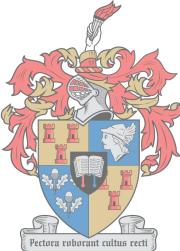


Configuring ‘Maasainess’: Contested Textual Embodiments

by

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Declaration

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March 2018

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to Godfrey, Joanne and Jollette with all my love.

Thank you for love and for giving me such a long borrowed time.

Abstract

In this thesis I seek to trace the figure of the Maasai as a fossilized (visual) image circulated in local and global imaginaries since the nineteenth century by British explorers, missionaries and administrators. This image of either the male warrior or wounded woman continues to be reproduced in literary and cultural productions from East Africa, America and Europe. My study explores the notion of ‘Maasainess’ as a cultural identity being claimed, appropriated, redefined and performed in various genres by non-Maasai and Maasai authors and musicians. I am particularly interested in exploring how this construct circulates in contemporary texts and performances that also contest and transform it in response to the Maasais’ negotiation of their cultural identity due to land grabbing in the name of environmental sustainability and the impact of globalization and contact with other cultures, notably through the tourist industry and urbanisation. Following the introductory chapter in which the historical and theoretical framing of the thesis is established, I discuss four autobiographically inflected novels by the prolific Maasai male writer Henry Ole Kulet as a basis for my further exploration of the portrayal of ‘Maasainess’. This is followed by the third chapter in which four autobiographies by two male Maasai writers and two female non-Maasai writers, one from Switzerland and the other from the United States, are examined in relation to the notion of cultural appropriation. The fourth chapter looks at two historically inflected novels by the former British settler in Tanzania, David Read and the Australian UN expatriate in Kenya, Frank Coates, who both claim an affiliation with the Maasai as the basis for their fictions, in order to engage the history of settler colonialism. The fifth chapter shifts the focus to contemporary popular cultural performances of ‘Maasainess’ by analysing three songs by a non-Maasai duo, Shengena Gospel Panorama, and two Maasai musicians, Abel Motika and Lekishon Ole Kamwaro. The thesis therefore attempts a multi-genre approach to reading texts in which the figure of the Maasai is configured within a range of contexts. In this, I am primarily guided by Rosi Braidotti’s concept of “nomadic embodiment” and Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of the “contact zones” as facilitating change and challenging the fixity of stereotype. My argument is that ‘Maasainess’ is a shifting cultural signifier at porous contact zones where cultural exchanges continuously occur. Therefore, this figure renders itself available to various appropriations, reconfigurations and contestations.

Opsomming

In hierdie tesis poog ek om die beeld van die Maasai as ‘n gefossileerde (visuele) beeld soos versprei in plaaslike en globale verbeeldings van Britse ontdekkers, sendelinge en administrateurs sedert die negentiende eeu, na te vors. Hierdie beeld van óf die manlike kryger óf die gewonde vrou gaaan voort om gereproduseer te word in literêre en kulturele produksies vanaf Oos-Afrika, Amerika en Europa. My studie deursoek die idee van ‘Maasaiheid’ as ‘n kulturele identiteit wat aanspraak maak, gepas, geherdefinieer en verrig word in verskeie genres deur nie-Maasai en Maasai skrywers en musikante. Ek is veral geïnteresseerd om uit te vind hoe hierdie saamstelling sirkuleer in hedendaagse tekste en uitbeeldings wat dit ook kontesteer en vervorm in antwoord op die Maasai se onderhandeling van hul kulturele identiteit as gevolg van landinname in die naam van omgewingsduursaamheid en die impak van globalisering en kontak met ander kulture, veral die toerisme bedryf en industrialisering. Na die inleidende hoofstuk waarin die geskiedkundige en teoretiese raamwerk van die tesis gevestig is, bespreek ek vier romans met outobiografiese invloede deur die prolifieke Maasai skrywer Henry Ole Kulet as ‘n fondament vir my verdere ondersoek na die uitbeelding van ‘Maasaiheid’. Dit word gevolg deur ‘n derde hoofstuk waarin vier outobiografië deur twee manlike Maasai skrywers en twee vroulike nie-Maasai skrywers, een afkomstig uit Duitsland en een afkomstig uit die Verenigde State, bestudeer word in verband met die idee van kulturele toewysing. Die vierde hoofstuk kyk na twee geskiedenis-beïnvloede romans deur die voormalige Britse nedersetter, David Read en die Australiëse VN-uitgewekene in Kenya, Frank Coates, wat albei aanspraak maak op ‘n affiliasie met die Maasai as ‘n fondament vir hul fiksies om beter ineengryping te maak met die geskiedenis van nedersetter-kolonialisme. Die vyfde hoofstuk verander die fokus na hedendaagse populêre-kultuur uitbeeldings van ‘Maasaiheid’ deur die ontleding van drie liedjies deur ‘n nie-Maasai duo, Shengena Gospel Panorama, en twee Maasai-musikante, Abel Motika en Lekishon Ole Kamwaro. Hierdie tesis probeer om ‘n veelsydige-genre uitgangspunt te bereik in die leesvan tekste waarin die figuur van die Maasai gekonfigureer is binne-in ‘n meetgebied van konteks. Hierin word ek hoofsaaklik geleei deur Rosi Braidott se konsep van “nomadiese beliggaming” en Mary Louise Pratt se idee van die “kontak areas” wat verandering kan veroorsaak, en wat ‘n uitdaging rig teen die stewigheid van die stereotipe. My argument is dat ‘Maasaiheid’ ‘n veranderde kulturele

aanduider is van deurdringbare kontak-areas waar kulturele uitriling deurlopend plaasvind. Hierdie figuur maak homself dus beskikbaar aan verskeie toe-eiening, herkonfigurering en omstredenheid.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

‘Maasainess’ as an Expression of Nomadic Embodiment

The term Maasai often conjures various contested visual images of identity construction. This image unfolds in different figures such as the warrior, contested land, mutilated female bodies, visible markers such as the Maasai shuka and nomadic pastoralists. This thesis studies examples of fiction, life writing and music produced from the 1970s to 2016 in order to trace the representation of ‘Maasainess’ in texts produced by Maasai and non-Maasai writers and musicians. ‘Maasainess’ – a term used here to register the often essentialising qualities attributed to the Maasai – has been circulating in the global imaginary since the beginning of the nineteenth century after first contact between the Maasai and missionaries whose documented accounts are considered to be the earliest written records about the Maasai people, as Christian Jennings points out (174). The main goal of this study is to identify and analyse how selected autobiographically inflected novels, autobiographies, historically inflected novels and music videos construct Maasai identity and configure ‘Maasainess’ in their appropriation, negotiation and challenging of entrenched stereotypes and tropes of ‘Maasainess’. To achieve this goal, I ask the following questions: By whom and in what textual forms are constructions of ‘Maasainess’ deployed? What configurations of ‘Maasainess’ can be identified and how can these be read within a postcolonial and feminist frame? What dimensions of ‘Maasainess’ are privileged over others in these texts? How is the body deployed as a site to configure and re-configure various forms of ‘Maasainess’? How do new media forms such as popular music videos appropriate and perform ‘Maasainess’ while contesting rigid figurations of ‘Maasainess’?

‘Maasainess’ has generally been conceived of and portrayed in static terms derived from the prototype of the nomadic pastoralists of the East African rift valley set in circulation by early European explorers, missionaries and later colonial administrators. John S. Akama’s observation that “the image of the Maasai does not appear to have changed since early European explorers and adventure seekers first

encountered the Maasai over 200 years ago” provides the point of departure for my study (148). The study reads contemporary configurations of the Maasai in relation to colonial representations in order to trace variations of recurring tropes and locate new re-configurations of ‘Maasainess’ that challenge or depart from them. In these and subsequent accounts, the complex social and cultural lives of the nomadic pastoralists have in many cases been reduced to the gendered stereotypes of the male warrior and the wounded/mutilated woman. While the figure of the male warrior is celebrated as iconic of a desirable African masculinity, the figure of the Maasai woman tends to be invisible in representations of ‘Maasainess’ in various literary and cultural productions, as the texts analysed in this study demonstrate. In most cases, the figure of the Maasai woman achieves visibility only when portrayed as the victim of female genital incision, commonly referred to as Female Genital Mutilation. In this study, the voice of the Maasai woman author is notably absent because of the dearth of texts written by or music performed by Maasai women. While Naomi Kipury’s *Oral Literature of the Maasai* (1983), a collection of Maa oral tales, songs, proverbs, sayings and omens, is a valuable resource, it falls outside the parameters of this study. I have also excluded the Kenyan Moipei sisters, known for their gospel music sung in Maa, because of the lack of critical engagement with Maasai stereotypes, even though it could be argued that their decision to sing in Maa challenges the linguistic dominance of Kiswahili and English in the region.

Throughout this study, I use scare quotes to distinguish my deployment of the term ‘Maasainess’ as a way of indicating its provisional state and to signal the fact that what is understood as such is constantly under construction, often contested, resisted and reconfigured by different cultural and literary creators.

Edward Bruner succinctly offers an abridged version of Maasai mythoi in the Western imagination when he states: “the basic story about the Maasai [...] is a gendered Western fantasy of the male warrior – proud, courageous, brave, aristocratic, and independent, the natural man, and the freedom-loving pastoralist” (in Salazar “Imaged or Imagined” 53). The traits in this description seem positive but fragmented;

similarly, imaginings of ‘Maasainess’ taking after each or some of these traits are not one or the other thing but a set of ideas which are differently appropriated in different contexts. Colonial descriptions and their persistence in tourism and travel writing not only freeze the image of the Maasai in time, but use Maasai cultural identity – gendered as male – as a metonym for African culture in general, which consequently excludes or erases the presence of the Maasai woman, who is, as Dorothy Hodgson points out, “disenfranchised from a sense of Maasai identity” (“Once Intrepid” 122). Being Maasai or ‘Maasainess’ thus “came to be understood by Maasai men themselves as being a pastoralist and a warrior” (“Once Intrepid” 122). These skewed descriptions often do not attempt to address even the most basic question, Who are the Maasai?

The Maasai are an indigenous semi-nomadic people originally located in Kenya and northern Tanzania, whose distinctive customs, dress and residence near the many game parks of East Africa have made them among the most well-known African ethnic groups internationally. Noel B. Salazar describes the Maasai as “speakers of the Eastern Nilotic Maa tonal language [who are] a widely dispersed ethnic group of semi-nomadic pastoralists and small scale subsistence agriculturists [who] occupy arid and semi-arid rangelands in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania – collectively known as Maasailand” (“Imaged or Imagined” 52). The notion of a “Maasailand” in this definition is useful in the sense that it blurs the cartographic lines between Kenya and Tanzania; but it is also questionable in the sense that it suggests a homogeneous people who occupy a clearly demarcated area or, even more problematically, a reserve, which recalls the colonial era when the Maasai in both Kenya and Tanzania were displaced from their ancestral lands. The Maasai oral literature supports the notion of homogeneity despite geographical dispersion, for example, Tepilit Ole Saitoti and Carol Beckwith record a lullaby in which a wider scope of Maasailand is mapped. The mother in the lullaby tells her child to grow up like a mountain, to grow as big as Mount Meru, Mount Kenya and Mount Kilimanjaro (*Maasai* 51-52). Hence contemporary notions of Maasailand emanate from the fact that the Maasai are a closely homogeneous linguistic group whose nomadic lifestyle allows for high

geographical dispersion partly reinforced by the colonial curtails through cartography and confinements. According to historian Lotte Hughes, the first Maasai displacement happened in 1904-05 when the British evicted Maasai clans from the Naivasha-Nakuru area to lay claim to it for their own use. In 1911, the British again forced the Maasai to move from Laikipia to the Southern Maasai reserve. Despite the efforts of the Maasai to seek justice from the British colonial government, these injustices were never redressed (“Malice” 208). It is in the context of these displacements and land grievances that Parselelo Kantai, a Maasai journalist and writer, argues that the 2004 Maasai demonstrations in Kenya for the return of their confiscated land in Laikipia make apparent that this place remains “a colonial space existing within a post-colonial environment” (“In the Grip” 114). The Maasai are, however, known to be resilient in their opposition to infringements imposed on their nomadic ways of life; which strongly influence issues of land ownership and property formalization by modern governments. Notably, in both the colonial and current contexts, the Maasai have taken legal action against government infringements in both Kenya and Tanzania.

These same governments also, simultaneously, exploit the Maasai’s close proximity to the wild and their physical appearance and attire – animal hides in the past and currently the so-called Maasai *shukas* – to bolster the tourism industry. Maasai material culture is widely advertised as part of East African tourism. It is used in different forms of popular culture, and the image of the Maasai warrior has become iconic in representing African culture. Salazar points out that “the British in East Africa highlighted Maasai life because, as colonisers, they wanted to promote an image of Africans as different and nobly primitive” (“Image or Imagined” 51). It is this singling out of the Maasai as representative of an African exotic that is marketable and easily consumable as cultural commodity which still informs some of the texts read for this study, while others contest its validity through variously expressed re-appropriations. According to Edward M. Bruner, “the colonial image of the Maasai has been transformed in a postmodern era so that the Maasai become the pleasant primitives, the human equivalent of the Lion King, the benign animal king who behaves in human ways” (894). This has become possible because some Maasai

self-consciously appropriate the same stereotypes to perform and commoditize them for their own personal gain. For example, in tourism performance in the Kenyan context, “the Maasai say, they are in it for the money and are willing to play into the stereotypic colonial image of themselves to please their clients, the foreign tourists” (Bruner 896). While some representations of the Maasai thus rely approvingly on notions of authenticity, purity and goodness, they also register the group’s marginality and less-easily condoned traditional practices, conceived of as forms of savagery. This paradox is what Salazar describes as “the double edged imagery of Maasai culture as both attractive and repugnant” (“Maasai” n.p.). He furthermore contends: “while the globally circulating cultural representations of Maasai may remain largely “frozen in time,” the Maasai themselves are increasingly on the move, in ways that diverge widely from their stereotypical image as obstinate semi-pastoralists” (“Maasai” n.p.). However, it is important to note also how the stereotypes are variously appropriated to present the Maasai as either attractive or repugnant. A case in point here is the land crises in Kenya where the Maasai who fight for their land were necessarily reimaged as martial like. Kantai observes that “The Maasai were reconstructed [...]. No longer the benign noble savage of an earlier era whose photographs had graced so many coffee-table books, so many tourist postcards;” instead “the Maasai moran was re-stereotyped, re-armed, ‘Mau Mau-ed’ – [...] potential bearer of savagery against Europeans – by virtue of the assumed proximity to the Zimbabwe scenario” (Kantai 115).

It is within this frame that my study explores the notion of ‘Maasainess’ as cultural identity being claimed, appropriated, redefined and performed in various genres by non-Maasai and Maasai authors, autobiographers and musicians. I am particularly interested in exploring the pliability of this construct and how it circulates in contemporary texts and performances that also contest and transform it in response to the Maasais’ negotiation of their cultural identity due to land grabbing in the name of environmental sustainability and the impact of globalization and contact with other cultures, notably through the tourist industry and urbanisation. My reading of the primary texts in which contact between the pastoral Maasai and other cultures is

portrayed focuses on the gendered embodiments of the Maasai in these texts that privilege the figure of the Maasai as nomadic male warriors while the women are presented as domestic subjects. I draw on Rosi Braidotti's "concept of the nomadic", as a figuration of a subject who defies fixity, which coincides with the Maasai nomadic lifestyle characterized by journeys and Mary Louise Pratt's concept of "contact zones" to explore the ambivalence that arises when Maasai culture meets other cultures and particularly how 'Maasainess' is often configured or reconfigured in the cultural and temporal contact zones. My study thus focuses on the ways in which these different representations use bodily images of the Maasai to represent their cultural identity. Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton's notion of "bodies in contact" from their edited collection *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* is particularly useful here in thinking about the Maasai body as a site for imagining and imaging African cultural identity in the postcolonial era. As Ballantyne and Burton assert, "the development of global empires have [sic] been entwined historically with bodies in contact: that is, bodies in motion, bodies in subjection, bodies in struggle, bodies in action", in which case the Maasai male body is engraved in the Western imaginary and subjected to immobility (8). The Maasai body has been "the most intimate colony" to use Ballantyne and Burton's phrase, which received considerable gaze, surveillance and description from colonial explorers, missionaries and administrators. Therefore the Maasai body "remains a zone of management, containment, regulation, conformity, and resistance" under the coercive techniques manifested through policies to confine the Maasai in reserves and criticise their culture while circulating stereotypical images (407).

Despite such a history of taming the Maasai body usually imaged as male, this study sees the Maasai body as a nomadic-resilient body, which requires constant constructions and reconstructions. The Maasai body, as contact zone between the colonial agents and the Maasai exhibits, through the stories accrued as a result of its surveillance, a historical moment when the Western world encountered Africa. The afterlives of this encounter are still active in both global archives of knowledge as well as in image producing industries such as tourism, film, and other forms of visual

arts. In this study I explore the consequences of the circulation of the image of the Maasai body in tourism, a phenomenon Ning Wang terms “Tourismification of peoples”, in reference to “a socio-economic and socio-cultural process by which society and its environment have been turned into spectacles, attractions, playgrounds, and consumption sites” (in Salazar, “Imaged or Imagined” 49). An example of this situation is illustrated by the autobiographical story *The White Masai* which I analyse in chapter three, in which a Swiss-German woman tells her story of how she fell in love with a Maasai warrior, whom she would eventually marry, while on a touristic adventure in Kenya with her German boyfriend. While Hoffman finds the opportunity to marry a Maasai warrior rewarding, Lketinga, a dancer at a local resort, performs his own commodification subject to a touristic gaze and consumption. Michael C. Hall and Hazel Tucker’s collection of essays titled *Tourism and Postcolonialism: Contested Discourses, Identities and Representations* (2004) are crucial in understanding the juxtaposition of tourism and cultural representations in the range of texts in this study. In an essay titled “Neocolonialism, Dependency and External Control of Africa’s tourism Industry: A Case Study of Wildlife Safari Tourism in Kenya” John S. Akama notes: “the Kenyan tourism image is constructed and reconstructed to revolve around wildlife and the Maasai image” such that “scenes of the Maasai dressed in red ochre shuka and/or traditional regalia are juxtaposed with the ‘Big Five’” as if the Maasai were an appendage to wildlife (148). My thesis therefore begins by analysing colonial representations of the Maasai before proceeding to critically engage the representation of the Maasai in a range of texts emerging from different identity locations.

‘Maasainess’ in History

To understand the hypervisibility of the Maasai in contemporary literary and cultural productions, it is imperative to trace the history of the image of the Maasai in early nineteenth-century travellers’ accounts. As Mary Louise Pratt points out, “the range and variety of writing produced by travel in the mid-eighteenth century [...] produced other parts of the world for the imaginations of Europeans” (18). Accounts such as

Joseph Thomson's *Through Maasailand* laid the foundation for the stereotypes about the Maasai and it remains the basis for other subsequent accounts about the Maasai. Hughes in a chapter titled: “‘Beautiful Beasts’ and Brave Warriors: The Longevity of Maasai Stereotype” reminds us that “these travel texts had scientific pretensions that overlaid an expansionist colonizing ethos and were written primarily by white middle-class men who came to map and measure ‘nature’” (268). She adds, “while classifying African fauna and flora, the travellers also spent a great deal of time and energy categorizing ‘primitive’ peoples, defining themselves and the culture they represented in relation to the exotic other” (268). It is colonial accounts of the Maasai, such as Thomson's *Through Maasailand* (1887), that first established the still pervasive stereotype in the global imaginary.

Important to note is the fact that the Maasai were not the only exotic Africans in circulation during the nineteenth century. Hughes notes: “From the 1890s onward, pictures of “bushmen” and Maasai and Zulu warriors dominated popular representations of African peoples in books, lantern slides, postcards, and colonial exhibitions” (“Beautiful” 268). Interestingly, “the warriors came to represent their respective ethnic groups, powerfully reinforcing the idea in the Western mind that these ‘tribes’ were predominantly martial, and indigenous women played a lesser (usually decorative) role” (Hughes, “Beautiful” 268). The Maasai and Zulu warriors have remained tropes for reading Africa and Africans. As Neal Sobania bluntly remarks: “images of the Maasai and Zulu have served to represent alternative sides of the Other in popular depictions of Africa [and] within the generalized categories of ‘exotic,’ ‘native,’ and ‘tribal,’ the Maasai are noble, the Zulu savage” (“But Where” 313).

These stereotypes began as mere geographical mappings and classification of people according to their economic activities. Dorothy Hodgson explains that “the ethnonym ‘Maasai’ was first used in travellers’ accounts of the mid-nineteenth century to designate territorial differences among Maa-speakers (with Maasai living in certain areas and Iloikop/Kwavi in others)” (“Once Intrepid” 124). However, Hodgson adds,

“by the late 1870s, the meaning of ‘Maasai’ had shifted to indicate economic differences, with Maasai as pastoralists and Iloikop/Kwavi as agriculturalists or agropastoralists” (“Once Intrepid” 124). This distinction would later form the basis on which land would be annexed from the Maasai because it was considered unoccupied and wasted.

British explorer Sir Harry Hamilton Johnston’s 1886 account reveals that the masculinity represented by the Maasai was conceived of as admirable and romanticised as the exotic obverse of English constraint and domestication: “[T]he physical appearance of the unregenerate robber Maasai is splendid [and] the physical perfection of these East African beef-eating, bloodthirsty warriors is of the prize-fighter’s or the rowing man’s ideal rather than the aesthete’s” (408-409). This description perfectly captures the polarity of the image of the Maasai as both admirable and deplorable. Earlier contacts such as the Arabs propagated the idea that the Maasai were a formidable race. Hughes states that, “the reputation of the Maasai as a bloodthirsty, martial race had prevented European commercial exploitation of upcountry East Africa, this was a deliberate ploy by coastal slave and ivory traders” (“Beautiful” 267). But “Thomson slew the dragon by proving it was possible to move unscathed through Maasai territory” (Hughes, “Beautiful” 269). His successful journey (penetration in colonial parlance) through Maasailand resulted in the glorification of the Maasai but was not without scornful fetishization. In the aforementioned chapter, Hughes seeks to deconstruct the stereotypes constructed through Thomson’s *Through Maasailand* (1885) and his novel *Ulu* (1888), co-authored with Miss Harris-Smith. Hughes notes that at first Thomson appreciated the Maasai, who received him with warmth against his expectations. He was fascinated by the Maasais’ “natural fluency and grace [...] and a dignity of attitude beyond all praise” and “commend [ed] [him] to the Masai for grace and oratorial power, for order and decorum in debate” (*Through* 162, 253). But “he sought to spice up the story – the racier the tale, the better its likely reception and the healthier his sales would be” (Hughes, “Beautiful” 270). On the travelogue, Hughes remarks, “Thomson left the reader with an impression of the Maasai as beautiful but beastly, idle

occupants of a land too good for them, who existed only to talk, fight and fornicate though he did acknowledge their oratorical strengths and suggested that the warriors were reformed by marriage” (“Beautiful” 274).

These descriptions attracted the attention of the intended European audiences because of their aesthetic appeal and emphasis on the beauty and fierceness of the Maasai; these were not merely reports about exploration but artistic renditions of the art of seeing and gazing. It is the aesthetic element of these accounts that germinated the ubiquitous and unabated circulation of the image of the Maasai warrior, even as one notes the oxymoron implied by such formulations as a well-cultivated person who is a robber and a murderer. Drawn from such depictions are subsequent accounts such as Rider Haggard’s novel *Allan Quatermain*, whose author “seems to have taken the story of *Ulu*, interwoven it with scenes from Thomson’s travelogue, and created a fantastic concoction that thrilled generations of school boys” (Hughes, “Beautiful” 276). Apart from the stereotype on the behaviour of the Maasai, Thomson also influenced the land policies, which were to guide colonial administrators in East Africa. His comments that Laikipia was an empty land, which could be utilized by European settlers, constitute the genesis of the violent displacements of the Maasai. To justify the colonial violence, the Europeans claimed that the Maasai section known as the Laikipiak was extinct and therefore their land was empty. This claim about the extinction of the Laikipiak is contested (Sobania, “Defeat” 105-116). Sir Charles Eliot in an introduction to Alfred C Hollis’s book, *The Maasai, their Language and Folklore* (1905) suggests that the Laikipia plateau was empty because the people of Laikipia were weakened economically due to rinderpest which decimated their cattle, thus making them an easy target for their enemies (in Hollis xv).

In order to avoid land conflicts between the European settlers and Maasai in Tanzania, the British introduced policies to regulate the economic activities of the Maasai. The British colonial administration evidently wanted to maintain Maasai pastoralism through the introduction of the so-called Maasai Development Plan (MDP) initiated in 1951 with the intention “ironically, despite all of the derogatory

stereotypes about pastoralists and their presumed ‘conservatism’ [...] to reinforce Maasai livelihoods as pastoralists” (Hodgson, “Taking Stock” 74). Hodgson observes that: “these processes and their associated interventions have further reinforced and rigidified the distinctions between some Maasai as ‘traditional’ and others as ‘modern’” (“Once Intrepid” 122). The Maasai Development Plan was an initiative by the British geared at keeping the Maasai at a safe distance from British settlers who had seized most of the fertile land from the Maasai, but instead the plan precipitated other complexities including the Maasai’s reluctance to adapt the money economy. Hodgson explains that “[t]he alienation of much of their remaining fertile land undermined the viability of pastoralism, rapidly increased the pace of their impoverishment and intensified their resentment and hostility at what they perceived as the government’s betrayal” (“Taking Stock” 75). These contradictions in turn produced sentiments such as: “pastoral tribes are very retentive of their ways. While his cultivator neighbour is being increasingly drawn to economic needs and influenced by urban and industrial development, the pastoral tribesman has tended to remain an anachronism outside modern society” from administrators – as documented in the East African Royal Commission report (Hodgson “Taking Stock” 64). These views only affirm British anxieties about the Maasai as “rudimentary capitalists” who “refused to sell surplus cattle for cash” (Spencer 67; Hughes 287). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the Maasai image was and is always under construction, by both Maasai and non-Maasai configurations and reconfigurations, at different socio-historical junctures.

Maasai oral history does not furnish much information about the origins of the first Maa speakers in East Africa. However, they often “assert [...] that their history began when they ascended *endigir e kerio*, the Kerio Escarpment,” a fact that is both coherent and acknowledged by key scholars of the Maasai (Galaty, “Becoming” 64). The account by Ole Saitoti and Beckwith affirms that:

After a prolonged period of drought, which led to famine and deep discouragement, the elders noticed that birds were bringing green grass to

build their nests. The elders met and decided that the birds must be fetching their green grass from areas beyond the escarpment where rain had fallen, and they would send scouts to discover where the grass had come from. The scouts went out and, after much effort, crawling on their hands and knees, reached the top, they found a land green and fertile and filled with sweet streams and rivers very unlike their barren dust bowl. (Saitoti and Beckwith, *Maasai* 22).

The theme of this myth/story is drought and how the society was saved from this drought by birds (echoing the post flood messenger of the Biblical Noah) who indicated a promis[ing] land beyond. The drought mentioned in this myth is prevalent in various accounts about the Maasai of nineteenth century. Though considered a myth, the most important aspect gleaned from this oral history is the issue of Maasai migration into the East African Rift valley, a fact that most linguists, historians, anthropologists and archaeologists tend to reiterate in their writings. Paul Spencer and Richard Waller in their most recent paper titled, “The Maasai Age System and the Lookidongi Prophets,” agree that “the Maasai preserve a memory detached from the sequence of age-sets, of a disastrous drought from which survivors escaped by climbing up the (Kerio) escarpment [and] [r]ecent scientific research has shown that the drought happened and can be dated” (462).

Despite the agreement that the modern Maasai migrated into the East African rift valley only during the nineteenth century, there are studies which show earlier Maasai presence in the region even as early as AD 500 (Vossen 71; Ehret 53). Ole Saitoti and Beckwith hint that “the race is considered a hybrid between the Nilotes, a people coming from the Nile region, and the Hamites, a people originating in North Africa. One looking at Maasai dress can observe certain resemblances to the attire of the ancient Romans, who once occupied North Africa” (20). To substantiate this claim, they add that the Maasai “share with other tribes of Nilotic origin such customs as the shaving of women’s heads, the removal of the two middle teeth from the lower jaw, the one-legged stork stance, and the use of spittle in blessing” and “circumcision and clitoridectomy in initiation rites and the age-grade system among young warriors to a

dislike of eating fish and a scorn for blacksmiths" (Saitoti and Beckwith, *Maasai* 20). Among the Maasai today, some or all of these practices are still observed and adherence to these can determine one's 'Maasainess'.

Another important thing that Maasai history reveals is the fact that its history coincides with the early European contacts with Africa, which is mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth century. Although this does not suggest that the Maasai were not there or their history was not known before, it is in the interest of this study to explore Maasai history from this historical epoch because even the genesis of the image of the Maasai that circulates today is traced to the nineteenth century. John Galaty observes: "...by mid-nineteenth century, Maa-speaking peoples inhabited a vast area stretching from north of Lake Turkana in what is now southern Ethiopia through Kenya to central Tanzania." He adds that "the Rift Valley region itself provided a north-south axis of Maasai occupation and a corridor for their expansion" (Galaty "Maasai Expansion" 61). This habitation of the East African rift valley by migrants from the North does not suggest that the land was empty and waiting for the Maasai to occupy it; they had to displace other people some believed to be Maa speaking who were occupying these areas. Hollis affirms: "In fact, there does exist a Maasai tradition of the 'earliest inhabitants' of Maasailand, who 'looked just like Masai but cultivated', and who were referred to by the term *Ilumbwa*" (*The Maasai* 280-281). J.E.G Sutton, in a chapter titled "Becoming Maasailand" in Thomas Spear and Richard Waller's collection, *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa*, particularly pinpoints the Sirikwa as the occupants of the Nakuru area. These were settled pastoralists and cultivators with whom the Maasai interacted upon their arrival in the East African Rift valley. Sutton therefore surmises: "one might see the unusual homogeneity of Maa dialects as partly the result of continual interaction between highly mobile and successful pastoralists who came to share a similar identity and culture" ("Becoming" 41). This view then partly explains the extensive dispersion of the Maasai along and beyond the East African rift valley. It is estimated that the Maasai are divided into "twenty two autonomous, territorially demarcated sections" (Sommer & Vossen 30). However, these sections, which also suggest the variation in linguistic dialects, are

clustered under only two groups: “North Maa includes the Samburu and Chamus dialects, while South Maa consists of an as yet uncertain number of variants which make up Maasai” (Sommer and Vossen 25). Despite their geographical dispersion and variation in social economic activities, all Maasai sections “including Parakuyo and their kinsfolk, the Samburu and Chamus refer to their language as a single linguistic unit by calling it *ol-máá*” (“Dialects” 26). Galaty clusters the Maasai into “four major alliances – the Kisongo, Loitai, Kaputiei and Purko;” he argues that “the Kisongo were the first to emerge from the Maasai core” and “moved to the area west of Mount Meru in northern Tanzania while Sikirari occupied the rich Sanya corridor between Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Meru. Kisongo and Purko came to represent the southern and northern vanguards of the central Maasai” (“Becoming” 70). With further expansions and movement because of their nomadic lifestyle, the Maasai sections expanded while other sections merged with others. Ole Saitoti and Beckwith believe that

Maasailand is divided into approximately twelve separate geographical sections: Ilkisongo, Ilpurko, Iloitai, Ilmatapato, Illoodokilani, Ilkekonyokie, Ilkaputiei, Ildamat, Ilsiria, Ilwuasinkishu, Oldalalekutuk, and Ilaitayiok. The largest section in Maasailand is the Ilkisongo of Tanzania, and the second largest section is the Ilpurko of Kenya. (Saitoti and Beckwith, *Maasai* 18)

Galaty also mentions other Maasai sections such as “Loogolala, Parakuyo, Loosekelai, Laikipiak and Samburu who “occupy the more distant peripheries” (“Becoming” 72). These sections can be considered the most distinct geographical sections but they are more or less interrelated to each other. The Waarusha farmers are not mentioned as being a distinct Maasai group despite the fact that they occupy a distinct geographical location and a socio-economic preoccupation. Instead, the Waarusha are described as being affiliated to the Kisongo section.

