herself with ideals of womanhood that focalise women's strength on a youthful body. For instance, the adult Saadawi notes that while old age brings insights to "see things to which [she] was blind" as a younger woman (*Daughter* 2), aging is often associated with weakness. She however argues that while her body grows weaker, her mind becomes stronger. She therefore views body and mind as one inseparable entity, working together to sustain her selfhoods. She observes that in her advanced age, her "[b]ody becomes mind transparent" and "[b]ody memory becomes one with [her] spirit, with [her] blood" (*Daughter* 2). Saadawi's conception of the unity between body and mind encapsulates Viljoen's idea of "a lived body" (*Daughter* 101), which Young defines as a "physical body acting and experiencing in a specific socio-cultural context" (*Daughter* 16). By merging body and mind, Saadawi is able to seal the gap between the ideal image of herself imagined by others, and the reality of the corporeal body, what she describes as "the distance between the image and the original" (*Daughter* 53).

Saadawi is also critical of patriarchal discourses that portray women's sexuality as embodying evil, a discourse that necessitates the suppression of the 'sinful' capacity of the woman's body. In view of the preceding remarks, I now discuss how the dialectics of the

image of the woman's body as a source of sin/pleasure are configured in the public space of the beach. To explicate this issue, I turn to a photo that Saadawi describes in *A Daughter of Isis*, not shown in this thesis, showing her mother, father, brother, sisters and aunt Ni'imat. The engagement with the photo described in the text by Saadawi as an object of remembrance reflects the writer's narrative negotiation of the exertion of patriarchal control over women's bodies by both men and women. In this photo, Zaynab and her daughters appear together while her father and brother are seated far from them. Additionally, while Saadawi's body (like that of her female relations on the beach) is constrained by a swim-suit, the chests of her father and brother are left bare. In Saadawi's narrative and in the photo men are portrayed as viewers, gazing distantly at women's bodies. The subjection of these women's bodies to the male gaze despite the policing methods otherwise subscribed by religion commodifies them. To reclaim her mother from this objectification, Saadawi re-images her as "daughter of the sea" (*Daughter* 57). Here, the sea becomes a space Saadawi narratively employs to re-configure mothers and daughters as free women. The sea becomes their home: "[their] air, [their] sun, [their] sea", an imaginary in which the sea is gendered female (*Daughter* 57). For Saadawi, whose mother symbolises a degree of freedom from patriarchal conventions, this photograph preserves Zaynab's memory in ways Saadawi's writing has been unable to. In the photograph as in real life, her father appears distanced from "[them]" the women. His distance in the photo and on the sea shore is translated into real life so that despite Saadawi's attempts to reach out to him, there appears to be a chasm between the sexes that cannot be breached even in the same space: "A world made of male bodies in which [he]r female body lived" (*Daughter* 57). He becomes the embodiment of the body that "hide[s] the sun and sea from [her]" so that his body encompasses "an independent […] existence [that is] the outer world of [her] father, of land, country, religion, language, moral codes" such that the male body embodies the symbols of female ostracism and policing (*Daughter* 57).

In Saadawi's contemplation about the memories invoked by this photo, the beach is imagined as a threshold space where patriarchal and class ideals of gender are negotiated by men and women. The significance of this photo in symbolising Saadawi's self-distancing from patriarchal conventions of womanhood is captured in her observations about the fading "shine" of the photo and "the colours as she [once remembered] chang[ing] to black and white" (*Daughter* 56). Against this background of a diminishing patriarchal control over women's bodies in public spaces privatised by patriarchy, her individuality and strong

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womanist stance is accentuated. She says that amidst these blurring symbols of male patronage (the shine and the colours), the following caption in her mother's handwriting "stands out: Chatby Beach, Alexandria, 18 June 1935" (*Daughter* 56). The fact that the inscription on the back of the photograph is in her mother's handwriting, though faded, voices Zaynab's point of view (*Daughter* 56). The beach, real or imagined, then features as a space where women, albeit subtly, challenge patriarchal norms.

However, Saadawi does not only portray the policing of female bodies as a predominantly male prerogative. She notes that women, too, endorse patriarchal control over other women. Saadawi's aunt Ni'mat features as one such female figure who sustains control over women's bodies. Saadawi says that whenever she tried to "pull down the straps [of her swim suit] from [her] shoulders while at the beach (*Daughter* 58), her aunt would "slap" her, telling the young Saadawi "'Shame on you'" (*Daughter* 58). Unable to comprehend the fault of her desire to relieve her upper body from the constriction of the tight material, Saadawi "would point to [her] brother and ask 'Why him'", and she would receive the answer, "'He is a boy and you are a girl'" (*Daughter* 58). Apart from her aunt Ni'imat, Saadawi also depicts the *daya* called Um Muhammad as another woman who exerts control over women's bodies. A *daya* is the cultural custodian of customs in Saadawi's community and performs various rituals on women's bodies including birth, ear piercing, clitoridectomy, and breaking of the new bride's virginity to make the new bride "pure and clean" for her wedding night and to confirm that the bride's honour is still intact (*Daughter* 32). In this way, the *daya* becomes a symbol of women's sexual suppression. Saadawi cannot comprehend if Um Muhammad's persistence on exerting trauma on women's bodies is from "some kind of feud between her and the female sex" or a projection of herself hatred (*Daughter* 61). By presenting women as complicit with men in executing patriarchal control over female sexuality, she deconstructs the belief that patriarchy is instituted by men alone.

Apart from patriarchy, Saadawi also envisions religion as key in indoctrinating women into assuming a subordinate position to men. In retrospect, she now concedes that in her father's world only her brother gained access to the Quran as her father believed that "God did not address women in his book" (*Daughter* 59). Saadawi also learns from religious teachings that menstruation makes her body "polluted" and during this period she is not "permitted to pray or to fast or to read from the Qur'an" (*Daughter* 65). Further, Saadawi elaborates, "in the holy books mothers are described as being sacred or accursed, the embodiment of evil or the

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essence of purity and love" (*Walking* 155). For this matter, girl children are always at risk of being killed at birth either deliberately or through neglect because it is believed they are a burden to their families, yet so resilient with "seven lives like cats", unlike boys, are seen as fragile thus the need to be protected by charms and prayer (*Daughter* 32). So when Saadawi gives birth to her own children she showers them with love and affection and never allows anyone to demean her daughter, Mona, because she is female. She also debunks the myth that girls do not take care of their parents, a discourse that promotes preference of boys over girls, and notes that Mona has always been there for her in all her struggles (*Walking* 82).

Saadawi also shares with the readers her opinion of marriage. She regards it as an institution that normalises women's abuse. She says that love "trap[s] women into the prison that is the marital home" (183). In colloquial Arabic marriage means "permit" and a woman's destiny. Her grandmother used to say "My *Gawaza* is my *Gananza*", meaning my marriage is my funeral (182, emphasis in original). Many anecdotes included in her autobiographies attest to Saadawi's belief that women suffer both on earth and in heaven. According to Saadawi: "paradise for women was […] hell since it meant either eternal loneliness or an endless cycle of pain and humiliation to ensure that men could satisfy their insatiable lust" and that the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad that describe sexual pleasure as "strictly confined to men", teachings that she says have sexualised paradise (*Walking* 164). Towards this end, she poses the question: "Is this why men will have no role to play in paradise other than to deflower the hymens of virgin women? For each man will be allowed ninety-two virgins for his pleasure, and each time he deflowers a virgin the hymen will heal again so that his pleasure will be without end" (*Walking* 144-145). These teachings then make her realise realises that contrary to her belief that having suffered on earth her mother would find peace in paradise, she only gets a chance to be with her husband after he is done with the queue of women craving his attentions. This explains Saadawi's choice of title for the chapter describing her mother's death as "My mother has no place in paradise" (*Walking* 165).

In *Walking through Fire*, Saadawi recalls the trauma of her second marriage. She says that she felt so lost and one day she was unable to identify with her reflection in the mirror. The mirror reflects someone else, "this woman inside the woman I was, who had married a man she did not love, had become pregnant with child without love, and jumped off the balcony to take away its life" (*Walking* 221). She violently lashes out against herself, and says that in anger, she "lifted [her] arm, struck the face of the woman in the mirror with the plaster cast.

The mirror cracked. Now the woman's face was no longer one face but two faces with a single eye each" (221). Here, Saadawi's revulsion in her body is the consequence of her inability to reconcile the image in the mirror with the woman that her mind represents – the doctor, writer, and activist. When she later discovers that she is pregnant, she chooses to jump off the balcony and abort, risking death, rather than bring a baby into such an oppressive marriage. The prospect of motherhood becomes a source of foreboding:

> Nothing linked me to this woman and her son other than the embryo inside me. It was a foreign body these strangers had implanted in me. I wanted to rid myself of my body, often thought of committing suicide. But then my eyes would wander to the pile of papers on my desk. My novel kept drawing me away from all this, telling me to finish it before I died. So I decided to postpone dying until I had finished it. (*Walking* 222)

Saadawi's emotional trauma is a manifestation of an inner turmoil manifested as a "'dissociative personality that has been fragmented through a series of traumatic experiences'" (Katrak 150), reminiscent in her declaration that: "I wanted to rid myself of my body, often thought of committing suicide" (222). Trauma forces her to name the sources of her struggle, her marriage and unwanted unborn baby, thereby enacting what Katrak calls "the power of naming forms of women's oppression" (xii). After undergoing an abortion, Saadawi feels "free, rid of the chains" binding her to her second husband. She says, "[t]he evacuation had freed me from the foreign occupation of my body. I had torn from my womb the foreign body that had become a part of myself" (*Walking* 227). However, Saadawi is still unable to obtain a divorce because it is considered "the prerogative of men only […] an absolute right which he alone possesses" (*Walking* 228). When she threatens to stab him with a knife, he grants her the divorce. This equates this incident with the events in another woman's life, the story of "Fatheya the killer [who] had cut her husband to pieces when she found him raping her eight-year-old daughter" (231). Saadawi met Fatheya in prison and wrote about her in the fictionalised biography *Woman at Point Zero*. This decision to turn to fiction to exemplify the enormity of despair at the prospect motherhood is reminiscent in Viljoen's supposition that some women resort to fiction in representing the "(m)other" as fictionalisation "[takes] some of the pressure off the written 'other'" (Mother 153). Although Viljoen is speaking about a daughter representing the mother, her views are of value in reading Saadawi's narratives where the fear of motherhood incites such angst that the psyche

splinters and the subject views herself as separate from the mother-to-be. In the process, one of her selfhoods envisions its fictional double as an 'other'.

Saadawi explains that Egyptian girls' training on reproduction was limited to flowers and insects and they were taught child care without its prelude. Human reproduction was a taboo subject which girls were not required to know about. They were supposed to be "virgins who knew nothing about sex or illegitimate [or even normal] pregnancies" (*Daughter* 220). Sadaawi finds it ironic that a society that fiercely guards young girls' sexuality contains the term 'illegitimate pregnancy' in their vocabulary, thereby making a mockery of these laws. Consequently, young girls became so paranoid about illegitimate pregnancies that they would even pray not to become the receptors of an Immaculate Conception. It is for this reason that while at the boarding secondary school, girls, under constant surveillance of superintendents and with budding, albeit repressed, sexual desire, projected their desires for love onto their female teachers. The teachers too seemed to be prisoners of their society and per Saadawi, the more attention these young female teachers received, the more beautiful they feel. For Saadawi, her love for Miss Saneya was borne of nostalgia for her mother and her first love "suppressed but still alive" (*Daughter* 243). Thus, Saadawi saw the object of her love not as a sexual being but as an embodiment of an ideal love. For her, then, Miss Saneya was not "someone with a body, she was neither a man nor a woman" but an embodiment of the freedom to love (*Daughter* 243). She clarifies: "My love had nothing to do with sex" but a search for an ideal human being and "a kind of God [she] had looked for in vain when [she] was a child' (*Daughter* 243). While these girls imagined the object of their desires as sexless, these "love stories between the school girls and the female teachers" bordered on the sexual. In a way, then, these young girls objectified the female teacher and if not in a sexual way, then by robbing them of their sexuality thus obliterating their femininity. The girls' displacement of their sexual latency and its projection on their female teachers, viewed through Saadawi's own experiences, diminishisng the power of women that lies in their sexuality. Thus, the illusory love that these girls imagined was a fantasy that was shattered when Saadawi realised that the object of her Freudian desire was actually a woman in "flesh and blood" (*Daughter* 245).

I argue that Saadawi's autobiographies give testimony to some coping mechanisms employed by some Egyptian women to handle with the pain levied on their bodies within the domestic arena. While she narrates happy memories, these are often juxtaposed with the horrors of the

past, as if to catalogue the enduring nature of Egyptian womanhood. Most of the female characters in her autobiographies appear to be deliberately enforcing forgetfulness as a survival strategy. For instance, she tells about a patient, Masouda who embraced madness to avoid facing recurrent memories of her constant marital rape. Although her family and community assume that Masouda was sick and perhaps possessed by a demon, Saadawi understood that her patient was faced by the compulsion to forget, because remembering meant confronting her corporeality as a sexual object. Smith and Watson note that "narrators struggle to find ways of telling about suffering that defies language and understanding; they struggle to reassemble memories so dreadful they must be repressed for human beings to survive and function in life" (*Reading* 22). For Masouda, "the fear suppressed within her manifested itself in the form of a devil which mounted her" (136). Saadawi's treatment of Masouda's predicament, like that of her nurse Zeinat, as relational to other Egyptian women's experiences as psychological suggests that the root of their suffering partly arises from some men's disparaging attitude towards women's bodies. Therefore, Saadawi appropriates madness as a metaphorical device to voice Masouda's (and other women's) pain. Seemingly, the only way that Saadawi can retell Masouda's ordeal is to recall a teenage dream featuring "[a faceless] man whom the girls in school addressed as [sir]" (*Walking* 130). This dream re-enacts how rape is silenced and brings terror and fear to girls such as Masouda and Zeinat who are unable to voice their trauma and therefore are labelled insane. According to Susheila Nasta, "[t]he use of alternative forms of consciousness – through dreams, 'madness', or […] 'zombification' as advanced by Carolyn Cooper – in order to define new spaces and realities for women is a common technique" and here, she cites Afro-American women writers as common applicants of this technique (xxvi). To counter violation of their female bodies, the women in Saadawi's community perform exorcism on women like Masouda and themselves, a ritual culturally referred to as *zar* through which they vent their anguish as a collective group (*Walking* 132). Exorcism then seems to function as a counter-discursive metaphor that narrates collective forgetting. Saadawi acknowledges that she took part in one *zar* out of curiosity and found the ritual effective in reducing pent-up anxiety. As a medical doctor, however, she questions its ability to cure madness. She explains that at the height of the ceremony, women experiences border on pain and pleasure, a threshold space in which women freely expose their bodies and condemn their suffering (*Walking* 133). Both Saadawi and Hirsi-Ali use madness to represent manifestations of neurosis by women in their societies.

To conclude my argument in this section, I declare that the two writers enter into conversation in ways through which culture is embodied in women's bodies. I argued that the writers demonstrate that male tyranny aside, patriarchy manifests in various ways such as: racial and ethnic superiority, economic stratifications, sexual control, religion, cultural rites of passage, and marriage. Saadawi's and Ali's narrations reflect on how women propagate patriarchal practises that oppress women and that the continued assumption that patriarchy is synonymous with male superiority overshadows how different role-players exercise and execute power in myriad ways.

Conclusion

I have argued that the autobiographical subjects studied in this chapter portray the personal as political. The six selected writers negotiate identity in their writing through using four key syntactic units, naming, genealogy, mother, and body. I read these techniques of rememberance as grammatical metaphors the writers use to re/sign women's everyday (private) experiences in the public space of autobiography. Their autobiographies employ personal and collective memories from oral archives, silenced by hegemonic discourses, to contest their masculinisation and to participate in reconstructing women's histories from oral archives. This is why I surmise that communal remembering in the African woman's political autobiography is cognisant of the workings of orality. By writing their autobiographies and performatively resigning their public selfhoods from discourses that silence their agency, they enter into private discourses in new publics that acknowledge their agency. I presented the argument that the writers' historical revisions as collective memories are located in the incontestable communal oral repertoire to validate their historical renditions. Orality not only results in a cultural fusion in terms of narrative modes and re-invention of nationalist grammar but also in legitimising their versions of history. Orality is emphasised in these autobiographies in narrating the ordinary because of its unconventionality. Further, orality establishes for the writers, discussed in this chapter, continuities with maternal histories silenced by (post)colonial and patriarchal narratives.

CHAPTER FOUR

(Re)Contextualising the 'Problematic Self': Reading the "*Sous Rature*"[74] of Public and Private Selfhoods in the African Female Political Autobiography as Counter-Discourses

In the beginning was Africa/orality/the word and the word was women's.
(Nnaemeka "Orality" 137)
[T]he most important type of behaviour by which leaders mobilise their followers is their linguistic performance. In democratic frameworks it is primarily through language that leaders legitimise their leadership.
(Charteris-Black 1)

Introduction

The previous two chapters explored how place and space influence public and private aspects of African political womanhood. In this chapter, I examine how self-representations of hybrid African female political subjectivities are negotiated in five autobiographies, from the scope of texts selected for this study, to unravel what modes of narrating selfhoods are foregrounded in identity formation. I focus on how the autobiographical subjects traverse between the private-public to private-private and public-private to public-public spaces within a single narrative event. In his conversation with Nurrudin Farah, Chinua Achebe who proposes a concentric model of postcolonial African identities, recommends that self-consciousness be viewed as a topography mapped in relation to others and prevailing ideas of nationhood.[75] I suggest that African female political subjectivities are represented in concentric patterns that re-contextualise African political womanhood in multiple times and spaces. This layered mode of identity performance contextualises African political womanhood to a postcolonial "African Palimpsest" that facilitates a reading of the cultural-specific nature of African female political rhetoric (Zabus xvii). This methodology interrogates how the writers in this chapter appropriate different linguistic practices to subvert conservative ideas of (political) womanhood in gendered spaces. I argue that their narratives foreground modes of self-representation that portray political womanhood as a complex identity whose performance is nuanced with sub-texts -overt or hidden, thus its *sous rature*. My use of the Derridian concept "*Sous Rature*" in the chapter heading then becomes a mode of deconstructing/reading the discourses of the selected autobiographies, either foregrounded

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[74] Literally translated as under erasure, the term '*sous rature*' was propounded by Jacques Derrida (1976) and it refers to the act of writing a word, crossing it out, then printing both the word and its deletion.