The Maa language is classified under the Nilo-Saharan phylum as far as African languages are concerned and specifically a branch of the Eastern Sudanic languages (Sommer & Vossen 26). The linguistic homogeneity suggested by the above history

does not guarantee homogeneity of people who are scattered across two different nations; like many other identities, Maasai identity is imagined amidst centuries of interaction with other linguistic groups in the East African region.

All the above accounts pronounce pastoralism as being a distinct characteristic for being Maasai and agriculture is seen as the antithesis thereof. However, Thomas Spear observes that “people of the Rift were highly specialized economically, and yet such specialization necessitated widespread economic interdependence [thus] [h]unter-gatherers, farmers, and especially pastoralists each relied on others” (“Being” 120). Spear adds: “Kisongo pastoralists, Ogiek hunter-gatherers, and Arusha farmers all participated to some degree in Maasai social institutions together” (“Being” 120). This suggests a composite Maasai identity, which includes pastoralists, hunter-gatherers and farmers. Despite this shared identity there are attempts to protect a hegemonic pastoral ideal, which is reinforced by external pressure resulting into ethnocentrism. In this case the Maa speakers who practise agriculture have often been excluded from the shared ethnic identity with the Maasai core. The agro pastoralists or settled Maasai people came to be known as *Iloikop/Wakwavi*, *IIngurrman*, or even more derogatory terms such as *Embarawuio*, *Arus* and *Irmeek*. The Arusha according to Thomas Spear “spoke a dialect of Maa closely related to that of the Kisongo of the plains. They belonged to common Maasai clans shared with Kisongo” (“Being” 122). The Samburu, who are Maa-speaking nomadic pastoralists, are on the periphery because of their intermarriage with the Rendille, a union which resulted in the interstitial *Ariaal* (Fratkin 273). Other differences between the sections include body aesthetics, colour preferences and mode of dressing. In terms of colour for instance Ole Saitoti and Beckwith inform us that: “the Ilkisongo prefer dark red and dark blue colors in bead decoration, whereas the Ilpurko favour orange and light blue” (Saitoti and Beckwith, *Maasai* 18). In terms of dress, “the Ilkisongo section wears below-the-knee togas, while the Ilpurko warriors and most Kenyan sections prefer very short togas to expose the beautiful bodies of the warriors” (Saitoti and Beckwith, *Maasai* 18). However, these differences do not systematically apply to all the sections as a rule of thumb, there are more complex variations within the sections.

Maasai occupied lands in both Kenya and Tanzania have always been contested terrains since the colonial period to the present. Recently, between 2008 and 2012, the Tanzanian government leased 10,000 acres of land to Tanzania Conservation Limited, a division of Thompson Adventures Inc, which created a nature reserve at the expense of preventing more than 40,000 herders, whose grazing grounds and water points were then privately owned by Thomson Safaris. In 2009, there was an attempt by the Tanzanian government to declare 1,500 sq km of land traditionally owned by the Maasai in Loliondo district a restricted hunting corridor in favour of a safari (game hunting) company Ortelo Business Corporation (OBC) owned by the Dubai Royal family. This endeavour included forceful eviction of people and their animals from the area by the Tanzanian Field Force Unit (FFU). It is believed that 60,000 cattle were forced to a drought stricken area, while their calves were left in a stampede and at least 150 homesteads were burnt. An online activism site, Avaaz.org, mobilised thousands of people to sign a petition against the deal. Although the government publicly declared a stop to the plan, OBC have been in Loliondo since the early 1990s where they have been conducting hunting activities without restricting pastoralists from grazing their herds.¹ All of these events reiterate and maintain colonial methods of displacing the Maasai from their land, often with a big plan to protect animals or provide for foreign investors. The postcolonial governments still marginalize the Maasai with the excuse that they are reluctant to change while in fact it is in the interest of the states to maintain the Maasai as cultural icons. The story of Maasai land dispossession began more than a century ago when the British in 1904 and 1911 signed illegal land treaties with the Maasai, agreements which led to the displacement of the Kenyan Maasai from their prime grazing lands. During the colonial period the

¹ See more about the land conflicts in Loliondo on www.justconservation.org, information compiled by

British moved the Maasai first to clear space for the construction of the Uganda-Kenya railway and consequently displace them, to clear land for settler occupation in both Kenya and Tanzania. Confining the Maasai in one place further facilitated administrative concerns such as taxation and control of the spread of stock diseases. The argument that the Maasai prophet Olonana/Lenana was also interested in the move due to internal conflicts with his brother Senteu/Sendeyo is negligible since, at that time, he did not have the capacity to influence British decision makers.²

A retrospective reflection is important to understand the gist of the most recorded conflict among the Maasai. The Maasai prophet Mbatian had two sons, Sendeyo/Senteu and Lenana/Olonana. Before his death Mbatian wanted to confer his magic power upon his elder son Sendeyo. Mbatian summoned Sendeyo and instructed him to “bring [...] roasted sheep meat and honey beer,” but Lenana who was eavesdropping heard these instructions and presented the things before his brother arrived (Saitoti and Beckwith, *Maasai* 20). Lenana’s plan materialised because “Mbatian, who was very aged and had only one eye, behaved much like Isaac [the Biblical patriarch] in similar circumstances, and gave his younger son the insignia, [...]. Lenana succeeded, and was accepted as *Laibon* by all the Maasai except the *Loita*” (in Hollis xviii). This resulted in “a division in the tribe, and as it roughly corresponded with the division between British and German territory, Sendeyo was long regarded as the chief of the German Masai [sic] and Lenana of the British” (in Hollis xviii). Although this conflict served the interests of the two colonial

² Hughes’s work emphasizes Prophet Olonana’s [also Lenana] duplicity as a reason why the Maasai should not blame the British alone for their land alienation (*Moving* iv). Considering the circumstances of the first move and European settlers’ desire for Maasai land, it is difficult to apportion significant blame to Prophet Olonana because his interests were quite trivial. Olonana who cheated his brother out of succession, needed to form an alliance with the British for protection in case of retaliation. However, Olonana’s fear alone cannot justify the Maasai move from their fertile ancestral lands (*Maasai* 24).

governments, “in 1902 Sendeyo quarrelled with the German administration, made his peace with his brother, and came over to the British Protectorate” (in Hollis xviii). Another version of the same account emphasizes the fact that, “when the Maasai saw that the English were not content merely to administer their lands but were interested in seizing huge tracts of land in the Rift Valley near Nakuru and in the Laikipia plateau, they consulted together and managed to bridge their differences (Saitoti and Beckwith, *Maasai* 24). The Maasai mobilized efforts to recover their land through negotiations with the British and a court case. These claims were pursued by Maasai age-set spokesmen notably Parsaloi Ole Gillisho and Nkapilil Ole Masikonde with the help of British administrators such as Dr Norman Leys (Hughes, *Moving* i).

This deterritorialisation of the Maasai from their most valuable grasslands for pasturage is an on-going affair, with their land constantly changing hands from the colonial governments, to British settlers, to postcolonial elites, to Arab trophy hunters and Euro-American conservationists. Kantai suggests that the current land struggles are “an old struggle [which is] going to be re-enacted, [and] the ensuing drama would have an added bonus: that the suspects were still at the scene of the crime” in the Laikipia context (“In the Grip” 115). Kantai emphasizes the currency of the land issue among the Maasai, as a recurring phenomenon rather than a matter of history. In addition, the Maasai campaigners for land restitution in Kenya emphasize that “the British own and control all the resources of [the] country...Kenya’s independence is a fallacy and there is documentation that can prove it” (“In the Grip” 119). This questioning of foreign owned land in an independent state is the primary preoccupation of lawyers, activists and politicians in Kenya, particularly those of Maasai origin who demand restitution for the injustices that the British committed towards the Maasai. Kantai also reveals that in independent Kenya, the settler descendants and other foreigners, thirty-seven families in total, own at least two million acres of land (“In the Grip” 115). While the Maasai are constantly obliged to destock due to lack of sufficient grazing lands, these landowners are allowed to enclose huge chunks of land for ranching and nature conservation. In August 2004, the Maa community in Kenya presented a petition to the Kenyan government and the

British High Commission, appealing for the two governments to terminate the land leases which were about to expire; and compensate for the loss endured by the Maasai as a result of their dispossession. While the Maa community's petition was designed to precipitate the revocation of the centennial leases, the Kenyan government maintained that they were millennial. However the Maasai lawyers led by Elijah Ole Sempeta refocused their claims from the expiry of leases to the legality of the leases themselves. Ole Sempeta stated: "the agreements are illegal...the basis upon which they were created is a forgery" (Kantai, "In a Grip" 119). These statements ignited hot contestations between the government and Maasai activists, whose sparks were precursive of the murder of Ole Sempeta few months after the campaign.³

On the other hand, in then Tanganyika, the Maasai faced the same land curtailments and possibly what was happening in Kenya spilled over into Tanganyika. Hodgson accounts: "soon after [the British] took over Tanganyika from the Germans in 1916, they forcefully consolidated all Maa-speaking herders ('real' Maasai) into an ethnic reserve to control the movements of livestock and people and to protect them from outside influences" ("Taking Stock" 65). While they remained confined in the reserve and separated from interaction with other communities, the Europeans seized Maasailand. In Tanzania, the "Maasai had granted the [colonial] government permission to farm wheat on several large blocks of land in Ardai and Olmolog [Arusha] during the Second World War, as well as temporary leases to European settlers for war-time cultivation" ("Taking Stock" 68). Despite being "suspicious about the 'temporariness' of the leases, Maasai perceived these loans and the 27,308

³ Parselelo Ole Kantai accounts that Ole Sempeta was murdered while driving to his residence in Ngong. His body was found in his car and the murderers did not take any valuables apart from some money from his wallet. Ngong residents believe he was assassinated for the police have not been able to track his murderers ("In the Grip" 119).

cattle they ‘donated’ to the war effort as part of their obligations as friends of the government” (“Taking Stock” 68). Lawrence Mbogoni, in his book *Aspects of Tanzania Colonial History* (2013), notes that: “in colonial Tanganyika substantial immigration only occurred after World War Two [...]. Between 1948 and 1958 the number of settlers doubled from 10,648 to 20,498, which called for an increase in the amount of land alienated for European settlement” (59). According to Mbogoni, about a dozen ex-servicemen or retired colonial civil servants turned to farming after securing land at Ol-Molog, an area which constituted prime Maasai grazing lands and routes to the “Tinga Tinga livestock Market” (58). These farmers included Piet Hugo, David Read, Arthur Palfrey, Campbell Webb, Harold Stuchbery, George (aka Robin) Johnston, Sir Archibald McIndoe, Con Benson, Brian Freyburg, Derek Bryceson, John Millard and Dr Michael Wood (58). Of particular interest among these settlers is David Read, whose novel *Waters of the Sanjan: A Historical Novel of the Maasai* is analysed in the fourth chapter of this study. The Kenyan born Read who grew up in Loliondo among the Maasai, left Tanzania in 1975 for Zambia after Julius Nyerere’s revocation of private ownership of settler farms in independent socialist Tanganyika. Read returned to Tanzania in 1993 and successfully applied for citizenship. Though retired from farming, Read worked as a coffee growing consultant while writing his books.⁴ Read built a house at Momella, under the slopes of Mount Meru, where he lived until his death in 2015. In *Another Load of a Bull* (2005), Read admits he was granted “farm No.3 at Ol Molog on a 99 year lease consisting of 1,236 acres” (*Another* 18). This book, which is a compilation of extracts from Read’s Ol Molog diaries, accounts for his experiences as a settler in the area. While independent Tanganyika restored land to its citizens through nationalization of private property,

⁴ See the foreword for Read’s book *Another Load of Bull*, written by Elias Mshiu, co-worker at the Tanganyika Farmers Association and the sponsor for Read’s citizenship application.

settler-owned land in Kenya remained in the hands of a few foreigners and a handful of the postcolonial elites. It is under these circumstances that the Maasai elites in Kenya established a political party, Maasai United Front (MUF), which involved Tanganyikan Maasai in consideration of forming an independent state. According to Ole Kantai, “the Maasai, once the supreme others, have become obsessed with the other – partly as a consequence of colonial reservation policies that entrenched ideas of exclusivity, essentialism, bounded and static ethnic identity, and the necessity of ejecting ‘aliens’ from Maasai’s ‘promised land’” (“In the Grip” 9). While I agree with Ole Kantai’s observation of entrenched Maasai nostalgia for exclusivity, this does not warrant the marginalisation that the Maasai have suffered from the colonial period to the present. In fact, it is the strategic imposition of essentialism that enabled both the colonial and postcolonial governments to marginalise the Maasai economically. Through a mix of strategies, including forcing the Maasai to conform to strict pastoralism, confining them to reserves while taking away their grazing lands for “war time cultivation” and their cattle as “donations” for the war efforts or by creating National Parks and reserves at the expense of their livelihoods, these governments systematically presided over the touristification of the Maasai.

The Maasai *Shuka*

Evan Mwangi’s contention that “the Maasai community is reputed to be one of the most positively impervious to colonial cultural hegemony” is a historical misconception, unless taken for an irony conceived during early Maasai colonial contact (13). This misconception, which outlived its historical antecedents, arises from early accounts by Western travellers who painted a picture of the Maasai as conservative and unwilling to adapt change. In fact, geographers’ and missionaries’ written accounts of their travels and the illustrations that accompanied them consistently showed the Maasai “as the antithesis to modern Europeans” (“Once Intrepid” 124). Yet in reality, the contrary was the case. As their way of life suggests, the Maasai have always interacted with other societies for the main reason that their economic means, that is pastoralism, has never been sufficient to sustain their needs;

they constantly traded with other communities to subsidize their food. On the other hand, the Maasai acquired their embellishments such as clothes, beads, weapons and wire through trade.

The Maasai today are associated with at least two cultural markers which bear witness of their interaction with the outside world: the Maasai *shuka*, which they use for their traditional attire, and beaded ornaments. The Maasai *shuka* which has become the sartorial emblem of Maasai culture and without which the Maasai are invisible, is reminiscent of the Scottish tartan. Like the Scottish tartan, Maasai *shuka* is also a pattern made of a minimum of two colours which are weft and warp so that they are right angles to each other.⁵ The Maasai *shuka*'s genealogy has not been ascertained for a long time although there are various schools of thought regarding its origins. While the Scottish tartan is believed to have originated from the Chinese desert, where it was found on mummified Celtic bodies, its varieties found in Africa, India and the Caribbean have their own histories. During the colonial period, tartan kilts of the British Army's Highland regiments influenced the production of what came to be known as madras fabric in British occupied India where, in a place called Madras, this fabric was produced and then transported to the Caribbean and the United States where, at the time, there was an increased demand for light-weight cotton goods. In India, the fabric is worn traditionally as lunghi while in the Caribbean it is known as madras. In East Africa, an Indian man named Mr. P.D. Dodhia introduced tartan to

⁵ Definition by Brian Wilton, Director of Scottish Tartan Authority in an interview with Teleica Kirkland, who is founder and director of The Costume Institute for the Africa Diaspora. The interview was part of an exhibition titled “Tartan: Its Journey Through the African Diaspora” which was staged at the Craft Central Gallery in Farringdon, London on 4th August 2014. This information is on exhibition.ciad.org.uk and on blog.sapelle.com under the title, “Must-see Exhibition–Tartan: Its Journey Through the African Diaspora.” Teleica Kirkland also narrates most of the history of tartan in an interview with Arise TV.

the Maasai. However, some believe that it was the Scottish regiments and missionaries who introduced tartan to the Maasai.⁶ Blogger Andrea Bohnstedt validates this claim by quoting Tereneh Mosley: “a professor told [her] that the fabric was introduced by the British, it is tartan...the Asian traders made them for the Maasai again using the beloved red as the main color [sic].”⁷ Although Wilton reveals that tartan is not a specific material but a pattern, he also adds the unwritten rule that a tartan had to have a meaning. The appropriation of tartan by other cultures beyond Scotland was possible because it could be weft on various available materials and in different colours, for example the Maasai *shuka* in East Africa is currently made of Chinese synthetic ironically labelled “original Maasai *shuka*.” The Maasai tartan that often comes in red with blue or black stripes became the iconic Maasai *shuka* over the years. It is this piece of cloth that has come to signify ‘Maasainess’ and is now the most visual signifier of Maasai culture, particularly as a key sartorial signifier for Maasai warriors’ bodies. The Maasai *shuka* lends itself to appropriations the same way tartan has. In their 2012 spring/summer collection, the Louis Vuitton designers incorporated the Maasai *shuka* theme into their outfits. The drive behind the designs was not the mere use of tartan as a fabric pattern but tartan with a particular meaning, in this case, the exotic Maasai, evinced by their choice of tartan in red, blue and terracotta colours. In a newspaper article published by the Kenyan paper, the *Daily Nation*, English fashion designer and artistic director for Louis Vuitton’s men division, Kim Jones, admits that his design was inspired by images of Africa, African landscape and the savannah, photographed by Peter Beard whom he regards as “a

⁶ David Read, while working in Tanzania with Tanganyika Packers, travels to Loliondo to buy cattle and meets his childhood friend Matanda. Read presents the following gifts to his friend, “a heavy tartan rug, an ex-army Greatcoat, plus some beads for his womenfolk” (*Barefoot* 236).

⁷ Posted on www.the-star.co.ke, on May 17, 2014.

David Livingstone of sorts".⁸ This juxtaposition of a colonial explorer and a fashion photographer correctly underscores the shared gaze behind the cultural exoticisation that is at play on the Maasai and their cultural identity. The appropriation of this particular cultural icon was strategic given the ways in which the fashion industry banks on an already existing prototype. Kim Jones is more than aware of the prevalence of tartan in Scottish culture, being English himself, but it was the Maasai brand that carried a particular cultural exoticism that was different from the Scottish one.

Maasai visibility today is directly related to the nineteenth-century history of the Maasai; their encounter with the British provides a niche for my study to reflect on the configurations of ‘Maasainess’ that emerged after such encounters in different temporal contexts. The image of the Maasai that the British consolidated probably generated inordinate attention from Western scholarship and ample space in the colonial archive, relative to many other African cultures. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that “wild tales of African ‘savagery’ sold well, while gentler stories of amenable indigenes did not, simply because they did not satisfy the public appetite for lurid representations of the Other, now whetted by a series of published travelogues” (Hughes, “Beautiful” 270). The Maasai circulated both in print and visual media through travelogues, ethnographic accounts and films. The most notable of these include: Joseph Thomson’s *Through Maasailand* (1885), with exotic and racialized images of the Maasai followed by *Ulu* (1888), in which Thomson presents a fictional account of his encounter with the Maasai. The novel gets its title from the main character Ulu “a beautiful half Chagga, half Maasai,” whom “adventurer hero

⁸ The *Daily Nation* published an article titled, “Global Fashion Pays Homage to Shuka” on Saturday July 2, 2011 in which Carol Odero reflected on the appropriation of the Maasai *shuka* into the Louis Vuitton spring/summer collection.

Tom Gilmour fantasized about marrying” (Hughes, “Beautiful” 272). Other titles include Rider Haggard’s *Allan Quatermain* (1887), Alfred C. Hollis’s *The Maasai: Their Language and Folklore* (1905) and Meritz Mekker’s *The Maasai: Ethnographic Monograph of an East African Semite People* (1910). The contemporary global film industry has in recent years reproduced the stereotypes formerly recorded in print. The Maasai featured in most of these films are at best “faceless, pliable, and with no speaking roles”; at worst, “play on the line of exoticism and innocence” (Salazar, “Imaged or Imagined”). Some of these films include Sydney Pollack’s *Out of Africa* (1985) and Stephen Hopkins’s *The Ghost and the Darkness* (1996), in which the warrior stereotype is replayed when the Maasai said to kill ferocious lions are invited to kill the Tsavo lions but they fail. In Josiah Kibira’s *Bongoland* (2003), a Tanzanian film director uses the Maasai only for marketing the film as they appear on the promotional poster as mere exotic images for market appeal. Hermine Huntgeburth’s *The White Masai* (2005) which adapted Corrine Hofmann’s autobiography of the same title at least features active Maasai characters, although the role of the main Maasai actor is played by the Burkinabe-born French actor Jacky Ido who features as Lemalian.⁹ Despite the eminence of Maasai visibility in texts and film, the same cannot be said of the literary productions about the Maasai both in the region and abroad. There has been little critical attention paid to the literary productions about the Maasai, given the efforts by writers like Henry Ole Kulet to devote an entire oeuvre to write on the Maasai. Ole Kulet’s work has been relegated to the category of popular culture as opposed to serious literature; a binary which for many decades kept the doors of the East African literary canon locked against the most prolific Maasai

⁹ Noel B. Salazar in his article, “Imaged or Imagined? Cultural Representations and the ‘Tourismification’ of Peoples and Places” examines in more detail how images of the Maasai are traded in Hollywood movies and in various ethnographic documentaries.

novelist in the region. This lack of engagement with work produced by the Maasai about the Maasai for a long time repressed the representation of the Maasai as a significant quota of the African literary debates.

Theoretical Concepts and Points of Departure

To think through these variable expressions of ‘Maasainess,’ this study takes the Maasais’s nomadic lifestyle as a useful point of departure from which to critically engage with feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti’s *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory*. Braidotti employs the concept of the “nomadic subject” to mean a “situated, postmodern, culturally differentiated understanding of the subject” (4). Braidotti’s concept of the nomad coincides with the position of the Maasai, but for her the nomadic feminist holds a privileged position, migrating across borders, cultures and languages, while for the Maasai pastoralist, this is often a position of un-belonging, marginality and perpetual displacement. I also consider both the literal and metaphorical implications of Braidotti’s concept of ‘embodiment,’ adopted from Michel Foucault, as “signifying bodily materiality” (57), which is “the site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory sets of experiences” (4) in relation to the Maasai and the representations of ‘Maasainess.’ *The Online Etymology Dictionary* traces the word nomadic to middle French word *nomade*, which means “wandering groups in Arabia” and Greek *nomas* which means “roaming, roving, wandering”. The emphasis on motion articulates the migration of the East African nomads, particularly the Maasai who moved into the rift valley from North Africa. For Braidotti, however, “nomadism [is] a theoretical option [which] translates into a style of thinking” (1). In this thesis, the term is used both in its literal sense and in the sense propounded by Braidotti to mean the mobile, unsettled, unfixed representational identity of the Maasai. Here, Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay’s argument that identities are “constructed through not outside difference” and that they “can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, leave out” is relevant (4-5).

Graham Huggan's argument that exoticism "describes rather a particular mode of aesthetic perception – one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them and effectively manufactures otherness" is central to the study's exploration of how the texts read perpetuate or destabilise stereotypical constructs of 'Maasainess' (13). However, the works of scholars critical of Huggan's argument are also taken into account. Sarah Brouillette in *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*, for example, challenges Huggan's core claims about exoticisation, especially his view that all postcolonial literary products strategically produce the exotic for commodification. Brouillette's argument is that "strategic exoticism is not something a writer deploys to teach a reader about the errors in her conceptions about other cultures, [...]. Instead it indicates a set of textual strategies" (43). For Brouillette, these strategies include "being self-conscious and canny, being always only strategically exotic" (43). In reading the musical performances in chapter five, I consider the Maasai musicians self-conscious and strategic in the ways in which they parody stereotypes about the Maasai. Despite the fact that these musicians gain fame and popularity, their musical products and performances are subversive.

Another central concept is Mary Louise Pratt's 'contact zone', which she employs to understand the relations between the colonizer and the colonized, "not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power" (7). The notion of the 'contact zone' registers concerns similar to those detailed in Ann Laura Stoler's *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (2002), which focuses on how the imperial powers institutionalized the control of intimate relations between colonizers and colonized. These delineations of contact and intimacy are, for example, brought to bear on the postcolonial context – and occasionally subverted – in Hofmann's *The White Maasai: My Exotic Tale of Love and Adventure*, Budgor's *Warrior Princess: My Quest To Become the First Female Warrior* and Coates's *Tears of the Maasai*. Equally important is Ballantyne and Burton's focus on embodiment which shows colonial encounters between people and cultures in their "gendered, sexualized context" (13). My reading of these

autobiographies by Hoffman and Budgor as forms of new settlerism enables me to engage with colonial reflections of race, intimacy and gender that Stoler examines; and to trace how these women's interactions and intimacies with the Maasai subvert colonial constrictions on such intimacies which had limited scope for white women's interactions with local men.

I perform a close reading of the selected texts in which they are always contextually situated and my analyses are informed by theory pertinent to the focal concerns of the study. By focusing on a range of texts that also emerge from different historical and temporal contexts, the study provides an overview of various ways in which this notion of 'Maasainess' is negotiated by differently located subjects and texts. Texts written by Maasai authors are read alongside those written by non-Maasai authors in order to map the overlaps and differences in their embodiments of 'Maasainess.' I thus undertake a critical reading of how these different texts construct the image of the Maasai to either re-inscribe or resist stereotypes that have their roots in colonial representations of the Maasai.

My engagement with the concept of stereotype is crucial in this study. I use the term stereotype to mean the various fixed images which represent 'Maasainess' in the texts that I analyse in this study. Homi K Bhabha sees stereotype as "a primary point of subjectification in colonial discourse, for both colonizer and colonized [...] an arrested, fixated form of representation" (*The Location* 75). Bhabha further observes that for stereotype to function as a signifier it "requires, [...] a continual and repetitive chain of other stereotypes" (*The Location* 75). In this study, I use the word stereotype to mean/signify the tendency to reiterate notions of 'Maasainess' which were imagined by the British colonial agents (explorers, missionaries, and administrators) and to refer to the continued currency these stereotypes enjoy in contemporary configurations of 'Maasainess'. In chapter five, I also deploy Bhabha's idea of mimicry to explore how local music artists use parody to subvert these stereotypes by turning them on their heads.

As the title of my study suggests, I focus on contested textual embodiments of ‘Maasainess’. In this case, I configure (literally put together) contradictory sets of representations which suggest the fact that ‘Maasainess’ is continuously under construction; it is therefore a provisional concept that allows me to work through the various images the different texts portray. It is important for me to create a base upon which the texts I read and the contexts in which they were constructed will speak to each other. In my first analytical chapter, I analyse the figuring of ‘Maasainess’ and its embodiments in the Maasai writer Henry Ole Kulet’s autobiographically inflected fiction. His first novel, *Is It Possible* (1971), and his second, *To Become a Man* (1972), are analysed together with *Daughter of Maa* (1987) as they represent the Maasai’s encounter with other cultures and how individual characters grapple with the contact between the two worlds of Maasai culture and Western education. I also read Ole Kulet’s Jomo Kenyatta Prize winning novel *Blossoms of the Savanna* (2008), a text which focuses on the subject position of women in Maasai society, their silence and the price that they pay in maintaining that culture. For example, as Annie Gagiano observes, the novel addresses female circumcision, a topic more usually taken up by women than by men and often perceived as a cause “Western feminists” are vociferous about, while lacking the kind of local, insider knowledge that Ole Kulet has (“*Blossoms*” n.p.). Gagiano’s observation on an insider’s view is important when considering African-American author Alice Walker’s efforts through her book and documentary film titled *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women* whose argument for the banning of female circumcision in Africa, while correctly outraged at the act of mutilation and the scars it leaves on women, nonetheless overlooks the cultural specificities of this practice and its attendant rituals. Chimalum Nwanko observes that Alice Walker’s texts “reveal recklessly a prototype and blueprint of the action of erstwhile neatly disguised global sisters rushing all over Africa and anything African in pretended aid of the poor African” (221). Indeed, circumcision is a culturally rooted phenomenon, which has psychological and spiritual impact on the people who practice it. This is perhaps why Ole Kulet engages with this issue very late in his writing career, indicating his own

ambivalent feelings about such a complex cultural matter, also evident in the multifaceted and inconclusive treatment of the subject in his work.

Although this thesis presents texts from different genres, such as fiction, autobiography and music, the autobiographical remains the overarching method of engagement in this analysis. In Ole Kulet's fiction for example, he deploys the bildungsroman, which enables him to "narrate the formation of a young life as gendered, classed and raced within a social network" (Watson and Smith, *Reading* 102). The bildungsroman offers Ole Kulet "a decisive model for the presentation of [Maasai] lives [by] cast[ing] their narratives in terms of encounters with powerful mentors at cultural crossroads ... of conflicting concepts of education" (Watson and Smith, *Reading* 108). Overall the autobiographical subject is cast "at conflicted cultural sites where discourses intersect, contradict, and displace one another, where narrators are pulled and tugged into complex and contradictory self-positionings through a performative dialogism" (Watson and Smith, *Reading* 109). In each of the texts including the musical videos, the autobiographical subjects in the image of characters, authors or personas configure various ways of understanding 'Maasainess' as a cultural embodiment.

Chapter Layout

This study is divided into six chapters, which comprise four analytical chapters, an introduction and conclusion. From the opening chapter where I introduce key concepts of the study which creates a background to the understanding of 'Maasainess' and its various possible configurations, I proceed to engage with the autobiographically inflected fiction by the Maasai writer, Henry Ole Kulet. The Kuletian oeuvre is wide in its thematic concerns. As a result, I specifically analyse only four of his published novels: *Is It Possible* (1971), *To Become a Man* (1972), *Daughter of Maa* (1987), and *Blossoms of the Savannah* (2008). I begin with a reading of Kulet's work because, while his books have in the past been placed "under the 'popular' rubric to occlude it from mainstream studies", as Evan Mwangi notes, "the worth of 'popular' literature is now seeping into the Kenyan academy" and "Ole

Kulet's art more than deserves mention in the study of the region's cultural politics" ("I to I" 17), particularly as it provides a Maasai point of view in fiction.