[75] This conversation is from a film recording of a talk between Chinua Achebe and Nuruddin Farah held in 1986 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London, England.

in speech/writing or erased/silenced by dominant and subversive discourses. The texts are: Sophia Mustafa's *The Tanganyika Way* (1961) from Tanzania, Elizabeth Nyabongo (Bagaaya)'s *Elizabeth of Toro: The Odyssey of an African Princess* (1989) and Janet Museveni's *My Life's Journey* (2011) from Uganda, Vera Mlangazuwa Chirwa's *Fearless Fighter:An Autobiography* (2007) from Malawi and Margaret Nasha's *Madam Speaker, Sir!: Breaking the Glass Ceiling; One Woman's Struggles* (2014) from Botswana. The five selected texts serve as particularly good examples of how dialogism and hybridization – two Bakhtinian terms discussed below – act as counter-discursive strategies to dominant discourses that attempt to confine the subjects' identities to notions of 'proper' womanhood. Further, these hybridized texts infuse African cultural concepts that contextualise the individual narrators' womanist discourses to their cultural worldview. I, therefore, proceed to interrogate how the writers in this chapter theorise the hybrid nature of African female political discourse to negotiate sexual politics that encumber public and private spaces and the gender politics that constrain gender performativity of the personal and political.

To question how African female political rhetoric re-contextualises African political womanhood as a 'new' political idiom of multiple and hybrid potentialities, the debate in this chapter is modelled after the "four master tropes" that Kenneth Burke identifies as "metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony" (421). I use these narratological devices highlighted by Burke as methodological frameworks to determine how dialogism between linguistic elements foregrounded and put "under erasure" in the autobiographical palimpsest (Derrida 89), contribute to the process designated by Burke as the "discovery and description of '*the truth*'" of narratives (421, my emphasis). The phrase 'the truth' establishes reciprocity with 'a truth' to signal the truth-value of silences and fictions of *the* self. Additionally, I propose that African concepts in the political rhetoric of these writers signals cultural truths that generate 'new' understandings of African political womanhood which contest simplistic conceptions of womanhood. I support Molara Ogundipe-Leslie's sentiment that women should voice their own agency and view these palimpsestic female writing as activist literature for their potential "to inspire passionate and intelligent response to the present challenges" faced by African women politicians (Ards 2). However, I differ with Ogundipe-Leslie's criticism against the "appropriation of a woman's voice by an African male on important women's issues" (108), because a womanist reading of these texts celebrates collaborations that de-stabilise social binaries like man/woman, black/white. This approach calls for an engagement with narrative, postcolonial, and performance theories to unravel

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how discursive practices re-invent African political womanhood. Therefore, in addition to Burke's paradigm that informs the structural organisation of this chapter, the following concepts are invoked to underpin the critical debate that unfolds: "problematic selfhood" by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "dialogism" and "hybridization" by the Russian linguist Mikhail Bakhtin, "hybridity" by the cultural-literary critic Homi Bhabha, and "performativity" by the gender/queer critic Judith Butler.

As noted above, the blurring of binaries established by hegemonic cultures in research on the identities of men and women of (former) colonies is a core component in the work of the post-colonial critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In her rhetorical text *Can the Subaltern Speak*? (1988), Spivak, who is aware of the duality of victimhood and power that comprises subaltern female subjectivities, notes that "you cannot have a true fit of identity in the political" thus she envisions the subaltern's speech as power negotiation ("Acting" 788). Her critical insights are significant to my research as they raise the question, how do African women politicians by virtue of what Mamdani calls the bifurcated duality of citizenship and subjecthood, negotiate subalternity? What literary devices facilitate African political womanhood's performance of both subalternity and sovereignty? What notions of female subjecthood are produced when an individual consciously enacts aspects of citizenship and subjecthood? Consequently, I consider autobiographies of African women politicians as narratives performatively recreating the dilemma of African political womanhood, redressing their conception as transgressive, then suggesting ways of reading female political subjectivities. In this way, I echo Spivak in reading these autobiographers as 'problematic selves' speaking for themselves as opposed to succumbing to a definition by others, mainly (white) men. I, therefore, draw on Bakhtin's theoretical concepts 'dialogism' and 'hybridization' to explore how language use in the autobiographies in this chapter negotiate dominant and subversive ideas of African political womanhood.

In conducting a Bakhtinian reading of these texts, I aim at showing how the merging of political rhetoric with forms of everyday speech – therefore orality – constructs a female political rhetoric that turns discourse from what Bakhtin refers to as monologism to dialogism. Through the claims they make to orality in their autobiographies, these writers form strategic narrative interventions to negotiate the gendering of the autobiographical tradition, political rhetoric, and public and private spheres. In *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (1992), the African folklorist Eileen Julien notes that "aesthetic, cultural,

and social needs [of orality in prose] are met by reference to and imitation or parodying the structures of oral genres" (ix). To her, this is a unique approach that "accords writers more liberty and assumes they are thinking architects rather than prisoners of a cultural heritage, [hence] it allows for richer, more complex interpretations" (ix). As this debate unfolds, I show how the hybrid political language in these writings facilitates a reading (and writing) of African political womanhood as a multiple and re-vised identity. I consider these autobiographies multilayered "illocutionary acts" (Lara 2), characterized by what Butler calls "performing of gender norms and performative use of discourse (*Bodies* 231). In the book *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993), Butler notes that the concept "'sex' that acts as the stable point of reference on which, or in relation to which, the cultural construction of gender proceeds" is a social construction and "[t]o claim that sex is already gendered, already constructed, is not yet to explain in which way the 'materiality' of sex is forcibly produced" (Butler xi). Consequently, she proposes the terms performance and performativity; where performance is a conscious acting, the embodying of a moment, while performativity refers to features of identity (re)produced in language that is ongoing and not always a choice – a series of effects continually (re)produced or mimicked. I will show that the heteronormative gender norms that inform these women's identities within the domains of public and private spheres are social constructions. Alternately, these critical discourses on womanhood echo Butler's concession that indeed, gender is a performance performatively constituted through repetitive acts. In this way, women's political rhetorics as counter-discourses to dominant discourses enact a 'performance' of gender that reclaims political womanhood from its position at the margins and re-situates it at the centre of political discourses. However, as this chapter demonstrates, and as noted above, the dialogism of these speech acts realises a palimpsest narrative with *sous rature* that I propose, suggest that African political womanhood is a performance of both public and private selfhoods in the myriad ways that these terms present themselves. I, therefore, suggest that as a hybrid identity, African political womanhood does not necessarily occupy a clear hybrid status between public and private; rather, to evoke Achebe and Farah, it is performed in concentric circles that enable the writers to occupy either spheres depending on the social meanings either public or private selfhoods perpetuate. In other words, the women I study in this chapter performatively foreground either a public or private selfhood depending on the social agenda they wish to advance. In the following section, I show how the writers in this chapter reclaim African (political) womanhood by foregrounding (post)colonial and patriarchal discourses that put women under erasure in both public and private spheres. I then suggest

that the writers subvert these dominant discourses through the subversive discursive devices of metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, and irony.

Metonymy, Synecdoche, Metaphor and Irony as Counter-Discursive Frameworks

As noted above, (post)colonial and patriarchal discourses silence African women politicians' agency by putting them under erasure. In my reading of the *sous rature* of these autobiographies, I discuss how the manifestation of the four 'master tropes' delineated by Burke in these autobiographies function as narrative devices that challenge the dominant discourses of patriarchy and (post)colonialism that define women politicians. The womanist political rhetoric of these writers, produced in the language of metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, and irony, form a palimpsest narrative with *sous rature* that negotiate dominant and subversive conceptions of African (political) womanhood. The four devices interrelate in ways that establish a commonality between the five writers' shared interest in reclaiming political womanhood. The palimpsest text produced by these erasures shows traces of competing 'truths' with regard to the changing roles of women in 'public' and 'private' spaces. While (post)colonial and patriarchal discourses that put women under erasure and silence their agency in public and private arenas, the women I study in this chapter put these discourses that (mis)represent them under erasure to challenge their marginalisation and to reclaim womanist ideals that accentuate their power in public and private domains. The first trope I discuss is metonymy in Museveni's autobiography.

Metonymy as a Counter-Discursive Strategy in Janet Kataaha Museveni's Autobiography
A metonym, according to John Anthony Cuddon, is "a figure of speech in which the name of an attribute of a thing is substituted for the thing itself" (434). As a literary device, it is a form of reductionism that attempts to represent reality in a concise manner. In this section, I interrogate how Museveni crafts a rhetoric of persuasion to navigate politics through metonymy. Her autobiography *My Life's Journey* narrates the history and trauma of the civil war in Uganda from Museveni's personal, familial and communal encounters. She occupies different subject-positions as a Ugandan citizen before and during the war, as a public figure in her capacity as First Lady and as a leader (parliamentarian and minister) after the war, and as an exile subject, which informs the historical accounts that she narrates, and the truth value of her autobiography. I propose that the metonyms she uses nuance Obote's and Amin's

political injustices in ways that put under erasure Yoweri Museveni's government's political excesses. Further, the Christian discourse that informs her political rhetoric puts under erasure discourses that might incite rebellion from the Ugandan masses, inculcating in the masses submission to Museveni and herself, who she endorses as the preferred rulers of Uganda. My reading of this text hence interrogates *sous rature* to question the 'truths' that Museveni's autobiography makes claims to. In particular, I focus on how she manipulates language to construct a gendered political rhetoric that counters the stereotypes that men are born politicians and women their destined helpers, which is grounded on a notion of female virtuosity and submission. Her autobiography employs a retrospective narration for self-exploration that manifests a recollection of the self and Uganda's (historical) biography through its struggles for democracy, and she views the process of voicing Ugandan women's traumatic experiences under colonialism, dictatorship, and civil war as "triumphant" (191). Storytelling then enables her perform and process grief to help her nation face their tumultuous past and heal. In giving an account of herself, she embraces the notion of female virtue to manipulate the political public into supporting her leadership as the First Lady of Uganda, Parliamentarian, and (Assistant) Minister. This performance echoes what Sanne Derks and Meike Heessels call the "Marianismo complex", which they define as the permissive ideology of female virtue as a "gender paradigm" which expects women to aim for the status of "the Virgin Mary as a passive submissive role model" (303). The notion operates on two assumptions: first, that women transpose their maternity into politics and their political agenda to mother the nation, and second, that by acting submissively, women perform politics morally compared to men. It is through her autobiographical act that Museveni flouts these social conventions, proving right Viljoen's observation that a woman uses the autobiographical space to "establish her female subjectivity, but also as a space in which to constantly revise and reform it" ("Mother" 134). Museveni embraces this image of virtuosity but only as a strategy to further her political agenda, turning the patriarchal gaze on her femininity back to her society.

Although the personal pronoun in the title *My Life's Journey* connotes a single subject, the autobiography is relationally dialogic. The narrator's symbolic use of language suggests that she is part of the collective Ugandan nation whose history she tells; her personal story is then relational to the national. I view her use of 'my' as a rhetorical device that signals her belonging to collective attempts to minimise the trauma, pain, and depravity of the civil wars and dictatorial regimes that mark Uganda's history. One way she does this is through

adopting a Christian linguistic repertoire, a religious discourse that reflects her fantasies about an ideal Ugandan subjectivity structured around morality. She locates her social consciousness in religion, which she appropriates as a textual narrative device to embody her political image as honourable and virtuous. In my view, Museveni's preoccupation with virtue and morality suggests an underlying neurotic fear of change in post-war Uganda that might possibly throw the society into disorder. It seems her overt concern with social purity, especially in Uganda, is also a way of manipulating national memory to further her family's political agenda.

I contend that Museveni's autobiography's main motive is to convince readers of the author's (and her husband's) political suitability, and her criticisms against Uganda's former leaders is to foreground their evils, which when juxtaposed with her husband's political regime, invokes fear of change in the masses. This role that Museveni takes as a producer of public discourses is what Mathilda Slabbert calls "writer as myth creator" ("Inventions" 3). Consequently, I believe that Museveni's self-portraiture as virtuous has managed to sway the public in her favour. Blogger Contador Harrison describes Museveni's autobiography as a "multipronged love story […] with chapters full of sorrow, happiness, expectations and achievement" and the writer as "a role model for many who have given up in life" (1).[76] Similarly, Doreen Ochido in "Ugandan First Lady Janet Kataaha Museveni Tells About Her Past", views Museveni as "a woman of strength and character worth emulating" whose story is "filled with history, a rich culture, family values and personal struggles" (2). Further, Angelo Izama and Michael Wilkerson in "Uganda: Museveni's Triumph and Weakness" observe that Museveni is "a two-term MP with her own following and significant influence in government and business" (75). These views, a reflection of the link between female virtue and Museveni's image in Uganda's public discourse, metonymically echo Museveni's clever attribution of woman's virtue with good leadership. As the debate unfolds, I explore how the writer negotiates the notion of honour and virtue through various figures of speech like the psalm and metaphors of light and darkness to posit her leadership against what Grace Musila calls a "phallocratic" discourse of power (40), which challenges hegemonic masculinities of male leaders which, in Museveni's context, is the former presidents Milton Obote and Idi Amin

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[76] For a detailed outlook at the review of Janet Museveni's My Life's Journey, visit Contador Harrison's blog at the following address: http://www.contadorharrison.com/my-lifes-journey-by-janet-museveni/

In his review of Museveni's text, Andrew Mwenda acknowledges the ethical dilemmas that her autobiography raises. He envisions her as occupying a precarious position as a First Lady who is also an autobiographer expected to convey her ethical responsibility to tell the truth of the nation. He says that:

> When she [Museveni] went to campaign for Parliament she realised that politicians win elections by bribing voters. When she became State Minister for Karamoja, she found that government has been pumping money into the region without anything to show for it. Her comments on the state of our healthcare system are as critical as those any opposition politician would make. And yet she still believes that her husband's administration has been a very successful one. (2)

Mwenda here exposes how autobiographical truth is undermined by the writer's maintenance of silence over issues of potential threat to her personal and public images. He writes that while the autobiography "is an intimate self-examination […] the challenge is how much to reveal about oneself" (1) and that Museveni's book "makes intriguing comments on the failures of Uganda without the author making clear who she is blaming them on" (2). In this respect, it seems, Museveni enforces silences in moments where truths could contradict her motive to present herself as a virtuous woman and competent leader. For example, while she condemns the bribing of voters and claims she would never do it, she does not reveal whether her husband prescribes to the same principles. Additionally, while she informs the reader that the ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), was displeased at her decision to become a politician, she does not mention NRM's reactions to her election.

To validate her husband's rule, Museveni narrates Kampala's destruction during the civil wars in Uganda, first initiated by President Amin to oust President Obote, and then by the successive attempt by various parties to remove President Amin from power, as symbolic of Uganda's fate under bad leadership, anointing Yoweri Museveni as the best ruler for Uganda. As a narrative device, metonymy enables Museveni to document the fall of Uganda and the brutal war under Amin's rule and represents Uganda's political trajectory to Yoweri Museveni's time by plotting its fluctuating growth against the physical appearance of Kampala as follows: at one time thriving, teeming with tourists and cosmopolitan populations and then, suddenly, totally shattered with armed soldiers populating it; once a city with flourishing economy and social life and then with dilapidated infrastructure and collapsing

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buildings. For example, Apollo Hotel, "a notorious haunt for Amin's trigger-happy soldiers, where torturing and executions were the work of the day", becomes a war monument where "after the war, they found skeletons and human skulls crammed into the elevators. All that was there was the stench of death and giant lizards running down the hallways (100). After the abolition of Amin's government, Kampala as a representative of Uganda is presented as an unpredictable place, bearing a semblance of normalcy even after Amin's brutal and volatile rule, yet a very "unstable environment", such that "[t]he peace in the city was tenuous at best and dangerous at its worst" (100). This image of a decaying Kampala is presented to legitimise Yoweri Museveni's rule, by portraying him as a figure of hope to transform this metonymy.