Transitioning from the autobiographical dimension of Kulet's fiction, the third chapter focuses on actual autobiographies, written by both Maasai and non-Maasai authors in order to examine how these narratives appropriate the warrior trope and consequently broker elements of Maasai culture associated with the warrior figure. My analysis benefits from postcolonial and feminist-inflected theories on the autobiographical, which provide a theoretical framework for my exploration of the self-construction of 'Maasainess' in these narratives. I analyse Tepilit Ole Saitoti's *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior* (1988), which offers a personal account of his pursuit of education as he encounters Western culture and education that challenges his people's largely oral culture and nomadic lifestyle. I also discuss the autobiography of Joseph Lekuton (who is Maasai and a member of parliament in Kenya), *Facing the Lion: Growing Up on the Savanna* (2009). I juxtapose these with Corrine Hofmann's *The White Maasai: My Exotic Tale of Love and Adventure* (2005) and Mindy Budgor's *Warrior Princess: My Quest to Become the First Female Warrior* (2013). Hofmann is a Swiss-German woman who writes about her love affair with a Maasai man whom she had met in Kenya and whom she married and had a child with. Budgor is an American middle-class woman who travelled to Kenya once and found that the Maasai initiate only males into warriorhood. Her quest to become one herself and her successful completion of her training is recounted in this book. While Ole Saitoti and Lekuton sketch personal narratives which offer an understanding of the warrior figure and how the Maasai construct such an identity, Hofmann's and Budgor's works seem to confirm the gendered mapping of Maasai identity, its appropriations and how they, to some extent, subvert it, albeit in questionable ways. Hofmann's and Budgor's works also give insight into how the western woman's concerns with empowerment can appear strange to her Maasai counterpart, as they invert gender privileges. The desire to become a warrior has never been in the Maasai woman's priorities and this privilege if granted would not address any of her pertinent concerns. Budgor's efforts can be compared to Alice

Walker's passion to create a film about female genital mutilation in Senegal so as to expose the evil to the rest of Africa. Walker's intention and the medium with which she creates her intervention does not avail itself readily to African minorities who do not have access to new media technologies. These writers use 'Maasainess' to consume an already existing fantasy about Maasai identity which plays a significant role in how Maasai culture is marketed and circulated around the globe.

The autobiographical remains an aspect of the historically inflected novels discussed in chapter four, but here the focus is on the settler colonial presence and its postcolonial aftermath in David Read's *Waters of the Sanjan* (1982) and Frank Coates's *Tears of the Maasai* (2010). Read, who was raised among the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania, offers a view of 'Maasainess' from a settler's view of the society in which he dwells. In contrast, the Australian Coates wrote his fictionalized history of the Maasai from the perspective of someone who worked in Kenya and married a Tanzanian woman. While this chapter provides interesting historical aspects about Maasai culture, it also highlights the violence that the Maasai British contact initiated, a history which continues to haunt the Maasai to date.

In the final analytical chapter, I focus on more recent audio-visual representations of the Maasai that overtly challenge and re-negotiate entrenched stereotypes. I discuss pertinent examples of popular music emerging from the region, with particular attention to the music video of Abel Motika (Mr. Ebbo)'s song "Mi Mmasai." Katrina Daly Thompson observes that "Ebbo artfully draws on local stereotypes of the Maasai in ways that not only include his non-Maasai listeners in the humour attached to these stereotypes but also, paradoxically make urban Tanzanians the butt of his jokes" ("Ethnic" 499). James Lekishon Ole Kamwaro (L-Jay Maasai)'s music video for "Tapala" is an example of a postmodern reconfiguration of 'Maasainess' as a collage of past and present tropes; while the music video for "Simu ya Mukono" by the non-Maasai duo, Shengena Gospel Panorama adapts the Maasai iconic traditional regalia and intonation to critique the challenges posed by technology to moral values which the church is striving to impress upon the people. In contrast to the Maasai singers,

the duo fails to see the potential in using performance to subvert stereotypes levelled against the Maasai. Their performance instead commoditizes ‘Maasainess’ and reproduces the stereotypes. These texts, as forms of audio-visual media, endorse ‘nomadic’ images of ‘Maasainess’ while resisting passive stereotypical ones. In this chapter, I argue that ‘Maasainess’ becomes the cultural capital with which musicians produce their musical performance while also, through the acts of mimicry, these authors subvert the stereotypes while others commoditize the Maasai culture.

CHAPTER TWO: Figurings of ‘Maasainess’ and Reading Identity Reconstructions in Ole Kulet’s Novels

The Kenyan Maasai writer Henry Ole Kulet was born in 1946 in Enkare Ngusur Narok district, Kenya. In his article, “I to I in the Narrative Mirror: Fictional Autobiography and the Problem of Maasai Identity in Henry Ole Kulet’s Writings,” Evan Mwangi points out that Ole Kulet grew up in “an extremely conservative Maasai community” (14) and he subsequently joined school through forceful enrolment by the colonial government. After his graduation from secondary school, he worked as an assistant manager in the then Kenya Farmers’ Association, Kericho branch. Ole Kulet began writing at 25 years and his career has spanned over four decades. During this time he produced nine novels. Ole Kulet’s oeuvre focuses on different aspects of the Maasai and their attempts to negotiate the tensions between Maasai traditions and the impact on them of colonial education. He also portrays its continued influence on the relationship between the Maasai and the successive governments in the region as well as shifting socio-political contexts. *Is It Possible* (1971) is his autobiographical debut novel, which is followed by its sequel *To Become a Man* (1972). Subsequent novels include *The Hunter* (1985), *Daughter of Maa* (1987), *Moran No More* (1990), *Bandits of Kibi* (1999), *Blossoms of the Savanna* (2009), *Vanishing Herds* (2011) and *The Elephant Dance* (2016). Ole Kulet received the prestigious Jomo Kenyatta Prize for literature in 2009 for *Blossoms of the Savanna* and was also nominated for the International Dublin Literary Award in the same year. This signals to the fact that Kulet’s work is now recognized and its contribution is well acknowledged within and beyond the East African region. In 2013, his book *Vanishing Herds*, which advocates for environmental conservation, received the Jomo Kenyatta Prize. Ole Kulet is the only established Maasai novelist

residing in East Africa.¹⁰ His work can be classified as what Kenneth Harrow terms “literature of Témoignage”, a term used for literary works which are inspired by “a new urgency to bear witness” (35). Harrow’s use of the term denotes literary works whose authors draw inspiration from their own culture to write. He further argues that this kind of literature uses the autobiographical form; with Camara Laye’s *L’Enfant noir (The African Child)* being a classic example (35). In this thesis, Ole Kulet’s selected novels are thus read as autobiographically inflected accounts that bear witness to Maasai lives and reflect on their cultural and historical contexts.

In an interview with Evan Mwangi, Ole Kulet explains that his books are “not autobiographical in the strict sense of the word”, but he admits that there are autobiographical aspects in his novels because he “want[s] to reconstruct [his] society as [he] would like to see it” (14). It is particularly in his first two novels, *Is It Possible* and *To Become a Man*, which I discuss here, that this autobiographical element is evident, bringing these two texts in line with Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith’s description of autobiography as “a historically situated practice of self-representation” in which “narrators selectively engage their lived experience through personal storytelling” (14). A pertinent example of this autobiographical dimension is evident in his portrayal of the impact of colonial education on the lives of the Maasai, a recurrent theme in his writing, which is informed by his own childhood experiences. The more obvious autobiographical inflection of his first two novels is accommodated by his use of the bildungsroman to tell the story of a young Maasai boy’s growth into

¹⁰ Two other notable Maasai writers are the Kenyan Naomi Kipury who published an anthology of folk narratives, *The Oral Literature of the Maasai* (1983), and the Tanzanian children’s books writer Tololwa Mollel, a diasporic Maasai based in Edmonton, Canada, who has published about sixteen children’s stories. Although Kipury has not published any other literary work, her contribution to the preservation of Maasai oral literature is remarkable given the time of its publication and she remains the only Maasai woman whose literary contribution is published.

manhood and the challenges he must negotiate as a consequence of his colonial schooling. This focus on Maasai masculinity is captured in the question posed by the two titles in combination: *Is it Possible / To Become a Man?* My reading of these two novels therefore focuses on their imaginative construction of Maasai identity and how they portray cultural negotiations of ‘Maasainess’ within rapidly shifting colonial and postcolonial contexts. Ole Kulet’s texts illustrate Ogaga Okuyade’s reminder, in a different context, that “literature cannot escape contemporary history which furnishes it with raw materials” (138). The selected novels offer fictional mediations of key moments in the histories of the Maasai community, such as British incursions through compulsory colonial education which snatched boys from their families. This forcible imposition of colonial education had two important results which Ole Kulet grapples with: it threatened the Maasai’s livelihoods because the boys were the society’s security and source of wealth through cattle raiding; and it also imposed contradictory obligations on Maasai conceptions of masculine identity, which thus simultaneously interfered with the lived experience of Maasai cultural identity.

My analysis focuses on four of Ole Kulet’s nine published novels to trace how his characters negotiate their cultural identity in response to encounters with British colonial education. At this juncture, Pratt’s term “contact zones” becomes relevant as a way of understanding the cultural products resulting from “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” (7). It is also useful to adopt Pratt’s term “transculturation”, described as “a phenomenon of the contact zone”, which is productive in understanding cultural encounters as a process of exchange where each culture involved is altered in one way or the other (6). I read *Is It Possible* (1971), which portrays the life of Lerionka Ole Kariankei, alongside its sequel *To Become a Man* (1972), which traces the life of a Maasai boy who undertakes formal education and returns to his community. While *Is It Possible* demonstrates the possibilities of negotiating identity at the threshold between traditional values and colonial ones, *To Become a Man* engages with the repercussions of the failure to live up to traditional values in the process of becoming modern. *Daughter of Maa* (1987), his fourth novel, focuses on the position, voice and

agency of the Maasai woman. Here, Ole Kulet employs the romance genre to raise questions about the traditional constructions of feminine identity by juxtaposing the educated and westernised Anna Nalangu with the obediently traditional Seleina Ole Mugie in a romantic triangle that shows up the limitations of pre-arranged marriages, patriarchy, male privilege and polygamy. *Blossoms of the Savanna* (2008), the most recent of the four novels selected here, is one of his key texts because in it Ole Kulet confronts the controversial topic of female circumcision or female genital mutilation (FGM) to demonstrate how the conflict between traditional cultural practices and modernity is played out on the bodies of Maasai women. The female body therefore functions as the embodiment of this particular kind of ‘contact zone’. In selecting these four novels, I set out to trace Ole Kulet’s portrayal of ‘Maasainess’ as always contested and under construction over a period of 46 years, a span of which covers the moment of colonial contact followed by post-independence negotiations of cultural identity within a larger national space, marked by restrictions on the Maasai traditions such as female circumcision and nomadic pastoralism.

Is It Possible To Become a Man? The Postcolonial Bildungsroman and the Ambivalence of Maasai Masculinity.

Ole Kulet uses the genre of the Bildungsroman in his two first novels to trace the development of Lerionka Ole Kariankei in *Is It Possible* and Leshao Ole Merresho in *To Become a Man*, both of whom redefine themselves as Maasai after their encounter with colonial education offered through compulsory formal schooling and conversion to Christianity. Read in sequence, the two novels portray different dimensions of the male characters’ negotiation of their identity at the contact zone where Maasai cultural values confront compulsory British colonial education for boys. While *Is It Possible* advocates a selection of the best values from traditional Maasai and the new traditions, invoking a politics of appropriation and negotiation and creating a hybrid of traditional and new values, *To Become a Man* demonstrates the difficulty of achieving such a hybrid status in the absence of support structures to mediate the process. *Is It Possible* explicitly traces Lerionka’s development from a traditional

nomad boy to an educated Kenyan Maasai. Lerionka questions his identity as a Maasai as he comes of age at a time when his society experiences the impingement of colonial values on its hitherto exclusively traditional, nomadic ways of life. Lerionka is the only son of a famous Maasai elder, Kariankei Ole Sururu, whose age group nicknamed him *Osokonoi*, a bitter fruit, as a result of his fierce actions as a moran. Despite his father's fierce reputation, Lerionka's father succumbs to pressure by the colonial administration to enrol his only son in school at the age of seven for fear of being arrested by the government. Ole Sururu's fear of the government is indicative of the colonial government's power over the traditional leadership system, given the old man's revered position in the community. Initially, he is willing to "sacrifice [himself] to go [...] to the white man and tell him that [they] do not have any children to offer" to go to school (*Is It Possible* 7), because, in keeping with Maasai custom, Lerionka must undergo initiation into Maasai tradition in order to take care of the family's livestock which is their livelihood. Despite his lamentation – "an old man like me, with an only son, left without anybody to send to look after the cattle or to protect those cattle against robbers?" (*Is It Possible* 15) – other elders already convinced to take their children to school, like Ole Saidimu, persuade Ole Sururu to follow suit. Ole Sururu's resistance asserts the traditional rite of passage prescribed for boys that marks their growth into Maasai manhood – the successful achievement of which he embodies as a fierce warrior – against the encroachment of British colonial education directed at the creation of a black bourgeoisie who will inherit power from the white master, as is dramatized in a debate session in Lerionka's school. The motion for the debate was: "African countries should not be granted freedom," whereas the opposers to the motion contend: "It is time our government realised that these people, though black, are intelligent. We have educated them to the

point where they can rule themselves" (*Is It Possible* 131). Having drawn insights from a book, 'How British Empire is Governed', Lerionka and his fellow students begin to question their state of affairs subverting the expectations of the colonial education system.¹¹ But the then district commissioner invited to the debate discourages such conversations in the school (*Is It Possible* 132). Although the aim of colonial education, as Peter Ekeh observes in his essay, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement", was "to [create] the African bourgeois class of [colonial] ideologies" in order to "legitimate an alien domination of Africans" Lerionka's cohort and some of their teachers challenge this status quo (*Is It Possible* 100).

Ole Kulet juxtaposes Lerionka and Lekakeny to convey two different responses to the impingement of colonial education, while at the same time showing, through the inferiority of the protagonist Lerionka, who is the narrator of this story, how ambivalence is triggered through what is experienced as the benefits of colonial education. Lerionka goes to school in Narok with other boys, including Lekakeny Ole Saidimu, his friend. Lerionka likes their teacher, Mr. Senten, and what he teaches them about nature and animal husbandry; he also likes his school uniform. When Lerionka returns home for a three-month holiday, he learns that "[his] family left [the] village" to another "village called Olderkesi" because his parents "did not think [he] would come back" (*Is It Possible* 30). This forced dislocation of his family can be explained as a result of defeat and loss of position in decision-making resulting from Ole Sururu's capitulation to the forced enrolment of his only son. However, Lerionka is able to locate his new home where he is reunited with his family. In his last attempt

¹¹ This title 'How British Empire is Governed' cannot be ascertained to be an actual book. However, the quotes placed on it may suggest that this was a short form of prose used in a school setting.

to evade the colonial order, Ole Sururu sends Lerionka to his uncle in Arusha, but instead, the young man voluntarily enrolls again, at the persuasion he meets en route. While Lerionka is torn between school and home and the different futures they represent, his friend Lekakeny defies the rule to stay in school and runs away before the term closes. However, the boys are able to show solidarity and peer belonging even as they differ in educational choices. We see in the narrative how Lekakeny escorts Lerionka to Arusha when he realizes there is a possibility for them to be circumcised there (*Is It Possible* 51). While travelling to Arusha, Lerionka meets Livingstone Lerionka, whose Maasai name is also Lerionka, but he had acquired his English name at school, where he learnt about Jesus and was baptized. Livingstone has just returned home after many years of schooling and at least two years in teaching and their encounter marks another step in Lerionka's educational development. Livingstone encourages him to go back to school and facilitates his education by introducing him to Mr. Asman, the headmaster of Arusha School, and later pays for both his school fees and expenses to get to school. Livingstone, who is named after the English explorer and missionary, is portrayed as a subject who has successfully adopted colonial education and its demands. He, ironically, appropriates the qualities of his British namesake by baptizing and naming Lerionka, whom he calls Henry, an act that makes him the "epitome of alienation" (Mwangi, "I to I" 24). According to Mwangi, Lerionka's name echoes a character in Rider Haggard's *Allan Quatermain* (Livingstone's favourite read) whom Mwangi describes as "an enemy of the Maasai" ("I to I" 24). The naming of Lerionka as Henry is an extension of the imperial project to name and conquer rather than an act of baptismal convention. The assumption is that he is being converted from paganism into Christianity while in his community there has always been communication with God on a daily basis. In one such instance when Lerionka accompanied his cousins, Mpoki and Lepish, to a meat camp, Lerionka recounts that "Mpoke would wake up before dawn to pray in the quietness of the night" (*Is It Possible* 41). Another intertextual allusion is to Henry Morton Stanley, who searched for the lost David Livingstone and upon finding him near Lake Tanganyika continued to explore the region with him. This suggests the metaphorical significance of the journey that Livingstone and Lerionka undertake in

pursuing colonial education. Like their namesakes, they engage in exploration of unfamiliar horizons. Upon graduation, however, Lerionka is disillusioned as he fails to get a job in Arusha, only to be rescued by Livingstone again when he receives a letter from him, inviting him back to Kenya, with the promise of a teaching job. Upon his arrival, Livingstone lends him money to buy some cattle to present to his family as both a peace offering and an act to validate the modern rite of passage he has undergone as being beneficial to him without severing him from traditional norms. Lerionka is thus shown as achieving the ability to negotiate his ‘Maasainess’ under the mentorship of Livingstone’s from whom he learns how education can be made useful to and integrated with a traditional Maasai’s lifestyle.

The protagonist’s journey of development begins at home when his father teaches him important facts about his identity as a Maasai boy. Typical of the bildungsroman with its interest in origin and naming, the father establishes a family genealogy when he says: “my name is Kariankei. My family name is Ole Sururu. My age group – iltalala – called me Osokonoi, meaning my actions were bitter, like the fruits of the tree called Osokonoi” (*Is It Possible* 3). This identity orientation extends to the naming of ideal masculine characteristics like bravery, associated with the warrior stereotype. It is also an act of situating Lerionka in his broader communal context. With childish innocence and enthusiasm, Lerionka promises to emulate his father. Indeed, Lerionka soon after appropriates his father’s fame in his fight with Lekakeny, his age mate, where he deliberately provokes his fellow boys by driving his calves into their grazing site, causing a fierce fight with Lekakeny which prompts the other boys to sing his praises and hail him as “Osokonoi”, like his father (*Is It Possible* 6). However, unlike his father, who keeps a record of instances in which he has proven his bravery, Lerionka’s name is earned through a once-off performance, which gains him the adulation of his peers. In the traditional context, this is an important step for Lerionka in his growth as a young Maasai boy because it earns him allies and foreshadows the kind of warrior he will make in the future.

As a young boy growing up in a pastoral and nomadic setting, Lerionka aspires to live like his society's adults. He shows agency by emulating his own father's brave actions, and he also desires to attain physical growth like the senior boys in his community, as he admits, "I felt as if I was as big as Mpoke" (*Is It Possible* 7). However, the process of forging his Maasai masculinity is interrupted by the government order to enrol boys in school, because, when the colonial government's messengers arrive at the village to enrol children in school, Lerionka has not yet gone through important male initiation rites such as circumcision. The bildungsroman plot pivots on this moment of interruption, at which Ole Sururu's expectation that Lerionka will grow into the knowledge of his environment, be circumcised, go into Moranship to train for cattle raiding and defence of his society and become a young Maasai elder with wives, children and stock, is frustrated by the westernising intervention of the colonial government. The bildung narrative from this point on follows the opposing template of development introduced by colonialism, as Lerionka goes to school, graduates and attempts to get a job as a civil servant, and ends up becoming a teacher.

The two narratives of development are at first shown to be mutually exclusive, hence the ambivalence in the character's feelings towards both. This ambivalence is foreshadowed in Ole Sururu's words at the beginning of the narrative which alludes to the novel's own title *Is It Possible*. He asks, "how do you expect a man to be able to hold the heavy spear in one hand, the sticks in the other, and books at the same time? It is impossible" (*Is It Possible* 13). Indeed, it is difficult to balance these two ideals, which are rooted in different sets of values. Lerionka finds himself in a dilemma when he has to follow his passion to learn and his obligation to obey his father whose authority is challenged by the colonial government which forces him to send his son to school against his wish because failure to do so is regarded as a crime. Ole Sururu expresses his resistance by sending his son to Arusha, an act that confirms his fear of the colonial authorities. However, before his father's wish is fulfilled, he meets Livingstone who helps him to resuscitate his dream of going back to school, thus defying his father's order. With his mentor's support, the protagonist devises a way of

asserting both traditional ideals of manhood and the obligations of British colonial education through a process of negotiation. His decision to go back to school against his father's wishes and before his traditional circumcision indicates that Lerionka is actively negotiating survival in these two different spaces. Livingstone, a Maasai who has acquired the formal colonial education and seen its benefits, becomes a mediator and support structure between the two value systems by ensuring that Lerionka is enrolled back in school. In a dramatic enactment of his mediating role, Livingstone performs his identity while at home, "as [they] drove the cattle off to the pastures," he was "wear[ing] a clean blue cotton sheet. In one hand he had his spear and in the other he had two books and a pen. Round his waist was the sheath with the sword" (*Is It Possible* 93). This demonstrates to Lerionka that after acquiring colonial education, one is "left in some place between foreign culture and [his] own" (*Is It Possible* 94). Through his traditional attire and performance of his moran duties, such as grazing, Livingstone demonstrates his belonging in his homeland but when in town, he appears in business suits and speaks English.

By wearing his traditional attire, Livingstone confidently inhabits both worlds, proving that he can carry a spear, sticks and books at the same time. However, the irony that is embedded in Livingstone's performance brings uncontrollable laughter to Lerionka. Both Livingstone and Lerionka know that their identity crisis is not simply sartorial but it is a matter of one seeking affinity with his immediate as well as wider community. There are many cases where 'Maasainess' is performed by the protagonist and his mentor according to the context in which they are. For example, the narrator's mentor has undergone baptism, a Christian ceremony necessary for new believers, which is an outward declaration of affinity with the Christian faith and an initiation into Christianity (*Is it Possible* 88). This ceremony positions Livingstone in conflict with his society, but it is presented to propose that the two worlds can coincide without any tension ensuing from either side, thus disambiguating the paradoxical statement made by Ole Sururu at the beginning of the story, which suggests tension between traditional Maasai values and the demands of colonial formal education.

The narrative proposes a shift of aspirational ideals for the protagonist, from emulating his father's bravery to wanting to follow Livingstone's example as a teacher. Knowing that he is acting in defiance of his father's order, Lerionka decides to fulfill his ambition to acquire education and be like Livingstone, a role model he now emulates; in a symbolic replacement of father figures and role models. That he shares a name with his mentor – Lerionka – who subsequently names him Henry, mirroring his earlier aspiration to his biological father's name – Ole Sururu – signals a shift in paternal authority, from the traditional Maasai father to the hybridised Maasai father figure in a position of authority in the modern world, as a teacher. The shift of the protagonist's geographical locus also marks his change of attitude as he moves from a rural to an urban setting. Both Livingstone's and Lerionka's movements from a local village to a town such as Arusha marks the fluidity of identity that the narrative suggests. The Maasai, being nomadic, practically practising transhumant pastoralism, are usually a borderless community that move towards more sustainable graze lands and favourable weather. The term 'nomadic', which in itself suggests constant movements, characterised by 'goings and comings', is useful in understanding Lerionka's narrative as both a journey of growth from childhood to adulthood and that of a quest for identity formation in a new social context. As a nomadic subject, Lerionka traverses into a new culture which he musters and appropriates. Like Gikandi's subject Jomo Kenyatta in the former's essay on postcolonial subjects' modes of cultural translation, Lerionka's story is not fixed but: "suspended between the mastery of [formal education] and the deepest desires of the national [cultural] imagination" (357).

The Bildungsroman genre employed here is also connected to the rise of African nationalism. Lerionka's development can be read as a symbol of the growth of the East African nation states, particularly Kenya and Tanzania, before and after independence. Lerionka witnesses the efforts by his mentor and his colleagues, both in Tanzania and Kenya, in fighting for political independence. His headmaster's friend, Mr. Shem, reminds Lerionka that freedom does not mean "a chance to banish once and for all the efforts made by the present [British] government to educate"

those who embrace traditional ways of life (*Is It Possible* 141). Ole Kulet seems to endorse the role of formal education in transforming African cultures into more accommodating stances in place of maintaining conservativism, hence the mocking of Lerionka's collection of the weapons he once tucked away while in school. Lerionka's vacillation between the two worlds also reveals the frustration of the African elite who has to step into power after the departure of the European colonizer. This move requires what Gikandi calls "meticulous translation of the colonial culture into the idiom of self-making" where one moves from traditional identity into a "self-translated" subject who can easily walk in and out of each tradition (357).

The intertwining of these historical events impact on the forging of national identities and Maasai appropriations of a new, blended identity as the result of formal schooling coincide with national changes, particularly following liberation from colonial governance. Mr. Shem tells Lerionka that "there will be no major changes in the day-to-day running of the offices, and that law and order will remain enforced as now" after independence (*Is It Possible* 141). The resignation of Mr. Asman (Lerionka's headmaster) concurrently with Livingstone's resignation from teaching gestures towards historical shifts of the year 1959, dated through the letters Livingstone writes to Lerionka and Mr Asman. Lerionka recalls that, "during the eighth year of [his] education, which was in 1959, things took a different trend. Mr. Asmani [...] resigned from teaching" in order to commit his time to the independence struggle (*Is It Possible* 136). In the headmaster's speech, which is foreshadowed by the students' debates, the headmaster remarks: "we now can rule ourselves, and we will be allowed to do so only if we show our rulers that we are responsible, capable and [...] peace-loving [otherwise] we shall try all we can to force them to do so, even if it means fighting," because "Uhuru is our right, not a privilege" (*Is It Possible* 136). Elsewhere, the headmaster references the 1961 liberation of Tanzania, then Tanganyika, in which the novel is partly set. Like Mr Asman, Tanganyika's first president, Julius K. Nyerere, was a teacher who resigned before he went into politics.

As a coming-of-age novel, *Is It Possible* registers the changes in the narrative of Maasai development, which in Lerionka's case portrays his growth from schoolboy to teacher and, later, politician. Although Livingstone is baptized when he is in school, Lerionka does not undergo either circumcision or baptism. The author's silence about circumcision in the protagonist's and his mentor's lives is significant because such silences are difficult to read, raising questions about Ole Kulet's position in relation to traditional rituals considered crucial in forging Maasai masculinity.

Towards the end of the story, Lerionka's father's admission that "it is possible to hold a book in one hand and a spear in the other" (*Is It Possible* 150) takes the narrative back to the conversation between father and son at the start of the novel when this blended identity was inconceivable to him. In their conversation, Lerionka and his father conclude that it is the new government formed of the new African elite, the "*Black Ilashumpa!*" – black White man – that enables positive changes (*Is It Possible* 150). While the postcolonial elite is still ambivalent about how best to reconcile the traditional and the modern, the masses, like Lerionka's father, are convinced that this new elite that snatched power from the colonial government would definitely bring about positive change. The efforts shown by Livingstone and Lerionka to negotiate their new identity suggest the possibility of a new form of 'Maasainess' which is not purely traditional and not completely foreign but which is similarly oxymoronic as connoted by the term *Black Ilashumpai*.

The narrative thus follows a circular shape, typical of the Bildungsroman, through the journey of the protagonist, who leaves home and later returns after acquiring a colonial education, which has transformed him from a nomad boy into a teacher. As the narrative moves towards closure, it is clear that Africans will acquire independence and new governments to replace British colonial rule with their own. On the other hand, conservative notions of traditional identity, such as 'Maasainess', are exposed to new forms of knowledge and being. At the end of the narrative, Lerionka is able to identify himself as Henry, to wear trousers and speak English, while he is at the same time able to maintain Maasai tradition by returning home with

a gift of a few calves for his father. It is worth noting that Lerionka bought the calves as opposed to acquiring them through raiding. He has thus gained a new understanding of his traditional values through his academic journey; and retains the legitimacy of cattle as a valuable economic and cultural marker, while simultaneously subscribing to a different logic of wealth accrual, through the market system rather than the traditional cattle raid. *Is it Possible* asserts Maasai masculinity as much as it narrates the contradiction that education has brought to the old traditional order of knowledge. It is a representation of that moment when individuals oscillate between the two value systems. As Mwangi points out, “the story affirms and at the same time contests the possibility of combining Maasai culture with Western education” (15). As a result of such ambivalence, the novel does not give one answer, but rather mirrors Gikandi’s process of “the self be[coming] the other and the lines between the two [being] blurred or folded into one another”, a theme Ole Kulet explores further in his second autobiographically inflected novel, *To Become a Man* (357).

To Become a Man is a story of a young Maasai boy, Leshao Ole Merresho, who had been enrolled in the colonial school system and is in his final year when he returns to his village for a three-months’ vacation. Leshao is faced with the implications of having to undergo traditional circumcision, followed by training to initiate his age group into manhood for the purposes of defending their tribe and accumulating wealth through cattle raiding. Both these activities would prevent Leshao from returning to school and completing his education. Leshao’s father is Kerea Ole Merresho, a widower who is embittered by life because of a series of disasters which had struck him, including the death of his wife, drought, heavy rains and a raid that wiped out all his stock. The old man resents having to sell at least two oxen every year to pay his son’s school fees and government tax. The overriding mood of the story is disillusionment expressed through anxiety and anger. Leshao is afraid to talk to his father about his concerns and the old man is anxious because he thinks his son is a coward and cannot uplift them from their poverty. Leshao recognises the need to be circumcised as a Maasai boy because the ritual will initiate him into adulthood, but he considers being circumcised in the hospital because his impoverished family

cannot afford to honour the requisite hospitality of contributing towards feeding Leshao and his fellow initiates. Leshao's proposal to his father to go to the hospital instead of being circumcised in the traditional way by the Iltorobo (the hunter-gatherer tribe) provokes the old man's anger against colonial education. Ole Merresho is hit by the reality of his poverty but he blames Leshao whose education drains him and delays his initiation, a prerequisite to manhood and cattle raiding which will revive his wealth. Ole Merresho arrogantly dismisses the offer of his clan to help contribute cows for the boy's initiation. When his young brother Metteur offers help, Ole Merresho asserts himself, saying: "I will carry my own tusks and when I am very tired I will sit and rest, but I know that at last I will reach my destination" (*To Become* 58). Against such a tense background, Leshao has two options: either to go back to school and find employment afterwards or go on cattle raids in order to bring cattle to his poor father. The narrative proves that either of these two options is reliable, due to uncertainties in both. In this section, I focus on the ambivalence that arises when individuals attempt to reconcile traditional rites of passage such as circumcision which marks one's entry into manhood with the pursuit of colonial education which was believed to guarantee one's success in life; without the socio-economic cushioning that can mediate successful reconciliation of the two through mentorship support or pre-existing wealth, as was the case for Lerionka in the preceding novel.