Raymond Mpubani, in "Janet Museveni: Emerging from the Shadows" (2016), views Museveni's political career as a negotiation of the personal and political. He concedes that "for a long time it seemed that [being a First Lady] is all she was content to be, content with staying behind the scenes to support her tireless husband, until she decided to join his profession" (1). In Museveni's privatised imaginary above, she emerges as a subdued wife, but even in her catalogue of this part of her life, she still manages to portray herself as part of the government machinery in her capacity as First Lady. Elleke Boehmer observes that in male autobiographies "leaders' wives by and large inhabit a separate sphere of domestic, maternal, generally non-national activity" (*Stories* 79), a position that Museveni locates herself in before embarking on a political career. Although this discussion does not focus on her husband, Museveni seemingly situates herself in the position Boehmer talks about. Accordingly, I concur with Mpubani's deliberations that Museveni possibly becomes a politician as a way to institute her political autonomy. However, Mpubani also expresses doubt about her real motive for venturing into politics. He asks: "was the move prompted by the need to remove one of her husband's most principled critics, a man who had served in Museveni's government as IGG before he broke rank and joined the opposition? Ruhaama is after all not where she originates from – she was born in Kajara County, Ntungamo, 64 years ago. Or was it a gambit, an opening sequence to something bigger?" (1). While Mpubani's criticism is sexist in his inability to accept that the writer can have separate interests from her husband, he nevertheless recognises her strength in her decision to run for Parliament despite her husband's and his party's reticence. Mpubani also applauds, albeit cynically, her willingness to defend her family against the accusations of misappropriation of state funds.

In view of Mpubani's criticism above, I propose that one way in which Museveni appropriates religion to craft a political rhetoric that enables her to navigate politics is by constructing her political engagement as God's calling. She biblically alludes not only to male figures like Jesus, David and Samuel but also a woman like Esther to endorse this call. She says after fulfilling her maternal role, she had planned to retire in the countryside and never anticipated "the Lord would call [her] to jump into an area that [she] had always considered off limits" (236). She defines her political motive as a calling which she grounds in the analogy of the parable of the lost sheep. By evoking Jesus' metaphorical teaching that, "His sheep hear His voice and follow Him and the voice of a stranger they do not follow" (237), she constructs her political womanhood as an act of obeisance. The word "voice" appears nine times on page 237 and I suggest the aim is to emphasise her calling. Like the biblical Samuel, she does not oblige the first and second callings. On the third call, however, she tells Museveni of her 'calling' to lead but he dismisses her and solicits another candidate for the same seat. Faced with her husband's and party's lack of support, she sets out on her own noting, "I felt compelled to follow the Lord's leading and obey His Voice" (239). In linking her leadership to religious myths, Museveni portrays herself as part of a legion of leaders ordained by God to lead and triumph just as she intones in the first paragraph of this section. Mwenda, who is critical of this Christian approach, notes that

> one has to worry about Mrs. Museveni the politician for she couches her politics in the language of religion. For instance, her decision to run for parliament itself, she tells us, was an instruction from God. Then one has to ask themselves: If the first lady's views in politics are guided by divine intervention, how can we mere mortals disagree with her? Would disagreement [be] tantamount to opposing the almighty? (2)

This metonym of her leadership is clinched when Museveni introduces in chapter one "Irenga" as her homeland, the background of her political career, with a verse from Psalm 23:8, one of the songs related to David, thereby symbolically envisioning herself as part of David's house and drawing a parallel between herself and David as God's anointed leaders (1). Religious (Christian) rhetoric in this autobiography therefore reaffirms her affinities with practices in autobiographies by African male politicians breaking the man/woman binary that pervades traditional autobiographical criticism.

The autobiography is structurally adapted to the morphology of the Psalm, a narrative strategy that intertwines her personal story with Christian teachings and scriptures to poetically juxtapose her life as bearing witness to key historical events in Uganda. The psalmic components visible include individual and communal laments, thanksgiving, hymns and kingship mythologies, coronation rituals, marriage ceremonies, and battle songs. The psalms are core components in Christian worship. This form embodies one of the narrator's multiple selfhoods; the 'I' of a virtuous ((fe)male) leader destined to deliver Uganda from destruction like the biblical David. By structuring her story as a psalm and framing herself and narrative as religious, she is amassing political capital for Yoweri Museveni and herself.

The rhetoric of sin and the need to revert to virtue emerges in her autobiographical narration of Uganda's war against HIV/AIDS. The writer, who associates HIV/AIDS with promiscuity, says that in their nation-wide campaigns against HIV/AIDS as the First Family, "raising awareness about the dangers of living this kind of illicit lifestyle was the main gospel that Yoweri preached wherever we went", especially since due to the celebratory mood in the post-war years, "the morality of the people had deteriorated" (203). She says it was an undeniable fact that prevention was only temporary, and for this matter, she saw a need for a change in people's perceptions on "morality and sexuality" (203). Such a shift would enable the youths to "live a pure life until they were married" by abstaining from pre-marital sex and being "faithful in marriage" grounded in the "pure foundation of the teachings of the Word of God" (207). Although her approach is prescriptive, she says "I am unapologetic about my beliefs and I feel that in this day, when political correctness is more important than moral aptitude, I would rather do what the Lord says and have a clear conscience" (208). With this image, Museveni legitimises her dogmatic approach to convert Ugandans into a submissive, 'pure' state that will suit her political agenda. Jonathan Cohen and Tony Tate in the article "The Less They Know, The Better: Abstinence-only HIV/AIDS Programs in Uganda" note that Museveni is:

> [T]he best-known proponent of abstinence-only programs in Uganda; Mrs. Museveni has described abstinence-only approaches as a blend of African and Christian values and has used her position of influence to intimidate organizations that promote condoms to young people. On World AIDS Day [in] 2004, she called for a national "virgin census" to support her abstinence-only efforts, raising fears that children

would be forced to submit to intrusive medical tests or otherwise disclose confidential information about their virginity status. (175-176)

The above criticism levelled on Museveni questions her reliance on Christian philosophy to initiate a governance that is almost authoritarian. The blogger Siobhán McGuirk in "Righteous Crusades? Imperialism, Homophobia and the Danger of Simplification in God Loves Uganda" (2013) identifies religion as a tool for oppression of sexuality. He further notes that "[o]ppression of sexual freedoms is not new to Uganda" (2).[77] The root of this form of social control, he says, was initiated in the pre-colonial context by Catholic and Protestant missionaries with their emphasis on 'sexual morality'. After the institutionalisation of the colony, the colonial administrators "enforced public decency and anti-sodomy laws, explicitly aiming to correct the immoral sexuality of savage natives" and these legislations have been "incorporated into modern Ugandan culture and society" (2). Most critics underestimate Museveni's socio-political influence in Uganda. It is of interest to note that while Yoweri Museveni rules the civic public, his wife's self-styling as a God-ordained leader does not just set her up as a destined and unopposed leader. Rather, her influence in the primordial public is also likely to make her political actions, however dubious, unquestionable. In my view, this poses a threat to democracy. Her self-representation is then best conceived as cunning.

Museveni's account of the history of Uganda is, however, problematic as it is not based on her own experiences. Her historical rendition seems like a patchwork of hearsay and rumours, two forms recognised by Jan Vansina in his book *Oral Traditions as History* (1985), oral forms that can be relied on to access news. Hearsay and rumours in Museveni's autobiography function as channels through which she accesses information about her people and country while in exile. For instance, she obtains news about the situation in Uganda through telephonic conversations with fellow Ugandans. As she relates, she and other Ugandans living in in exile "would go over all the bits of information they gathered from people who were either in Uganda, or those who had heard accounts from others" (151). She also relies on rumours to narrate the triumph of the guerrilla movement, the National Resistance Army (NRA): "[t]he news spread like wildfire that Kampala had fallen to the

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[77] For more details on the impact of Chrsistianity to Ugandan subjectivities, read Siobhán McGuirk's article at: http://postcolonialist.com/arts/righteous-crusades-imperialism-homophobia-and-the-danger-of-simplification-in-god-loves-uganda/.

NRA" (151). While in Sweden, her friend Caleb calls her and asks her why they were still in Sweden while "Kampala is liberated?" (153). Further, when the NRA takes over Kampala, it is her friend Jovia Saleh who puts the receiver close to the radio for Museveni to "listen […] to the popular military songs that were playing" (152). However, by relying on rumours and hearsay to narrate historical events that occurred while she was in exile, Museveni as the First Lady and wife of the former leader of the NRA, is distancing herself from the autobiographical ethical responsibility of narrating about the role of the NRA in the suffering of Ugandans who they were fighting against.[78] The modes and patterns of narration discussed here shows that the autobiography dwells to a great extent on the narrative of family and friends, as well as her religious convictions to deliver her political oratory, making her version of history seem unreliable.

Through parallelism/antithesis, Museveni also constructs an image of herself, and Uganda, as in crisis. Her husband features as a messianic figure who liberates the nation. Charteris-Black characterises the 'messianic goal' as "leading […] followers to their ultimate place of redemption" (62). Conversely, Museveni envisions herself as a modern-day Esther[79] meant to assist her husband in his redemption project to free Uganda from the 'evil' clutches of Obote and Amin. She uses the following biblical verse as an epithet of this characterisation: "[y]et who knows that you have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this […] (Esther 4:14)" (179). Museveni further says she related to her husband, consequently her readers, that "[she] never wanted to be a public figure, but now whether [she] wanted to or not, [she and her husband] were thrust into the most public place of all as leaders of [their] nation" (154). This is regardless of the fact that she was a key promoter of NRM's policies and one of Yoweri Museveni's top campaigners. By embracing the messianic myth, she portrays herself as a good woman who does not attempt to overshadow her husband but sacrifices herself in service to the nation. The "messianic myth" according to Charteris-Black, ritualises a "series of prophetic functions" (60) including "creation of a moral vision" towards achieving unified "national identity" (61). In my view, Museveni presents herself as a good Christian woman to

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[78] While rumours and hearsay in Museveni's autobiography are a key narrative device, their complexity and volume have so many nuances and an in-depth analysis might deviate the focus of this chapter in which I focus on metonyms. I am, therefore, currently writing a paper interrogating their role as stylistic devices in Museveni's autobiography. My engagement with these techniques is therefore limited.

[79] According to the Hebrew Bible, Esther was a Jewish queen and wife of king Ahasuerus of Persia. When the King issued a decree that all Jews be executed, realising that their lives were in danger, she fasted for three days and when she was summoned before the King (an unusual event as she had possibly fallen out of favour with the king). It is believed that Esther's prayers and the favour she re-gained with the King not only saved her cousin Mordecai, who was appointed as the king's right-hand man, but also the Jews.

manipulate her audience. As such, her subversion of the original essence of image, while subtle, is so powerful that she succeeds in constructing herself as a model politician, serving in the same parliament and cabinet with Yoweri Museveni, yet somehow evading taking responsibility for the NRM government's failures.

Museveni then appropriates a range of narrative devices in her political rhetoric to construct herself and husband as honourable and virtuous – metonyms that extend their portraits as ideal Ugandan leaders who possibly exist in the nation's fantasies. By juxtaposing these techniques of (self)presentation with the silences that emerge through lack of experienced evidence, the truth-value of her narrative is compromised. I surmise, in reference to this text, that the idea of female virtue is a façade, a political weapon Museveni uses to garner political capital.

Synecdoche as a Counter-Discursive Strategy in Elizabeth Nyabongo's Autobiography[80]

To discuss how Elizabeth Nyabongo reclaims African political womanhood from its marginalised position in her self-narration as a transgressive femininity and restores it by locating it at the centre of contemporary feminist discourses, I investigate her use of self-representation as a synecdoche. Cuddon defines synecdoche as "[a] figure of speech in which the part stands for the whole, and thus something else is understood within the thing mentioned" (704). My reading of *sous rature* in this autobiography traces the shifts in what constitutes the personal and political for African women leaders to examine how Nyabongo challenges the designation of women into the private and men into the public domains. I then put the masculinisation of the term politics under erasure to explore how Nyabongo's foregrounding of narratives of women in leadership challenges the notion of men as leaders and women as the supporters of the former. Gwendolyn Mikell in *African Feminism: The Politics of Survival in Sub-Saharan Africa* (1997) observes the need to probe the categories public and private, and notes that "the twin gender-political crises in Africa has resulted from social-structural problems that arose during the process of European colonization, as African political economies were tied as appendages to the West and African men were given increased recognition relative to women" (2). Consequently, I read this autobiography as a

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[80] *Elizabeth of Toro: The Odyssey of an African princess* (1989 [1983]) is a re-issue of an earlier version, *African Princess: Princess Elizabeth of Toro* (1983), described by Alice Nnaabalamba as a history of "the institution of the monarchy in the African society" (211). She notes that, "In an effort to find the most effective way of symbolizing, projecting and thereby preserving the torch of her African culture, [Bagaaya] enters the modelling profession" (213).

symbolic reintegration of African political womanhood into public discourse. The narrative is dialogic as it speaks back to four monologic discourses. First, colonialism and Christian missionaries' re-invention of royalty; second, the autocratic rule of President Obote; third, the military authoritarian rule of President Amin; and, lastly, (her) society's views of the author as a celebrity and lawyer.
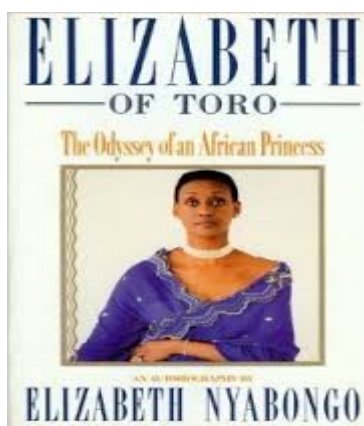

Figure 9: Bagaaya in full traditional regalia[81] Figure 10: Bagaaya's Book cover[82] Figure 11: Bagaaya as a vogue[83] model

The title of Bagaaya's autobiography foregrounds Toro as an integral component of her synecdoche as its princess (see figure 10 above). In the first part of her autobiography, she describes Toro as one of the four kingdoms (along with Buganda, Bunyoro, Ankole) that comprised the African systems of political organisation before and after colonialism in Uganda. The story is narrated from the point of view of an African female leader – a Toro princess and *Batebe*.[84] However, her identity as a princess and model (see Figures 9 and 11 above) that frames her imaginary in Ugandan public discourse undermines her achievements as an educated woman and politician in favour of her royal and celebrity status. This is the dilemma the autobiographical subject attempts to negotiate in her account of herself. By narrating herself and other women in her family like Queen Victoria as leaders, I argue that she echoes African womanists and feminists like Mary Modupe Kolawole, Chikwenje

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[81] This photo showing Bagaaya in her full traditional regalia, is obtained from a blog which can be accessed at: http://ugandansatlarge.blogspot.co.za/2009/11/pricess-bagaya-on-amins-offer-of.html. It is also available in various other public sites.

[82] This book cover image has been copied from the following site: https://www.amazon.com/Elizabeth-Toro-Odyssey-African-Princess/dp/0671673963.

[83] This photo has been obtained from pinterest, a public site. It can be accessed at: https://za.pinterest.com/zahraazam/princess-elizabeth-bagaya-of-toro/.

[84] According to Bagaya, a Batebe is a female member of the Royal house-hold, normally a sister to the incumbent king, who acts as his most trusted adviser and confidante. It is an established position in the Toro Empire.

Okonjo Ogunyemi, and Mikell among others, in claiming that African women are not transgressors in the political sphere as they occupied this domain before colonialism. In reading her as a synecdoche of African women in leadership, and in the interest of furthering this portraiture, I, therefore, refer to her in this debate as Bagaaya.[85] I then recommend that in its invocation in various public discourses debating about her political womanhood, the name Bagaaya marks the *sous rature* of her identity.

The centrality of the name Bagaaya to the writer's self-representation and this debate is revealed inside her text in various instances. For instance, we learn that her father used this name to fondly refer to her, but implicated in this reference, I suggest, was a reminder of her impending leadership in Toro kingdom. However, this coming into self-awareness is revealed towards the end of chapter seventeen, "From Symbol to Individual", where she writes:

> I was named Bagaaya after strong, fearless women who symbolized the spiritual and temporal well-being of our people. Throughout my upbringing, the stories of my ancestors instructed me: "You are Bagaaya." Thus my character, my actions, even my fate to some extent, have been consciously shaped by the legacy of my name. (267)

The women she refers to are previous *Batebes* and queen mothers like her grandmother, Queen Victoria. Therefore, while the name appearing on the cover of her autobiography is Elizabeth Nyabongo, her other name Bagaaya, is explained almost at the end of her narrative, holds more power in terms of embodying her political agency. As a marker of her identity, the name Bagaaya performs the dialogic function of countering the patrilineal monarchical leadership structure that confines her to a mere advisor, and that which ignores her private status. It, however, robs her of her individuality and autonomy as it images her as a symbol of her community. Her meeting with her future husband Wilbur becomes a turning point in her self-definition as she is transformed from a communal symbol to a self with her own desires and actions. She says "the encounter with Wilbur transformed me from being a mere symbol to an individual" (267).

By narrating her role as princess of Toro and as *Batebe*, she is highlighting women's leadership and their presence in the public spheres before Westernisation and depicts herself

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[85] Although the cover of her autobiography bears the name Elizabeth Nyabongo, she constantly calls herself and is fondly referred to by her maiden name, Bagaaya. I will also refer to her as Bagaaya in this chapter.

as a representation of her African political womanhood as a non-Westernised ideal. Bagaaya has occupied a public position in her society since childhood which challenges the assumption that African women belong to the domestic sphere and those who venture into the public are either "renegades" (Gqola 1), "transgressive" (Cazenave 4) or "honorary males" (Mamphela, *Life* 180). According to Bagaaya, the privatisation of the domestic sphere and location of all women into the private sphere by colonialism has rendered the femininity of women like her, who culturally occupied the public sphere in pre-colonial times, ambiguous. For her, private is a state of mind that she craves, but cannot achieve spatially. For example, she recalls how during her childhood while being escorted by her father to the Buganda Kingdom to start schooling, she was engulfed by emotions which she could display because "[p]rincesses are not supposed to show fear, [and] so [she disguised [her] emotions behind a mask of silence" (17). Despite her centrality in the public space, the domestic arena is where she locates female political agency, turning this space into a public domain. Accordingly, she challenges the dichotomies public/private by blurring them. She also uses her family experiences to challenge notions of personal and political; as a princess, she is public property and so, for her the personal is literally political. For example, while at Cambridge studying law, she reminisces that

> The permissive society with its "free love" was in full swing in the sixties. Was it right to indulge; was it cruel to refuse? I had to remind myself that I was in a sense public property, a symbol of my country and m culture. My life was not properly my own, so while others could afford to indulge and let themselves go, I could not. So I stoically denied myself any sexual activity or emotional involvement with any man, leaving Cambridge a virgin […]. (37)

As I will shortly elaborate and as the writer herself demonstrates, discourse on Bagaaya's sexuality predominates public opinions about her. By embracing her body and sexuality via modelling, for example, she performs her leadership at a time when the monarchy was abolished in Uganda by Obote, which effectively challenged the customisation of a princess as nothing more than a King's advisor. She also uses her body as an activist's tool to criticise the objectification of women's bodies by Amin.

To re-insert Toro women into Uganda's history, Bagaaya makes claims to nationalism through orality. She obtains examples from her family's historical archive, oral histories,

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which she calls "living history" (13), of influential Toro women. The images she evokes of Toro female leaders, the queens, queen mothers, and *Batebes*, recalls past female political leaders in Toro. Memories of these women leaders also establishes continuities with a stromg tradition of female leadership suppressed by hegemonic cultures. For instance, in chapter two, titled "To Crown My Days", she narrates:

> According to ancient tradition in Toro, as in Egypt, the king ascends the throne with his sister the princess royal, who is known as the *Batebe*. As my great-aunt Bagaaya had been the Batebe to my grandfather, King Kyebambe, and my aunt, Ruth Komuntale, had been to my father, so was I destined to be the Batebe to my brother, Patrick Kaboyo Olimi, when he succeeded my father. (24)

Bagaaya also celebrates her great-grandmother Queen Victoria, King Kyebambe's mother, whom she says saved the Toro Empire from extinction. This Queen mother forfeited all luxuries and chose a nomadic lifestyle to save her son whose life was under threat from King Kabalega of Bunyoro Kingdom who planned an attack against Toro upon the death of their king Ntare. She flees with her one-year old son to Ankole, then Buganda Kingdoms, with nothing but "the perfumed ointment contained in the horn of a cow, which she used to massage daily into her young son's body" (30). The queen approaches the Imperial British East Africa Company's agent Captain Lugard and negotiates that he "restore[s] her son to his kingdom" in exchange for "a share in Toro's salt and other mineral wealth" (30). Queen Victoria is also the figure behind the institutionalisation of Christianity between the Catholic mission and Toro Kingdom. Bagaaya narrates that Queen Victoria entered into a treaty with Pere Achete, a French Catholic missionary, at a time when such negotiations were facilitated by men. This treaty was contracted in her palace, the *Rwengo*, described as "the most important house" in the palace "[a]part from the Court House and the seven houses of the Sacred Guild" (44). Bagaaya notes that treaties created an eternal bond of "blood brotherhood", a term that points to the masculine nature of the ritual process. Her great-grandmother's participation in a ritual is, therefore, a contestatory act that disapproves the myth that confines African women within the private sphere. For Bagaaya, "[t]hat the queen was able to conclude a blood pact with a white, male Roman Catholic missionary at that time is an amazing occurrence, [a] revolutionary [act]", a reification of the myth of the public sphere as a male domain (25). This performance of nationalism through the ritual of treaty-making, together with an anecdote (above), portraying the queen's bravery, puts Queen

Victoria on an equal standing with any male ruler and legitimises her motherly acts as political. Therefore, Bagaaya narrates, when blood brotherhood was "banned" by Christian missionaries "as cannibalistic and barbaric, they sliced through the moral fiber (sic) of our society" (25).

Colonialism, religion, and modernity are therefore conquest cultures that distorted Toro history, foregrounding male political presence while silencing female voices in politics to maintain the status quo of male patronage. For example, she observes that after the establishment of Uganda as a British protectorate, Toro's traditional currency was obliterated and replaced with silver coins "bearing the portrait of [the British] Queen Victoria" as opposed to the writer's great-grandmother who was Toro's queen mother, Victoria, their matriarch (103). The writer also observes that the encounter of Toro with Christianity changed its people's cultural identities. The missionaries, intolerant of some aspects of traditional Toro culture, set out to depose of practices which they felt contravened Christian dogma, distorting traditional subjectivities. According to Bagaaya, most practices the missionaries thought "satanic" were discarded, "destroying much of the mystery surrounding the Toro monarchy" (112). Traditions that were considered worthy to the success of Christianity and the empire such as the kingship structures were, however, promoted rather than abolished.

To please the missionaries, King Kyebambe ignored some rituals that symbolised kingship such as polygamy, coronation ritual, mourning and burial rituals, and religious beliefs, as custom demanded, transforming into a Christian King. However, his *Batebe* Bagaaya restored her society almost to its former state. She recalls that: "The chief exponent of resistance to cultural domination was Akiiki Mukakijabara Bayaaya Rwikgirwa (after who I am named), the princess royal – the *Batebe* – to King Kyebambe" (111). Married to King Kabalega "to secure the peace between their kingdoms" she had escaped to Buganda Kingdom when her husband was arrested by the British and exiled (111). Summoned by her brother King Kyebambe, she facilitates his coronation and re-introduced polygamy to retain the throne in her family as the current queen had been unable to conceive and there was pressure from the colonial administration that the King name his heir "from among his nephews" (113). However, while polygamy was re-introduced, the Christianisation of the throne demanded that only the first wife is recognised while the rest live outside the palace, which contravenes the rights of these other wives. This autobiography then re-establishes matrilineal cultures

and creates a hybrid female political identity to navigate this male patronage that has rendered the political sphere in the contemporary African societies today hostile to women. Bagaaya demonstrates that African women have been active in politics. She embraces this role and translates the inspiration into the post-colonial era. For example, by recognising her predecessor *Batebe* Bagaaya's militancy and linking their destinies through the name Bagaaya, she is foreshadowing her resistance towards President Obote's and Amin's regimes to obliterate her kingdom and silence Toro's history. At the end of chapter nine, "The Roots of Resistance", Bagaaya says, "[d]efiantly, I resolved that if I could play a part in saving our civilization from within Uganda, I would try. My name was a daily reminder of my responsibility" (118). The name she is referring to is Bagaaya.

Bagaaya establishes continuity of the militancy exhibited by earlier Toro female leaders like her name-sake Bagaaya and great-grandmother Queen Victoria in contemporary times. Like Queen Victoria, she salvages the history of Toro Empire by sustaining its memories following the abolishment of monarchical rule in Uganda by Obote and Amin by imprinting its history on her body and re-telling this history through modelling. Like her predecessor Bagaaya, she also ensures the survival of the tradition of female leadership in Toro by reclaiming the legacy of female leadership, silenced and distorted by the missionaries and colonialism. She further contests her objectification as a sexual object by Amin and re-invents her sexuality as a protest tool by sharing her experiences of sexual harassment as a female Assistant Minister in her autobiography.

To narrate her resistance against Amin, Bagaaya represents his excesses through parody, defined by Cuddon as "a branch of satire", a mode of writing that exaggerates certain (character) traits either to correct an existing portrayal or to express derision towards an image (514). An example is an anecdote that demonstrates Amin's blind imitation of President Jean Bedel Bokasa[86] in order to amass public recognition. With the use of humour, she narrates Amin's attempts to garner popularity from the masses by reproducing his own brand of the meme "Operation Bokasa" dubbed Operation Amin (130).[87] The meme 'Operation Bokasa' which she uses to encode Bokasa's hunger for power is ambiguous in the

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[86] The surname of President Jean Bedel Bokasa is spelt with a single 's' in Bagaaya's autobiography, but it is also spelt in other contexts outside this autobiography as Bokassa.

[87] According to Susan Blackmore in *The Meme Machine* (2000), a meme is that which is "learned by imitation from someone else" (6). She elaborates as follows: "when you imitate someone else, something is passed on" and when passed on again, it "take[s] on a life of its own" (Blackmore 4).

sense that it presupposes Bokasa's dominion over "every activity in the CAR, whether private or official" (139). Like Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi, Bokasa wrote out the former president from the history of the nation and appointed himself the life president. Amin's mimicry of Bokasa is presented as his perversion of the radio airspace and the public sphere with echoes of "Operation Amin" (140). He also instructed a London firm to supply him "a legion of military medals" and began preparing the ground for his ascendancy into the position of "life president", openly declaring Uganda a "military government" (140).

Bagaaya is not the only one to represent Amin's absurdities. Colin Legum in "Behind the Clown's Mask" (1997) portrays Amin as a 'clown' calling him "a unique phenomenon among tyrants: a clown whose performance […] has made it hard to get people to accept that such a funny man could do anything as evil as his critics would have them believe" (86). In chapter eleven, "The Clouds Gather", Bagaaya narrates the mysterious death of one of Amin's wives, Kay. Looking at him, she recals, "for the first time, I noticed how large his arms and hands were" (154), a statement that implies her conviction that Amin had taken part in Kay's murder. This is compounded by the following comment:

> Up to this time, Amin's murderous system had claimed few women as victims; I only know of Pink Kabahenda [one of Amin's victims] whom he accused of having been a spy of Obote. The combination of the soldier and the Muslim made Amin not quite despise women, but made him feel they presented little or no threat – which made Kay's murder even more mysterious. I felt we were entering the murky waters of psychopathy. Was the president a sadist? Whatever he was, this latest incident boded no good for the rest of us. (155)

Her sentiments expressed here portray Amin as grotesque. It is an attempt to deconstruct his veneer of harmlessness towards women, whom he favoured as objects of pleasure. Read through Legum's theorization of Amin as a clown, the comic effect elicited by this caricature not only heightens Amin's sadism, but also tarnishes the images of people like Bagaaya who associated with him. It seems Legum caricatures Amin to satirise militarized masculinity in Uganda and to contest the sexualisation of women, which demeans their leadership capabilities. Bagaaya also portrays Amin as the embodiment of evil to discredit the scandalous image that Amin propagated of her as a sexually immoral woman and to re-claim

her political image from the discourse of morality in the public domain. Legum captures two instances of such depictions, which I later in this section.

Amin, Bagaaya proposes, performs his militarised masculinity to accentuate his virility, and considers all women his property. Despite her qualifications as the first Ugandan woman to obtain a law degree (abroad), to Amin she remains a challenge in so far as his sexual proclivities are concerned. She mentions three different instances during which Amin demonstrated sexual interest towards her. At one point, he summoned her into his office and told her that rumours were circulating to the effect that there was a romantic liaison between them. He informed her that he had asked his informants, "am I not a man, and is Bagaaya not a woman, what is wrong with it?" (135). Amin's promiscuity described by Bagaaya, also intimated by Janet Museveni, suggests that he considered women's bodies above all as sources of pleasure. Bagaaya points out that "the combination of the soldier and the Muslim made Amin not quite despise women, but made him feel they presented little or no threat" (115). Here, she signals Amin's stereotypical view that even though highly educated, Bagaaya's physical attraction prevented her from rising above her sexuality to become a politician. Although he continued to make sexual advances towards her and she rebuffed them, the possibility of her accepting it in future ensured her position as Amin's right-hand woman, until he felt threatened by a white Western man, as Legum argues (discusses below).

To counter this image, Bagaaya includes in her autobiography several photographs taken during her modelling career and accentuates her fashion sense during her tenure as a public official in her various capacities as Ambassador and Assistant Minister. These images are a textual feature that counters the objectification of her body by the male gaze into a cultural symbol. The following example demonstrates the writer's proclivity of her body to her culture. During a fashion show hosted by Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon at the Marlboro House to raise funds towards "eradication of polio in the Commonwealth" (77), she showcased Ugandan culture through fashion. She says that when the announcer said, "'And from Uganda, the Princess Elizabeth of Toro models a dress designed by Philippa Todd' […] I strode onto the stage, feeling proud and animated by the spirits of my ancestors" (78). She further recalls:

> Soon after, top British modeling (sic) agencies and fashion magazines bombarded me with modeling offers. […]. Modeling was considered a rather frivolous thing to do,

and I had a hard time convincing my friends and advisers that it would help me achieve my goals. Modeling was a means to an end for me, enabling me to make an important point regarding my beloved country. Beauty is […] a reflection of one's people, one's country. It is an asset one holds in trust. At that time, a black model appearing in top magazines was rare. I wanted to destroy the myth of white superiority in terms of beauty and sophistication. (78-79)

Writing in retrospect, Bagaaya reiterates how discourse on her sexuality silenced her political agency. These sentiments are also prevalent in the critical public back then. For example, Legum's scholarly criticism of Bagaaya's political career is cynical of her political agenda. He reduces Bagaaya's ministerial position to an image in which she emerges as a public defender of Amin's extravagances, which she attempts to neutralise by accentuating her sexuality. He says that: "Amin, whose proclivity for beautiful women is legendary, sustained Miss Bagaaya in office for nine months, during which time she made a particularly memorable debut at the UN General Assembly in a shimmering and tightly-fitting gold gown [see figure 12 below] to put up a spirited defence (sic) of her President against charges of racialism, dictatorship and brutality" (90). In this description, Bagaaya emerges as no better than Amin. While Legum is critical of Amin's stance towards Bagaaya, he is also cynical about what he seems to suggest is her reticence towards Amin's excesses. His remarks that "her own ignominious downfall followed swiftly when Amin publicly on 28 November 1974 accused her of 'making love to an unknown European in a toilet' at Orly airport in Paris" (90), therefore, he appears to suggest that Bagaaya had escaped lightly. Legum's assessment of Bagaaya's predicament falls short of what Chielozona Eze calls "feminist empathy", which is "the ability to feel oneself into the experience of a woman in undeserved suffering" (311). In view of Amin's intolerance to any form of opposition, government officials like Bagaaya could not afford to criticise him in public, bearing in mind that those who had dared to challenge him and his masculinity had disappeared under mysterious circumstances. For this reason, Bagaaya's subversive stance could only be subtly executed, which excluded a public countenance that Amin's rule was a travesty of humanity.

Figure 12: Bagaaya in a gold gown during the UN meeting

Bagaaya further reveals that patriarchy, Christianity, and colonialism are the roots for the seclusion of women into the private sphere. She reverts to the African cosmology to make sense of their dilemma and locate their voices in a third space where African political womanhood is not understood in opposition to political masculinity as transgressive, renegade, or rebellious, but as an alternative femininity with its own parameters, what Ramphele calls an alternative "female destiny" (*Passion* 9). Therefore, I read Bagaaya's political womanhood as a translated and transformed female identity, a complementarity of traditional African womanhood and contemporary African conceptions of femininity.

In conclusion, the idea of public and private as distinctly separate spaces for African women is rendered ambiguous by Bagaaya's self-portraiture as a synecdoche of female leadership in pre-colonial Africa, before the social categories public and private were introduced by Christianity and colonialism. She presents private identities like motherhood, sisterhood, wifehood and sisterhood as metaphors that function as political myths, and private experiences like marriage, trauma, and death as frameworks for understanding African female political experiences. These 'private' aspects of womanhood function in her autobiography as symbolic political acts. Bagaaya narrates the experiences and histories of her female family members to reclaim the stories of African women leaders, in their capacity as warriors, political advisors, and leaders, whose agency is silenced in the postcolonial era by patriarchy, colonialism, dictatorial rule, and Christianity.

Metaphor as a Counter-Discursive Strategy in Vera Chirwa's Autobiography[88]

I now explore how Chirwa's use of metaphors in her autobiography *Fearless Fighter: An Autobiography* (2007), problematizes the appropriation of Malawian cultural indigenous

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[88] Vera Chirwa is a member of the Malawian middle-class elite. She was married to the late Orton Chirwa, a key figure in Malawi's political landscape who died mysteriously in jail during President Banda's regime. For more biographical details, see chapter one.

concepts in the mythification of former President Hastings Kamuzu Banda by himself and the supporting public that re-invented him as a demi-god with monopoly over the civic and primordial publics. Her text shows that the civic and primordial publics as previously discussed in view of Ekeh's ideas, personal and political, are social constructions, ideologies that Banda's political philosophies appropriated to institute phallocracy. Chirwa and other critics resist this kind of political, iconic mythification in narrating the metaphors that constituted the political rhetoric of Banda's regime. The dialogic established across narrative and oral time and space between Chirwa and other critics of Banda, whose sentiments I echo in this debate, counter Banda's self-glorifying mythification and dictatorship through summoning metaphors from Chewa people's oral archive. She refers to Banda's metaphors and also uses her own in her narration. By invoking these cultural concepts as metaphors, I propose, Chirwa re-evaluates indigenous and postcolonial womanist epistemologies of conceptualising Malawi womanhood during and after Banda's dictatorial regime. In place of his method of political identity construction, Chirwa suggests reclaiming Malawi women's individuality to liberate them from political constructions that silence(d) their agency and endorse(d) subordination to patrimony. In retelling Banda's political myths, Chirwa exposes, in counter-discourse, his rule as male tyranny and constructs her subjectivity as a gendered, political, and writer-activist.