In his first novel, *Is It Possible*, Ole Kulet downplays the tensions that arise at the intersection between colonial imposition of education and traditional institutions of initiation such as manhood which involves circumcision and cattle raiding. In his second novel, he foregrounds the tensions between the two moral and economic ideals, traditional and colonial, to show how individual identity and socio-economic well-being are determined by successful negotiation of these two spaces. Leshao, the main character of this story, excitedly anticipates his demonstration of bravery by being circumcised without anesthesia and the celebrations thereafter, but he also considers what would be expected of him. When his father insists that the boy prepare birds for his decoration during the ceremony, the protagonist contemplates whether his father is ““mad”” because “[w]hen other *ilaibartak* come, what are they going to

eat?" (*To Become* 39). While Leshao's greatest concern is the indignity of their poverty which makes it difficult to honour the protocols of hospitality expected of initiates' families, his father reads his reluctance to be circumcised traditionally as cowardice and corruption by the colonial school. His father reproaches Leshao saying, "but you have become stupid. Either you were born with *emalless* or the *ilmusheni* have knocked the sense out of you [...] I would rather have you with *emalless* than have you spoilt by the *ilmusheni*" (*To Become* 14). *Emalless* (in the glossary provided by the author) is what the Maasai people believe to be a "confused mind or stupidity". Ole Merresho then prefers his son to be stupid rather than corrupted by the *ilmusheni*, the mission school. This man's preference is informed by the Maasai belief that a stupid person can be whipped back to his senses. The threat of his son choosing the hospital instead of the traditional circumcision scandalises Ole Merresho: "I cannot imagine my son going to hospital, as if sick, just for the mere cutting [...] – and coming out the next day calling himself a man" (*To Become* 14). Ole Merresho is deeply concerned about the influence of modern education and its impact on traditional Maasai values. The act of circumcision for him is a symbol with great significance in one's growth, because this act will transform a young boy into a man, representing his initiation into adulthood. The initiation into adulthood comes with responsibilities which for Ole Merresho concerns his status: "there is no property of an uncircumcised man. He is a child no matter how big he is" (*To Become* 15). Ole Merresho's desire is to circumcise his son so that he will acquire a status of a man in his community and thereafter engage in cattle raids and restore his lost glory. Ekeh's remark that the postcolonial elite need to "simultaneously [adapt] to two mentally contraposing orders" (100) is crucial here. Leshao's exposure to colonial education and religion gives him alternatives through which to envision success. Although he wants to transform the state of affairs in his family, he cannot go for cattle raiding while successful completion of his studies presents a possibility of getting a good job after his graduation.

Like Nwoye's father Okonkwo in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Leshao's father thinks of his son as lazy and cowardly like his own father, Leshao's grandfather, who died

poor, thanks to his reluctance to go on cattle raids. Ole Merresho informs his son, “I still blame you and your grandfather for our poverty. Your grandfather feared to go on raids and I only inherited ten cows from him” (*To Become* 5). This suggests that, even during pre-colonial times, not everyone upheld the practices associated with hegemonic masculinity. Some, like Leshao’s grandfather who was traditionally initiated, rejected it without having been influenced by colonial education. Achebe’s Nwoye chose to join Christianity because he thought Christian people were gentle, and the bravery of his father, which made him kill Ikemefuna, was for him a cruel act that a father should have rejected at all costs.¹²

Leshao and his father reflect the kinds of conflict which arose after the colonial intrusion and disruption of traditional Maasai ways of life, which include the criminalisation of some of their ways of survival. The elders in Leshao’s community, led by his own father, who initially embraced the idea to take their children to school, are now suspicious of its sustainability. Ole Merresho’s brother, Meteurr, counsels Leshao when he learns the boy wants to be circumcised in the hospital and return to school instead of going into moranship, warning him that “when [your father] seats you, he expects you to lead the family when he sleeps. I do not say it is bad to be employed, as that is what every young boy who has gone to school wants today, but just put yourself in his place” (*To Become* 52). Leshao is forced to choose between the completion of his education which will strip him of his identity as a moran, or

¹² Ikemefuna is a lad from Mbaino who was given to Umuofia after his kinsman accidentally killed a woman from Umuofia. This young boy was given to Okonkwo who stayed with him for three years until the elders of Umuofia demanded that the boy must be killed as decreed by their oracle. Ogbuefi Ezeudu cautions Okonkwo against taking part in the killing of the boy because he calls him father, but he proceeds to participate, out of fear of being deemed a coward. Nwoye, Okonkwo’s son, is traumatised by this murder and rejects his community’s prescripts of what it means to be a man, in favour of the church and its comforting spirituality.

obeying his father and being initiated into adulthood through circumcision and moranship which will prepare him to take up his responsibilities as an elder.

The colonial education imposed on Africans had its own limitations and disadvantages. The fact that education was not separated from colonial rule made the school system an ideological mechanism to create particular types of Africans. If this education system had been independent of the colonial rule, Leshao, as an old man's only child, would have been encouraged to stay closer to his father and take care of him through improved ways of stock keeping rather than spending more than eight years in school while the father is struggling in poverty. Meteurr warns Leshao against deserting his home because this is where he will always return to. He uses the term "*Olmuate*" which is a Maasai word denoting a deserted home (*To Become* 53). I read the image of a deserted home as evoking a nostalgic longing for a place to return to, which the African subject in the face of change needs to grapple with; or what Harrow elsewhere describes as "the centripetal direction of individual introspection and nostalgia, leading toward the past" (6). The Swahili proverb, "*Mkataa kwa mtumwa*", insists that those who reject their home will always be slaves but as long as one has a place to return to, no one can exploit such a person. Leshao's fear that he has turned his back on his home and that his father will die poor if he does not do anything, pulls him back to the community and its practices.

The narrator introduces pride and shame to juxtapose the two kinds of value system, the modern and the traditional, demonstrating that what is shameful in the modern tradition is embraced with pride in the traditional value system (*To Become* 98-99). For example, when morans return from a cattle raid, women and young girls perform and sing praises for the warriors who were able to restore the community's wealth and means of survival. On the other hand, raiding is criminalised as theft by the colonial administration and therefore punishable by law, while also carrying the burden of sin, according to Christian doctrine, which brings shame upon a believer. On one occasion, Leshao's friend and peer, Mbulung Ole Nkipida who believes in raiding

cattle, sings the following song which shows how the Maasai regard cattle raiding as a means of survival, contrary to the government's view of it as a crime:

The aeroplane swooped low at the forest of bamboo,

And all these boys were looking for us.

And as they looked for us, we sat enjoying

Ole Melita's courageous, relentless effort.

The meat of the black and white ox.

Brought from among many, which are

Waiting for us, because the owners are not –

And they never will be – entitled to them.

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-Sita. (*To Become* 98)

In this song, the police, referred to as “the boys”, are looking for morans who stole cattle but the moran, on the contrary, insist that they went to retrieve their stock from people who are not entitled to own it. Here, it is clear that the Maasai believe that all the cattle belong to them and that the police who attempt to limit their activities are only doing so because they are immature and thus ignorant of the Maasai's entitlement to cattle. Consequently, Mbulung's song inverses the colonial infantilisation of African men, whom they often referred to as ‘boys’. Regis Stella in his work *Imagining the Other: The Representation of the Papua New Guinean Subject* (2007) registers similar concerns where “indigenous people were referred to in discriminatory terms such as ‘boy’, “Manki Masta” (literally boy-Master), ‘houseboy’, [...] terms which perpetuated the master-servant relationship” (103). The Maasai *moran* inverts the colonial order by mocking the police's inability to track their enemies even with an aircraft with which they can ‘hunt’ from above. This

mockery is symbolic of the colonizers' ignorance of certain cultural ideals and their relevance to the colonized societies.

Although Leshao has to give in and undergo traditional circumcision, he does not want to engage in cattle raiding, which he considers criminal. His exposure to modern education and the Christian faith lends him different moral perspectives that conflict with his community's moral world. Leshao's outlook on life is echoed by Mbulung's father, Ole Nkipida, who, unlike his friend Ole Merresho, believes that education can bring positive change in the society (*To Become* 101). Although he is of the old generation, he wants his son to go back to school and complete his education because it will enable him to get a good job. However, despite the exposure that Mbulung has, he still feels that honour will come through recognition in the society as a brave warrior who has engaged in cattle raids. His father categorically tells him that he does not support theft but Mbulung will not take heed. While Ole Merresho was optimistic at the beginning, thinking that his son will get employed and drive a car like Reverend Walker's, he becomes sceptical after seeing his son's doubt about his future. For his part, despite the uncertainty of employment after completion of schooling, Leshao is strongly opposed to cattle raiding. He tells his friend Mbulung that he "will never support cattle raids. They are bad, degrading, dangerous and keep us backward" (*To Become* 99). This strong opposition by Leshao is a result of his exposure to the colonial ideologies about the natives, in this case the Maasai, which were dispensed through the school and the church.

Leshao's encounter with colonial education and Christianity has become a moment of crisis. When he attempts to run away from his traditional values that he now perceives as criminal and shameful, he is disappointed by the way he is treated by Reverend Walker, whom he thought of as a role model and a channel to success. After a fight with Jeremiah, Rev. Walker's cook, over the right to see the priest, Leshao is dismissed like a thief from the priest's premises, and considered as posing the risk of turning it into "a den of iniquity" (*To Become* 125). Leshao is frustrated by the system into which he attempts to assimilate and whose values he aspires to. After

unsuccessful attempts to find employment, Leshao returns to the values he had rejected and goes on a cattle raid, during which he is shot and his leg is amputated as a result. He is arrested and sentenced to 15 years in jail, a consequence that reveals the many ironies embedded in Metteur's earlier counsel that Leshao must keep in mind that his father "does not have any other son. He has no wife. He has no cattle. It is only you he has. If you fail him, you will spoil his heart" (*To Become* 53). Ole Merresho is devastated when he sees his son with one leg and a jail sentence of 15 years, but the harshness of his wish that his son "had died" like Ole Nkipida's son Mbulung had registers Ole Kulet's critique of his inflexible position, which, like that of the colonial administration, has tragic consequences for Leshao and for the Maasai in general.

The two novels demonstrate Ole Kulet's perspectives on the crisis at the threshold of change where traditional values meet the modernising influence of colonial incursion, with dire consequences for the entire community. The first novel shows how Maasai men negotiate the expression of their masculine identity in both traditions. The second novel extends the debate by highlighting how significant it is to master one's traditional knowledge and identity before one can adapt to other cultures. The anxiety of the elders in the novel arises out of their concern for the future of their tradition if their youth can easily neglect its important aspects. *To Become a Man* shows the irony of the colonial modernising project which attempted to erase everything traditional and impose a new moral regime that is pegged to Christianity. This new moral regime renders old practices such as circumcision (masculinity formation) and cattle raiding (wealth creation) punishable by law through jail sentences. It is even more challenging for the Maasai both old and young to adapt to these new sets of values which are imposed upon them and allow no room for negotiation. Ironically, the British imperial project is a different sort of raid in that it involved physical and cultural imposition of British cultural hegemony and appropriation of land across the Maasai terrain. While Maasai practices were criminalised, the British appropriated the Maasai cattle-raiding tradition as an operational technique during the First World War (Hughes, *Moving* 252). As Hughes points out, Kenyan British settlers like Gilbert

Colvile, “led the Maasai warriors to raid a community called Il-Tatua during the war between the British and Germans” (*Moving* 252). These acts were handsomely rewarded by the British colonial government; Colvile, for instance, received land as a “token of appreciation of his 1st World War exploits” which, according to Hughes, is “a euphemism for his freelance raiding” (*Moving* 253).

It would have been easier for Leshao, in *To Become a Man*, to fulfil his obligations as a Moran and later pursue his education because he would be able to carefully select the best values from both. In *Is It Possible*, Lerionka’s father concedes that change is inevitable and it has the potential to improve their livelihoods. Lerionka, through the mentorship of Livingstone, is able to go back to school, complete his studies and secure a job. But Lerionka’s case is different because his mentor lends him money to buy cattle to arrive home with. The fact that Lerionka goes back home with six calves makes a great impact and influences his parents’ reception. For them, education has not corrupted their son since he still remembers to come home with cattle. On the other hand, Leshao’s father assumes a different stance because change has brought him trouble. His son’s failure to complete his studies makes it difficult for him to get a job. Leshao’s sudden return to the values he once ran away from before he could master them reveals the contradictions that exist between traditional ways of life and the modern ways of life. Leshao is faced with only two options: he either gets a job or embarks on a cattle raid. In *Is It Possible*, a middle ground becomes possible when Livingstone lends money to Lerionka to buy cattle and finds a job for him. However, in *To Become a Man*, Leshao’s friend Pushuka is alienated from his society to such an extent that he does not care what his friend is going through. Both novels thus present the dilemma faced by individuals who find themselves in between two conflicting socio-cultural positions and are forced to negotiate an identity that can encompass both. The two titles in combination pose the question: ‘Is it possible to become a man who is authentically traditional and yet a responsible citizen in a postcolonial nation state?’ the two texts respond to the question with different degrees of optimism and scepticism, emphasising the role of mediating structures and cultural brokers such as Livingstone in facilitating smooth reconciliation of the two world views. In the next

section, I discuss how Ole Kulet grapples with the construction of Maasai feminine identity in a society where cultural identity is defined as male.

Who is the Daughter of Maa?: Maasai Femininity and the Subversion of Female Agency in Kulet's *Daughter of Maa*

Maasai culture is often portrayed as a mother culture, yet the male nomad warrior predominantly embodies it. Florence Stratton, in ““Periodic Embodiments”: A Ubiquitous Trope in African Men’s Writing”, shows how often male writers use female figures to represent the African landscape and even individual nation states through the use of the “Mother Africa” trope (113). Stratton identifies two strands to the trope, namely, the “pot of culture” which compares a woman to “traditional values or bygone culture” and the “sweep of history” which sees a woman as “an index of the changing state of the nation” (112). Although Ole Kulet does not use the female characters in *Daughter of Maa* to represent an entire nation, he pairs them to represent the Maasai culture, which is considered to be one of Africa’s “Mother culture[s]”, to challenge the pervasive stereotype of the male nomad warrior as representative of ‘Maasainess’.

Daughter of Maa is a love story about Joseph Malon who is engaged to Seleina Ole Mugie but, before they get married, falls in love with a young community teacher known as Anna Nalangu. Considering the historical trajectory that Ole Kulet deploys in his fiction, the characters in this novel seem to be extensions of the same characters that are seen in his first novel. The main male character in this novel, Joseph Malon, is reminiscent of Henry Lerionka who went to school and now returns to work for his community, while Joseph’s friend Richard Lanto may be compared to Livingstone, Lerionka’s mentor, both being teachers. Joseph chooses Richard, who looks like him, to become his *Ishepu Ilkera* (best man), whereas Livingstone and Henry share the name Lerionka. Ole Kulet adopts the romance plot, although he subverts its happy ending, to tell a story about Maa traditional marriage which is determined by Maasai feminine identity. Jane Bryce’s argument that “romance fiction has been appropriated and adopted (by African writers) as a vehicle for the exploration of new possibilities

in sexual behaviour and relationships [...] brought about by the intervention of Christianity and western education in traditional practices” is applicable here (347). Ole Kulet appropriates popular romance as a mode of crafting this tale about postcolonial subjects shaped by colonial education. Joseph Malon is the new veterinary doctor who went to school and came back to work at his home village, Maa, while Seleina Ole Mugie is a young submissive Maasai girl of traditional upbringing. In her “pure physicality”, she represents the “always beautiful” young girl that Stratton describes as typical of the “Mother Africa Trope” (“Periodic” 113). She is the seventh child of Ole Mugie and Nalotuesha, having three brothers and three sisters. Joseph Ole Malon the new veterinary doctor and Seleina are attracted to each other, but Seleina’s mother had to consent to this relationship on behalf of her daughter because she was still very young at the time he proposed.

The omniscient narrator assumes the posture of a storyteller to chronicle the stories of a Maasai community, particularly the Maa village which he describes as “the full flowering of a tree which grew tenaciously from a mere seedling among other” societies “which died because they were less sappy, fibrous and persistent” (*Daughter 1*). This exposition introduces the reader to a society that has been resilient and strong throughout and remains determined to uphold its cultural values. The story opens with an engagement party where Joseph Malon’s family comes to Seleina’s family to officially ask her parents for her hand in marriage to their son, a custom known as *enkaputi* in Maa language. The narrator explains how the Maa village is excited “to witness the engagement of his daughter Seleina to the new Veterinary Officer, the illustrious son of Maa, [...] Joseph Malon”, who perpetuates the continuation of his nomadic culture by returning home to work and start a family (*Daughter 1*). Seleina Ole Mugie is considered a daughter of Maa because the majority of the village elders are her father’s age mates and, because they cannot marry their age mate’s daughter, she is considered the daughter of all of them. In contrast, Anna Nalangu Ole Rana is a daughter of a man from a village called Ilmoru, and because her father is not of the *Ilnyangusi* age group like the majority of the elders in Maa village, she is seen as a potential wife rather than daughter of the elders of Maa village. Spencer, in his

attempt to factor women in Maasai age-sets explains that “the avoidance of the father’s age-set is regarded as fundamental to Maasai morality and pride [...] this avoidance [...] slots the girl into the age system” (“Becoming” 153). Spencer’s view enables my reading of the relationships and tensions that emerge in the Maa village with regard to Anna Nalangu and Seleina Ole Mugie. Anna Nalangu has come to Maa village as a teacher who has decided to work for her community, the Maa people. To foreground the differences between Seleina and Anna as daughters of Maa, the author gives Anna a middle name, “*Nalangu*”, which makes her even stranger to the Maa village. When written with an apostrophe, *Nalang'u*, the word means the one who crossed. If this is what the author intended, then Anna is regarded as a trespasser into Maa village because her home village is Ilmoru. This is emphasized by the fact that Anna’s arrival in Maa village creates anxiety among the elders of Maa, like Ole Masi who “reflected” on Anna’s age, “possibly the age of [his] daughter”, but he finds out that Anna’s father is not his age mate and that there is therefore no “abomination entailed in marrying her” (*Daughter* 12). This desire for the new teacher is driven by lust and endorsed by traditional patriarchal institutions such as polygamy which allow men to marry more than one wife as long as they are not the daughters of their age mates.

The deployment of romance also subverts the notions of love, traditional values and what defines the Maasai woman. By pairing Seleina Ole Mugie and Anna Nalangu Ole Rana, Ole Kulet challenges notions of purity, beauty and innocence which the Maasai patriarchal society subscribes to. The narrator foregrounds Seleina Ole Mugie as the “daughter of Maa”, who conforms to the patriarchal expectations of ‘a daughter’ in the traditional Maa village (*Daughter* 5). Seleina, who has not acquired formal schooling or exposure to different cultures, does not seem to question the patriarchal values which institute arranged marriages. While the author portrays the character in a sympathetic light, she also conforms to stereotypes circulating outside Maasai society, expressed by Anna Nalangu’s friends at school who are critical of her decision to work in the Maa community that is alleged to comprise “illiterate men and women” (*Daughter* 31-2). The narrator casts Seleina as passive and illiterate. She

does not take agency in making her own decisions but only abides by already existing patterns. For example, before she is married, Seleina knows, “deep in the unlit centre of her heart, that her marriage to [Joseph] would not be different from other Maa marriages right from the beginning of time” (*Daughter* 104). She thus represents Maasai tradition as passive and static, because she perpetuates it rather than envisaging ways of altering her own position in her future marriage.

The engagement, which is the traditional negotiation of two families about their children’s union in marriage, reveals the commodification of a woman in this society. Joseph, who is slightly older and much more educated than Seleina, has to get consent from his friends and later his parents. The narrator tells us that “everyone in the Maa village agreed that Seleina was the only fitting reward to be given to the learned Joseph Malon, whose new knowledge was revered by the Maa elders because it was invaluable, especially his knowledge of cattle diseases and their cure”, and, “despite what the young men felt about him, Ole Mugie’s clan and the Maa village elders negotiated a successful *enkaputi* with Ole Malon’s family” (*Daughter* 6). The fact that the society had thought of rewarding Joseph with a wife after his academic achievement makes Seleina a gift. The Maa engagement ceremony involves the negotiation of bride price between the bride’s and the bridegroom’s family. It is a negotiation because, even though there are prescribed processes and items to be exchanged, there can always be alterations, depending on what the bride’s family wants and what the bridegroom is able to fulfill. In some cases, the terms of the negotiation are determined by the elders who constitute that particular gathering. Seleina, at the time of her engagement, was aware of Joseph’s affection for her but there is a lot that she cannot determine. It is her father and other elders who determine her worth and the fate of her destiny. She cannot, for instance, decide when she needs to get married, even after the *Enkaputi* is done. She is waiting for Joseph to be ready to marry her. This denies Seleina agency even in a love relationship with Joseph, since everything is dictated by a community of male elders. It is also worth noting that Joseph too has no right or power to alter what has been decided during these negotiations. Since the two families have consented to their union, Joseph has no

power to revoke his engagement to Seleina, but he is allowed to get to engage to and marry another woman after marrying Seleina.

There is a metaphorical representation of culture through the two female characters, Seleina and Anna, who are used to embody Maasai culture as static, on the one hand, and as dynamic, on the other. At the end of the narrative, the narrator shows that culture cannot be perceived as static even within its traditional local setting. Instead, it is supposed to be viewed as a growing entity that adapts to change. Seleina is foregrounded in the stories about the land as “the daughter” and “the beauty” of Maa, making her resemble the history of this particular culture. In this case, Seleina symbolises culture as a bygone tradition which resides in the past, often viewed as pure and undefiled. This is typical of early African nationalistic sentiments which saw the pre-colonial period as a haven of peace. On the other hand, although the narrator does not foreground Anna Nalangu in the narration of the culture, he focuses the readers’ attention on her, casting her as an outsider who intrudes into the day-to-day community life through her work. Although Anna Nalangu’s contact with the village elders creates conflicts between her and the village women who see her as their competitor rather than daughter, she also fosters the right ground for Seleina to exercise her agency. As a result, when Joseph deserts her after their wedding, Seleina undertakes a lonely journey, which becomes a symbolic initiation into womanhood. Seleina walks back to her village alone, to follow Joseph Malon, whom she fears will be with Anna Nalangu. The lonely walk through “a lonesome wood of tall trees” is what initiates Seleina into maturity that comes with the agency she needs to confront patriarchy (*Daughter* 163). It is important to note that Seleina, although depicted as a static representative of tradition, initially moves from her original place of birth to her husband’s home, and is made mobile by forces within the context of the village and its neighbourhoods. Her decision to follow her husband and the denouement of this journey suggests that even a woman who initially subscribes wholeheartedly to traditional culture may thrive through adaptation and a more critical stance towards male entitlement. Seleina’s shift from static to dynamic mobility represents a mode through which Maasai women could inhabit tradition in more flexible ways. The

notions of a pure, undefiled tradition that resists change – embodied by Seleina – are propagated at the beginning of the narrative by both the older and younger generations. However, as the narrative unfolds, Seleina no longer represents a static culture as she initiates her own agency as symbolised by the lonely walk through the wood (*Daughter* 163).

In contrast, the narrator makes Anna the focal point of the Maa village elders, youth and women, and challenges the societal views about modern cultures. The elders gaze at and desire to possess Anna as their wife but at the same time they seem to be provoked by the way that she dresses in trousers and tight-fitting dresses which expose her figure. Anna therefore becomes exotic in the context of Maa village as she embodies change and the waves of change, which come with colonial education. Her unawareness of the extent to which the male elders are distracted, causing havoc in the entire village through their compulsive attempts at seduction is notable. Anna's mobility, symbolised by the fact that she owns a car, suggests that some aspects of modernity may be conducive to shifting women's position from the domestic sphere to the public sphere, represented by her role in teaching the village women. However, her mobility is also portrayed as potentially disruptive of social order when she parks her car at the local shop and converses with the men who gather there (*Daughter* 35). Although Anna's education enables this mobility that challenges the traditional role of women, she does, in fact, still observe Maa cultural values, which suggests that her mobility might be read as an expression of the nomadic that becomes possible for Maasai women. Anna, for example, attempts to explain to Nalotuesha, Seleina's mother, that she is not an obstacle to her daughter's impending marriage as suspected, by consulting Ngoto Nanana, Nalotuesha's age mate, to speak on her behalf (*Daughter* 91-92). This act of courtesy demonstrates her knowledge of and adherence to Maa values, while her education empowers her to be more useful in her community. Anna admires the "wisdom and intelligence" of her people and believes that, "if they were educated in a way that recognised their cultural values, [...] then the education" would "change their way of life without creating an unnecessary vacuum" (*Daughter* 32).

Daughter of Maa sets out to show how Maasai identity is embodied and gendered. The differences between the two female characters, Seleina Ole Mugie and Anna Nalangu, reveal that identity is not only reflected through how one dresses but through how one's life reflects the values and beliefs of one's culture. Although Anna's dresses and trousers make her “[appear] indecently dressed” in the eyes of the Maa community – thus positioning her in contradiction with her society's beliefs (*Daughter* 87) – she still demonstrates a strong attachment to her people. Seleina, on the other hand, is adorned with traditional attire which makes her modest in the eyes of men and earns her adoration as a daughter of Maa. Anna's dressing emphasises her feminine features and makes her exotic to the Maa men who gaze at her with lust. She becomes a fantasy from which the men of Maa village draw their pleasure. For example, her waist, which symbolises her ability to reproduce, is discussed or thought of repeatedly, which reveals their intention to possess her as an object of pleasure and site of reproduction (*Daughter* 9, 87). Anna's waist occupies the centre stage of the Maa men's day-to-day village life. She is mentioned in many conversations in public and in the private individual households of the Maa village. For example, when on one occasion Ole Ngasharr exclaims in ecstasy, “that waist!”, it becomes “superfluous” to Ole Masi “because that was not the first time that waist had been discussed by the men of Maa” (*Daughter* 9). Ironically, the Maa villagers who seem to embrace tradition as symbolised by Seleina, hailed as the daughter of Maa, desire her antithesis, the modern Anna. Contrary to the Maa men though, the Maa women are not in favour of Anna and they view her as an intruder, or a wayward girl, who should be tamed through marriage (*Daughter* 30).

When the old men pursue Anna with the hope of marrying her, they seek to capture her back into what they consider her rightful domain and tame her, as Ole Mugie asks Olodalu, “so you think I cannot tame her?” (*Daughter* 154). Ole Kulet uses the character of Anna to problematize simplistic understandings of Maasai feminine identity and instead exposes other possible ways of understanding Maasai identity, such as the likes of Anna Nalangu who, after acquiring formal education, is able to move from the domestic sphere into the public sphere, and gain access to spaces that

were formerly male dominated. Anna's ability to have her own car enhances her mobility around Maa village and beyond. She is both mentally and physically empowered as she is able to reject the domestication of women in her society. When Ole Mugie goes to her father to ask him whether he become engaged to and marry Anna, her father admits that he "cannot for instance tell her who to marry" (*Daughter* 159). Anna Nalangu's exposure to formal education and her ability to acquire things like a car make her the embodiment of a new feminine Maasai identity. Even if she does not engage in male pursuits like travelling in search of pastures or cattle raiding, she travels every day from her home to work at the Maa village and back home. This nomadic status accorded to Anna by the narrator calls for a reconfiguration of Maasai identity and of 'Maasainess' as it is traditionally perceived. Hodgson, in her ethnographic work on the Maasai of Tanzania, observes that "'being Maasai' was configured as a masculine category –'real' Maasai were pastoralists, warriors, and nomads, all of which were perceived as male pursuits" ("Once Intrepid" 13). However, after the exposure to education and the changes that happened within the Maasai community, "today, what it means to be a Maasai in general, and a Maasai man or woman in particular, is significantly different from what it meant even twenty years ago" ("Once Intrepid" 14).

Joseph Ole Malon is regarded as "the illustrious son of Maa" who moved from his society and was exposed to modern education and Western culture before he returned (*Daughter* 1). Paradoxically, while Joseph's education is seen positively and he gets a warm reception back into the community, Anna Nalangu's education is seen as a threat to both Maasai men and women. However, Anna, like Joseph, uses whatever new knowledge she has acquired for the good of her society. The novel thus draws attention to the gendered construction of mobility through the way Seleina, Anna and Joseph are positioned within a society in which men are nomadic while women are domestic. Accordingly, the ideal Maasai man has to be nomadic, demonstrate an ability to go on raiding expeditions and bring more cattle from far-off lands. Joseph, having moved from his society to pursue education and returned with expertise in curing cattle diseases, enhances the pastoralist lifestyle and guarantees its continuity.

Anna's ability to move around in her small car from the base of her own house, without having to ask for permission or consent from a male figure, offers an alternative, female mode of mobility. It is this appropriation of the nomadic that the men in Maa village strive to curb by attempting to make her a wife, an endeavour ridiculed as laughably inappropriate conduct by the elders of the community by Ole Kulet's narrator. For example, Ole Masi has to go to Ole Musalala's homestead under the pretext of calling his wife to go and look after a sick calf, only to steal a glance at Anna.

As the new cultural embodiment, Anna Nalangu's commitment to teaching and empowering the Maasai woman belies her credibility as a good daughter to Ole Rana, her father, but she becomes 'the new daughter of Maa' to her wider community, the Maasai people. Olodalu, the old man who values Anna's contribution to the community and appreciates her integrity, sees that Anna is "dignified in her character" regardless of her modern dress and conduct (*Daughter* 87). Interestingly, the ideal Maa daughter, Seleina Ole Mugie, is defined by her physical appearance and traditional dress as an embodiment of Maasai femininity. Seleina is foregrounded from the beginning of the story by showing how "men travelled from far off villages just to come and have a glimpse" of what the society perceive as the "beauty of Maa" (*Daughter* 5).

The Maa community is facing a new era in history where colonial rule has brought formal education with other beneficial commodities which the Maasai consume, for example the blankets which replaced the ochre-smeared animal hide, drinks such as beer and soda, and even knowledge about cattle diseases and their cure. Within this changing environment, Anna embodies a set of modern values that are potentially useful to the community. It is only Olodalu who gazes at Anna with genuine admiration because he recognises her sincerity and potential (*Daughter* 87). The novel therefore situates him as an exemplary Maasai elder whose appropriate behaviour towards her is an explicit critique of others' inappropriate conduct. While he appreciates the good values of modernity such as education, he tries to correct his

fellow elders from their erring behaviour and their obsessive desire for Anna. In one such instance, Olodalu rebukes Ole Mugie, who “h[as] a desire to seize her, hold her closely or even beat her”, by saying, “when you speak of her keep your lusts harnessed in your loins” (*Daughter* 28, 39).