I consider Chirwa's autobiography revisionist as it challenges masculine notions of national belonging advanced by the political philosophies of Banda's regime. In giving her personal account, she also narrates Malawi's history, especially the period marked by the repressive rule of Banda. The narrative is dialogic and it initiates discourse across space and temporalities between men and women that challenge Banda's hegemonic autocratic political discourse. This discourse is what Reuben Makayiko Chirambo calls the "rhetoric of Kamuzuism", a concept he advances as a "'political theory'" to explicate Banda's attempts to secure his presidency as a "lifetime rule [sanctioned] by a higher power [like God]" ("Orality"139). As Chirwa intones, and also theorised by Chirambo, this political rhetoric was created by Banda and his supporters and spread exponentially through oral channels as Chewa cultural myths. Chirambo delineates Kamuzuism as a process through which "ideas, beliefs, and myths about Banda […] presented him as the 'fount of all wisdom' and a leader who 'always knew what was best for the nation'" ("Orality" 139-140). This mythology thereafter framed Malawians' worldview at that time, socialising them into accepting Banda's indefinite rule. Focusing on three African concepts that Chirwa foregrounds in her discussion

of Malawian wo/manhood that gained political prominence during Banda's regime, *Ngwazi,*[89] *Nkhoswe*,[90] and *Mbumba,*[91] as political metaphors, I discuss how Chirwa disrupts mythopoeia that framed Banda as Malawi's only and ultimate ruler, as well as owner and protector of all Malawian women. In their original context these terms mean different things, as Chirwa also shows in her autobiography. However, these words were/are corrupted/manipulated from the traditional to the political, to suit a particular androcentric narrative. In this chapter, the capitalisation of the terms *Ngwazi*, *Nkhoswe* and *Mbumba* signifies their utilisation as political metaphors. Where they are not capitalised, I read the use as a deliberate attempt by the autobiographer or critic to summon its original cultural context. The bigger question is, therefore, how does Chirwa move from the traditional to the political and back (in reference to womanhood), within the whole project of *sous rature*? I now discuss how Chirwa crafts her own identity in relation to the metaphor of *Nkhoswe*.

To cement Banda's political image as a destined ruler, the 'rhetoric of Kamuzuism' appropriated various figurative devices that celebrated his heroism as *Ngwazi*, as Chirwa puts it. One such technique is, as Chirwa notes, his "nick-[name] [as] the 'Lion of Malawi'" (17). She reiterates, Banda was renowned and admired for "[h]is roaring voice [that] burned through everything" (17). This vocal prowess inspired his selection as a nationalist figure because Malawians needed someone who "could speak" on their behalf to the colonial regime (17). However, the 'rhetoric of Kamuzuism' popularised this figure of speech, likening Banda's political prowess to the narrative of the lion as king of the jungle to signify his ability (as a man-eater) to exert dominance over his subjects and political detractors. The

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[89] In Malawi's local grammar, the term *ngwazi* connotes a shrewd and aggressive person or someone who is exceptionally good at what they do, such that they deserve to earn praise or adulation. The term has been appropriated in the political sphere, where *Ngwazi* means "Conqueror" (Chirambo *Culture* 35), chief or chiefs or great lion. Thus in the Bandan political sense, this word is transformed from the verb *ngwazi* to a noun Ngwazi, perhaps suggesting that Kamuzu Banda was the greatest conqueror or lion of Malawi. This might also explain the persistent reference of him as Dr. Banda (he was a medical doctor), even as President, probably to invoke his medical skills in a political context, signaling his capacity to 'treat' the nation's illnesses, that is, to rid Malawi of 'bad' habits like resistance to his rule as a Life President. In the Malawian/patriarchal set-up, the term *ngwazi* is gendered and is almost always used in reference to men. If used in reference to a woman, it usually connotes that she has attained whatever feat she is being congratulated on 'like a man.'

[90] '*nkhoswe*' simply means a direct male relation to the woman, who is there to offer some supportive role, hence the "guardian, protector, provider" interpretation that Chirambo gives in his thesis (*Culture* 51). This, too, is problematic.

[91] '*mbumba*' can either mean women siblings or, simply, women (and children). The latter meaning of *mbumba* is the understanding behind the question: 'how is your *mbumba*?', which means 'how is your family?' This is a common greeting in Malawi, a question usually posed to a (married) man. On the rare occasion that it is posed to a married woman, the addressor most likely inquires after the woman's children (and not her husband).

idea of the president as a man-eater is expounded in the trajectory and nature of his political reign where Banda is portrayed as 'devouring' the rights of his people. For example, Chirwa notes that it was rumoured that some people were taken to "secret camps where they were tortured and thrown to the crocodiles in Shire river" to be eaten (85). This culture of despotism, according to Chirwa, was however not a secret, as Banda would crack 'jokes' in parliament, telling the parliamentarians that political dissidents would be "meat for the crocodiles" (85) while MPs allied to him "laughed hysterically" at these jokes (85). This discourse of fear of the crocodiles in Malawi's political discourse has been defined by Syned Mthatiwa as the "rhetoric of animality" that he designates as embodying Banda's cruelty (98). Chirwa observes that while initially the nickname "Lion of Malawi" was a humorous attempt to explain his roaring voice and incessant talking, it soon became synonymous with Banda's tactics to sustain his authoritarian rule in postcolonial Malawi (17).

In chapter three, "Independence", Chirwa highlights the role of Banda's mythification. She explains that Banda took titles of pronounced significance like '*Ngwazi*', accentuated by praise names like 'Lion of Malawi', to further the myth that he was a great and infallible leader. According to Chirambo, the function of "praise titles" bestowed onto Banda and the political ideologies these propagated were means to popularise him and sustain his memory in public discourses uttered within public and private domains ("Sinking" 562). Here, the *ngwazi-Ngwazi* dichotomy is nuanced by Chirwa's acknowledgement of Banda's shrewdness in compound his vision in orature, whose creditability is often unquestionable, to secure a lifetime leadership position. The praise title *ngwazi,* in this case, is translated into a political myth, *Ngwazi*, and according to Chirwa, valorised by The Women's League in their constant reference to Banda as "our Ngwazi" (Conqueror), thereby recognising him as the father of the nation and symbolic benefactor to all women (50). Chirambo observes that narratives "that re-valorise Banda as *Ngwazi* (Conqueror) and father and founder of the Malawi nation perpetuate […] a nationalist history that both distorts and even falsifies Malawi's history" ("Sinking" 556).

Further, the title *Ngwazi* was appropriated by Banda's 'personality cult' to generate a public discourse on Banda as eternal ruler. For instance, Chirwa says that the president's "full title [was] Ngwazi Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, Life President of Malawi" (50), a narrative that was not easily contradicted out of fear from the 'animality' of his regime and the insouciance of the masses who may have felt they had more important matters to deal with. Then,

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gradually, "the ideas of Banda as Messiah" were firmly implanted in all spheres of Malawi's social imaginary (Chirambo *Culture* 9). This appeal to 'transcendental truth' became a form of political capital Banda and his supporters used to harness unchallenged public support for him. For Chirwa, the glorification rhetoric, which she interprets as illustrative of the sycophancy rampant in Banda's reign, promoted a culture of praise for the head of state at the expense of the citizens' democratic rights. For instance, she notes that the personality cult around the president would sometimes advise him as follows:

> 'No, *Ngwazi*, the ministers are conspiring against you. They just want to take over', they told him, and deliberately made mischief between the leader and his ministers to take advantage of the situation. Dr Banda then started to make new alliances and promised people seats in the government in return for their support. (65)

Relying on his sycophants' word, Banda would castigate the ministers who had broken away from the cabinet. The civic public was so amoral that according to Chirwa, those close to Banda saw themselves as wielding the power to discipline those they thought were disobedient to the presidency. She relates one instance where Cecilia Kadzamira, Banda's former secretary and then mistress, "yelled" at her husband Orton Chirwa for allegedly conspiring against Banda (66). She argues that Banda's fear for rebellion saw him implement stringent measures, i.e. dictatorship, to curtail any form of resistance to his rule, producing a level of submission among the masses that almost bordered on the inhuman. The state was so distanced from the masses that "rumours and exaggerations" became the only ways through which people could voice their opinions about the state's plans (21). Chirwa therefore recalls this association of Banda to religious myth-making processes to situate herself as a human rights' activist.

Closely related to *Ngwazi* are the terms *Nkhoswe* and *Mbumba*, also Chewa indigenous concepts used by Banda and his supporters to consolidate his political mythification. Of interest is how Chirwa's autobiography explores what Nick Tembo calls the "*Nkhoswe-Mbumba* ideology" of Banda's regime to manipulate all women to look upon him as their protector, thereby securing their support of his presidency (111). In her text, Chirwa intones that Banda's political rhetoric established a faux-paternalistic relationship over all women who had to answer to him. She notes:

> [Banda] established himself as the nation's *Nkhoswe*, which according to African tradition is a benign father figure, a family head, who looks after the women and children, clothes them, feeds them and so on. The *Nkhoswe*'s dependants are called the *Mbumba*, and Dr Banda's *Mbumba* was all the women of Malawi. (159)

By officialising Chewa culture as national culture and declaring himself overall *Nkhoswe* across all cultures in Malawi; patrilineal and matrilineal, Banda not only collapsed boundaries that would limit his rule but also, suppressed his adversaries like Chirwa who was imprisoned for her husband's opposition of Banda. She is rendered "vulnerable" and forced into exile, succumbing to a fate suffered by most women under Banda's rule that, according to Emily Mkamanga, "left no woman untouched" (11). In the excerpt, Chirwa does not differentiate *mbumba* from *Mbumba* or *nkhoswe* from *Nkhoswe*, perhaps to show the blurred demarcations between the private, primordial and civic publics after colonialism' attempts to Westernise Malawi society. In view of Chirwa's sentiment that Banda had declared "all the women of Malawi" his *Mbumba*, regardless their age or willingness to be part of his mythification (159), I propose that Chirwa dedicates much narrative attention to the mythical symbolism of *Mbumba*, *Nkhoswe*, and *Ngwazi* in relation to Banda's portraiture rather than to herself to deliberately distances herself from Banda's mythical public imaginary of *Mbumba* as the nation's and the president's women. To reclaim her individuality. In narrating experiences of the *Mbumba* with authority of experience, Chirwa questions the coercion of women into a communal identity that silences their agency.

Additionally, Chirwa notes that the *Mbumba's* reinvention as Banda's "personality cult" legitimised paved way for their miss-use to further his political agenda. She explains, Banda made himself the Minister of Women and Children's Affairs and declared himself "*Nkhoswe* No. 1" out of selfish reasons like a fear of being usurped if he "entrust[ed] affairs of his *mbumba* to any other person" thereby spreading his reign to the primordial public as *Nkhoswe* ("Culture" 62). Chirwa says that Banda's role as *Nkhoswe* perverted the "African tradition [of] a benign father figure, a family head, who looks after the women and children, cloth[ing] them, feed[ing] them" (159). Tembo situates the terms *nkhoswe* and *mbumba* as institutions designed to govern relations between men and women, particularly "the male uncle or brother and his women siblings" in matrilineal communities like the Chewa, which Banda hailed from (111). Instead, Banda took his role as national *Nkhoswe* too seriously, especially his responsibility of ensuring their "good conduct" (Young & Banda 13), thereby policing their

sexuality. As Asante Mtenje observes, as the nation's *Nkhoswe*, Banda had declared all 'provocative' outfits illegal and his *Mbumba* were expected to wear long dresses "that reached to their ankles, concealing the definitions of their bodies and symbolizing sexual propriety" (81). If a woman displeased the president, she would be in "trouble" and if coerced by her husband into disobeying Banda, "he would be arrested and imprisoned" (160). He, therefore, interpreted the *nkhoswe*'s role of getting his *mbumba* out of "trouble" literally to mean interfering in their marriages (Young & Banda 14). Consequently, Chirwa reiterates the state's interference in the private sphere as creating a private-public sphere in which state authority governed the personal.

Further, according to Chirwa, the president created the *Mbumba* institution to extend his autocratic control over the civic public. Speaking with authority as one of the co-founders of the NAC Women's League, an organisation "formulated […] to fight for [their] freedom, for the abolition of the Federation and for the release of all the political prisoners" that endeavoured to "teach […] women about their rights" (Chirwa 44), she says that Banda's imaginary of *Mbumba* as 'women' parodied the cultural institution of *mbumba*'s promise of freedom and security. Similarly, Chirambo says that Banda "publicly threatened that as *nkhoswe* he would deal with any man abusing *his mbumba* in Malawi" and while the scope of this abuse was relative, e.g. "failing to buy a woman party uniform or refusing her to go to the dances for Banda, [or] wife beating", the punishment, mainly "flogg[ing] [the man] at the party chairperson's house or office" was meant to humiliate the perpetrator (Chirambo *Culture* 32). Nevertheless, Chirwa notes, Banda's promise to "take care of them and protect them [if] they would in turn honour and respect him and show their praise, gratitude and deference – through dance" was a way to exploit them (159). However, whenever they posed a challenge to his leadership, he called the Women's League members "[his] Amazon Army" (50), a comparison to the legendary, mighty women warriors, the Dahomey Amazons (see Figure 2). According to her, Banda would praise them saying that "'[his] women [were] very strong'" (51), but to make a mockery of their attempts to fight for women's "rights" (44), as if their show of militancy is a caricature of that displayed by the Dahomey Amazons.

In her critique of Banda's tactics to silence Malawian women, Chirwa concedes that through the *Mbumba* institution, he succeeded in converting the women's league into a group of female singers and dancers who served as his entourage in public appearances and when he was returning home from abroad. She says that "when Dr Banda toured the country and

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campaigned for our independence people would dance and celebrate before and after the rallies. It was a normal, communal and natural expression of joy and it was fine. Men and women freely joined the dance or sat and watched" (160). However, writes Chirwa,

> [a]fter the Cabinet Crisis, when Dr Banda consolidated his dictatorship, […] [i]t became compulsory for his *Mbumba* – that is, the women and not the men – to dance. At every public appearance there was a dance. Women dressed up in the red, green and blue colours of the MCP and wore dresses with Dr Banda's portrait [see figures 13, 14, and 15 below]. When he came back from trips abroad it took highly absurd proportions, with huge and extravagant dance events in the National Stadium to honour the return of the Nkhoswe. And the women had no choice. Dancing was compulsory. The Young Pioneers would go into the villages and collect women in truck-loads. (160)

Chirwa then observes that dancing, once a "free and spontaneous" mode of expressing happiness, had been turned into a forceful act that she interprets as an explicit of women's submission to Banda's masculinity and leadership (160). In "Taking Charge: Unmasking Sexualities in Contemporary Female Malawian Poetry" (2013), Mtenje regards the dancing forcefully ritualized by the '*Mbumba-Nkhoswe* ideology' as an institutionalised form of sexual control over Malawian women that "gave a false hope of the empowerment" while using them to further male political agenda (81). The dancing *Mbumba*'s sexuality was reserved for Banda's eyes only and "party officials were directed to ensure that Banda enjoyed the best view possible of the dancing women's bodies (Mtenje 81). In this way, the male gaze that controlled women's sexuality was magnified, turning the dancing arena into a private-public sphere where patriarchal dominance over women's sexuality was exploited for the president's pleasure. Chirwa recalls this mode of gender performance to restore its cultural meaning and critiques Banda's appropriation of culture to exert control over Malawian women's sexuality for his personal benefit.

Figure 13: Mbumba in a stadium[92] *Figure 14: Banda dancing with the Mbumba*[93]*Figure 15: Mbumba in different uniforms*[94]

In summary, the three metaphors *Ngwazi*, *Nkhoswe*, and *Mbumba* in Banda's mythology reflect a hegemonic masculine discourse of power that not only objectifies women, but also disregards citizens' democratic rights. Juxtaposed with Chirwa and other critics' counter-discourse, the resultant dialogism in identities Chirwa constructs of herself and other Malawian women demonstrates the paradoxical relationship between the individual and the state, personal and political, and public and private.

Irony as a Counter-Discursive Strategy in Sophia Mustafa and Margaret Nnananyana Nasha's Autobiographies

In this final section of my exploration of modes of narrating *sous rature* of African political womanhood, I examine how Mustafa's *The Tanganyika Way: A Personal Story of Tanganyika's Growth to Independence* and Nasha's *Madam Speaker, Sir!: Breaking the Glass Ceiling, One Woman's Struggle* foreground irony to negotiate dominant and subversive discursive practices that show women's movement between the public-private-public and private-public-private spheres of primordial, civic, and private spheres in postcolonial states. According to Cuddon, irony is a critical literary device and epistemological paradigm of perceiving the world. However, in view of its "oblique quality", Cuddon says, irony is not easily and explicitly deciphered but mostly implied in "an ironic temper or tone, an ironic way of looking at things and feeling about them" (372). There are various manifestations of irony, but the two most common are dramatic and situational. Dramatic irony is when "the

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[92] This photo is a caption of a gathering of *Mbumba* in a stadium singing and dancing for Banda. To view this video, follow the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m-hhrICv0N8.

[93] This image, in which Banda is dancing with the *Mbumba*, is available in the *Nyasa Times* Online website, and can be accessed at: http://www.nyasatimes.com/pictorial-of-kamuzus-kale-movie-manganya-documenting-life-of-ngwazi/.

[94] This photo, showing the *Mbumba* singing and dancing for Banda, is obtained from *Nyasa Times* Online, is accessible at: http://www.nyasatimes.com/pictorial-of-kamuzus-kale-movie-manganya-documenting-life-of-ngwazi/.

audience understand the implication and meaning of a situation on stage, or what is being said, but the characters do not" (216), while situational irony "occurs when, for instance, a man is laughing uproariously at the misfortune of another even while the same misfortune, unbeknownst, is happening to him" (372). In my reading of irony as a technique that highlights *sous rature* of discourse, I suggest that Mustafa and Nasha put their private identities as wives and mothers under erasure to expose how patriarchal expectations of women to adhere to social conventions silences their political agency. As I will show, the two women deliberately narrate intimate details of their private lives at home and in the political sphere through irony to challenge their silencing by patriarchy and Westernisation.