The narrative consistently portrays how an educated woman can influence society and culture, especially a culture that asserts its resilience. This is because, while the male character’s education affirms his nomadic nature and improves it, the female character’s new knowledge repositions her in the society and gives her a nomadic status which contradicts her societal/patriarchally prescribed obligations as a woman. Despite her new position and status, Anna is still desired by the old men of her society who jostle for the challenge of ‘taming’ her back into the patriarchally defined role of a Maasai wife. Anna, on the other hand, does not seem to pay attention to the impact of her presence in the Maa village. Her hybrid identity makes her exotic and desirable to the men of Maa village. She does not realise how flustering her presence is to this community and her ignorance of the situation makes matters escalate beyond control. Although she is an embodiment of change, the rest of the society has not changed yet. This indicates that the society is ready for cultural modifications and adaptations. The narrator strives to achieve a new definition of ‘Maasainess’ and who the daughter of Maa is by deploying irony that satirizes rigid definitions of ethnic identities.

Cultural modifications and the empowerment of women need to be sensitive to the existing mechanisms through which women garner agency in their society. Although women are generally denied agency in patriarchal societies, older women have access to some form of power. In the Maa village, the old women have influence over their husbands’ decision-making, especially on matters affecting their families. When Ole Mugie begins to show interest in Anna Nalangu, Nalotuesha, his wife, uses her husband’s weakness to manipulate the timing of their daughter Seleina’s marriage (*Daughter* 1). Nalotuesha wants Anna Nalangu to be engaged to her husband as soon as possible so that her daughter will be married by Joseph Malon who is now drawn to Anna Nalangu. By enticing Ole Mugie, Nalotuesha is sure that her daughter’s

welfare is secured. The narrator suggests that there is no fixed position even for women who are not educated despite the fact that this is a patriarchal society. Each woman is experiencing her own battles and triumphs, given the aspects of age, social status and education. Nalotuesha and Ngoto Nanana (who are both elderly women and senior wives) are portrayed as very strong and vocal in the Maa village. These women demonstrate how the elder women and senior wives are often complicit with the patriarchal control of women.

Consequently, the romantic trajectory that the narrative follows introduces rivalry as the plot of the story advances and creates a conflict. Towards the end of the story, Seleina confronts Anna Nalangu in order to rescue her marriage, only to realise that it is Joseph Malon – and other men such as Ole Mugie, her own father, and Richard Lanto – who desire to possess Anna, who has not consented to any of them. All the parameters which determine the continuity of the society have shifted ground and are repositioned. The elders, the culture, the daughter, the father, marriage and *enkaput* are assigned new meanings and positions in a society where identity is defined in masculine terms, and it is women who triumph at the end. In the end, when both Seleina and Anna resist male control, Richard Lanto – Joseph’s best man who is also attracted to Anna Nalangu – asserts “this is a women’s world” (*Daughter* 172). The fathers/elders who had the mandate to make decisions for their daughters now relinquish their role. For instance, Ole Rana, Anna’s father, tells Ole Mugie to seek Anna’s consent before he can engage in an “*Enkaputi*” (*Daughter* 159). Men, who had power to choose women at random for wives, are chased away from Anna’s house after their invasion fails. The “*Enkaputi*,” which is significant in bringing society together, no longer works. For instance, Seleina who was engaged traditionally and officially wedded according to custom, is able to walk away from her in-laws’ home, only a few days after her wedding (*Daughter* 163). The novel thus deconstructs the notion of “*Enkaputi*,” which supposedly creates a “bond between two families rather than the bond between the groom and the bride” who are going to live together for the rest of their lives (*Daughter* 44). Although the crisis could not be

resolved at the end of the narrative, the novel gives insights into ways through which cultural identity and gender identity can be questioned.

Daughter of Maa questions aspects of Maasai gender identity that are often taken for granted and it enables a critical reading of Maasai patriarchal values which undermine female agency. The view that cultural survival is achieved through marital union foregrounded at the beginning of the story is shown to be in need of reassessment, because the female characters realise that they are being exploited by a male-dominated system. Instead, the two women who were positioned as rivals for the love of a man now find solace in friendship with one another. Ole Kulet ends the novel by subverting the conventional romantic closure in marriage because neither of the women gives in to the demands of male domination and lust. Therefore, all the men who were chasing after Seleina and later Anna Nalangu are dismissed from the narrative. While Joseph Malon “disappeared into the darkness”, Ole Mugie “too hurriedly scurried away” and Richard Lanto, who came later, “too disappeared into the darkness” (*Daughter* 172). In a society where women have always been disenfranchised, where men pick them like objects and invade their spaces without any guilt, this ending is both ironic and subversive. The narrative ends triumphantly in its vision of possible challenges to patriarchal hegemony. The three novels that I discuss above have so far focused on how individual men and women negotiate the tensions between upholding Maasai identity and adopting other cultures. In *Blossoms of the Savannah*, Ole Kulet broadens the web in which these tensions emerge to a more contemporary period where families within a broader community are conflicted about adherence to cultural practices which are no longer viable in their socio-economic contexts.

Cultural Transitional Zones in *Blossoms of the Savanna*

Ole Kulet's *Blossoms of the Savanna* received the Jomo Kenyatta Literary Prize in 2009 and in 2011 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) was officially banned in Kenya.¹³ The novel's concern with female 'circumcision'¹⁴ therefore engages directly with public debates about this cultural practice which is seen to define Maasai womanhood in ways that are oppressive and that inscribe gender through an act of violence on the bodies of young girls. In the previous two sections, I have discussed how Ole Kulet employs the bildungsroman and romance as narrative forms to portray the various shifts in embodiments of Maasai gender identity as a consequence of social changes, particularly as played out in the contact zones between Maasai pastoral, nomadic customs and traditions and the impingements of colonial and postcolonial regimes. *Blossoms of the Savannah* focuses on similar tensions by offering an expository account of the Maasai institution known as *Olkukak le Maa* which educates its members through traditional lore, handed down by parents, teachers, elders, initiation ceremonies and mentors. In a dialogic exposition, the narrator shows the positive and negative sides of this culture, emphasizing how time and context validate or obliterate some of these values. As the last in the sequence of four novels discussed in this chapter, this novel shows, through its treatment of FGM, how both men and women must negotiate Maasai cultural norms as they attempt to survive under changing conditions that require adaptation, which also lead to conflict among individuals in Maasai society. *Blossoms of the Savanna* portrays such an identity crisis in a

¹³ See "FGM: Kenya Acts Against Unkindest Cut" by Sarah Boseley's global health blog under *The Guardian*, posted on 8 September 2011.

¹⁴ I use scare quotes to mark the word circumcision when used to refer to female incision because of the fact that female circumcision is not anatomically possible. Although the term is commonly used to refer to female incision and similar blood letting rituals this study steer of from such usage.

contemporary Maasai family which had already been affected by the modern, urban lifestyle where communal ties are no longer strong and people's life choices are dictated by individual choices not community values. I argue that the novel shows how female agency can be mobilized to bring about cultural change by using the same agents used to undermine such agency. Ole Kulet again uses the theme of education to show how the characters re-negotiate new, hybrid identities in relation to the question of belonging and not belonging after their encounter with other cultures.

Blossoms of the Savanna is a story about Persimei Ole Kaelo, his wife Jane Milanoi and their two daughters, Taiyo and Resian. While the novel's main story line traces the growth of the two young women at a transitional zone between traditional cultures and post-colonial hybridity, it also develops a sub-plot that follows Parsimei Ole Kaelo's intensifying traditionalism whose cultural authenticity and allegiance are still gauged through standards by which he runs his home and the choices he makes concerning his marriage and children. This family is cast as a microcosm of an emerging Maasai identity which is in transition. The novel begins in medias res when Ole Kaelo's family is loading trucks with their belongings as they evacuate a flat that they occupied for a couple of years in Nakuru area, where he used to work for Agribix as an agricultural manager, before he is retrenched. Ole Kaelo is prepared to move back to his home village, Nasila, where he has already established a business which sells agricultural supplies. This relocation marks the beginning of a return journey for Ole Kaelo's family. The narrator is silent about the reasons for Ole Kaelo's retrenchment; however, due to his "contentious mind" and "shrewd brain", Ole Kaelo is not shocked by the news of his retrenchment (*Blossoms* 9). As a symbol of cultural transition, it is a gradual uprooting. In parallel, the narrative exposes the contrast that exists between the growth and expectations of Maasai men as opposed to that of Maasai women. Ole Kaelo's daughters have had the benefit of being raised without having to worry about being 'circumcised', a fact that preoccupies other Maasai girls, especially those who live in their ancestral lands such as Nasila. Because they were born in Nakuru, they are saved from the ghost of circumcision, which haunts the girls in Nasila. Contrary to their expectation, Taiyo and Resian, together with their parents,

have a great price to pay in order for them to be reinserted into their ancestral home, Nasila. Female ‘circumcision’ is a requirement for every girl in Nasila tradition. This ritual is used to initiate young girls into womanhood and raises a girl’s chances of getting married. Girls who are not ‘circumcised’ are singled out by the derogatory term *Intoye Nemengalana*, a Maa term which means ‘uncircumcised’ girls.

Nakuru town, which is described as a “melting pot”, is positioned as a symbolic opposite to Nasila, which stands for tradition, goodness and purity (*Blossoms* 6), encapsulated in the Maasai word ‘Nasila’, which means ‘pure’ or ‘clean’. This pairing of opposites by Ole Kulet at a time when his fiction embraces change paradoxically relies on the most common stereotypes attached to the Maasai as a people who are conservative and nostalgic about an unspoilt, noble past existence. The author sets up stereotypical beliefs that the narrative proceeds to question, one being that the Maasai are represented by Nasila tradition which is a pure repository of all tradition, in comparison to the lifestyle represented by Nakuru. Another assumption that comes with this one is that Taiyo and Resian must get married to fellow Maasai who can only be found in Nasila area in order to ensure cultural continuity. The girls are also treated by their father and community at large as people with no agency. The movement from Nakuru to Nasila therefore suggests a process of purification for this family which was immersed in the urban life of Nakuru with its impure traditions. However, the most domestic space that they are going to inhabit is not at all different from their Nakuru home. They discover that their father had built a house in which “all the rooms were a replica of their former house in Nakuru” (*Blossoms* 31). In Ole Kaelo’s family, Nasila brings bad memories and fresh worries to each of them. Jane Milanoi is faced with the reality that her daughters have to be circumcised in order to marry in Nasila. She is reminded of how she used to ignore the comments of women from Nasila whom she considered “busybodies who enjoyed intrusion into other people’s affairs”, but now they may “be the mothers of her would-be sons-in-law” (*Blossoms* 8). She even remembers clearly how they described her daughters as “*Intoye nemengalana*” in contempt (*Blossoms* 8). The status of Ole Kaelo’s daughters becomes what Mama Milanoi calls “a dark spot” as the family moves back to their

ancestral home (*Blossoms* 8). This family did not anticipate the degree of stigma that this status would attract in Nasila. Taiyo and Resian were socialized by the individualist mentality of a mixed culture in Nakuru, only to realise that Nasila is a community that constantly profiles its members through rituals and prescribed ceremonies.

The novel presents resilience as a way of re-visioning cultural indices and traditional values. Through characters like Resian, the narrator demonstrates how some traditional values are no longer viable. Resian is Ole Kaelo's second daughter whom he "detest[s] because he expected his second born to be a boy who "would carry the Kaelo's name to the next generation" (*Blossoms* 10). Resian's behaviour is influenced by her father's attitude towards her and she has grown to be "melanchol[ic]" (*Blossoms* 10). Since Resian is in disfavour with him since childhood, she has no confidence to ask of her father what she desires for her life. Ole Kaelo's attitude towards his children exposes a deeply entrenched gender bias. He is in favour of the male child, celebrating the "traditional favouring of sons", which Carole Boyce Davis and Anne Adams Graves question in *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature* (9). Davis and Graves explain that the African feminism they propagate "respects African woman's status as mother but questions obligatory motherhood and the traditional favouring of sons" (9). Ole Kaelo "felt cheated by nature" after having two girls while he desired "at least three boys" (*Blossoms* 9). Despite the fact that his first born is also a girl, Taiyo, he sees her as "proof of [...] fatherhood" and favours her (*Blossoms* 10). The two girls therefore "occupy separate parts" of their father's heart (*Blossoms* 10), one presenting the feelings of joy celebrating manhood while the other presents scorn, because she embodies his lack of a male heir. Ole Kaelo's exposure to other cultures in Nakuru does not dissuade him from subscribing to Maasai patriarchal ideology, expressed in the preference for sons. Ole Kaelo's passionate and active dislike of his second daughter portrays a value system that imposes pressure upon men to father sons. The patriarchal values of the Maasai community of Nasila inculcate these expectations in its male members which, in Ole Kaelo's case, causes him to undervalue his own daughter, while suffering anxiety at

the perceived failure of his masculinity she represents as female. His community moreover mocks him as “a mono-eyed giant” who “stand[s] on legs of straw” because he “remain[s] married to only one wife,” with only “two daughters” who are ‘uncircumcised’ (*Blossoms* 13). The fear that he experiences when he returns to Nasila is determined by his new context. In Nakuru, Ole Kaelo had no pressure to defend his decision to have only one wife or to refrain from ‘circumcising’ his daughters, but after their move to Nasila, all this changes. In Nakuru, what matters is a good job and the ability to compete in climbing the corporate ladder, whereas in Nasila, it is about integrating into community life through specific rituals such as ‘circumcision’ and polygamy.

Resian’s marginal position and her father’s rejection have made her a resilient fighter for her rights, who must eventually fight for her life and the right to protect herself from being mutilated. She demonstrates her agency through questioning the gendered view that the people around her have about girls. She does not comply with routine chores expected of girls in their house because she prefers to read a book while her sister is busy with chores. She does not want to get married and have children, because she wants to “obtain [her] degree” in veterinary science first before “other peripheral matters such as a husband, children and such may be considered” (*Blossoms* 18). Although her father regards Resian as an “ignorant” and “stupid woman,” whom he likens to “a goat’s kid who refuses to suckle after birth” (*Blossoms* 188, 191, 192), Resian’s self-confidence continues to grow. As a child, she believes that her father will ensure that her dream to go to university will come true, because she does not grasp that he “dislike[s] her with passion” and feels that “the earlier he disposed of her [...] the better” (*Blossoms* 192, 10). When she loses this naivety and confronts the reality of her situation, she is able to retaliate in ways that prove her resilience. For instance, when she later on discovers that Olarinkoi has lied to her and that he is planning with his mother to ‘circumcise’ her and force her into marriage, she successfully pre-empts their plot because she is determined “to resist” and “refuse to be subdued” by the patriarchal values which undermine female agency (*Blossoms* 230).

Taiyo, on the other hand, is gentle, and, although she does not succumb to oppressive traditional values and male chauvinism, she remains subtler in her resistance. Like her sister, she also criticizes some Nasila cultural values but she does so only when they directly affect her happiness. Otherwise, unlike Resian, Taiyo is not quick to see the claws of patriarchy as they advance towards their household. She is awakened to a sense of injustice when her love for Joseph Parmuat – the music and traditional lore mentor her father had appointed – is threatened because of customary constraints on relationships between cousins. Joseph, “ever since he knew that the Kaelos were from the *Ilmolelian* clan and of the *Iloorasha-kineji* sub-clan, like his family [...] considered Ole Kaelo to be his father according to their culture” (*Blossoms* 122). Joseph and Taiyo “have no blood relation but Nasila culture dictates who are related and who are not” (*Blossoms* 134). Taiyo strongly objects to this constraining taboo as she condemns their culture as “oppressive” and “backward” since she feels that it “violates [her] rights” to love the man of her choice (*Blossoms* 132, 134). She is, as a consequence, unafraid to “offend the sensibilities of Nasila” and to “face the consequences of doing so” (*Blossoms* 133). These intermarriage restrictions among members of the same clan are very important among the Maasai. These are not necessarily restrictions to bind women from choosing their spouses, but they were placed to maintain a certain social order. Taiyo construes this resistance to tradition as “a war of liberation of the Nasila woman” when it is apparent that she is motivated by self-interest (*Blossoms* 135).

On the other hand, as wife and mother, Jane Milanoi expresses her agency through revisiting the traditional reservoirs of knowledge to revise the Nasila culture she had grown up in so as to question the current version of it. While Ole Kaelo’s wife seeks critical engagement with her past in order to understand her present, her husband trivializes her as a gift from providence, highlighting her physical features to the exclusion of everything else (*Blossoms* 9). The narrative is critical of the fact that women are denied agency and are reduced to objects of pleasure for male entertainment. Although Ole Kaelo admires his wife’s physical beauty, he does not appreciate or even recognize her ability to reason and take part in the family’s

decision making. Ole Kaelo “over the years [...] had scolded and bullied” his wife “like a half-witted child” (*Blossoms* 29) and he does the same to his daughters. The complete breakdown of Jane Milanoi’s agency occurs after their move to Nasila when she “knew her daughters are now in danger of being circumcised but she has already lost all hope and surrendered the case to fate” (*Blossoms* 30). According to Annie Gagiano, Mama Milanoi’s position is a result of “her entire upbringing” which “has socialised her into wifely submission” because she shows only “a feeble attempt at protesting on behalf of her daughters” (“Blossoms” n.p.). When her intervention fails, “she subsides and promises to comply with the instruction” (n.p.). Apart from wifely submission, conformity to societal expectations is very important for this family and Mama Milanoi sees no other way of escaping that. However, Mama Milanoi’s upbringing reveals more than just conformity to a male-dominated order. She laments that their culture has now “become mutable and it now contained defiant mutants that it could not regulate and which were above Nasila laws” (*Blossoms* 118). According to her, this cultural pollution and mutation are a result of both cultural hybridity and individuals’ own appropriation of new values. This appropriation of values results from a process of negotiation of cultural identity and new identity and ambivalence about traditional values. These “defiant mutants” consist of the likes of Resian and the extortionist Oloisudori, Ole Kaelo’s business partner, each representing a particular kind of challenge to the Nasila tradition. While Resian is powerless, her resilience allows her to question some Maa values that she finds oppressive. Oloisudori, on the other hand, is powerful and uses his material wealth to undermine men, women and the authority of his cultural values. His financial strength allows him to force his friends’ daughters into marriage without seeking their fathers’ consent through the usual *enkaputi* procedure that we see in *Daughter of Maa*. Ole Kaelo, “like an animal that was unable to free itself from a snare,” had been forewarned by his mentor, Ole Supeyo, against his business partner, who defrauds him (*Blossoms* 119). Oloisudori consolidates his patriarchal power through illegal hoarding of wealth and extortion, which he then uses to trap other men into his web.

The narrative also shows examples of negative female agency in portraying older women's perpetuation of patriarchal oppression of young women. Olarinkoi's mother, Resian's supposed future mother-in-law, reveals to her that she is not yet woman enough for her son until they "clip that erogenous salacity from [her] that destroys homes, [when she] will become a respected woman" (*Blossoms* 229). By implication, this means that for a woman to be identified as Maasai, she must undergo 'female circumcision'. While men's initiation into becoming warriors is associated with bravery and pride, 'female circumcision' is a way of curtailing a woman's sexuality and placing her body in service to patriarchy through compulsory marriage and motherhood. The fact that those who are not circumcised are treated with contempt and stereotypically referred to as *intoye nemengalana* suggests an agreed rule among the Maasai that women should be 'circumcised' to gain respect and acceptance. This resonates with how this society calibrates its members' identities according to rigidly defined gender roles. For example, Taiyo and Resian are assaulted by two men because they have not been circumcised and hence do not belong in Nasila, according to conventional views, which place them outside customary protection.

Although the narrator gives historical and contextual justification for some traditional practices such as FGM, he is also critical of them. Ole Kulet's culturally sensitive voice in condemning FGM lauds him as a social thinker and reformer. In Chimalum Nwankwo's words, Ole Kulet claims "whether it made sense in the past remains debatable within the parameters of specific social and moral circumstances, but because we live in the present, we must concern ourselves with present day realities" (221). This position is expressed through ways in which some of the characters are disturbed by how cultural values are used as excuses for male dominance and exploitation of women. Jane Milanoi recognizes the greed that underpins selfish appropriations of Maasai cultural practices. She knows that, had it not been for her husband's complicity, Oloisudori Loonkiyaa's conduct towards her daughters would have been considered punishable according to Maa standards. She astutely observes that her husband blames their culture while it is not actually Maasai culture but a "defiled and polluted" version of Maasai culture with which he is compliant

(*Blossoms* 118). Ole Kaelo's character demonstrates that there is a high degree of personal agency in cultural adaptation because one is able to select and ignore aspects of cultural exchange. In this case, Ole Kaelo, Ole Supeyo, his mentor, and Oloisudori seem to have selected different aspects of modernity and they are translating them differently. The demands imposed by Oloisudori on the Kaelo family, that is to circumcise their daughters and give them to him, are presented under the guise of Maasai custom, but they are in fact entirely self-interested and based on his own sexual desires and greed. One of the customs which the extortionist Oloisudori appropriates is his demand that Ole Kaelo should 'circumcise' his daughters before he marries one and gives the other to his friend. Olarinkoi's mother tells Resian that "it is a pity that we now have to do what Ole Kaelo ought to have done long time ago. Anyway, Maa culture will soon judge him harshly" (*Blossoms* 229).

Indeed, Ole Kaelo is already judged harshly by patriarchal expectations from his community. The fact that he returns to the village as a result of retrenchment not choice renders him vulnerable to extortionists like Oloisudori. Moreover, Kaelo's capitulation to Nasila pressure is partly related to anxiety resulting from his failure to live up to the expectations of Maasai masculinity, especially as a subject who acquired modern education and secured a good job. Societal expectations of him are high, even higher than Lerionka and Livingstone's societies.

The myth of female 'circumcision' is related to the daughters of Ole Kaelo by Joseph, their music teacher and tradition mentor. 'Circumcision', we learn in the narrative, was initiated by women about two centuries ago to resist sexual exploitation but, ironically, men have appropriated it as a weapon to "dehorn" women whom they consider "an otherwise wild gender" (*Blossoms* 22). If women were able to institute female circumcision as a way of "curtail[ing] desires [of] worthless predators", then it is clear that Maasai women are not totally disenfranchised (*Blossoms* 90). This is proof that women had some form of power in the traditional system, for example their mandate to dispense punishment to old men who attempt to have sexual relations with young children (*Blossoms* 115). The narrative documents how women could mobilize

others to punish and even kill a man who seduces a young girl, the age of his own daughter (*Blossoms* 116). It should be possible for the same Nasila women to gang up and punish Oloisudori for his “deplorable manners” towards Resian, but this is no longer possible (*Blossoms* 99). Mama Milanoi’s hope for a resurgence of Nasila culture is disappointed because it is like the polluted water of the Nasila River, which will soon “[begin] to sicken and kill” because of human activities that have polluted the once clean and pure water (*Blossoms* 117). Mama Milanoi and her family are not exempted from the pollution. It is her husband’s greed for more wealth that has trapped them in Oloisudori’s snare. When she solicits help from her sisters in law, they compare her and her husband to a “proverbial greedy hyena that straddled two parallel paths with the ridiculous intention of reaching two destinations simultaneously so as not to miss the meals in either places” (*Blossoms* 145). The women elders feel that Ole Kaelo’s family is “being aloof and selective on the aspects of Nasila culture” that “they chose to interact with” (*Blossoms* 145). However, culture is practised through choice because even the decision of the women elders to refuse to intervene for the daughters of Ole Kaelo is a matter of choice because their culture seems to give them such a mandate, hence the decision by Mama Milanoi to consult them.

The significance of the ‘circumcision’ myth in this novel is not only to trace the origin of this practice but also to expose the power that the Maasai women have in controlling societal order. This myth places the blame on women for bringing the calamity of ‘circumcision’ to their own kind, and points to the fact that no significant change can be effected without women deciding to use their power to condemn such practices. Taiyo and Resian, in their attempts to evaluate their traditional customs, pinpoint some of the areas which need to be modified. This is implicitly shown through the three blind mice identified by Taiyo in the narrative. The three mice are all women, *Enkasakutoni*, *Enkaitoyoni* and *Enkamuratani*. These three offices are held by women who perform various roles in undermining women in Maasai society: the *Enkasakutoni* curses the ‘uncircumcised’, the *Enkaitoyoni* or midwife spies out the ‘uncircumcised’ during her services and the *Enkamuratani* performs

‘circumcision’ (*Blossoms* 153). If these women’s eyes would open to the change that is happening in the world, Nasila tradition would also change because it is these three offices headed by women that “oppress the women folk” (*Blossoms* 153). However, the narrator shows that the new generation usurps the power of the older generation and uses it to bring about change. *Minik ene Nkoitoi*, the educated Maasai woman who runs a mission to rescue girls from the circumciser’s knife, is aware of the power of the Maasai woman and uses her education to bring about change in the society. She decides to face patriarchy by rescuing girls who are about to be ‘circumcised’. She is supported by Resian and Taiyo, who are determined to change their fate through a serious pursuit of education. They see Minik as their role model and they are determined to “shade off” cultural “aspects that become irrelevant with time”; these include “F.G.M and the clan system” (*Blossoms* 128). Nabaru, the nurse who takes care of Resian after her assault by Olarinkoi, also challenges the old order. Although she is old, she sees the need to adapt to change and discard oppressive or simply painful acts. After all, if this practice was instituted by women against men, as the myth suggests, then why do men seem to enforce it for their own purposes? The answer to the question is likely to be male fear of female sexuality, which they imagine they can control through the excision of the clitoris.

Female ‘circumcision’ features in Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s novel *The River Between*, a precursor to Ole Kulet’s novel, in dealing with the question of female genital mutilation. Although Ngugi uses female ‘circumcision’ as an act of resistance to enculturation and imposition of Christian values during colonial contact, he still questions its logic. Tobe Levin, in reading Ngugi’s *The River Between*, observes that “without removal of the clitoris, without ‘purity’, it is assumed that female sexual energy would threaten the tribe with destruction” (211). This echoes what Olarinkoi’s mother tells Resian: “as soon as we clip that erogenous salacity from you that destroys homes, you will become a respected woman worthy to be called” a wife (*Blossoms* 229). It seems that in societies where women are ‘circumcised’, there is a strong belief that it is a cleansing ritual. This notion of cleansing accords with many cultures’ perceptions of women’s sexual and reproductive bodies as contaminating;

and often in need of cleaning and control. Ole Kulet's inclusion in the novel of the myth that women instituted female 'circumcision' draws attention to how it has been appropriated to serve patriarchal control of women, with which women themselves have become complicit. Consequently, the Maasai woman is seen as a powerful agent who can effect change because she is at the centre of the implementation of oppressive acts such as 'circumcision' as both an executor and victim of the act.

The violation of cultural practices through individual choice is seen not only among the young generation but also the older one. Ole Kaelo who is also a product of colonial formal education demonstrates how his personal choices contradict his society's expectations of him. Ole Kaelo's failure to use his education to succeed in business instead of relying on an extortionist who then jeopardizes his life and that of his family is reminiscent of the failures of modern education and the individual's feelings of nostalgia. Education was seen as the key to success, but Ole Kaelo is retrenched despite his hard work. As Khwezi Mkhize, in "Carrying the Cross: Isaac William(s) Wauchope's *Ingacamango Ebunzimeni*", observes, this is a "failure of European modernity to live up to its promises and fully enfranchise Africans" (20). Although Ole Kaelo has demonstrated significant advancement after his successful acquisition of colonial education, the failure to completely reconcile traditional aspects of culture with modern lifestyles often brings the feelings of nostalgia for a prior cultural world and its values. The only available solution for Ole Kaelo is to return to his homeland where he believes there is hope. This return to the Nasila tradition reflects the notions that the Maasai culture is purer, better and nobler than other cultures; yet that culture has by now been compromised by forms of greed and abuse of power enacted by extortionists such as Oloisudori. Furthermore, his behaviour reveals that whatever he acquired from his interaction with other cultures has transformed his values, and desire for material wealth seems to override everything else. Nakuru, as symbolic of a multicultural space, has created for him a different form of barbarity, not "Maasai ignorance" or "noble savagery", but a desire for material wealth.

Conclusion

The four novels discussed in this chapter represent Ole Kulet's oeuvre which is invested in representing the Maasai and their culture through fiction. The novels portray 'Maasainess' at four different historical "contact zones" between Maasai traditional values and colonial education and its postcolonial variants. The first two novels form a unit, which takes its narrative strategy from the bildungsroman. In these novels, pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial experiences of the Maasai and their contact with Europeans and other non-Maasai people in Kenya and Tanzania are portrayed. The two texts highlight the forced integration of Maasai individuals into the colonial education system which imposed on this community new limitations and expectations which were often in conflict with their traditional ways of knowing and doing. This conflict creates an ambivalence within the characters and their societies, especially when both modern values and traditional values fail to allow for flexibility. The most difficult situation to negotiate is when modern values undermine indigenous knowledge systems and criminalise its ways of living. Although the first novel portrays a peaceful return to and reconciliation with the homeland, the second novel reveals the clash of cultures that requires a careful negotiation between an individual and the society. The two cultures are seen as standing in opposition with each other rather than as complementing one another. The third novel, *Daughter of Maa*, is a romance which portrays Maasai women who are empowered and their place in society is illuminated. This text also reveals oppressive patriarchal practices such as domestication of women and polygamy. In this novel, Kulet subverts the idea that women are subordinates and that their position in society depends on men. One of the protagonists, Anna Nalangu, is used as a catalyst for the community's reassessment of its values. Her presence in the Maa village causes the community members to question some of their views about women. Contrary to the characterization in *Is It Possible* where women are mentioned only in terms of their relational roles as daughters, wives and mothers, in this narrative each woman has a name and a role to play. In *Blossoms of the Savanna*, which is set at the latest phase of contact during the postcolonial/post-independence period, Ole Kulet takes us back to oppressive Maasai

rituals such as ‘circumcision’ of women, forced marriages and polygamy. In this novel, the author takes the reader through a dialectical engagement with Maasai culture which justifies the span of his project as he tackles one issue after the other. Fiction allows him to evaluate and critique his culture while at the same time maintaining the view that cultures are not static, but dynamic. It is indeed a process of negotiation and reconciliation. *Blossoms of the Savanna* reveals that it is not only Maasai culture that oppresses people but individual traits such as greed and promiscuity that can be harmful to others in the society. For instance, Oloisudori’s intention to marry Resian and give Taiyo to his friend after they have undergone female circumcision is a perversion of Maasai rituals. This is driven by a personal desire to marry more women. The four novels portray Maasai individuals’ ambivalent attempts to maintain their Maasai identity while embracing aspects of colonial modernity. These novels also enable the reader to mediate Maasai society with keen focus on specific traditional customs which are important in forging Maasai identity but are attained at a high cost. Rituals such as female circumcision, forced or arranged marriages and emphasis on dominant Maasai masculinity are highlighted by these narratives. In its portrayal and critique of aspects of ‘Maasainess’ from the perspective of a Maasai author, Ole Kulet’s fiction presents an important archive which this thesis adopts as its point of departure for further exploration of the complexities of Maasai identity and configurations in literary and visual imaginaries.