I begin with how Mustafa's autobiography shifts the boundaries of public and private, disrupting the gendered meanings these spaces perpetuate.[95] I also explore how she challenges the new patriarchies that her autobiography exposes through irony, mainly featuring in the dialogues between her and men (politicians) often within the domestic sphere of her home. From the onset, Mustafa's text presents its dramatic irony in her decision to dedicate her book to her husband Abdulla "for his forbearance with [her] politics" (2). As one of Tanzania's first women parliamentarians, her existence in the political sphere seems to be a lonely journey among male politicians as the photo on the cover of her autobiography intones.
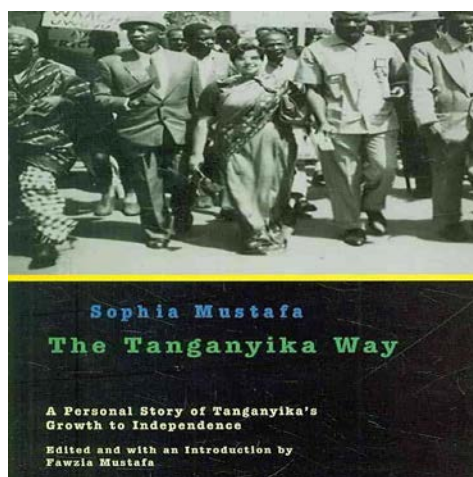

Figure 16: The cover of Mustafa's autobiography[96]

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[95] An Asian-African of Kashmiri Indian origin, Sophia Mustafa (1922-2015) was a fictional writer,[95] politician, and gender activist. Her autobiography *The Tanganyika Way: A Personal Story of Tanganyika's Growth to Independence* (2005 [1961]) recalls evens of the transition (1958-1961) when Tanganyika (now Tanzania) gained independence from Britain.

[96] The image of this cover photo has been obtained from: https://www.amazon.com/Tanganyika-Way-Sophia-Mustafa/dp/189477051X.

I read the journey motif suggested in the cover photograph (see figure 16 above), title, sub-title, and narrative content as echoing Tanganyika's trajectory to independence, and the autobiography a "narrative of nation-building" (Steiner 139). I also view the content as a form of resistance against the confinement of womanhood and subjection to patriarchy within the domestic sphere, testifying to what Ogundipe-Leslie characterises as male dominance in "private and public life" (112).[97] I consider Mustafa's autobiography as revisionist in the sense that it locates Mustafa, consequently Tanzanian women, within "nationalism, the nation state, and the post-colony" ("Introduction" v). Marjorie Mbilinyi, in the afterword, describes this autobiography as an "activist text" (157) that supports Mustafa's agential move of voicing Tanganyikan women's role in the "nationalist struggle" (158). In this way, says Mabilinyi, Mustafa locates women's voices in the public sphere at a time when "the nationalist struggle was defined and marked by race/ethnic relations" (158). As a communal biographer, Mustafa echoes African womanist call for unbiased social mobility and she intersperses her personal story with that of the Asian-Africans as well as black Tanganyikans to create an inclusive womanist paradigm of nation-building the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) way, which she presents as *the* 'Tanganyika way' as her title endorses.

Mustafa uses dialogue to juxtapose her pro-womanist sentiments about female political participation with her society's patriarchal views, vocalised through her husband Abdulla, to foreground the suppression of women's agency. Dialogue recalled shows the irony of secluding women from politics based on a social worldview informed by the "private/public dichotomy of gendered activities" in her society (Stanlie & Busia 47). Mustafa's awareness of the androcentric nature of Tanganyikan politics perhaps explains her tactfulness in subverting patrimony. Although she seemingly adopts a sublime attitude towards her domesticity, the heavy tinge of irony that pervades her narrative suggests a mockery of the structures that aim at controlling her womanhood. For example, when approached by Robert Philipp – a prominent TANU member – and requested to become the Asian representative, she tells him: "'I don't know whether I can even spell legislative council correctly'" followed by "'why do you want me to, Robert? Don't you think one of the others will do?'" (12). I view her suggestion that perhaps 'others' might be a better option as an acknowledgement of patriarchy's amoral stance towards women's presence in the civic public, rather than an admission of her incompetency to lead. This attitude might be explained by her reiteration of

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[97]For more details, see: "African Women, Culture and Another Development" (1993).

Abdulla's retort in response to Robert's pledge that Mustafa enters into politics, saying that he "must be joking" to have even considered his wife and home-based stenographer for a role outside the domestic sphere. Abdulla's dismissal of his wife as "crazy" for even considering politics as a career and his advice to her that she should forget about politics and "get on with [her] work" is indicative of the perversity of patriarchy over Mustafa's life (12). Her dissatisfaction with the status quo within her home emerges in her sentiment, "oh, why does one's life always have to be ruled by others?" (13). Although she is hesitant to portray Abddulla as a sexist, his duality as an executor of patriarchal control but later on also a supporter of his wife's political ambitions makes him a shifty character whose motives are difficult to decipher. However, it is possible that his identity performance in concentric circles connotes the instability and multiplicity of patriarchy. Consequently, when he tells her "I just can't imagine you in politics", he implies there is a type of person "fit for it" (14). Juxtaposed with his views that that she is "better than many men", in fact "just as bad as they are" (13), the reader/audience can decipher the irony of this statement that also portrays Abdulla's concession that there is no gender suitable to lead, neither male nor female. When he asks her: "'but why do you want to bother about it [politics] at all? Why can you not relax and enjoy yourself. If I were in your place I'd sit in the garden with a good book and music and entertain myself that way'" (14), one might then argue that Abdulla's discouragement is altruistic, expressed to protect Mustafa from the corruption that power wields. His attitude also suggests his reluctance to accept her independence possibly because he believes that Mustafa's roles outside the domestic sphere are mere hobbies. In Abdulla's conception of spatiality, the domestic sphere is the only domain where women can display some level of seriousness.

I agree with womanist and feminist scholars such as Oyeronke Oyewumi, Gwendolyn Mikell, and Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, who have argued that the conflict between men and women is with regard to public and private spaces' occupation. It is this conflict that Mustafa attempts to negotiate, and it reflects a tension between patriarchy's attempt to maintain a status quo, and womanisms' attempts to re-open up the public sphere to women. Her autobiography contests the imposition of Western ideals of the social category gender on her gender performance, echoing Oyewumi's critique of the "colonial" paradigm that restructured the public sphere in Africa (31). I view Mustafa's foregrounding of Abdulla's views portraying her political career as encroaching on a sphere she is unfit for as a challenge to men's prerogative to dictate spaces women should occupy. Mustafa's counter-discourse

invokes Mikell's views that the gendering of "public and private spheres" suppresses female agency (3). Further, Mustafa reclaims the "dual-sex" social systems that favoured both men and women's political roles (Mikell 3). Radhakrishnan calls the deliberate attempt to forget female political agency the "schizophrenic vision" of a nationalist historical project where "[w]oman becomes the allegorical name for a specific historical failure: the failure to coordinate the political or the ontological with the epistemological within an undivided agency" (85). Mustafa challenges the gendering of public and private spaces by staging instances of political arguments within her home that blur the public/private demarcations and expose the sexism that pervades the political public sphere.

Mustafa's commentary on conventional gender roles serves as counter-discourses that I interpret as her personal resistance towards sexist views. Abdulla dismisses her desire to take up a career in politics over her other social roles at home like: her maternal, wifely and his secretarial duties and outside her home like the Home Makers initiative she started as unnecessary fancies. When she outlines her success with Home Makers, he asks her "'are you comparing Legco to 'home makers?'" (13). She responds by telling him she can read about politics from books and Abdulla asks, "'[d]o you think political books are like story books or novels?'" (14). She recalls the following conversation where Abdulla tells her:

> "Do you think political books are like story books or novels? […]. You know, you are just like a person who goes into a jungle and sees a lion. He has a .22 gun and he comes face to face with the lion. He feels very confident as he has a gun and he thinks he could shoot the lion if attacked. It is so difficult to explain to you. I am, perhaps, talking above your head. For heaven's sake go to sleep and forget it all". (14)

Abdulla's sentiments seem representative of monologic patriarchal laws, and Mustafa's views epitomises pro-feminist counter-discourse. In this dialogue, Mustafa stages her narratological resistance towards the hegemony of monologic sexist ideas. Although she is a house wife and lacks formal education on "political science, economics and social science", which Abdulla sees as important tools for politicians, Mustafa stands up for her beliefs, resisting her society's attempts to restrict her within the domestic sphere. Abdulla's dismissal of her intended career further convinces her of her responsibility towards addressing her community's social needs, such as the need for pregnant women's proximity to hospitals. Her political knowledge hereafter emanates from personal experience as opposed to theoretical

know-how (13). Later, she notes, Abdulla came to realise that she has a very strong sense of responsibility that often prompted her to "take things too seriously" (65). Abdulla's disregard for her intellect is augmented by the comment: "'it is so difficult to explain to you. I am, perhaps, talking above your head, for heaven's sake, go to sleep and forget it all'" (14). His remark summarises the gendered dilemma of female political womanhood, a view that symbolises the exclusion of African women politicians from the public sphere to maintain the status quo. This explains why Mustafa regards her election into the Tanganyika Legislative council in 1958 as "pure chance" (9). Therefore, Abdulla becomes the mouth-piece who voices the defeatist nature of the Arusha society's norms and social conscience Abdulla's views. He functions as the trigger for Mustafa's personality change. When confronted by patriarchy, she begins to realise her strength, "I don't know, but I am very bold in a number of ways. Even as a child I was quite daring" (13). The growth of her political awareness is narratively realised by comparing the contrasts between her political statements towards the end with her earlier statements expressing her doubt with regard to her ability to: "'even spell legislative council correctly'", and even suggesting that other women "'will do'" better than her (12).

Mustafa's reluctance to separate her public and private selves represents her anxiety to usurp the gender roles that gender performativity in accordance with patriarchy demands. According to Mbilinyi, colonialism and patriarchy exerted pressure on men and women to conform to social norms "with men shining in public life and women in the domestic realm" (158). Mbilinyi adds:

> There was tremendous pressure on both women and men to conform to gender and ethnic stereotypes about appropriate behaviour and thereby fit into the patriarchal and colonial structure of society […]. Many women who broke patriarchal boundaries faced public ridicule and domestic strife. (159)

She further notes that the husbands of women in the public "were also prone to teasing if not public ridicule for 'allowing' their wives to shine in the public sphere - heightening the pressure on both parties to conform to patriarchal norms" (159). It was necessary for Mustafa at that time, Mbilinyi mentions, to perform a degree of domesticity because if women were 'allowed' to shine in the public sphere, men would also be compelled to do so in the private sphere. This would have opened the androcentric political sphere to women, making it more

competitive. Mustafa attempts to redeem Abdulla's masculinity by portraying him as her companion in her political trajectory. Accordingly, when she presents her political acts, she uses the collective pronoun 'We' more frequently than 'I', but she uses 'I' when talking about domestic arrangements. This 'We' is consolidated and encompasses not just Abdulla and her children, but also the Asians, immigrants, her political colleagues and Tanganyika as a whole.

In negotiating various spaces and identities, such as those mentioned above, Mustafa's interpersonal relationships indicate a progression in terms of how she situates herself as a Tanganyikan outside her public appearance as a TANU member. Mbilinyi points out that female 'transgressors' were publicly ridiculed and experienced tension in the domestic sphere, the results were "family breakdowns and divorce" (159). Mustafa therefore conveys the necessity to defend her identity as a good mother and wife due to her public engagement. Without her society's, husband's and children's welfare to consider, she has no qualms existing as a public figure. Therefore, the bone of contention is not her sex, but her gender roles. Mustafa's daughter, Fawzia views her mother's resignation from active politics as a reflective of the unfavourable androcentric rules governing the country's political sphere. Fawzia comments in the introduction to this autobiography that after the ascension of Abdulla to the bench, the "abruptness with which she [Mustafa] was subsumed back into the patriarchal order signals the contradictions that women of her generation and location grappled with" (vi).

However, Mustafa seems oblivious to the resistance she voices through polyphony. For example, she says that "[m]y readers, perhaps will be bored by these petty personal incidents but I recount them because perhaps they, indirectly and unconsciously, had turned me into politics" (17). This statement evokes an argument at the core of this thesis: how do women politicians present public and private identities? According to Mustafa and other female political memoirists, the political autobiography is a space to present political encounter and not private details. Even though she assumes that "petty" (10) personal details are irrelevant in her memoir, nevertheless they are the thread that weaves in her unique contribution to the feminist movement in Africa. Mbilinyi notes that unconsciously, a large segment of the narrative is devoted to "the changing relations between Sophia and her husband, Abdulla, and their children Hana, Mali and Fawzi, as she negotiates her private space to engage in nationalistic politics" (159). For example, the title of the first chapter "A Housewife in Politics" immediately signals the writer's awareness of the locatedness of gender roles.

Odhiambo Ojwang in "The Bad Baniani Sports Good Shoes" (2006), describes Mustafa as "the Ismaili housewife who worked closely with Julius Nyerere towards Tanganyika's independence" (10). Due to her awareness of the intricacies of her political womanhood, I interpret the title 'A Housewife in Politics' as a dialogic mechanism that demonstrates the writer's defiance towards the limitations that African female subjectivities are confined to.

By embracing her identity as a housewife, the writer creates a new public space within which to air her political views. Mbilinyi says that "Sophia consciously albeit apologetically mixed personal accounts of events in her life with public events on a wider stage and shared her own analysis of the political and economic struggles taking place at that time" (158). The dynamics at her home also spell tensions with regard to her Legislative Council (Legco) membership, as a woman. This is evident in two different scenarios narrated: in the first instance, when Mustafa returns home from her second public address, her daughters are impressed by her performance but her son Mali criticises her speech as "disjointed" and "boring" (30). He even tells her that "surely you could do better than that" (30). Tina Steiner in "Translating between India and Tanzania: Sophia Mustafa's Partial Cosmopolitanism" (2011), describes this autobiography as "unusual […] for its time" because of the strict patriarchal norms guiding gender performance, which confined Asian-African women to the domestic arena. Similarly, when she becomes a politician, Mustafa's first dilemma is of a private nature. She feels "guilty that, this holiday, [she] had neglected the children and had not taken them out anywhere, or to the coast" and fails to reconcile her achievement in the public sphere with success and something her children could be proud of (46). While she is apologetic for having "spoilt" her children's holiday, her younger daughter Hana is ecstatic that she had something to "show off about" in school (46). Consequently, although Hanna sees her public ventures as success, Mustafa only views her achievement in terms of her performance in the domestic sphere. Her elder daughter Fawzi, on the other hand, is unable to dissociate her mother with the domestic arena. She cannot comprehend her mother's "untidy" look in the evening after her campaigns and asks her why she "did not just stay at home like other women, or go to the office" (46). Even at this tender age, Fawzi is already conscious of gender roles. She is confused by her mother's absence from home and views her mother through her maternal roles. Fawzi's reactions to her mother's maternal roles also suggests that she is already being socialised into locating women within the domestic sphere. For instance, she tells Mustafa that she thought votes "were people" her mother has to take care of (46). When Mustafa disabuses her, Fawzi says, "'Oh, I see'" (46). The emphasis she places

on the words "Oh" and "see" by stressing the sounds, as reported by Mustafa (46), reflects Fawzi's disappointment that Mustafa does not fit into the social role the daughter has been conditioned to view her mother in. However, the emphasis might also be read as an indication of Fawzi's increasing awareness of Mustafa's alternative responsibilities outside the domestic sphere.

For me, this autobiography is as an activist act against the exclusion of women from politics. It portrays the impasse between men and women with regard to public/private in political matters as a riddle that remains unsolved. Mustafa's self-location within the domestic realm and her lack of confidence in her viability as a candidate for the Tanganyika Legislative Council (Legco), arises from her belief that politics is a male domain best-suited to "highly educated male professionals" (Steiner 142). Mbilinyi mentions that in Tanganyika, politics was reserved for selected few, mostly men (160). However, Abdulla's political "talk" with Mustafa in the evenings at home suggests that the home was indeed a space where political tensions were enacted and resolved. Mustafa recounts an instance where President Julius Nyerere, and a white TANU member, Bryceson, met in her house following their visit to Arusha, "for a while we talked about the children and then when Abdulla had got Julius a drink, we talked about Tanganyika and Kenya politics and also Somalia and other places" (58). Further, the family bonds that these three representatives of the races of Tanganyika formed forged an extended family that traverses racial tensions and represent Nyerere's vision of a model de-racialized society. The domestic space thereafter became a "safe" zone for negotiating trans-national and socio-political tensions (58).

Abdulla's willingness to discuss politics with Mustafa complicates the idea of chauvinism, and I suggest this signals his changing attitude towards gender. Although he is sceptical of his wife's viability as a politician, he does not consider her a "dunce" (14). Therefore, Abdulla's reluctance can be read as an anxiety to be perceived as willing to become domesticated in the absence of his wife. In her first public address as a TANU nominee in Moshi, Mustafa begins her address by invoking the metaphor of the kitchen, which represents her discomfort in this space. She says: "Mr. chairman, ladies and gentlemen, first of all I would like to apologize for not addressing you all in Swahili, but I doubt if the type of Swahili I talk would be understood, even in the kitchen" (29). The formal address that she appropriates and the protocol she observes here indicate that she is consciously attuned to the dictates of a public space. This, juxtaposed with the kitchen metaphor, signals the transgressive nature of her

political engagement. In this case, Swahili language becomes the element that is used to signify public and private entities as well as her otherness; not just as an Asian but as a woman.