CHAPTER THREE: Forging the Autobiographical Self: ‘Maasainess’ and the Warrior Trope

Expanding on the discussion of the autobiographical underpinnings of Ole Kulet’s fiction in the previous chapter, this chapter will work towards establishing the different ways in which the stereotype of the Maasai as male warrior is used in constructions of autobiographical subjectivities in two Maasai-authored texts: Tepilit Ole Saitoti’s *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior* (1986), Joseph Lemasolai Lekuton’s *Facing the Lion: Growing up on the Savanna* (2003) – and two non-Maasai women’s texts: Corinne Hofmann’s *The White Maasai: My Exotic Tale of Love and Adventure* (2010), and Mindy Budgor’s *Warrior Princess: My Quest to Become the First Female Warrior* (2013). The focus here is on the ways in which autobiographical subjects gain agency to fashion their identity through acts of cultural translation and cultural appropriation by embodying ‘Maasainess’ through the warrior trope. I will further explore the ways through which each author uses a particular version of ‘warriorhood’ to forge their autobiographical self/voice. Two of the autobiographies are written by male Maasai authors who were motivated by their move to the West to narrate their histories and the other two are written by a female Swiss-German author and a female American author respectively, who move from the West to stay with the Maasai as a way of gaining a voice with which to write their story. The autobiographies in this chapter exhibit the salient features of what Pratt calls “survival literature” (20). The four books as a whole represent the two sides of the same coin, namely “hardship and danger on the one hand, and marvels and curiosities on the other” (Pratt 20). Hofmann’s and Budgor’s books open up new possibilities for postcolonial travel writing by white women who account for their survival experiences in Africa, while Saitoti’s and Lekuton’s accounts elaborate their curiosity and astonishment during their travels to Europe and America. As a result, two distinct genres emerge here, namely “ethnographic” and “autoethnographic” autobiographies. Pratt explains that “autoethnography” or “autoethnographic expression” refers to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer’s terms” (9). She notes that, “if ethnographic texts are a

means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are texts the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations” (9). The gender of the authors is central to my discussion of the warrior trope which is appropriated by the Maasai authors to reconfigure their masculine identities, whereas the desire for the male warrior figure and male warriorhood informs the self-construction of the two female writers. ‘Maasainess’ thus emerges as almost exclusively attached to the male body, which is celebrated and desired for its resilience and beauty.

In the discussion on Ole Kulet’s novels in chapter two, I demonstrated how his autobiographically inflected texts draw from his own history and cultural background to portray the shifting constructions of Maasai identity and to imaginatively engage with discourses that construct stereotypes of the Maasai through accounts of lived experiences. While the characters in Ole Kulet’s texts negotiate their cultural identity within a local matrix and navigate a cultural collective, that is East African society, the autobiographical subjects studied in this chapter are Kenyan, Tanzanian, American and Swiss-German individuals who negotiate their identity through the reconstruction of self within and beyond their local cultures. I will read and critique the ways through which these four autobiographies appropriate and reconstruct the image of the Maasai warrior as an identity index in self-narration. This discussion will further question the use of the term ‘warrior’ in these narratives to supposedly construct or gesture towards a construction of a collective Maasai identity.

Tourism has become pivotal in the expression of modernity and civilization in Africa and globally where people increasingly subscribe to the global trends of consumption of leisure through travel. While tourism is packaged and consumed both in Africa and in many other parts of the world, not many accounts attain the discursive quality that African touristic experiences have continued to achieve. Grace Musila’s observation that Africa has the ability to allow a double-sided representation of itself as both “the tourist’s paradise, boasting a range of wildlife, spectacular landscapes and exotic cultural practices [...], and the crisis-ridden jungle teeming with disease, poverty,

violence and corruption, epitomized by the failed postcolonial state” is resonant in this context (163). This double-sidedness of the continent, a mixture of danger and adventure, explains why Africa continues to be written about mainly through the window of the leisure industry. In “White Man’s Country: Kenya Colony and the Making of a Myth”, Will Jackson notes that “[a]s decolonisation restored Africa to Africans, erstwhile settlers needed a new rationale to justify their continued hold over what was left of their former great estates. From settler farms, Safari parks emerged, the conservation of nature replacing the trusteeship of ‘backward races’ as the white man’s rationale” (355). In essence, Jackson shows how tourism, as lucrative as it may seem in the eyes of the postcolonial African state and its political elite, is simply a replacement of colonial settler economy. These sentiments can be justified by a keen exploration of the angles of intersection between the narrative of colonialism and that of postcolonial tourism. Rob Nixon astutely elaborates in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* how in the South African context “ancestral history [is] territorially dislodged by game lodges and other conservation projects [...] created under the banner of wildlife conservation” (182). Another major slant of such similarities is the gaze that is at work both in settler narratives and tourism narratives. This gaze is often cast upon the African landscape and wildlife. The African is always an appendage to these two, especially cast as the native or the exotic or as the perpetrator of environmental hazards. A recent example to illustrate these arguments is the nature documentary *Wild Nairobi* (2012) in which the domestic animal and its human patron must fight for existence in a “wild Nairobi” landscape. In this documentary, there is footage of Nairobians who are negotiating their survival through a semi jungle that is time and again invaded by wild animals. The pastoralist Maasai, on the other hand, have to be vigilant against menacing lions who prowl around to devour their cattle. The proximity between the wild and the Maasai in East Africa creates the contexts for the visibility of the Maasai which further generates paradoxical images of the Maasai relationship with the wild animals. It is from such contexts that the authors of these autobiographies, either as Maasai pastoralists, Maasai rangers or Euro-American tourists, find their points of departure into narrative constructions of ‘Maasainess’.

In the introduction to Saitoti's *The Worlds of the Maasai Warrior*, John Galaty writes that “[a] virtual cult of warriorhood lies at the heart of the Maasai age set system”, and that “[a]s ‘warriors,’ a figurative translation of *Ilmurran* (literally, ‘the circumcised’), young men enjoy certain privileges and incur certain obligations” (xix).¹⁵ In simpler terms, warriorhood comprises a period of transition from teenagehood to adulthood. In the autobiographies by the two male Maasai authors, *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior*, and *Facing the Lion: Growing Up Maasai on the African Savanna*, the construction of the autobiographical self consistently relies on the warrior trope of ‘Maasainess’ as essentially masculine. The term ‘warrior’ has been deployed in both colonial accounts and contemporary narratives as a metaphor for what it means to be a Maasai. The term has become a commonplace to the extent that both its gendered aspect and temporal dimension are taken for granted so that it has become metonymic of Maasai identity in general as opposed to a particular reference to an age-specific Maasai male. This generalisation often leads to the stereotype that a Maasai is a male warrior. However, behind such a trope is a complex politics of identity, which is fluid and heterogeneous. Both Ole Saitoti and Lekuton are Maasai but from different geographical locations. Tepilit Ole Saitoti is a Tanzanian Maasai of the *Kisongo* section, from Albalbal, a village between Serengeti and Ngorongoro, while Joseph Lemmasolai Lekuton is a Kenyan Maasai from Northern Kenya, from the *Ariaal* section of the Maasai. These two autobiographies are paired in the first section of this chapter because both of them perform what Simon Gikandi calls “acts of cultural translation and negotiation”, by which he means “the movement of the African subjects through [...] the anatomy of colonialism and their meticulous translation of colonial culture into the idiom of self-making” (357). Although Gikandi

¹⁵ The word Moran which is used in different texts that are cited in this work is an anglicised Maa word, *Murran* which means a warrior and *Ilmurran* for plural.

makes these observations with specific reference to Jomo Kenyatta; these remarks are equally relevant to understanding Saitoti and Lekuton's life stories. Having been mission schooled and baptized, both authors face an ambivalence of sorts in navigating European and American cultures while negotiating their 'Maasainess'. Both authors are characterized by privilege as males and as warriors who exercise a greater degree of mobility, or what I refer to as nomadicity, as compared to the Maasai woman whose sphere of influence is often limited to the home. Saitoti and Lekuton were enrolled in the colonial school systems while most of their female counterparts were not – with the exception of women like Anna Nalangu in the previous chapter – and they are able to seamlessly move from Kenya and Tanzania to Germany and the United States for further studies.

The Cultural Nomad in Saitoti's *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior* and Lekuton's *Facing the Lion: Growing Up Maasai on the African Savanna*

The term 'warrior', although widely appropriated to denote the Maasai male, has a specific meaning in the Maasai context. A warrior is a young man who is initiated through circumcision into manhood and has undergone training for the defence of his community. This training includes seclusion in a warrior village or *Manyatta* in Maa where warriors are given time to create bonds amongst themselves and occasionally retreat for meat camps which are essential in building their physical strength. In the previous chapter, I discussed how colonial education disrupted Ole Kulet's protagonists' transition to adulthood when Lerionka and Leshao are forced to adopt a new template of becoming men and abandon moranhood. Conversely, in independent Tanzania and Kenya, Ole Saitoti and Lekuton do not face the same ambivalence regarding initiation and warriorhood as Lerionka and Leshao. Ole Saitoti for instance only undergoes circumcision at eighteen when he completes his grade eight examinations; and only engages in warriorhood for one year after which he finds a job as a park ranger at the Serengeti National Park where he would meet the National Geographic crew with whom they film *The Man of Serengeti* (65, 81, 101). Similarly, Lekuton is circumcised after he completes his primary education (75). Ole Saitoti's

fervour to further his education takes him to Nairobi where he learns how to drive and while waiting for a driving job, he writes to his German friends who invite him to Munich to learn German and work for them at a Travel Bureau they wish to open in Nairobi (102-103). The National Geographic film crew invites Ole Saitoti to “work on the narration of the film and to advise the scriptwriter” just before he could return to Nairobi to start working (110). In America, the film offers him an opportunity to educate the American people about Maasai culture through lectures in different avenues. It is through these lectures that he meets John Blackwell, a man who introduces him to the Emerson College where he pursues his first degree.

Ole Saitoti and Lekuton deploy the word warrior to denote their own Maasai identity as males, but also as a metaphor to symbolize their bravery and resilience even in other contexts like America where they go for further studies. Their formal schooling, work and travel overseas transform them into hybrid warriors, who are removed from the context of warriorhood but still deploy the potentiality of warriorhood such as resilience and bravery to survive in a foreign land. This transfer of warrior resilience can be perceived as what Gikandi calls “acts of cultural translation” because the authors rehearse warriorhood in America through teaching, narrating and tour guiding. Ole Saitoti’s story draws the connections between warrior resilience and academic rigour as follows:

In a way I was repeating the night of initiation I had gone through. College was similar to treading the rigorous path of achieving manhood in Maasailand. I compared where I was to where I had come from. I had underestimated the loneliness of one who leaves behind his home, people, and culture. (129)

The above words first suggest the centrality of initiation into adulthood as a precursor for maturity and bravery among the Maasai and an instance of the nomadicity of ‘Maasainess’ whose attributes travel to different contexts and cultures. The metaphorical implications of the privileges of the male Maasai as a warrior manifest through the ability to use cultural experiences as navigational tools into other cultures. It is this warriorhood that would later motivate their collaboration with the National

Geographic Society which offers a platform for cultural performance. While Ole Saitoti becomes the subject of two documentaries, the Society publishes Lekuton's book, all of which fall under their main goal, to educate.

The National Geographic Society was founded on January 27, 1888, by a group of 33 men, including geographers, explorers, teachers, lawyers, cartographers, military officers and financiers, in Washington, D.C., for "the increase and diffusion of geographic knowledge".¹⁶ Nine months after its inception, the society published its first issue of the still popular *National Geographic* magazine, known for its striking photographic illustrations. While scientifically motivated, the magazine, as Stephanie Hawkins points out, was informed by imperialist ideologies in "portraying geography as the 'epic story' of human progress and producing iconic images of ordinary folk as well as of the savage and the culturally exotic," derived from the colonial imperative to map and lay claim to territory (64). Its founding only four years after the Berlin conference, an end result of earlier scientific exploration, geographical mapping and occupation, suggests the Society's articulation with imperialism. It remains influential in its portrayal of exotic places and peoples, such as the Maasai who are emblematic of the noble savage stereotype. In many ways similar to the gaze on Africans endorsed by the tourism industry, these images and narratives "invite Americans [and others] to project themselves in imagination into distant places around the globe," as Hawkins points out (24).

In this context, Ole Saitoti's and Lekuton's collaborations with the National Geographic Society and the subsequent production of their autobiographical accounts can be read as what Hawkins refers to as "cultural performances [or] restagings of

¹⁶ Authored by History.com staff under the title, "National Geographic Society Founded."

social behaviors, which are ‘framed’ or put on public display” (6). While Hawkins notes the *National Geographic* magazine’s potential to frame and display different cultures, this motive aligns with the National Geographic Society itself (6). A case in point is the 1985 photograph of an Afghan girl, Sharbat Gula, taken at the war-torn Afghanistan border, whose terrified green eyes became iconic on the magazine and subsequent appropriations of the photograph in American media. Hawkins maintains “there is no better example of this performative cultural framing than the ironic use of *National Geographic*’s iconic yellow frame” (6). Ole Saitoti’s and Lekuton’s use of the National Geographic as a platform for cultural translation becomes subversive in that they actively turn away from the framed meanings of ‘Maasainess’ as they take up the role to educate the American audiences through documentary, lectures, and autobiographies. However, contrary to Sharbat Gula who is absent when her image is circulated, commodified and reappropriated, Saitoti and Lekuton are present to engage with their audiences in translating their culture as well as mediating cultural differences. Their agency in rehearsing their culture through the Society’s framework inverts the gaze of the yellow symbolic frame of the *National Geographic*’s magazine.

The inscription of the word ‘Maasai’ in the titles of the two autobiographies signposts what is to be read and by which audience. This invocation, according to Gerald Genette, “perform[s] an illocutionary act” (11) instructive to the reader to form meaning in a particular way. I argue that the titles are porous “thresholds” because of their use of cultural makers, such as the terms “Maasai” and “warrior”, that frame the texts for certain interlocutors and predetermine their interpretation. Lekuton’s title situates him at the East African “Savannah” which Galaty describes as “the transition zone between Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania” (in Saitoti xiii) when contextualizing Ole Saitoti’s autobiography. In Galaty’s view, Saitoti and Lekuton are writing from the same place except for the fact that “Europeans in a distant land, rearranging the map of Africa, drew a line from Lake Victoria to the Indian [Ocean] – [a] straight line except where it curved around mount Kilimanjaro – which divided the British from the German sphere of influence” (*The Worlds* xiii). This divide “creat[ed] [a] boundary between the [sic] Kenya and Tanzania [of] today” and partly explains the

geographic dispersion of the Maasai and the minority that they have become today (in Saitoti xiii). This imposed cartography is responsible for the displacement of the Maasai who became marginalised in the region.

Ole Saitoti's and Lekuton's autobiographies are in this context educative tools to their Western audiences. By teaching them about Maasai identity and culture; these narratives convey complex images of the Maasai which counteract simplistic stereotypes. However, they also participate in the production and circulation of conventional views of the Maasai, especially in co-opting the warrior trope and foregrounding its traits in their narratives. The two authors, as autobiographical subjects, have become subjects of identity reconstruction and cultural translation through the privilege they gain at the cultural "contact zones", namely Western education, travel and tourism. Linda Anderson's view that autobiographical writers "try to endow [their] inscription within the text with all the attributes of a face in order to mask or conceal [their] own fictionalization or displacement by writing" is relevant in this context (13). The autobiographical genre for the two authors becomes a site for alternative cultural mediations and a way through which new cultural configurations are imagined.

Ole Saitoti was born in 1949 to Maasai parents in Olbalbal, Ngorongoro district. He attended the Ngorongoro Bush School and Endulen Native Authority Primary School, both of which are marked by the derogatory naming of the outgoing colonial government. The eight years of primary education cultivated in him a desire for learning and an eagerness to proceed to secondary school after grade eight. In the early sixties, secondary schools were few in Tanzania and highly competitive; Ole Saitoti was among the unfortunate ones who were unable to secure a place in secondary school. He joined Serengeti National Park as a ranger under Myles Turner, a Kenyan-born white "hunter turned game warden" to whom he occasionally offered translation services (Kiswahili to English) of memoranda from the government (95). After working for one year, he was transferred to the remote Lobo, a move he considered a demotion. Ruminating over the possibilities to further his education, Ole

Saitoti went to Nairobi for driving training so that he could work as a park guide. According to Salazar, “among the first Maasai to acquire international celebrity status was Tanzania’s Tepilit Ole Saitoti, who appeared in a National Geographic Documentary, titled *Man of the Serengeti* (1972), about his work as a game warden in the Serengeti National Park” (54). Ole Saitoti’s world became wider when he was invited to Germany to learn German in order to work as a receptionist for a travel bureau. However, in a sudden twist of events, Ole Saitoti flew to America and worked for the final production of the aforementioned documentary, its publicity and study for the next few years.

In his preface to *Worlds of a Maasai Warrior*, Galaty notes: “For Saitoti, the volume is one possible writing of himself, as the person between worlds” (in Saitoti xxii). Galaty here situates Saitoti in the multiple spaces from which this life story is experienced and told. At Endulen Native Authority Primary School, Ole Saitoti read Rider Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* and *Allan Quatermain* which inspired him to become a writer. I read this desire to write through the autobiographical genre as a deliberate strategy to construct a corrective voice to counter the distorted portrayals that stories like Haggard’s propagated about the Maasai. This initiative is also parallel with Chinua Achebe’s decision to ‘correct’ European texts’ representations of Nigerians in his novels, particularly *Things Fall Apart*. Writing back to empire, Ole Saitoti becomes an autoethnographer, because, as Galaty suggests, he “begins where most ethnographies stop with the lives of those for whom culture is a horizon of perception and experience rather than an object of study and reflection” (in Saitoti xiv). While his first degree equipped him to attain his dream, “to write about [his] people and their culture”, he hoped his second degree would enable him to “solve [his people’s] ecological problems”, notably the scramble “for limited resources” which they share with wild animals (131). These problems are familiar to Ole Saitoti who is closely acquainted with the predicaments of nomadic pastoralism in the African savannah (known for its abundance of wildlife) where he began grazing at age six, and later explored it as a warrior-cum-ranger. His other accolades include a co-published photographic book titled *Maasai* (1981) with Carol Beckwith, which was

listed for the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award. His autobiography, *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior* (1988), is the most articulate in responding to calls such as Achebe's for Africans to “[contribute] to a definition of themselves, writing ourselves and our stories into history” (in Adesanmi v).

The retrospective narrative recounts the life of a young nomad boy who grew up to become a warrior and subsequently a park ranger and tourist guide in the Serengeti. In the introduction to the text, Galaty explains that “only after circumcision does a young man gain the honor of calling himself ‘son of so-and-so’” (xvii). Before his circumcision, the narrator’s father’s voice is strong and unmediated in the story. It is only after graduation and circumcision that his father retracts because the boy can now make decisions and the father admits that he can no longer advise him because he has never gone the path of formal education. It becomes the role of other authorities such as teachers and mentors like Galaty to guide Ole Saitoti. Galaty’s preface to Ole Saitoti’s autobiography is an example of a recurrent paratext to the life stories of African subjects at various cultural contact zones, who are often beneficiaries of Northern patronage. For example, child soldier memoirs feature similar framing voices, mostly as forewords or co-authors.¹⁷ As an anthropologist, Galaty then finds it imperative to situate Ole Saitoti both geographically and ethnographically, mapping the multiple cartographies, both symbolic and actual,

¹⁷ Some of African child soldier narratives are co-authored by victims and patrons, for example, *The Bite of the Mango* (2008), which Mariatu Kamara co-authors with Susan McClelland, while Senait Mehari acknowledges the help of Lukas Lessing in writing her story titled *Heart of Fire* (2004). Others are authored by a different person apart from the victim for example Dave Eggers’s *What is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng* (2006); *Girl Soldier: A Story of Hope for Northern Uganda’s Children* (2007) by Grace Akallo and Faith J.H. Mc Donnell and others are authored by the victims but bear a preface, foreword or afterword from someone who most probably witnessed the escape or facilitated the rescue of the victim for example Jamala Safari’s *The Great Agony and Pure Laughter of the Gods* (2012) with a foreword by Elizabeth Mary Lanzi Mazzachini, who is a refugee rights activist.

which define a nomadic identity in East Africa. Ole Saitoti becomes a full nomad in a metaphorical sense as he travels to Nairobi without his father's consent and later overseas in the faith that he would always return home.

The circumstances of Ole Saitoti's birth invite a close scrutiny, especially when read in view of his own father's genealogy and against African feminists' main concerns regarding women and motherhood. I present two cases, Ole Saitoti's birth and his own father's, in order to fathom Maasai paradoxes regarding hegemonic masculinity and how familial relationships are organised on the one hand, while also revealing a traditional template of remedies to social problems, such as infertility. These traditional mechanisms seem to nod to modern medical solutions to biological problems such as in vitro fertilization and gestational surrogacy. In the first instance, Ole Saitoti's grandfather, Ngorishet, had two wives; one of them bore ten children who all died, while the other wife's children are unmentioned. Ngorishet then "asked his elder half-brother Moporo Olengiyaa to beget him sons because he had proved failure, and his brother did so without hesitation" (3). The second instance is when Ole Saitoti's father gives one of his wives to Ole Pesai his friend and, "as a result of this arrangement, [Ole Saitoti] came into the world" (6). Ole Saitoti explains that, "by Maasai tradition, Lemeikoki [Saitoti] is my father by law, having been the husband of my mother. But Olepesai was considered my biological father" (6). Despite the fact that Ole Saitoti was born of Olepesai, he belongs to his legal father, Saitoti, whose name he bears in the same way that Saitoti regarded Ngorishet as father while he was born of Olengiyaa, his uncle.

In Maasai society, like other African societies, children are adopted through various other ways such as raiding expeditions and conquest of other tribes. While this challenges notions of Maasai homogeneity and even the myth of single origin descendants of one ancestor, it is not a sustainable means of having children. Taking the first instance, in which Ole Saitoti is fathered by Olepesai despite his legal father's fertility as he fathers other children, raises important questions about how Maasai masculinity is formed and consequently performed. While Olepesai's position as a

man is obviously of lesser ranking due to the fact that he does not have his own family or material wealth but is attached to Saitoti, his friendship and belonging to this family are sealed through Saitoti's mother. A possible reading of this situation is to view the arrangements as the exchange of women among men, which calls for a reflection on Gayle Rubin's theory on *The Traffic in Women*. Rubin observes that "the relations of such a system are such that women are in no position to realize the benefits of their own circulation. As long as the relations specify that men exchange women, it is men who are the beneficiaries" (174). However, in the case of the Maasai, we cannot argue that only men benefit from such arrangements considering the centrality of procreation in this society and the role of women in child bearing in the two examples above. It is crucial then to revisit Rubin's discussion on kinship, a concept she adopts from anthropology, reflecting on Levi-Strauss's thoughts in particular, as she tries to understand the exchange of women. Rubin argues, "to an anthropologist a kinship system is not a list of biological relatives. It is a system of categories and statuses which often contradict actual genetic relationships. There are dozens of examples in which socially defined kinship statuses take precedence over biology" (169). It is important to note how the two examples here expose the complexities of Maasai masculinity and the social ordering of family and kinship, while these practices were stereotyped as licentiousness by the European colonizers who were often ignorant about the intricacies and specificities of African tradition. It follows then that, relationships are organised in such a way that children have biological fathers and legal fathers; they belong to legal fathers and not biological ones and women bear children with various men, but they and their children belong to their husbands, the ones who betrothed them. The issue of betrothal is important here because it emphasizes the status of the men who father children and those to whom these children will belong. Overall, the two examples do not render themselves legible to surface readings of Maasai masculinity but rather complicate the image of the Maasai society especially in the context of African patriarchal societies. Elsewhere, in reading Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* which offers an important meditation on polygamy and male infertility, Yunusy Ng'umbi concludes that the novel "subverts what is considered the norm by rendering the male character

impotent” (73). While male infertility is a case in point here, the wives device means to go behind their husband’s back and have children since, as Asanje Mtenje clarifies “Baba does not suffer from erectile dysfunction [...], but fails to produce viable sperm” (204-205). It is not clear in the cases of Ngorishet and Saitoti what the matter is. The Maasai case portrays kinship relations that do not fall easily into the general concerns of African feminism regarding compulsory motherhood, polygamy and patriarchy. While motherhood has a special place in this society, it seems to be a concern of both men and women to ensure that families have children.

Ole Saitoti also fashions an image of the Maasai as an exclusive people and a people of unique ethnicity and pure blood. He categorically describes his people as “a Nilotc people” while the Waarusha (agricultural Maasai), he argues, “are Bantu; they speak [Maa] and share some of our customs” (41). However, Spear and Waller in their work on *Being Maasai* point out that while “Okiiek hunters or Arusha farmers were functionally different from pastoralists, they nevertheless were often affiliated with the same or related clans and age-sets, spoke Maa, intermarried frequently, and adopted pastoralists who had lost their cattle to disease, drought, or warfare” (4). They conclude that “different economic groups, ethnically defined, thus participated as a matter of course in a common interdependent regional economy and culture” (4). These anthropologists view the differences between the Maasai sections as merely functional, but Ole Saitoti’s construction of his identity exclusive of other Maasai sections reveals his appropriation of the colonial cartography that splintered his people beyond borders, creating minorities and linguistic sub-sections. Further, his ethnocentric views speak to a certain investedness in border-maintenance characteristic of some Maasai sections even in contemporary Kenya and Tanzania, who constantly police the boundaries of certain versions of ‘Maasainess’, which exclude the agricultural Maasai who are derogatorily dubbed ‘Arus’ (spotted); but embrace and fully integrate outsiders captured through cattle raids or intermarriage who are willing to emulate certain Maasai ideals. This cultural policing is partly the schizophrenia of marginalized groups’ desire to protect the core and only mobilize solidarity when politically viable. However, the schizophrenia is partly a colonial

legacy because the British, though ambivalent, emphasized Maasai exclusivity even to the extent of creating reserves for them.

Gikandi's attempt to "understand what happens when we read Africa – and the African – through acts of cultural translation and negotiation, using a lexicon that was produced not simply by the opposition between colonial modernity and African traditionalism, but one that had been produced at the liminal scene" (357) becomes instructive in reading Ole Saitoti's role as a cultural broker in the United States. Ole Saitoti's translation ability began to manifest when he enrolled for colonial education. After acquiring Kiswahili and English, he was able to help his family transact with other people, as he explains: "My father thought me useful because I could speak Kiswahili and was even able to communicate a little in English, the white people's language" (43). Therefore, "[he] often sent me away with a long caravan of donkeys to search for and transport corn flour and maize back to the family"; because "[I was] the only one who spoke Kiswahili and knew how to manage money, I was the right person for the task" (51). It is therefore important to note how a colonial education enhances Ole Saitoti to become a navigator between cultures. His ability to speak English and Kiswahili characterizes his potential as a ranger, tour guide, and interpreter (also character) in the production of the documentary *Man of Serengeti*.

The dynamics of cultural translation that operate within Ole Saitoti's narrative are to be understood within the context of America and its cultural agents like the National Geographic Society which constantly frames other cultures in relation to itself. Through his engagement in the documentary film *Man of the Serengeti*, Ole Saitoti was unconsciously initiated into the role of a narrator of culture. His success as a translator makes Ole Saitoti a good tour guide at a time when "[a] National Geographic Society television crew came to make a film" whose "title was to be *Man of the Serengeti*" and "the crew chose [him] as its subject" (99). Ole Saitoti describes his role in the film as "interpreter and guide for the film crew," and adds that he "also had to appear before the Camera" (101). This then makes him both the story and the means through which the story is told. When the crew filmed his family, Ole Saitoti

became a middleman, negotiating the contact between his family and the film crew. It is through these negotiations that the crew's director "agreed to meet [his] father's hospital expenses" (100). For Ole Saitoti to become a fluent cultural and linguistic translator, he had to be multilingual. However, as an interpreter, Ole Saitoti becomes complicit in the cultural commodification process in that he participates in the National Geographic's project to film and circulate 'Maasainess' as a touristic object for various American and other audiences especially of the Western world.

Ole Saitoti presents a complex poetics of the co-existence between wildlife and the Maasai, a subject of his preoccupation as a scholar, and one that has been and still is paradoxical. He exhibits the landscape as a wonderful pastoral space where man and beast coexist. To the narrator, "this, God's country, is [his] home" where his "old ancestors won it from the ferocious Iltatua, [...] this country, known as the Korongoro, is so lovely that [he does] not regret the banishment of the Iltatua" (*Worlds* 6). While the Maasai conquered Iltatua also known as Tatog and "took over their wells" they have for centuries improvised ways of living among the wild animals (*Worlds* 6). Ole Saitoti showcases the great historical landmarks, the Serengeti, where the greatest Wildebeest migrations happen annually, and the Ngorongoro, in which lies the crater, claimed to be the first habitual abode of the first human within which he was born. This emphasis on the coexistence of the human with his domestic animals and the wild animals is later encapsulated in Ole Saitoti's Masters' thesis, "Peaceful Coexistence through Multiple Use: A Cultural-Ecological Study of the Maasai" (13). Consequently, he names his lecture talks "The Maasai: The Land and the People" (132). The paradox in these narratives of co-existence in the Maasai context is nestled in land use and other resources in it. In the 1950s and 1960s while Saitoti was growing up, it was fashionable among the Maasai warriors to "hunt lions as a demonstration of bravery and courage", known as *alamaiyo* in Maa (Ole Saitoti and Beckwith, *Maasai* 118). While this kind of hunting was done by a group of warriors who adhere to a defined course of action on how to attack the lion, and even a code of how to celebrate the victory, the Maasai would occasionally kill any predator preying on their animals, especially lions and leopards (Ole Saitoti and

Beckwith, *Maasai* 118). Ole Saitoti, for example, kills a lioness even before he is initiated as a warrior when it attacks a calf from his flock as he was herding (*Worlds* 61-62).

The claimed natural coexistence between the nomadic Maasai and the wild animals is therefore not without friction. However, it is a sustainable way of sharing the resources available in the Savannah since the Maasai are not habitual game eaters, and materials and design of their dwelling spaces correspond with their natural environment. The Maasai's need for land use as nomadic pastoralists transcends their need to own a particular enclosure of land, a fact that has led to lasting conflicts between the Maasai and the colonial and postcolonial governments. These factors could be behind the framing of Saitoti's titles above, which emphasize land use rather than ownership in a bid to clarify what it means to create a game reserve within Maasai settlement and deny them access to their watering points and dry season grazing areas. The debate about the dispossession of Maasai land by European settlers that I discuss in chapter four arises from similar concerns and is marked by misunderstanding of Maasai land use. During the British colonial era in Tanzania, a settler was speared by a Maasai whom the settler claimed was trespassing through his enclosed farm with his cattle. This man, Oldus Elishira, was using a traditional route to the livestock market, a route now enclosed in a farm owned by a settler. For Saitoti, it becomes crucial to engage with the question of the Maasai in connection to land because, while their proximity to wildlife is romanticised by the rhetoric of the Western Safari, it is because of their nomadic land use that the Maasai have always been tossed about and around in the East African region. Ironically, while the warrior image is traded as the only image of the Maasai, it is the same warrior who is demonized for accelerating the extinction of certain species of wild animals.