I have discussed how Mustafa's autobiography de-bunks the idea of definite public and private spaces, or the fixity of personal and political identities, and established that the categories public and private are socially-constructed and gendered to exclude women from considering a career in politics. In this way, the writer de-mystifies politics as men's rightful occupation and deconstructs the home as apolitical.

As is the case in Mustafa's autobiography, my reading of Margaret Nasha's *Madam Speaker, Sir!: Breaking the Glass Ceiling, One Woman's Struggle*[98] focuses on how the writer challenges expectations of female submission in the political sphere through the use of irony. As a literary symbolic device, irony in Nasha's autobiography, both dramatic and situational, is used for comic effect, to express fear, anger, and bitterness, as well as her offensive stance towards male chauvinism. I elaborate on the application and utilisation of these narrative strategies as this debate unfolds.

From the outset, Nasha poses a challenge to the policing of her political womanhood and this is foregrounded on the cover of her book by the title and her confident poise (see Figure 17 below).
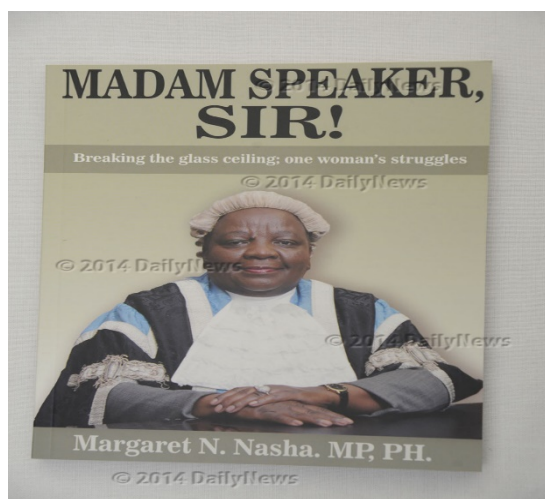

Figure 17: The cover of Nasha's autobiography[99]

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[98] Nasha's autobiography narrates the history of Botswana before and after independence from Britain and South Africa and that of its biggest party BDP.

[99] The image of this book cover was obtained from the Botswana *Daily News* website at: http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=10030.

I view the book's title as an antithetical device that introduces the reader to the irony that shrouds this text. The co-existence of 'Madam' and 'Sir' within the same sentence creates a parallelism that reveals the paradoxical position of a female house speaker. Conventionally, this position is assigned to men. As Nasha notes, Members of Parliament used to male Speakers "in the 45 years of parliament's existence" were bombarded by a female Speaker with her appointment and this change was hard to internalize: "[T]hey kept stumbling and addressing me as Madam Speaker, Sir" (190). Although she uses humour to convey this information, she succeeds to expose the severity of masculinization of the political sphere: "[i]t was hilarious listening to all this and watching Honourable Members scratching their heads and looking down with embarrassment, but I didn't take it to heart" (190). Similarly, the sub-title *Breaking the Glass Ceiling; One Woman's Struggles* further underscores the tensions of sexism. Glass is fragile – and I read her choice of this symbolic device as dualistic; on one hand, it signals her need to negotiate these tensions with caution and, on the other, it foreshadows the possibility of collapsing the binaries in the political arena that portray women as different from men, and the double-standards women and men are subjected to in politics.

Nasha makes sense of her personal identity by negotiating her individuality between the competing forces of tradition and modernity, introduced by colonialism. By narrating notions of her private selfhood, her story becomes autobiographical about her personal life. For instance, she begins her narrative as follows: "They tell me I was born on the 6th day of August 1947" and adds, "Oh yes, they told me so – or at least my older sister Keanole […] the first child to go to school in my family, convinced me so" (1). Here, Nasha expresses doubt about details pertaining to her birth and identity, especially in view of the colonial connotations conveyed in the anecdote about her sister. Nevertheless, she is compelled to rely on this 'story' of her birth to choreograph her personal story, as it is the only source available that has a shred of credibility in it, however tenuous the truth inherent (1). Even then, Nasha is hesitant to award credibility of this memory to the colonial system which claims to possess knowledge about the "exact day" and year of her birth, especially since its origins is the various accounts of people who profess the date to be true (1). Whereas their "unanimity" over the year seems more reliable, she is obliged "to accept it [6th of August 1947] as told" but only because she "couldn't prove anything to the contrary" (1). She, therefore, uses modes of 'oral' narration in her written account as a counter-narrative to recall colonial cultural practices that insisted on factual records. For example, to alert the reader to the oral

nature of her 'speech' act, she uses expressions such as "they tell me […] oh yes, they told me so […] so I came to accept it as told" or "you see […] that tells you a lot" and "by the way" (1).

Further, Nasha hybridizes her rhetoric with indigenous concepts from Setswana oral speech acts, enforcing her cultural identity and celebrating Tswana traditional customs. However, while part of her speech is narrated in Setswana, she translates some indigenous words like "*mosadi*" into English, "woman" (98), but leaves others like "*Kgotla*" in their original form (37). I show how these hybridized forms elucidate how irony works in Nasha's narration during this analysis. The use of Setswana positions Nasha's mother-tongue at the centre of her search for identity, as if signalling to the reader that she thinks in her indigenous language and writes herself in English, what Tina Steiner calls a "translated" woman. Steiner defines a "translated person" as an individual "who migrated from Africa to the West and thus occupies interstices of different cultures and languages and accesses different ways of knowing and representing the world" (2). Arising from this paradigm, I define translated political womanhood as a hybridised identity produced through multiculturalism, an alternative worldview that presents new ways of seeing the world. I contend that code-switching between Setswana and English not only shows a linguistic, ergo cultural specificity in Nasha's autobiography, but also her movement between public and private spheres in concentric circles as she defines herself. Further, this literary technique initiates dialogue between the writer and Setswana-speakers/readers, while inviting non-Setswana-speakers/readers to experience her culture. I, therefore, conceive Nasha's foregrounding of orality as a textual portraiture of her hybrid identity influenced by the convergence of indigenous Setswana and colonial practices from the ongoing process of Westernization in Botswana.

In the process of narrating her personal experiences, Nasha also tells the national story and I concur with Thamani Shabani's description of this text as a "biography" of Botswana (1). She contextualises her personal experiences within the broader history of the nation, alternately conducting a "criticism" of political practices by the ruling party she deems unfavourable for Botswana's progress (Moeng 1). In this way, she transforms her narrative into a 'community' biography. I now proceed to discuss how Nasha narrates the complexities of women's vulnerability under traditional and modern forms of patriarchy. To illustrate the

point, I focus on her views about social customs particularly in relation to (her mother's) widowhood and her community's marriage customs.

Through narrating widows' struggles, Nasha highlights the social injustices that Botswana women are exposed to. She documents her mother, Sadinyana's torturous attempts to raise funds for her children's tuition fees despite the family's secure financial status to show how chauvinism repackaged as 'culture' camouflages women's oppression and their complicity to it. Speaking in the context of her community, Nasha notes that customary laws that transfer total "control" over the family's property to the eldest son, in this case, her brother Keabona, upon the demise of a husband, incapacitate the widow's attempts to exercise freedom as new head of household (16). She explains that although customs dictated that both sons and daughters may inherit their parents' property when the husband dies, the wife loses control of her husband's estate. Though she may retain control over her own property acquired individually in the course of her marriage, cultural laws dictated that she obtains "permission" before selling her own cattle for any purpose (18). Accordingly, despite her ownership of several cattle, Sadinyana is unable to sell any of them to raise Nasha's school fees in view of Keabona's refusal to grant his approval. Nasha translates Keabona's attitude as indicative of his total subscription to patriarchal conventions, viewing modernity as an "irritating" disruption of traditional customs (17), but she also shows his own brand of chauvinism that is intolerant to women's social advancement outside the public sphere. According to her, Keabona saw no need to advance women's educational skills beyond reading and writing - the essential requirements for Botswana women to sustain communication with their husbands who worked in South African mines. Despite her assertive nature, the conservative nature of her society expects Nasha to maintain silence rather than "speak" in self-defence (17). When she deigns to contradict Keabona, she is reprimanded by him and subjected to Sadinyana's "discomfort" for what she terms the latter viewed as Nasha's "unsolicited outburst" (17). So, her choice to maintain silence in the face of Nasha's castigation, coupled with her non-verbal rebuttal conveyed to Nasha by a look that she says told her to "shut up girl!" (17), exemplify dramatic irony as it portrays Sadinyana as the guardian of institutional practices that infringe on women's rights. Sadinyana then uses her position as mother as a source of power to enforce patriarchy.

Nasha also presents marriage customs as gendered norms that constrain Botswana womanhood. For instance, she notes that brides-to-be are "encouraged" by elderly women to

be "subservient and submissive" to their husbands - to accept their "adulterous behaviour" without question (36). They are schooled into a performance of wifehood that stifles assertive women from exercising their discretion in dealing with abusive marriages. Additionally, the execution of this advice through "wise sayings" stifles any attempt at questioning their legitimacy (37). Some of these lessons through which women are inducted into marriage, that Nasha critiques, are: that women should ensure the husband always looks presentable; not to ask a man about his whereabouts "when he comes home at night"; that a man is a "calabash […] to be shared" without jealousy; that "marriage requires a lot of patience"; and that "every marriage has problems" (36). Nasha castigates this practice of producing a "good wife" as it nurtures women "to stay and persevere in dysfunctional and sometimes abusive marriages. Devoid of love and affection" (37). She says that women who 'transgress' this norm and "choose to be assertive are frowned upon and sometimes accused of bringing shame upon their families" (37). Women's collective and communal collaborative initiatives, therefore, also maintain surveillance over women's sexuality. On the contrary, the groom receives his induction at the "*Kgotla*"[100] on how to institute "control [over] his family" and "machismo", her society's conceptions of heteronormative masculinities (37). Along these lines, when a woman becomes either assertive or "materially independent", the man becomes "troubled and uncomfortable, and sometimes even angry" and punishes such women (37). For Nasha, her punishment was her husband's extra-marital affairs which began not long after their wedding. She says that "my guess is that I was probably too assertive – too much of a hard nut to crack", a sentiment that she supports by citing one of her husband's drinking partners' comments that "'*Monna, wa re mosadi yo wa gago, o mo kgona jang*?' meaning 'Man, this wife of yours, how do you handle her?'" (49).

As a primordial public, Botswana media's assessment of Nasha's writing and telling of intimate aspects of her life is impinged by the patrimonial patronage that overshadows their patriarchal society. For example, although Nasha, unperturbed by the secrecy enforced on women's experiences in the domestic sphere, decides to vocalise her abuse in marriage and humorous rendition of her vengeful act towards her husband and his mistress, the reviewer Tshepo Jamilla Moyo notes that as the Speaker, Nasha's bravery in sharing intimate details about her marriage reveal "that even she is a woman" (1). This observation is not only sexist but also biologically essentialist as if implying that women's narratives have a typology that

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[100] A *Kgotla* is a public gathering in a Botswana village headed by a headman or village chief that serves as a traditional court where decisions are reached in consensus.

even Nasha's liminal femininity of political womanhood cannot escape. Nasha confesses her violent retaliation:

> I was armed with steel bars and other weapons of some destruction […]. Once I was sure that all the window panes were broken and a lot of damage had been caused inside the house, I went for their cars. I let out all the air in the tyres, then drove off. I went straight home feeling good indie […]. I got home, parked my car, got into bed, and pretended to be asleep because I knew that the police would come looking for me. (52-53)

As a reactionary note to this testimony, Moyo expresses a difficulty in reconciling the "respectable Speaker of Parliament" with the Nasha "throwing a pile of bricks at someone's house" as if there is a script by which women politicians should adhere in performing womanhood. Since Nasha has strayed from the norm, Moyo deduces that she has "throw[n] away her veneer of respectability" (1). It is, therefore, ironical that rather than extending empathy towards Nasha's admission of weakness, Moyo chooses to associate the former's emotional response to her husband's betrayal as a "'criminal dealing'" (1).

As a married woman working in the civil service and as a member of the ruling party, Nasha discovered that men and women in these spheres are treated with double-standards. She explains that ambitious women are often made to feel guilty about their aspirations. So, she castigates androcentric laws that frustrate women's professional ambitions especially since as citizens, women have the democratic right to advance themselves. Her advice to women is "never to be apologetic about" expressing the desire to excel outside the domestic sphere. They should venture into the public sphere aware that loneliness and "hatred" come with the "territory" of education and professional success (98). For example, as a woman in politics she says she was amused by the discovery that:

> For some reason, my detractors harboured suspicions that this woman (myself) who seems to want everything under the sun could actually end up occupying that high office of vice president of Botswana. Compounding their fear was the fact that the country's constitution allows for automatic succession to the position of President of the country by the vice president. In their minds, as an elected Member of Parliament I qualified to be appointed as the vice president, and if that came to pass then I could

also one day become the president of the Republic of Botswana, and that was the last thing they wanted to see happen. (93)

During one of her campaigns she was asked by a male spectator, "'*Mmaetsho, re bolelele. A gatwe o batla go tsaya setilo mo go Mogae*? *Bolela*!' meaning: 'Lady, tell us. Is it true you want to take over the presidency from Mogae?", to which she responded, "I looked at him and thought to myself, obviously, this is just an ordinary citizen who has been drilled by someone to believe that this is a troublesome 'woman' who harbours the unthinkable thoughts of and dreams of one day taking over God-given power from men" (98). She says that in Botswana political circles, she was considered a dilemma. Her political opponents used to ask: "'*Kante gatwe mosadi yo, a re o batla eng?*' meaning, "'what does this woman really want?'" This question, she says, reflects the patrimony that pervades Botswana's political sphere. Nasha, who is unperturbed by her society's intolerance to women politicians observes that: "'This woman [herself] wants […] exactly what men want and are allowed to have without anybody even thinking about questioning their capabilities" (98). It is perhaps with the realisation about the patrimonial nature of Botswana's political sphere that she suspects the old man might have been marshalled to discredit her in public. Consequently, she tells him: "I do hope that one day I will be President of this country. Do you have a problem with that? I think I have the qualities to lead this country all right" (98-99). Startled by her candour as opposed to a show of submission, the old man replies: "Ah, *basadi ba malatsi ano*!" meaning, "Ah, these women of today!" (99). In the context of Setswana, Nasha explains, the old man's utterance is a "loaded statement" in itself (99). She speculates that probably her lack of embarrassment "disarmed" him, interpreting her speaking back as a direct challenge to his masculinity (99).

Further, as Minister for Local Government, when Nasha tours the rural areas to resolve a land dispute she is confronted with the reality of women's capriciousness in the political sphere. Addressing a *Kgotla* over a chieftainship dispute, she encounters ambivalence amongst community members about her capacity to solve a land crisis in a *Kgotla*, itself a public space, and is publicly disreputed as a valid mediator by a local male leader. Nasha recalls how the sitting regent of the Kgotla, Kgosikwena Sebele, reverted to the oral form of address in Setswana to inform the gathering that despite being "requested" to welcome her to "this *Kgotla*", he did not welcome her (131). Nasha's reiteration of the word "requested" presupposes a form of hegemonic power that the male leader claims by virtue of existing in

the *Kgotla*, which Nasha views as a disputed area where women have no jurisdiction despite their civic position. His refusal is therefore a lack of acknowledgement of the reversal of power performed by Nasha's prominence in the public domain as Assistant Minister (131). The audience, both men and women, however belittle this man's authority by reverting to "laughter" as they are aware of the politics behind the speaker's sentiments that she is not "welcome to address his people" (131). To exercise her power, Nasha uses her authority as Assistant Minister and as someone who "knew [her] rights" to declare to the leader and public that this man's assumption that he can prevent her from accessing the *Kgotla* is "wrong" (131), stating that the "*Kgotla* is a public place where freedom of speech is guaranteed and cannot be denied under any guise whatsoever", therefore she and "was not going to be bullied by anybody" (131). Her resistance against male dominance is symbolised by her insistence to address the *Kgotla* despite being rebuffed by her addressor, who as she says, expected her to "leave in despair" (131) She also interprets the man's reluctance to share the public space with her as a demonstration of some men's disregard for women. For her, this space signifies a violent oppression of women's right to speak. For instance, though women are welcome to attend *Kgotla* meetings, they are only allowed to ululate "their welcome to their guests" (131).[101] This collective voice, encoded in a customary onomatopoeic form, undermines their individuality and agency in the decision-making process. The depravity of Botswana women of the right to speak is reminiscent in Moyo's suggestion that Nasha's outspokenness has made her vulnerable to "criticism" for openly daring to challenge the government, President Lieutenant General Seretse Khama and Ian Khama's[102] ruling, and that these revelations, published just ahead of the General Elections "could quite possibly end her political career" (1). The fact that Nasha indeed was not re-elected as Speaker of the next Parliament confirms this suspicion and proves the persistence of the suppression of Freedom of Speech in the political arena in Botswana.

I envision Nasha's willingness to speak against political practices that she views as corrupt an explicit as demonstrative of her activist stance. Nasha, unperturbed by a possible end of her career, declares:

> I had never before come across a situation where a person could win an election
> without campaigning. Worse still, winning despite the fact that one knew there were

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[101] To ululate is to raise one's voice, either expressing grief or joy.
[102] He is the son of Seretse Khama and current President of Botswana.

people who were better qualified and could not be elected simply because they belonged to a weaker faction in the party. That was confusing and most stupefying to me. More bewildering still, was the fact that the leadership of the party was busy issuing strongly worded statements denying the existence of factions within the party. (89)

In this way, Nasha exposes the bigotry of the state that silences its critics in an attempt to hide its shortcomings and deceptions from the public. However, her characterisation of the ruling party as undemocratic has been chastised by Spencer Mogapi as a de-throning of public male heroes, and he regards the combination of her bravery and humour as "a near blistering self-immolation" (1). In his review, Mogapi's patrimonial views emerge even as he struggles to remain objective, and this perhaps explains his equivocating attitude towards establishing whether he views Nasha's political stance as a truthful depiction of the nation. While he describes her as a protégée of the same institution she criticises, he also commends her "honesty" but remains doubtful about her capability as a product of the same institution to be objective, thereby dismissing her claims to truth.

In another anecdote about her ambassadorial visit to London, Nasha recalls how Botswanans, who expected their representative to be a "man", were shocked to realise that she was a woman (67). She further tells of an incident in which a Botswana military Academy protocol officer found it impossible to register the fact that she was indeed the High Commissioner he was waiting for. Even after being introduced to her, he kept asking her colleague, a man, "Where is your High Commissioner?". When her agitated companion repeated the same answer, the army officer's face turned "pale with embarrassment" while Nasha was "thoroughly amused" at the officer's patrimonial patronage (67). She also admits to being mistakenly identified as the "wife" of the Counsellor Mr Sasara George, who was her employee, yet at social functions he would be addressed as "Excellency" because he was a man (68). Reverting to humour, she observes that "I suppose he looked more of an 'Excellency' than I did, a short woman with kinky hair standing next to him" (67-68). Her mention of the officer's pale skin, juxtaposed with her kinky hair, signals the reader to the intersectionality of her identity as a black woman, and the racial component of her womanhood. With these statements, Nasha suggests that generally, in the political circles of Botswana, the presence of women who hold important portfolios is regarded as a social transgression.

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I have illustrated in this section how Mustafa's and Nasha's appropriation of political rhetoric counters dominant patriarchal discourses that attempt to confine them within the domestic sphere. They deconstruct dixscourses that expect women to remain submissive to maintain the status quo of politics as a masculine domain. They subvert these discourses through irony and counter-discursively narrating their experiences in the private domain as public and in the public domain as private, thereby challenging patriarchal expectations of womanhood as a private identity. The two authors hybridize African political womanist discourse by merging modern and traditional linguistic and cultural practices in a womanist political rhetoric that exposes the patronage inherent in traditional and modern patriarchal values and discourses.

Conclusion

As noted in the first chapter, the political sphere has been choreographed by androcentric laws as masculine and is exclusionary to female politicians, yet the latter resist being confined within the domestic sphere. The writers examined in this chapter resist confinement to either public or private domains and favour fluid movement between these as the situation demands. The autobiographers demonstrate this spatial mobility by concurrently performing gender roles assigned to women in public and private domains. While all writers negotiate between spaces, their narrations draw on particular modes and methods to tell the stories of their lives. I have argued, that their autobiographical acts demonstrate their participation in political resistance movements, first as women, then as politicians, and lastly as writer-activists. Consequently, each subject is aware of the precarious state of the African woman who has been pushed to the periphery of the 'official' narratives of the state (including oral traditions) and her society's public domain due to patriarchy, colonialism, and modernity. They act as folklorists of women's encounters with forms of marginalisation and as writer-activists who challenge the naturalisation of women's oppression by patriarchal structures.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: Trends in Reading and Writing the African Woman's Political Autobiography

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
………………..
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me. (Angelou 46-49, 57-60)

My study has interrogated autobiographical representations of public and private identities of African women politicians.[103] I argued that the African woman's political autobiography is a site where public and private conceptions of African political womanhood are (de)constructed. The study concluded that public and private are hybrid notions that intersect with the literary form, autobiographical subject, and discourse of African women's political autobiographies. It proposed that the corpus of texts discussed in this study is a sub-genre of life writing with distinct narrative modes (or/and autobiographical subjects and discursive practices) that allow certain ways of reading identity politics as I have highlighted in the three core chapters.

When I embarked on this research, I assumed that notions of public and private are distinct and stable. Consequently, I wanted to investigate how African women politicians negotiate their distinct public and private identities. The discovery that changed the course of my study was that public and private, womanhood, and politics are concepts discursively produced differently in African as opposed to in Western discourses from the (pre)colonial to (post) independence era. It is for this reason that I conducted an African womanist rather than feminist reading of the selected narratives but without neglecting crucial and relevant (African) feminist arguments. Similarly, my thesis acknowledges that rhetoric is gendered,

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[103] By women politicians, I refer to women who have at one stage of their time held a political career. As I have defined in the introduction to this thesis, politics denotes activities associated with governance, but I also discuss politics various forms of activism with specific activist agenda like environment, gender, etc. For example, Peter Ekeh surmises that "politics refer to the activities of individuals insofar as they impinge on the public realm made up of the collective interests of the citizenry" (91). This definition of politics, which emanates from Sheldon Wolin's observation that "what is political […], is its relationship to what is 'public'" (2-3), is linked with the second conception of politics delineated above.

thus my reference to African women's, rather than merely, political rhetoric. Additionally, I recognise that the concepts public and private, upon which this study is anchored, are discursively produced hence contestable. Further, I contend that public and private are liminal spaces. It is these "in-between spaces" (Bhabha 309) that my thesis locates itself in making meaning of how representations of these spaces and identities in the African woman's political autobiography (de)construct conceptions of African political womanhood.

In view of my earlier assumptions about this study and the discovery of theoretical insights informing my debate (discussed above), I therefore shifted my interrogation of these life narratives to consider the inter-relatedness of the concepts of autobiography, womanhood, and political rhetoric, and the notions of hybridity they generate. Subsequently, the issue of hybridity is foregrounded in my reading of these autobiographies. Although the three concepts of hybridity (literary form, autobiographical subjects and discourse) are not explicitly delineated as the core organisational foundations of the three analytical chapters, they permeate my analysis of these autobiographies.

Chapter one, which introduces the core arguments I advance in this thesis, sketches the goals, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks that guide my reading of the selected life narratives. My interest in the texts in this sub-genre was borne out of the research I conducted for my Masters' thesis, women in public spaces, which inspired me to write the authorised biography of Julia Auma Ojiambo, a Kenyan woman politician. Her experiences were eye-opening and I wanted to learn more about other women like her, but was shocked to discover very few texts in English in the public domain. In addition, while African women politicians are described as encroaching on the political sphere – a public domain – I, and some of the autobiographers I study, contend that they are not transgressive or renegades, rather they comprise a distinct womanhood, which I termed as *African political womanhood*. To legitimise and reclaim this identity from dominant Western, cultural, and patriarchal discursive practices, I provided a genealogy of African women in leadership from the pre-colonial era to date and proposed an African womanist reading of these autobiographies that recognises African women's agency in the public and private domains from the pre-colonial era to date. I then recommended that the sub-genre of the African woman's political autobiography be considered as distinct from the Western and masculine autobiographies due to two factors: they are hybridized forms produced by incorporating orality in an otherwise Western and masculine form, and this mode of writing, I argue, de-genders and Africanises

this sub-genre. As I have mentioned in chapter one (see footnote 9), I am aware that neither is orality peculiar to Africa nor is its presence in this sub-genre an indication of its 'Africanness' (Hofmeyr 643). Oral traditions in these autobiographies link this genre with African indigenous knowledge systems that re-invent womanist discursive practices which delink black woman as 'other' to white and black (wo)men.

In chapter two, I read how the autobiographical subjects' self-representation negotiate notions of African political womanhood and public selfhoods through the conceptual framework of "historical consciousness", a concept advanced by Laura Marcus and James Olney's notion of "metaphors of selfhood", the latter serving as a methodological framework. My interest in historical consciousness is inspired by Ekeh who notes that: "History is to a large extent the selective emphasis of events from a national point of view" (97). The versions of history that are foregrounded in this chapter determine how these narrators as citizens and subjects conceptualise their selfhood(s). Since the colonial and apartheid enterprises as well as the struggle against these dominant regimes and the post-colonial states are patrilineal and androcentric, their ideologies are also masculine. Although I view apartheid as presenting different realities than colonialism, I am conscious of Mamdani's observation that the institutional frameworks of apartheid share similarities with most of the colonial ideologies that were implemented in European colonies on the African continent. Thus, I proposed that the political ideologies highlighted by Ekeh as core to (post)colonial states – imperial, colonial, and African bourgeois – inform apartheid subjectivities narrated in the autobiographies of the South African women politicians studied in this chapter. Consequently, I argued that the political agencies identified in the autobiographical narratives in this chapter are entangled with gender biases in the (anti)apartheid nationalist discourses. I explored these ideologies in the narrative techniques of the four metaphors of selfhood(s): sisterhood, motherhood, widowhood, and warriorhood in the context of six autobiographies by four South African women politicians: Ellen Kuzwayo, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Emma Mashinini, and Mamphela Ramphele. My discussion of sisterhood focused on how Mashinini 's and Kuzwayo's autobiographies couch the collective political agency of collaborative initiatives between black (and white) women (and men) under apartheid.

I established that the writers re-imagine sisterhood's power as compounded by its de-racialised and de-gendered approach to community empowerment. I then contemplated how the deconstruction of the patriarchal nuances in motherhood foregrounds mothering as a

woman-defined act of public selfhood. My debate centred on how Kuzwayo, Madikizela-Mandela, and Mashinini voice African womanist sentiments that de-gender and celebrate 'mothering' as a form of empowerment. Further, I turned to Ramphele's and Madikizela-Mandela's exploration of their public status as political widows. In addition, despite the overt assumption that political widowhood robs the woman politician of her agency, the fact that the writers invoke this particular metaphor in self-represension suggests a deliberate re-invention of this public discourse to suit their identity construction and political agency. Lastly, I discussed how Mashinini's, Ramphele's, and Madikizela-Mandela's sense of militancy narratively shaped and informed my reading of metaphors of warriorhood. In this section, I found that the three women craft their militancy as a corporeal and embodied act. For instance, Ramphele's sense of militancy is invoked by her re-presentation of storytelling as an act of resistance while Mashinini imagines her labour-union activism as a physical act of resistance to apartheid. Madikizela-Mandela presents her public image in apartheid South Africa as a symbol of black resistance to apartheid in her capacity as Nelson Mandela's political widow, mother of the nation, and an ANC member. Overal, this chapter endeavoured to illustrate Ekeh's claim that the two publics – civic and primordial – have different moral groundings. I showed how the writers discussed herein mostly associate with the primordial public during apartheid, but while Kuzwayo's, Ramphele's, and Madikizela-Mandela's identity constructions in the post-apartheid era favour the civic public, Mashinini nestles her political agency in the primordial public of the post-apartheid state.

Chapter three traced the shifts in narrative conceptualisations of private selfhood(s). It focused on how the writers' discursive transitions from the public to the private-public or public to private-private spheres resignify the personal as political. According to Ekeh, the idea of a private sphere is discursively produced by its opposition to public spheres. For instance, he says that when one "acts in his household or practices his religion in his home, he is acting in the private realm" (91). The chapter invoked Jane Marcus' conceptual framework of "Re/Signing the [private] Self", particularly its contextualisation of the autobiography as a private sphere, to claim that the ensuing dialectics between autobiography as a private-public space, the home as a private-private sphere, and the political sphere as a public-private domain for women, elaborate the temporality and instability, hence liminality, of the concept 'private'. To discuss how private selfhood is negotiated, I drew on Smith and Watson's concept of "Techniques for Remembrance" (after James Olney), and examined how four techniques for remembrance (naming, genealogies, maternal figure, and the woman's

body) serve as narrative strategies that the six autobiographers, selected for this chapter, foreground in their texts to inscribe their private selves. My exploration of naming practices unearthed a series of lexicons through which Wangari Maathai and Wambui Waiyaki Oteno (both from Kenya) politicise their everyday struggles at home and in public spaces. I also explored how Ellen Jonson Sirleaf (Liberia) and Grace Ogot (Kenya) draw on ideological, communal, and familial genealogies to re-image the "archive" (Mbembe *Archive* 19) compiled by women, both written (documents) and oral repositories as alternative and as agential. In this way, they re-invent the archive not as a thing of the past, but as a state of becoming. Additionally, I interrogated how the filial voice inscribes maternal experiences of older generation of black women and how this maternal relationality influences the writers' perception of their own identities. I found that by remembering through maternal figures and re-memorying their experiences, orally told from one generation to the next, two diasporic subjects, Nawal El Saadawi (Egypt) and Ayaan Hirsi Ali (Somalia) are able to recount other women's lived experiences. Lastly, I examined how Saadawi and Ali appropriate the woman's body as a narrative device to negotiate black women's embodiment of dominant religious and cultural discourses. I showed how they invoke womanist rhetoric that counters their (mis)representation and foreground their activism.

In chapter four I examined what forms of subjectivities are textually realised when writers deliberately locate themselves in the liminal spaces between public and private spheres to narrate their hybrid selfhoods. To exemplify how some notions of selfhood(s) are valorised over others to foreground particular political agencies, I used the Derridian concept of *sous rature*. To exemplify how the palimpsest discourse of *sous rature* navigates cultural hybridity, the discussion was guided by the four master tropes of linguistic expression advanced by Kenneth Burke: synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor and irony, to interpret identity construction in the autobiographies of Elizabeth Nyabongo, Janet Museveni, Vere Chirwa, Margaret Nasha and Sophia Mustapha. My analysis suggested that the four stylistic features are inter-twined and that the appropriation of each by the five writers either explicitly or implicitly underscores the desire to foreground their political agency in both public and private spaces as agential to counter the mythical binary of good versus bad woman politician. Further, I proposed that the rhetoric of the good woman politician which, I argued, is fashioned from ideologies of the patriarchal institution of motherhood, is essentialist and genders the political sphere as masculine. I then suggested that the idea of public and private as distinct spaces not only promotes ambiguous discourses on African political womanhood,

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but also exemplifies the paradoxes that shroud this political subjectivity. Over-all, the key finding of this thesis is that hybridity of form, autobiographical subject, and discursive practices in the African woman's political autobiography contest: the Western (and masculine) autobiographical canon, patriarchal and cultural and Western hegemonic expectations of womanhood, and the masculinisation of political rhetoric and thereby reproduce womanist notions of the same, which supports my theorisation that this corpus of texts or kind of life writing is a distinct sub-genre. I now embark on an elaboration of the difficulties I encountered in the course of this study and suggest avenues for future research.

From the onset of my research, it became clear that manifestations of hybridity – form, subject representation and discourse or discursive practices – would shape the conceptual framework of my study of African women's political autobiographies. This framing led to questions about how the narrators' subjectivities are narrated in relation to the notion of *African political womanhood*. My conceptualisation allows one to conduct a more extensive analysis of each text (independently) or a comparative reading (regional) – the ways texts speak to each other – and as more texts are sourced or published, to add to the sub-genre of narratives discussed in this study. Although I focused on specific narrative issues/features/themes, the scope and limitations of the study did not allow me to fully explore these concerns in each or all texts, and each text demands and deserves a more complex reading of the features of autobiographical acts.

This research presented a host of challenges. The issues I raise in this paragraph illustrate these difficulties, but they also focalise on avenues that my study open for future research. I also document some reflections on methods and modes of cultural production and circulation of the narratives in the sub-genre I have studied. The greatest problem was in terms of accessing the texts. Due to the lack of a comprehensive archive of this sub-genre, I learnt about the existence of these texts as my research progressed, which made it difficult to hypothesise about the end-product. As I mentioned in chapter one, there are other autobiographies that I encountered during the writing of this thesis but due to time constraints, I could not include in this study. They are: Aoua Keita's *Femme d'Afrique. La vie d'Aoua Kéita racontée par elle-même* (1975) translated into English as *An African Woman. The Autobiography of Aoua Kéita Told in her Own Words*, Andree Blouin's *My Country, Africa: Autobiography of the Black Pasionara* (1983), Emily Ruete Sayyida's *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar* (1907), and Brigalia Bam's *Democracy More than Just*

Elections (2015). Part of the reason for my inability to study these texts now, despite my proposal that the African woman's political autobiography should be considered a sub-genre, is that the archiving of women's life narratives in the public domain is fragmented. For example, unlike some texts discussed in this study, Ogot's book has been published by Anyange Press, which is owned and managed by her family. Additionally, while Sirleaf's text is now available on Open Access, others are either too expensive or out of circulation, like Wambui Waiyaki Otieno's, or exclusively available in the country of publication. Most of the texts included in this thesis fall into the latter category. Further, it seems that most of these autobiographies are published to serve as political capital for its subjects. For someone like Sirleaf, her autobiography was published after becoming the first black female head of state in (post)colonial Africa and winning the Nobel peace prize, which was shared with Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman. Due to Sirleaf's fame, her autobiography is more likely to attract a wider readership than Sayyida, a (pre)colonial political leader whose reputation is confined to the history of Zanzibar within a particular temporality. Consequently, her political role in the nineteenth and twentieth century Zanzibar is scarcely invoked in public discourses. The probability of Sayyida's autobiography being incorporated into political discourses is further problematized by the fact that it was first published in German in 1888 and translated into English in 1907. There are also other domains and mediums where women's life stories can be sourced and represented such as documentaries, photographs, oral historical archives and narrations, blogs, comic books, and so forth), many unexplored. These issues prompt a range of questions, some of which I aim, in fact, keenly aspire, to explore in future research.

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