Ole Saitoti was the warrior behind the warrior image and the Maasai behind the imagined pastoral nomads. Through his lectures at different American institutions, Ole Saitoti became the ultimate translator of 'Maasainess'. Different from the *National Geographic* articles, or the documentary films, Saitoti was both the tenor

and vehicle of cultural construction and consumption. The American audiences were experiencing performative immediacy through engaging with a character often imaged in the disembodied narratives of the National Geographic. The film director Robert Young tells Ole Saitoti: “you have a lot to offer American colleges by showing them the film and lecturing on your people and on Africa” (118). These words confirm the cultural commodification embedded in cultural rehearsals through staged performances which Young shrewdly recognizes as commodifiable, capable of earning Ole Saitoti a good income: “you will therefore be able to live in this country without financial problems as long as you want” (118). The irony of staged performance and the African subject’s naïve complicity with an imperial project surfaces when Ole Saitoti, “departing D.C., [...] was bothered by one question: What precisely is the National Geographic Society?” (116). Indeed, this question reflects his former unquestioning complicity with the commodification of his own culture and selfhood, which is remarkable given his extensive work experience in the tourism industry. Saitoti concedes that “[he] was very naïve politically” and thus “used common sense and instinct to answer their questions” (119). Since Ole Saitoti does not give account of any particular performance, it is impossible to estimate the magnitude of his naivety, which potentially resulted in unconscious cultural commodification, and reproduction of stereotypes. Salazar’s observation that, “to some, Saitoti’s efforts at representing Maasai are highly commendable, while others see it as heralding a new genre of Maasai disparagingly labelled the ‘professional Maasai’ – denoting those who have amassed wealth for simply trading in the group’s culture” speaks to the duality of cultural performance (54). Although it is clear that the National Geographic Society would benefit from the sales accrued by the film, Ole Saitoti’s survival in the United States before he begins his studies solely depended upon his lectures in which he had to perform the role of a cultural mediator between American and the Maasai people whom the film captured.

Galaty comments that the book is:

About journeys – semi-nomadic journeys from lowlands to highlands, from pastures to watering sources; journeys of the individual from the world of pastoralism and home to the world of school, trade, and work; journey of the Maasai from pastoral to national horizons; and finally journeys between East African and Western worlds” and back. (in Saitoti xiv)

The journey motif, implicit in the narrative, signals the figurations of nomadicity that are embedded in both the autobiographical genre and the Maasai lifestyle. Ole Saitoti is both a nomadic subject and author; his nomadic origin does not create in him an ability to settle and make a home in the United States. This autobiography makes clear distinctions between homelands and strange lands. It further differentiates between the ability to navigate through a culture and the ability to belong in a culture. Although the title of the autobiography alludes to belonging in multiple spaces, the narrative forecloses such possibilities. Ole Saitoti laments: “I was becoming a cultural half-breed, knowledgeable in both cultures but living between them” (129). Ole Saitoti strongly desires to return to his homeland after he has generated enough publicity for the documentary and later again after he graduated from his studies. This reality unfolds because the nomadic experience back home is a complex structure and not simply roaming about the Savanna, as it is widely perceived. Rather, it is a journey of constant returns to the point of origin. The idea of home and belonging is so strong that Ole Saitoti could not translate his nomadic experiences into a black person’s pursuit of a better life in America.

The Maasai’s nomadic moves which are usually determined by availability of pastures and water for their livestock cannot be compared to migrations such as the Southern American migration to the North to pursue the American dream nor can it be compared to the migration of Africans to the West in search of a better life. The Maasais’ movements are mostly to allow new growth of grazing pastures and there is always a return after the new area is exhausted again. This constant return to the same place, often taken as signs of nostalgia, symbolically endorses the nomadic sense of the Maasai and also provides for a strong sense of belonging to one’s cyclic nodes of

home/origin. This migration is seasonal rather than permanent because of the certainty of return. Braidotti's idea of the nomadic as an embodiment that "expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity" informs my reading of the journeys that Ole Saitoti pursues (22). These nomadic journeys or their figurations register the resilience and elasticity of Maasai identity, while simultaneously suggesting inherent anxieties about border crossings. These figurations cannot be reduced to the simplistic and romanticized notion of a "free roaming warrior/nomad" of the nineteenth-century anthropologists. Ole Saitoti's desire to return home can be explained as a form of nostalgia, but also as failure of his host culture to translate him into one of its own. This ambivalence can be explained by analogy with Jomo Kenyatta's response to colonial governmentality, as Gikandi would have it. Saitoti, like Kenyatta, "wanted to cultivate his selfhood through a simultaneous identification with colonial modernity and some measure of self-alienation from it" (366). Ole Saitoti writes that he "developed a guilty conscience; the feeling that [he] had betrayed [his] land and [his] people. [He] became homesick and [his] performance in college suffered as a result" (130). It is important to note that these feelings arise after he began his studies.

Ole Saitoti's location as a cultural navigator allows him to use his autobiography to reconstruct our understanding of an important culture icon in East Africa – the Maasai warrior – and the culture the image represents in local and global contexts. The narrative foregrounds the mobility of the Maasai nomad and the Maasai identity. The narrator shows how people, animals and cultural aspects constantly shift their position in search of a more sustainable way of understanding their environment to ensure better livelihoods. Ole Saitoti's ability to navigate through both African, European and American cultures, enhanced by his use of Kiswahili, German and English languages, reflects his own image of a warrior; as a Maasai man transitioning from childhood to adulthood. It is this warrior-enhanced privilege, referred to in this discussion as potentiality, that enables Ole Saitoti to make one transition between and in and out of cultures. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss how Joseph

Lemasolai Lekuton's narrative reconstructs the image of the warrior for a young American readership.

Lekuton, who was born in Laisamis in Marsabit County in Northern Kenya, belongs to the *Ariaal* Maasai which Sutton describes as "interstitial bilingual", resulting from "the close relation between Samburu and Rendille, who practise a dual camel/cattle economy" (in Spear and Waller 70). Elsewhere, Galaty adds that "intensive intermarriage or co-residence may, in fact, produce a new interstitial and often bilingual and bicultural ethnic category with stability over several generations" (in Spear and Waller 192). Lekuton is a product of intermarriage between "the Samburu and the Rendille. [His] mother [a] Rendille; [his] father was Samburu" (19) he discloses in the story. Like Ole Kulet's protagonists, the government forces the young Lekuton to join a mission school against the wishes of his father due to the contradictions posed by formal schooling to nomadic pastoralism. He completed his primary education and joins Kabarak Secondary School, sponsored by the then Kenyan President, Daniel arap Moi, who subsequently assisted him to secure a job as a bank clerk. While working as a clerk, Lekuton secured a scholarship for African students to study at the St Lawrence University in America, where he obtained his Bachelor's degree in Economics and Government, and proceeded to Harvard University to pursue his Master's degree in International Education Policy. Lekuton then started teaching at the Langley School, which, according to Herman Viola who wrote the afterword of the book, is "a prestigious private school near Washington, D.C." (in Lekuton 111). During this time, Lekuton was given the opportunity to write his story for a National Geographic publication. For ten years, Lekuton taught social studies and American history. He concurrently became a tour guide for American families who wanted to visit Kenya and the Maasai in particular. Lekuton's role is more complex than that of a tour guide, because, for him, taking American families to the Maasai people is an act of cultural translation. Lekuton decided to leave his teaching career in the US and returned home to engage in politics where he has been winning the Laisamis constituency since 2006. In a Ted Talk in June 2007, he gives

his testimony on how he managed to overcome the cultural and economic constraints facing the Maasai as a nomadic society.

From the autobiography's outset, the narrator marks his identity as a warrior, reminding his mother, "my sweet mother, don't call me a baby. I stopped being a baby when I was initiated" (9). This reminder reveals that the story is told in retrospect, revisiting the narrator's experiences as a young warrior, as it invites its interlocutors, the young adult readers. The author's work as a middle-school social studies and history teacher in the USA motivates his desire to write his childhood experiences. Lekuton's text is a more obvious example of the educational materials published by the National Geographic Society to promote global cultural mediations.

The story's trajectory follows that of the *Maasai Bildungsroman* (the sequence of life narration followed by Ole Kulet and Saitoti), which, in addition to contextualising the point of origin as deemed by the *Bildungsroman*, features the disruptive force of forceful enrolment to formal education. The text consists of eleven chapters, all of which are relatively short and in most cases preceded by an epigraph. These epigraphs are verses from a traditional *Ariaal* warrior song, as mentioned in one of the early pages of the book. The narrator begins to tell his story at the age of "about 14" years and he keeps growing as the story advances (9). Lekuton sketches his origin through a metaphor of the acacia tree: "Our hut was under an acacia tree that still stands today. When my mother was pregnant, right up until the time of labor, she would go out and do chores" (22). This ancient tree species, characterized by deep roots, thorns and thin leaves, is an icon of the African savannah and known to withstand harsh weather conditions. Because of its thorny spikes, this tree is commonly used among the Maasai for fencing their compounds to shield them from wild animals. This comparison makes Lekuton complicit in the mythmaking and romanticisation of the Maasai as an ancient culture, resilient, but also resistant to challenging cultural environments. As Joseph Mbele notes about Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, "in African societies, the elders wield much power, they are considered the repository of wisdom and experience" (28). In a similar vein, it is the elders who report, "about midnight –

when the night is equal, as the elders say – my mom started to go into labor” (22). Lekuton’s narration of his own birth story acknowledges the authority of the elders whom he invokes in the sentence, a gesture that corroborates the belief that knowledge and wisdom reside with the elders. Lekuton taps into the Maasai oral archive, acknowledging the protocols of Maasai gerontocracy to which he is initiated as male warrior.

Lekuton assumes the position of a storyteller through the first-person narrative ‘I’, beginning his narrative with an introduction suggesting a young audience: “I’m going to tell you the lion story” (9).

I live in northern Kenya, the lion is a symbol of bravery and pride. Lions have a special presence. If you kill a lion, you are respected by everyone. Other warriors even make up songs about how brave you are. So it is every warrior’s dream to kill a lion at one point or another. (9)

Lekuton demystifies the popular view of the warrior as fierce and ferocious like a lion. It is important to highlight the fact that Maasai warrior intrepidity is associated with the killing of a lion. According to Hodgson, the Maasai *ilmurran* (warriors) “competed with one another to demonstrate feats of bravery and skill such as jumping higher in dance, throwing their spears, wrestling, fighting mock battles, raiding cattle, and killing lions” (“Once Intrepid” 126). Hodgson further points out that these acts “bolstered the reputation of individual *ilmurran*” (“Once Intrepid” 126). Contrary to popular belief, lion killing is not a compulsory ritual to be observed during initiation but instead, like the other feats listed above by Hodgson, it is an individual escapade which could bring one prestige and pride. On the same note, with the increasing surveillance of wildlife by state agents and other conservation actors, killing of lions for mere pride is highly restricted.

Lekuton’s deployment of the lion story parodies the stereotype it underscores about the Maasai male warrior’s bravery. The lions’ perennial presence is reiterated in the book’s blurb, which states, when “the cows [start] to pee. All of them, in every

direction [,] [...] that is the sign of a lion [,] [a] hyena doesn't make them do that" (Lekuton, blurb). This psychosomatic embodiment of distress speaks to the tension between livestock and predatory wildlife in general and the lion in particular. Inversely, western scholarship and media have mythologized the relationship between the Maasai and wildlife for many centuries; with the main myth being that "Maasai culture includes rituals and value systems that can encourage and even celebrate the killing of lions" (Hernandez-Bachen 6). Although it is undeniable that the Maasai have co-existed with the wild animals for many centuries, the idea that every warrior has a dream to kill a lion to demonstrate his bravery is exaggerated. The narrator addresses this notion in the narrative by asking, "what's the big deal about a lion?" (10). This question shows that, rather than endorsing this stereotype and myth about the Maasai, the author intends to demythologize it. Lekuton, at the end of the chapter, shows that not every warrior is brave enough to be in a lion's presence, being "afraid of the lion" himself, (10) because, in many cases, killing it requires a collaborative initiative, as opposed to a solo warrior's courage. The narrator's comments are important when situated within the framework of the National Geographic Society which promotes conservation and discourages the killing of wild animals, especially for mere cultural pride. Lekuton uses the National Geographic to evaluate his warrior culture and suggests a pursuit of education rather than vain pride in warriorhood.

Lekuton extends the lion story in the figurations of his own warrior identity as a child. The second chapter's epigraph reads: "[M]y age-mates know my bravery. They say I am a lion. I roar day and night" (19). Apart from emphasizing the collective identity of warriorhood, this epigraph foreshadows the author's own identity reconstruction. He narrates in the chapter that he refused to breast feed and was therefore given the name "Lemasolai", meaning the "proud one" (24). Notable here is the recurring motif of praise for the warriors and their actions through naming, for example, Lerionka's father in Ole Kulet's *Is It Possible*, who was known as the *Osokonoi* for his bitter actions, and successful cattle raiders like Leshao's peers. Warriors who face and spear lions, like Ole Saitoti, are praised. The narrator's refusal of breast-milk is also considered bravery which symbolises the masculine rejection of feminine affection

and bonding as it contradicts male aggression. However, within the same chapter, Lemmasolai shows how his two brothers help their mother with domestic chores, despite the fact that they were boys in a society that demarcates roles according to gender, assigning house chores to girls and herding activities to men and young boys. Lekuton's brothers "sacrificed their pride and brought water and wood and did other chores" (21). Ironically, this association with and dissociation from womanliness unsettle strict divisions of gender roles. Moreover, Maasai women as mothers are "partly responsible for teaching *ilayiok* [young boys] about the ideals of warriorhood" because, as Hodgson points out, "their own prestige, respect, and economic security increased tremendously when their sons became *ilmurran*, a status they proudly displayed by wearing special earings" (Hodgson, 128). According to Spencer, "women are the principal spectators of the arena of *murranhood*" because "as proud mothers of *murran*, their huts become a venue for *murran*, even to the extent of being led away from their husbands' villages to live for a period in the *manyata*" (153). In addition, Spencer reflects on the analogy between women and warriors when he states:

Women explicitly assert themselves as the counterparts of *murran*. Rather as *murran* face the hazards of the bush and are regarded as the prime defenders of cattle, so women face the hazards of childbirth and must defend their procreative powers, their unborn children, and future generations of Maasai. (154)

Both Hodgson's and Spencer's arguments emphasize the paradoxes inherent in the image of the warrior as the metonym of Maasai identity which excludes the formative role women play in its shaping.

Lekuton's final chapter's title is another intertext, which not only echoes Saitoti's novel title, though slightly twisted, "A Warrior in Two Worlds", but suggests an intertextual engagement of texts and contexts. Lekuton pays homage to forebears, extending the conversation on reconstructing 'Maasainess' as Maasai literary writers. While Lekuton's focus is young adult readers, he also like Ole Saitoti is preoccupied

with educating American audiences, about his culture. As a warrior in two worlds, Lekuton constantly mediates these two cultures. He notes that, geographically, these are two different places, by focusing on the contrast between his mother's limited knowledge and exposure to the world as opposed to his own. He shares how his mother's understanding of the world is general, because "for her there's just nature" (106). He recounts how her understanding of time is comprehensible when translated into different activities one attends in a day. For example, when he tells his mother how long he travels, he has to tell her that, "my plane leaves at 6:30 in the morning, when you take the cows out. You go the whole day, and the cows come home, and I'm still up in the air. And you sleep, I'm still traveling, and the next day you take the cows out" (106). Lekuton translates modern conceptions of time into comprehensible cultural terms. Since the nomadic society's clock rotates around herding activities, Lekuton uses the same template to drive the point home for his mother.

As a cultural translator, the narrator frames his culture as distinct from the American culture in which he lives and works. Through sharing the most important event in his life, which is his initiation, Lekuton describes Maasai rites of passage to his young reader. He writes, "in Maa world, a man who is not circumcised is considered a small boy. He cannot make decisions and anyone can tell him what to do" (65). At this point, the narrator also highlights a distinct cultural practice which prepares a Maasai boy to face life's challenges, perhaps one to which the American young person might aspire. This act also is a test of bravery for the young Maasai boy who is about to be initiated, implied by the epigraphic verse that precedes this chapter: "our clan has no cowards" because "they know no limits" and "our cows ceased to be scared when I was a baby" (65). The epigraph accentuates the warrior quality of bravery and signals that circumcision is an initiation process that transforms a boy into a man who is supposed to demonstrate strength and courage. This courage is emphasised by the operation during which the boy is not supposed to flinch no matter how painful the cuts are. Lekuton tells us: "no blinking, no movement [...]. His brothers who are there to encourage him insist that he "[should not] blink, [or] move" so that he may not bring "embarrassment to [their] family" (70-71).

Lekuton's story is interesting for the ways in which it highlights how the warrior is formed through myth, rituals and even the society's ability to punish and reward. In its portrayal of Maasai warriorhood and masculinity, the mother has a significant role to play because she nurtures and nurses, and later trains this warrior to assume responsibility. It is the mother, sisters and female lovers who often encourage the warriors through their praise songs. In fact, Lekuton is taken to his mother's hut after circumcision to be nursed back to health (72). This position of the mother comes out strongly in the narrative when Lekuton is obliged to go back home and buy cattle for his mother once he starts working as a teacher (108). Although warrior intrepidity is important to survive in a world that is harsh, the care and tenderness of the mother are necessary to complement one's strength. Lekuton clearly models a good example of a son who is grateful to his mother, and even to his motherland, facts which are validated by his decision to leave America and return to Kenya to serve as a member of parliament.

The forces behind narratives of self and configuration of the warrior identity in the two autobiographies by the Maasai male writers emanate from their cultural orientation as well as professional inclinations. Notions of Maasai masculinity and warrior intrepidity, on the one hand, and the National Geographic's mission to explore and educate, on the other, shape the ways in which the two authors translate their culture in Europe and America and how they position themselves in relation to modernity. Their warrior nomadicity enables them to cross various borders to attain tools for cultural translation. Formal education gave them language, an important tool to navigate through various cultural and social borders. To perform their role as cultural translators, the two writers are privileged to gain access to various forums availed to them, such as participation in documentaries and talk shows, and the publication of their books. The two books become cultural testimonials for the *National Geographic* which is in itself "a cultural icon [and] a generator of icons" (Hawkins 1). The Maasai's cultural iconography is displayed when both Lekuton and Ole Saitoti are well placed within the institutional framework of the National Geographic Society in that their own culture has during the colonial time saturated the

colonial library with images of their cultural icons, especially the warrior image. Rehearsing their culture before various audiences in the US could be seen to make them complicit with the *National Geographic*'s mission as “distributor[s] of global images” (Hawkins 9). However, the two autobiographies succeed in challenging presentations of cultures through a single story, in which the complexities of cultural identity are often obscured. Both Ole Saitoti and Lekuton are considered ‘privileged nomads’ who acquire tools of cultural translation which enable them to rehearse their cultural identity in multifaceted ways. Both authors express a strong sense of belonging to their cultural roots, which forms the basis of their participation in educational endeavours in which they perform the role of “culture brokers”, to use Kwame Anthony Appiah’s term, who transport their culture to various literary market places (in Huggan viii). However, these two authors also take a more critical stance towards Maasai visual imaginaries, by presenting a community with complex structures which cannot easily be frozen into accessible touristic icons, such as the male warrior, the ‘circumcised’ female and the harmonious co-existence with the wild. These two authors have been able to disrupt such neat categories by telling an autobiographical story that foregrounds individual identity dynamically interlocked with the concerns that shape and challenge Maasai culture and ways of living, particularly as it pertains to senses of Maasai masculinity and its expression in warriorhood.

Becoming Maasai: Cultural Appropriations and Gender Reconstructions in Hofmann’s *The White Maasai* and Budgor’s *Warrior Princess*

Pratt’s argument that travel books “gave European reading publics a sense of ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to the distant parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized” situates the autobiographies read in this section (3). In addition to being a residue of nineteenth-century European travel writing, the two autobiographies are contemporary updates to the colonial library about Africa. Corinne Hofmann’s *The White Maasai: My Exotic Tale of Love and Adventure* and Mindy Budgor’s *Warrior Princess: My Quest to*

Become the First Female Maasai Warrior appropriate the tropes of the Maasai male warrior and that of the white hunter, albeit in ways that challenge conventional gender stereotypes. The common denominator between these two writers is their point of departure, both of them being tourists in search of leisure on holiday in Kenya and intrigued by their encounter with the Maasai, an experience that provides the substance for their stories. Both writers use self-narration to reconstruct their gender roles as women in their countries of origin and demonstrate how they appropriate ‘Maasainess’ to make meaning of their experiences as women – in Africa, Europe and America. As Westerners, both women exercise the power granted by the leisure industry to gaze upon other people’s cultures while the colonial legacy coupled with wealth affords them the audacity to transgress cultural and gender boundaries and write their personal experiences against the backdrop of the Maasai people. This assumed knowledge of self and the Other is what, according to Gurinder K. Bhambra, “enables Europeans, both individually and collectively, to affirm their sense of self at the same time as making invisible the colonial order that provides the context for their ‘self’-realization” (118). As tourists, both authors operate from what Keith Hollinshead terms “the violence-rendering rhetorical instrument of imperialism, perpetually dealing in Eurocentric accounts which tend to totalize Western/North Atlantic view as the proper account for our received pasts and our lived presents” (31). Both Hofmann and Budgor rely on the colonial archive inspired by the binaries between Africa and Europe to give them insights for understanding the people they associate with in Kenya. They mirror Achebe’s observations about *Heart of Darkness*: “Conrad did not originate the image of Africa which we find in his book”, but rather “it was and is the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination” and “Conrad merely brought the peculiar gifts of his own mind to bear on it” (17). Similarly, Hofmann and Budgor bring their “peculiar gifts” to the image of the Kenyan Maasai that they retrieve from colonial archives and postcolonial databases such as ethnography, tourism and social media. The two autobiographies demonstrate their keen effort to delve into the nineteenth-century settler literature where white female settlers who lived in Kenya produced memoirs. Such works include Karen Blixen’s *Out of Africa* (1937), Alyse Simpson’s *The Land That Never Was* (1937),

Beryl Markham's *West with the Night* (1942) and Elspeth Huxley's *The Flame Trees of Thika: Memories of an African Childhood*, (1959). A parallel that can be drawn here is the fact that both the settler women and the contemporary authors use the Kenyan landscape as a metonym for Africa in the Western worldview to provide a backdrop for their stories. Gillian Whitlock, in *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (2000), points to the "nostalgia for imperial dominance, the strategic forgetting that this requires, and ways of relating to the ruins of colonialism in late imperial culture" (2). What Whitlock reminds us is that there is no new project as far as imperialism is concerned but new endeavours towards erasing the past or managing its aftermath. This concept of "imperial nostalgia", which Renato Rosaldo invokes in his writing about how ethnographers keep returning to the ruins of what colonialism destroyed with a particular "yearning", (Rosaldo 107) provides an entry point to read the two autobiographies. The two authors attempt to construct their identity through 'Maasainess' while reconstructing their gender roles through cultural appropriation in ways that disturb their racial and gender identities. To understand the gist of their occupation, it is important to read Hofmann and Budgor against a background of the imperial project in which opportunistic designs were disguised as a divinely-inspired mission to civilize Africa.

Corinne Hofmann – a Swiss of mixed parentage, a French mother and a German father – was born on 4 June 1960 in Frauenfeld, Eastern Switzerland, the touristic Swiss Canton of Thurgau. At the age of 21, she opened a boutique where she sold bridal gowns and second-hand clothes. During a trip to Kenya in 1986 with her boyfriend Marco, Hofmann met Lketinga Leparmorijo, a Samburu-Maasai to whom she is attracted, which "annoy[s]" her boyfriend Marco, who is "embarrassed the way [Corrine is] staring so fixedly at [the] man" (3). Hofmann observes that Lketinga is "a tall, dark brown, beautiful exotic man" and "more beautiful than anyone [she had] ever seen" (2). Her desiring gaze is cast upon the Maasai body and its aesthetics, the ochre-painted half nude body of a Maasai Moran often presented for touristic consumption. She returns to Kenya in one and half years to find Lketinga, whom she marries and has a daughter with. This relationship barely lasts four years, after which

she returns to Switzerland with her daughter Naripai. Hofmann writes about her life experiences in a memoir she calls *Die weisse Massai*, published in 1998, translated into English by Peter Millar as *The White Masai* in 2005. In 2007, however, the book is republished under the expanded title *The White Masai: My Exotic Tale of Love and Adventure*, with a different cover photograph of Lketinga and a small family portrait of Lketinga, Hofmann and their daughter Naripai at the bottom of the page. The subtitle of the book summarizes the two main concerns of the story, namely, romanticisation of culture and the commoditization of leisure. Even after more than a decade, she is still showing the contrast between herself and Lketinga, evident in her subsequent book cover photos which immortalize the image of Africa through Lketinga in warrior regalia as its icon. In contrast, a portrait of Hofmann and her daughter against a refined European background is used for her sequel *Back from Africa. The White Maasai*, which became a four-million bestseller and was consequently made into a film, *The White Masai*, starring Nina Hoss and Jacky Ido. Hofmann published other books as sequels to the first book: *Zurück aus Afrika (Back from Africa)* (2007), *Wiedersehen in Barsaloi (Reunion in Barsaloi)* (2005) and *Afrika, meine Passion (Africa, my Passion)* (all written in German and translated into English).

In a revealing illustration of Pratt's conceptualisation of contact zones as sites of cultural encounters and clashes, *The White Masai* carefully recounts Hofmann's experiences in a culture which is not her own, highlighting the differences between her and her husband. The story ends with Hofmann's return to Switzerland after her marriage to Lketinga fails due to the couple's cultural incompatibility and, possibly, Hofmann's failure to accept the man behind the aestheticized warrior image. Pratt's reflection on colonial transracial marriages is pertinent to my understanding of this postcolonial transracial marriage. Pratt observes that:

While lovers challenge colonial hierarchies, in the end they acquiesce to them. Reciprocity is irrelevant. Such is the lesson to be learned from the colonial love stories, in whose denouements the 'cultural harmony through romance'

always breaks down. Whether love turns out to be requited or not, whether the colonized lover is female or male, outcomes seem to be roughly the same: the lovers are separate, the European reabsorbed by Europe, the non-European dies an early death. (97)

I quote Pratt at length here because she encapsulates the tragicomedy of transracial marriages. These marriages, Pratt notes, begin from a point of transgression of the normalised assumptions of racial inequality while the end is a double tragedy, featuring both the death of romance and its history. The death, even if metaphorical, implies complete erasure of this history from the European lover. These ideas illuminate my reading of Hofmann who terminates her relationship with Marco, her Swiss boyfriend, so that she can marry Lketinga, a Maasai from Barsaloi. Hofmann's marriage to Lketinga predictably experiences the diminution of the initial romance, which blinded her to their cultural differences. Hofmann's decision to marry a black man and a Maasai at that subverts at least two important beliefs of white supremacy: Hofmann is not concerned with colonial notions of racial purity which led to the excessive policing of women nor is she afraid of the black peril which kept women under domestic confinement (Stoler 59-61). Colonially, as Stoler points out, "European women in Kenya in the 1920s were dissuaded from staying alone on their homestead and discouraged by rumors of rape from taking up farming on their own" (60). European men, in contrast, were not prohibited from having concubines and their sexual abuse of non-Europeans of both sexes was not punishable by law. Hofmann, a woman on her own, gave up her privileges as a white middle-class woman to venture into the African savannah for "romance and adventure". Although an autobiography is a collection of personal stories, Hofmann's story only begins in Kenya without necessary flashbacks to her point of origin, except for her few trips back to Switzerland. According to Whitlock, an autobiographer like Hofmann deliberately "manoeuvre[s] for [her] public; for the privilege of addressing the reader about her life" among the Samburu in Barsaloi (3). Hofmann's marriage to Lketinga is not an exception from earlier imperial undertakings, interracial marriage being the best symbol, because "in each case these establishments were always tenuous and

doomed to wither and fail; yet each preserved in autobiography, where they remain potent" (Whitlock, 117).

Hofmann, in her touristic venture, performs an interesting inversion of the notion of erotic pursuit as a hunt in which the male is the hunter and the woman the prey in her relationship with Lketinga. She assumes the conventionally masculine role by feminizing him as a beautiful, desirable object to be captured and consumed. While walking with her boyfriend Marco, she sees a Maasai man whom she describes as "a tall, dark brown, beautiful exotic man" (2). This scene is also a deeply racialized event in which the male object of the gaze is exoticised. Lketinga, the Maasai warrior and tourist object, is available for consumption by tourists like Hofmann who can afford to 'consume' Africa at their own expense. These tourists possibly articulate and pursue desire in ways that are not available to Maasai men, whose travels to Europe and America are financed by well-wishers; and for whom this consumption of exotic European or American women is not on the agenda in a similarly uncomplicated manner.¹⁸ Hofmann describes Lketinga as an eroticized version of the masculine warrior rendered in a way that subverts the military warrior image of the Maasai. Her desiring gaze is reminiscent of the white hunter's; she desires and 'hunts' this beautiful man; literally tracking him down to his home. Hofmann appropriates the colonial male gaze and uses it to satiate her obsessive desire for the Maasai man. Hollinshead, in another context, describes "globe-consuming Western travellers" who "carried with them the dominant psychological features of the developed urban-

¹⁸ In his autobiography discussed in the first section of this chapter, Ole Saitoti for example mentions his dating American women and one of these relationships is specified as follows: "I left her and started dating a white college student whom I met in the gallery"; however, Ole Saitoti did not have the kind of access that Hofmann has to Lketinga and his family. This relationship, being transracial was open to mockery, racially charged jokes by black women and even street kids (*Worlds* 122).

industrial world and the accordant privilege to recognize/identify/position things in the world” (31). Hofmann exercises this “privilege”, by appropriating Maasai culture to produce a series of narratives from which she builds a globally-recognised career as a writer and memoirist.

Hofmann’s rhetoric is a familiar one, and the paratextual elements of her book suggest a canny awareness of how autobiographical travel writing of the confessional kind feeds into the tourist market. Recent works on tourism and post-colonialism continue to expose the decadence inherent in the tourist industry. The title of her autobiography and the cover photo lead the reader towards the dichotomy between ‘Maasainess’ and whiteness as categories of difference. The 2007 English edition title, *The White Masai: My Exotic Tale of Love and Adventure*, invokes the contrast between being white and being Maasai but also the appropriation of the term ‘Masai’ in coining Hofmann’s new identity which is iconic in representing Africa and ‘Maasainess’ as an identity that can be self-assigned at will. This juxtaposition of the words ‘White’ and ‘Masai’ is both strange and familiar, especially when Hofmann situates ‘whiteness’ and ‘Maasainess’ in relation to terms such as ‘exotic’ and ‘adventure.’ Hofmann’s autobiography elaborates on what Huggan describes as “aesthetic perception” (13). For Huggan, “exoticism describes, rather, a particular mode of aesthetic perception – one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery” (13). Although ‘exotic’ to Hofmann and her boyfriend, the image of the Maasai is familiar to both of them and what they see only affirms pre-existing knowledge about the Maasai. This admixture is best described, in Huggan’s words, as a “semiotic circuit that oscillates between the opposite poles of strangeness and familiarity” (13). It is this perception of the Maasai as ‘exotic’ and part of an African adventure that appears to inform Hofmann’s pursuit of marriage to Lketinga.

Hofmann’s description of their arrival in Kenya employs the usual touristic tropes: “wonderful warm tropical air [which] embraces us the minute we land at Mombasa

Airport" where she "already [...] feel[s] in [her] bones that this is [her] country"; she declares, "I'm going to be at home here" because "the extraordinary atmosphere works its magic only on me" (1). The narrator's romantic view of Africa as a place of home-coming is a familiar one, but her boyfriend Marco's interjecting voice provides a counterpoint when he says, "this place stinks!" (1). This expression of repulsion contradicts the touristic recital of romantic fantasy about African landscapes, which may be approximating the romance of previous colonial women travellers' first encounters in Africa. The same voice interrupts Hofmann's daydreaming, reminding her to be vigilant against "that Masai, for they steal from tourists" (2). Marco's warning represents a prevalent view of Africa as a dangerous, dirty and uncivilized place that, paradoxically, coincides with the exoticization of its peoples and landscapes.

The exploitation of the African landscape and its people as the canvas upon which Western subjects re-inscribe and construct their personal identities is clear in Hofmann's deployment of Africa to justify her presence in it. She narrates, "my thoughts are with the Masai [sic] who has somehow lodged himself in my head" (3). Hofmann's framing here points to Africa's complicity in its exploitation (in this case represented by the Maasai who lodges himself in the white woman's mind). This romantic imagination of the African landscape through a "beautiful" Maasai warrior is undercut by Marco, the narrator's boyfriend, critic and judge, who reminds the narrator to "pull [herself] together" (3) because this romantic imagination of Africa is intertwined with a reality of being African and living in Africa. Marco represents Western epistemologies presented as navigational shorthand to the tourists before they come to Africa and during their stay. Therefore, when Hofmann accuses Marco of blocking her view, she can be read as symbolically saying that her European understanding of Africa corrupts her vision and ability to gaze at its beauty.

Kenya, as a country which is representative of the image of the African landscape and culture, in itself fails to embody the Maasai image in any meaningful way. Instead of emphasizing the connection between the Maasai image and the Maasai people,

governments celebrate this detached state in order to foster what Salazar calls the “tourismification” of people. “Tourismification” is Salazar’s coinage out of the word “touristification” which he adopts from Ning Wang. Salazar coins “tourismification” because, he argues, “it is not the mere presence of tourists that is shaping this phenomenon but, rather, the ensemble of actors and processes that constitute tourism as a whole” (49). These factors may include comments, attitudes and certain performances or simply gestures by either tourists or the people in tourist destinations. In the following examples, Hofmann receives advice and information which frame the image of the Maasai in a negative light without her asking for any. The driver who takes Hofmann and other tourists into the Maasai Mara tells the tourists that the Maasai are “the last uncivilized people in Kenya” and a taxi driver from the airport tells Hofmann that the Maasai are “a primitive race” (5, 112). The immigration officials discourage Hofmann from bothering to take Lketinga to Switzerland unless she ensures he “learns how to put on proper civilized clothes” with “a guarantee of one thousand Swiss francs” plus Lketinga’s “return ticket has to be purchased upfront” (30). Hofmann, as a tourist, eagerly wants to maintain Lketinga’s ‘Maasainess’ displayed through what she calls “exotic apparel” (30). But Ursula, a German woman married to a Maasai, warns Hofmann against marrying Lketinga, because a Maasai who “[has] never been to school, can’t read or write and barely speaks English” will be at odds with “the Swiss obsession with perfection” (30). Ursula’s lecture lands on deaf ears and is resisted by Hofmann’s strong will to transgress cultural borders. As a matter of fact, it is Hofmann who is “disappointed” with Ursula’s husband who “looks like a ‘normal black’” with no “jewellery or traditional clothing” (30). Hofmann’s romantic obsession with what she believes to be authentic ‘Maasainess’ is a result of nostalgia, or what Rosaldo in a different context refers to as “innocent yearning” for traditional ways of living (108). Hofmann’s admiration of Lketinga is transgressive but strangely limited to the superficial touristic desires played out in Kenya and other touristic destinations. After observing responses to Lketinga in Nairobi, she finally concedes that it might be unwise to relocate with him to Switzerland: “Here in Nairobi even the natives give Lketinga strange looks: some laughing, some respectful. He doesn’t fit into this hectic modern

city. When I realize that, I'm glad the passport didn't work out" (63). Yet at the same time, Hofmann's dismissal of Ursula's husband as 'a normal black' without a trace of the exotic underscores her objectification of Lketinga as a touristic product, which provides pleasure by its ability to remain "exotically authentic" in its natural environment.

The inclusion of photographs in the autobiography grants Hofmann authority over the Maasai identity which she appropriates as her own to lend her story some sense of 'authenticity'. The photographs are carefully selected to represent a particular image of the Maasai and Africa, images which call for the viewer's sympathy for both Hofmann and the Maasai. Sverker Finnstrom's observation "that local populations must not be reduced to passive objects of cultural formation" is useful in this context (in Hall and Tucker, 16). In all her books, Hofmann displays photos she took with Lketinga in his traditional Maasai attire with jewellery, while others portray Lketinga's mother with her grandchildren in ragged clothing. Exoticisation of the Maasai and Kenya by the white tourist is eminent in Hofmann's visual and textual lexicon as she describes people and the landscape. Despite her self-assigned belonging in Kenya, she feels "in total darkness" to which she is called to bring light, by "a dark voice" from a "beautiful exotic man" with an "exotic smell" from the most "primitive race" and "the last uncivilized people in Kenya"; who often "steal" from tourists but are "more beautiful than anyone ever seen" (2, 3, 5, 112). Hofmann's voice constantly asserts the touristic, romantic view of Africa prevalent in the jargon of the tourism industry.

She appropriates a space and an identity that give her the power to defy obligations imposed by her German-Swiss upbringing. Although Kenya and Lketinga will not grant her the freedom she is seeking, she nevertheless uses this opportunity to break from Marco and familial obligations ahead of her: "I think of myself as a full-time businesswoman and am actively looking for a second shop, in Bern, I hardly have time for thoughts of weddings or children" (4). Like the settler women of the twentieth century "in their most compelling and seductive formulation, *Out of*

Africa, Kenya is represented as a place of freedom and regeneration, an Edenic place in opposition to the constraints and social, cultural and economic exhaustion of Europe" (Whitlock 122). As a businesswoman, Hofmann seems to be empowered and yet fuelled by a materialistic drive which prevents her from committing to Marco, for a possible family. However, the excitement of an exotic life in Africa is enough to make her sacrifice a few years to live among the Samburu-Maasai, in search of freedom, a lost nobility and an authentic self; but the search ends in disenchantment.

White privilege allows Hofmann to invade spaces that she is not invited into. The Kenyan social and political landscapes continually allow a replay of the colonial history, where people from the global North come and occupy different spaces. According to Whitlock, "Kenya, in particular the area known as the White Highlands, presents an environment that is ripe for European fantasy" (113). Hofmann loves Kenya, embodied in the Maasai, and cannot help but fall in love with Africa which she calls her passion in her most recent book, *Africa My Passion*. In what follows, I turn to discuss *Warrior Princess: My Quest to Become the First Female Maasai Warrior* to show how Mindy Budgor appropriates Maasai identity as a way of intervening in imposed gender roles supposedly on behalf of Maasai women; only to end up reaffirming her own voice and femininity because of her failure to fully appreciate the Maasai cultural logics, thanks to the uncritical use of Western cultural epistemologies in the Maasai context.

Mindy Budgor is a Jewish-American woman, a graduate of Chicago Booth School of Business, who started her first business while doing her undergraduate studies at the University of Wisconsin. Having ambitious parents, Budgor is restless while waiting to hear from various graduate schools after her first degree. Her trip to Kenya with a group of volunteers opens an opportunity for her to do what she wants to do in her life and an escape from the "fire" that her parents constantly "breath[e] down her neck," as she mentions in the blurb. Budgor escapes from the patriarchal Jewish father, and a mother and a grandmother who subtly translate patriarchal demands to their daughter, emphasizing the need for hard work and maintaining an attractive shape necessary for

getting a good husband. Budgor's life account begins with her experience of her formative years, as an assertive girl despite her parents' and school's attempts to shape her in a particular way. For her, Kenya becomes a breathing space away from the suffocating atmosphere of a conservative Jewish family.

Although Budgor is privileged to have a degree and an opportunity to apply for another, she is equally under pressure to fit into a patriarchal male-dominated world. Budgor's story reflects a capitalist society in which consumerism is the norm. She confesses to being obsessed with designers' products such as Gucci, Chanel, Manolo Blahnik and Under Armor (9, 48). Budgor persuades Under Armor, a clothing designer, to fund her warrior-training excursion under the pretext of helping the company to market their products. In her letters to Mr. Plank, the company's CEO, Budgor attempts to prove the durability of Under Armor clothes against the harsh environment of the African Savanna (265-273). Budgor chooses to spend three months in the "Forest of the Lost Child" among Maasai warriors who train her to become a warrior. This expedition gives her two kinds of agency which serve two different pragmatic purposes: one is "to help give Maasai women a much deserved voice in their tribe" and the other "to develop and listen to [her] own voice" (xii). It is in her prologue that Budgor presents this information which in turn becomes a threshold into the text. She emphasizes the fact that she needed to find her voice first before she could speak for others, hence her decision to relegate the Maasai woman's plight to a secondary mission. In this section, I demonstrate how Budgor's two-fold purpose becomes futile because of the abuse of her white privilege to appropriate other people's values while dismissing the need to recognize the agency of these people in influencing their own change.

The desire for the reconstruction of self through the agency to exercise one's voice and power over one's life further justifies Budgor's decision to write an autobiography where she gets to speak and manipulate her story rather than any other form of narrative. In an interview with Nick Higham, Budgor emphasises that her parents imposed on her career paths and choices that she could not pursue. She resists

ballet classes “at age five” through “bulldozing” other children (3).¹⁹ She chose to study Entrepreneurship instead of Medicine, and quits skating for hockey (2, 3). Budgor’s determination to find her own voice over her life made her travel to Kenya where she volunteers in building a clinic in Loita, a Maasai area. Her story reveals a struggle to fashion selfhood in a society where women’s rights are known but capitalism creates room for alternative patterns of female subjection. To achieve this goal, Budgor appropriates the Maasai warrior trope to show how women can also exercise resilience and intrepidity. However, she uses her agency as a white middle-class American to speak for the Maasai woman without a full comprehension of the cultural predicaments of Maasai women.

Budgor’s mission to empower Maasai women is evocative of Western feminists and humanitarians’ views about Africa. These well-meaning individuals more often than not miscalculate the problems facing African people or they tend to address them in the wrong order of priority. Nwankwo’s essay, “Parallax Sightlines: Alice Walker’s Sisterhood and the Key to Dreams” in which she discusses Alice Walker’s film and book *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women* offers interesting pointers for my discussion here. Nwankwo reads Walker’s work as an example of Western feminists who, without understanding the problems and contexts of their African sisters, “claim to be the key to dreams” (220). Using words from Tchicaya U Tamasi’s poem “Agony”, “there is no better key to dreams than my name sang a bird”, Nwankwo ironizes the appropriative agency of the Western feminists to African problems as “parallax sightlines” and not the only “key to dreams” of African women’s problems (219). Nwankwo argues that,

¹⁹ This interview is an oral interview hosted by Nick Higham’s “Meet the Author” aired by the BBC.

Western feminism, like the bird in U Tamisi's poem, which claims that no one else has a "better key to dreams," exercises in its methods, practices, and vision a similar claim, no whit different from the patriarchal structures which it fights or claims to differ from. ... Imperialism and Western feminism share the same ancestry, the same pedigree. (220)

I find Nwankwo's essay instructive in understanding Budgor's appropriation of the warrior trope to assert her voice while claiming to help the Maasai women. Her appropriation of Maasai or what she assumes to be Maasai women's predicament – their exclusion from initiation into warriorhood – raises questions about her motive. Budgor's claim to bring empowerment to the Maasai women is highly suspicious given her own need to battle with Western patriarchy and the forces of late capitalism; and her obliviousness of the possibility of solidarity with Maasai women as fellow victims of patriarchy. Although she won the childhood battles of what she would do for recreation and what she should study until the age of 27, Budgor is still under the authority of her parents. Her mother, anxious over her idle time, tells her: "I've been telling you to go to New York, [...] everyone is thin and there are tons of smart, single Jewish men" (8). Budgor reveals further that her mother "wants the best for [her] – it's just that a twenty-seven-inch waistline and a Jewish husband define 'the best'" (8). Budgor's society is imposing patriarchal obligations upon its youth, denying them agency. These obligations are often undergirded by capitalist motives, framed as values of a modern society, where hard work determines success and the ability to acquire material wealth defines one's integrity. Contrastingly, Budgor and other social captives of Western capitalist societies find an escape through Safari, a journey in search for freedom although camouflaged by the romance of packages such as holidays and volunteer missions. Consequently, the new generation of capitalist society becomes even more individualistic, as manifested through their excessive consumerism – for example Budgor's 'cultural consumerism' in her attempt to construct her 'selfhood'.

The relationship between Western patriarchy/imperialism and Western feminism becomes obvious through Budgor's obsessive American consumerism which translates into cultural consumerism. Budgor demonstrates this kind of consumption in her autobiography through the appropriation of the 'Maasai warrior' trope for her personal purposes. Her search for voice and individual agency allows her to draw connections between materialism and the need to work more, which results in consumerism where the absurdity of capitalism becomes obvious. Budgor discovers this relationship through her grandmother, Queen Lee, whose "concern for [Budgor]" has "a direct correlation" with her "accessory count" (9). Budgor gets her insight when her grandmother summons her "for a lecture on finances". Queen Lee "was wearing rings on both hands and a tightly tied scarf around her neck" (9). Budgor observes that, "the more worked up she got, the more embellishments were added" (9). Budgor's grandmother could be demonstrating to her the need to have more than what one could spend but her own consumerism defeats the purpose of what she is trying to model. It is the same grandmother who later endorses her trip to Kenya. In Kenya, Budgor attempts to live a life free from consumerism which becomes futile because she cannot survive in the warrior camp without her nail polish. The cover photo of her book displays the obvious contrast between the princess and the warrior in her title. Budgor's well-manicured nails, polished with the "Chanel Red Dragon" polish she took to the bush, expose the paradox that this mission constitutes (107, 146). Her hand displays the excess of her embellishments such as a gold bangle and a bracelet of pearls with two bearded Maasai bracelets usually worn by men. In this same hand, Budgor is holding a spear which is emblematic of warriorhood. Instead of bringing balance the title of the autobiography fragments the narrative further by showing how impossible it is for an American fashion-obsessed middle-class woman to become a Maasai warrior. Budgor fails all the tests that would have made her at home with the Maasai. She finds the tea, sour milk, and mutton soup highly nauseating (117). She literally vomits at her first attempts to eat these meals. Becca, her companion, on the other hand, seems to be at home and less ambitious yet willing to learn from their experience. Budgor's nausea symbolizes her repulsion at Maasai ways, from food to gender roles and rituals. Her mission, expedition and vision can

only be read as a perpetuation of cultural consumerism inherent in Western capitalist societies. As a ‘warrior’ training in the bush, she refuses to cut her hair, thus her claim to become a warrior is reduced into her abstinence from her chocolate indulgence, her restraint from using the phone and her courage to sleep in the bush without the fear of being raped by her male comrades. Her efforts to construct an independent identity beyond capitalist America become futile because she ends up enacting her societal values through self-centeredness, charity works, obsession with fashion and even the ballet girl syndrome which she resists but manifests in the title as ‘princess’.

The discrepancy between Budgor’s knowledge of the Maasai woman and what she does in the bush reveals the self-imposing character of Western sympathisers. Nwankwo comments on Walker’s shock when asked to buy a refrigerated truck for the women when she was filming *Warrior Marks*, a request she declines. As Nwankwo notes, “what is clear again here is the gulf between the quotidian needs of the African woman and the culturally distant issues peddled to these women by Walker and her global sisters” (233). This rift between real problems and cultural sentimentalities is present in Budgor’s text. Budgor, like Walker, appropriates warriorhood for her own purposes at the expense of poor African women who have more urgent problems than a desire to become warriors. However, Budgor’s knowledge of ‘being Maasai’ is limited to becoming a male warrior. Although this is the most readily available text for her, as an outsider, she had an opportunity to learn about who the Maasai woman is and what her challenges are. Her failure to initiate a process of cultural translation makes her a cultural hawker who simply appropriates cultural values and assigns them utility values, even out of their context. Like the British colonizers, Budgor fails to comprehend “the centrality of women to pastoralist production and their deep pride in their identity as semi-nomadic pastoralists” (Hodgson, 130). Budgor too is “fixated, even obsessed with what [the British] perceived as the proud, handsome Maasai warriors” (Hodgson 130). Of course the Maasai woman needs empowerment but not to attain warrior status or get designer underclothes (269). There are other pertinent issues such as more access to education and maternal healthcare. This tailor-made warrior training is specifically rendered to

Budgor's own project of self-making. She is simply using the warrior as a trope to create a marketing brand for Under Armor clothes, an opportunity she is constantly pursuing through her letters to Mr. Plank while in the 'bush' (270).²⁰ Unfortunately, Budgor is too naïve to realise that the Maasai women in question may not be interested in Under Armor clothes or any designer clothing no matter how resistant they are to the tropical weather. In a bid to convince Mr Plank of the reliability of their brand's new market, Budgor writes, "people in Africa are now not only beginning to be interested in athletic apparel, but they are specifically asking to be Armoured!" adding, "the backdrop of the forest and the warriors provides a plethora of perfect places for an Under Armour ad campaign" (270). It is clear that Budgor's warrior excursion is inspired by her own desire to find meaning in life, to reconstruct herself as an empowered woman who can make brave decisions.

Commenting on Budgor's autobiography, in an article titled "Review for Warrior Princess" Sarah Abdelrahim, who writes for *Voices for Biodiversity*, an affiliate of the National Geographic Society, argues that "not knowing much about the Maasai at first, she resolved to make a statement to the tribe's women" (n.p). Budgor's lack of knowledge about the Maasai may explain her self-indulgent 'intervention' plan. If she had no knowledge of this community and what was at stake, there were no grounds for her intervention. It becomes difficult to differentiate Budgor's intervention from other disingenuous projects camouflaged through donor aids and projects which do not immediately address the needs of the community involved. Yet, these donor aided

²⁰ Budgor uses the Maasai as a commercial brand the same way other Western multi-billion companies use the Maasai name to market their products. Western fashion houses like Louis Vuitton, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren have used the Maasai to brand their products. Ron Layton, a New Zealander copyright and patents specialist is advocating for the trademarking of the Maasai name (see ippmedia.com).

projects could be running for at least five years down the line, relieving Europe and America of excessive unemployment numbers by dispatching ‘experts’ as part of the ‘aid’ package.

That Budgor decided that through her intervention Maasai women “could become warriors, too, but without first ascertaining whether or not there were any Maasai women who wanted to make the transition” (Abdelrahim, “Review” n.p) is clear evidence of the author’s naivety. Budgor simply vulgarizes the concept of warriorhood without an informed understanding of why only male Maasai train as warriors. Arguably, it is not possible to separate Budgor’s race, class and gender from her self-imposed mission. Through the autobiography, she finds her own voice within her family and the American society through Maasai culture. While she is able to identify the aspects of the capitalist culture which exploit a woman, as a consumer of its goods and provider of its labour; she fails to become self-reflexive so as to see herself as complicit in what she is trying to oppose. Budgor’s materialistic desires make her sight “parallax”, to use Nwankwo’s words; like Queen Lee, she cannot see her complicity with what she is attempting to fight against.

Both autobiographies demonstrate new ways through which empire relates to its former colonies. Tourism, as it is evident in the discussion, has become a new conduit through which the West imposes itself on other people and places. Although tourism is an incentive to developing economies and offers new horizons of celebrating cultural heritage, it simultaneously mediates the commodification of cultural heritage. The Maasai in East Africa have a peculiar association with the Western fascination for traditional cultures. As is evident in the discussion on the two autobiographies, the Maasai attract intimate attention from white women coupled with volunteers ostensibly keen to improve their lives, but ending up commoditizing them and using their culture for various self-making projects. The two autobiographies invoke new ways of interrogating white privilege as the narratives reveal the vulnerability of the Western society and how Africa in their view seems to be the “saviour” rather than the one in need of a “saviour”. Moreover, as a tool of self-narration, autobiography as

a genre has given the two women the ability to construct their selfhood and challenge notions of female domesticity embedded in both Western and African societies. Both Hofmann and Budgor rely heavily on the colonial archive to inform their understanding of Africa so as to re-inscribe themselves into Kenya and they use photography as a tool to contribute to a new archive of Western ideologies of Africa which continue to freeze the image of Africa. Through their written and photographic portrayal, both autobiographies continue to privilege the Maasai male through foregrounding the ‘warrior’ as a trope symbolic of the ideal human, in the case of Budgor, and the ideal male, in the case of Hofmann.

Conclusion

In this chapter I juxtaposed Maasai male and non-Maasai female autobiographies which strategically use the figure of the Maasai warrior as a trope in configuring their own selfhood. I have shown in the discussion how Maasai male autobiographers have used their warrior potentiality to challenge the warrior prototype that circulates in local and global contexts. I have argued that Ole Saitoti and Lekuton become cultural translators who transcend local borders through their metaphorical nomadicity which they acquire through language, education and travel. Although they, too, deploy the same image of the warrior, it is in complex ways. The non-Maasai female autobiographers provide an interesting contrast to the two male autobiographers in that they as women appropriate a conventionally male status. These two autobiographies are a result of cultural appropriation. Hofmann’s appropriation is both actual and metaphorical in that she desires a male warrior and marries one. While I argue that Hofmann’s decision is transgressive of racial separation though reiterative of racial inequality, I critique her fetishization of the warrior body as a desirable erotic site ideal for consumption. Hofmann’s metaphorical consumption of the warrior image features in her identity reconstruction when she asserts herself as “The White Maasai”. Budgor’s narrative suggests a capitalistic appropriation of the warrior traits such as resilience which she mistakes for male privilege within the Maasai society. In a claim to help Maasai women fulfil a desire to become warriors,

Budgor reconstructs her own self as a resilient white woman who transgresses borders of gender and race in an attempt to assert her voice. My argument is that while the Maasai male writers who are indeed warriors themselves consciously challenge the stereotypical imaging of the Maasai as warrior, the two women recirculate and exploit this stereotype.

CHAPTER FOUR: Romancing the Past: ‘Maasainess’ in Historically Inflected Popular Fiction by Non-Maasai Writers

The focus of this chapter on the portrayals of Maasai identity in two historically inflected popular fictions by non-Maasai authors elaborates on concerns introduced in the previous chapter by critically engaging their appropriation of Maasai history as a central plot device in novels set in Kenya and Tanzania. Frank Coates’s *Tears of the Maasai* and David Read’s *Waters of the Sanjan* are selected because of the authors’ explicitly stated affiliation with the Maasai. Read is a settler descendant who was born in Kenya and grew up among the Maasai in Tanzania, whereas Coates worked in Kenya for the UN, which inspired his passion for Kenyan Maasai history and culture. Both authors strategically incorporate aspects of Maasai identity and history to create stories that will attract a readership within and outside Africa. Coates and Read are Rider Haggard’s successors who, like their predecessor, use Africa as a canvas for their writing. These writers use history to write popular novels, a tradition that bestselling authors such as Wilbur Smith and John Le Carré have popularised. They reproduce elements of the nineteenth-century imperial romance that marked the portrayal of contact between the Maasai and the British, then and subsequently, thus participating in a familiar politics of appropriation in their uses of historical material, whether taken from oral or written sources. Hayden White’s claim that “a specifically historical inquiry is born less of the necessity to establish that certain events occurred than of the desire to determine what certain events might mean for a given group, society or culture’s conception of its present tasks and future prospects” provides an entry point for my analysis of Coates’s and Read’s historically inflected fictional portrayal of ‘Maasainess’ (487).

Both authors’ affinity with the Maasai explicitly informs their fiction. Coates was born in Melbourne, Australia, and, after graduating as a professional engineer, worked for many years as a telecommunications specialist in Australia and overseas. In 1989, at the age of 45, he obtained a twelve-month contract to work as a UN technical specialist in Nairobi, Kenya, and travelled extensively throughout the eastern and

southern parts of Africa. He met Shayllah, a Tanzanian woman of the Nyamwezi tribe, at Nairobi's Carnivore Club and they married in 1990 on the shores of Lake Victoria. This real-life interracial romance, which lasted only four years, could be read as the seed for Coates's portrayal of a similar romance in *Tears of the Maasai*, published in 2004 and making the best-seller list in the same year. Coates's other titles include *Beyond Mombasa* (2005), *In Search of Africa* (2006), *Roar of the Lion* (2007), *The Last Maasai Warrior* (2008), *Softly Calls the Serengeti* (2011), *Echoes from a Distant Land* (2012) and *Whisper at Dawn* (2014), all of which reflect a keen interest in East African history and culture. Coates writes on his web page that he does extensive research for all his novels and that some of his novels are based on true stories ("With the Author" n.p.). *Beyond Mombasa*, for instance, is a true account about Ronald Preston, an engineer, and his wife Florence who came to Mombasa in 1897 for the construction of the Uganda Railway. Similarly, *The Last Maasai Warrior* was "adapted from the pages of history" and Coates acknowledges his indebtedness to the "expertly documented [research of] Dr Lotte Hughes whom [he] visited at Oxford University while researching the story" ("With the Author" n.p.).

Read, in the autobiographical notes prefacing his novel, explains that he was born in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1921 and moved to Serengeti in Tanzania when he was seven years old. Read died in 2015 at the age of 94 years at his home in Momela, near the Arusha National Park where he was also buried. His first language was Maasai, then the Tanzanian *lingua franca* Kiswahili – a Bantu language with significant influence from Arabic – before he learnt English. Read, highlighting his Maasai fosterage, explains how as a young boy he was able to participate in all the festivals and ceremonies of the Maasai, only joining school at the age of fourteen in Arusha town. He presents this account of childhood in Maasailand as a claim to credible authorship of Tanzanian history. This is augmented by his claim that Samburu men pleaded to work under him in the Second World War, which also consolidates his portrayal of his affinity with the Maasai in the autobiographical foreword (*Waters* x). He also explains that his work for the Tanganyika Veterinary Department after the war and, later, his decision to farm on Maasailand on the slopes of Kilimanjaro brought him

into even closer contact with the Maasai. During this time, he covered areas that included parts of Maasailand, which made it possible for him to renew his former close association with the Maasai. After 1961, when Tanganyika was granted independence, his farm was nationalised, and he finally moved to Zambia where he worked as a part-time Agricultural Consultant with Anglo American Corporation.²¹ Read eventually moved to South Africa, where he again tried his hand at farming, an interlude in his life that proved far from happy or satisfactory. Finally, in 1979, he returned to Kenya to join Lima Limited as their agricultural consultant. Read claims to be fluent in several African dialects and consequently “a leading authority on the people of Eastern Africa,” (*Waters* x) but it is the Maasai with whom he has been most closely associated. Read has also published other autobiographical works such as *Barefoot Over the Serengeti* and *Another Load of Bull* and children’s stories such as *Loito and the Lioness*, *Namasi, the Shoe Maker*, *Rain God of the Wambulu*, *The Honey Bird*, and *The Hornbill and the Mongoose*.

Subverting History and Myth: ‘Maasainess’ in Coates’s *Tears of the Maasai*

Tears of the Maasai is a historically-inflected thriller reminiscent of the tradition of nineteenth-century imperial romance in which “male explorer figures of the past [...] traditionally penetrate a fecund feminine landscape in order to bring forth fruits for the British Empire” (Davidis 260). It also explicitly incorporates elements of popular romance to tell the story of Jack Morgan, an Australian expatriate in Kenya, and Malaika Kidongi, a Maasai woman who works for AmericAid, whose pasts shape

²¹ Read’s properties might have been expropriated as a result of nationalization of privately owned properties during the mid 60s and early 70s. The first President of Tanzania, J.K. Nyerere, introduced nationalization in his famous Ujamaa policy that was an attempt of the state to control the economy of the country for the benefit of all citizens.

and, to a great extent, control their present lives. The main plot line starts with Jack Morgan's sexually risqué one-week affair with a woman he calls O'Hara at a conference in Honolulu. The plot hinges on a sex-game with a gun, initiated by O'Hara, that goes wrong, leading to Jack's incognito escape from Honolulu to avoid being implicated in a murder trial and his eventual arrival in Africa, working for the UN. The romance plot proper is introduced when Jack falls in love with Malaika Kidongi, a Maasai girl whose past is entangled with Kenyan politics and the legacy of colonial violence. Jack and Malaika's relationship is derailed when Jack and his colleague Bear Hoffman cross paths with Malaika's father and his ivory smuggling squad. The two parties fight and Hoffman is killed and later Mengoru, Malaika's father, also dies mysteriously, incidents which cause Jack to leave Kenya, leaving Malaika behind.

There are parallels to be drawn between the author's own experiences in East Africa as a diplomat and tourist and those of his main character, Jack Morgan, for whom "Africa was one enormous, empty land" (*Tears* 259). Morgan's Edenic sense of Africa as a place where "there [is] no sin" resonates with Gillian Whitlock's observation that "Kenya is represented as a place of freedom and regeneration, an Edenic place in opposition to the constraints and social cultural and economic exhaustion of Europe" (Coates, *Tears* 1; Whitlock, *The Intimate* 122). An Australian expatriate working for the UN, who takes this post because he is running away from the guilt of murder to live in Kenya, Morgan's pursuit of potentially dangerous desires in places conceived of as exotic in the name of seeking pleasure or freedom is stereotypical of the kind of English masculinity originally propagated in boys' own adventures set in colonial Africa, embodied by the figure of the great white hunter or intrepid explorer. Patrick Brantlinger's observation about "imperial gothic fiction" is relevant here, because, while it "may sometimes have seen the empire as a place of renewal, as in Haggard's adventure stories [...] [...] it just as often treated the non-civilized world as a domain in which the primitive might overwhelm the white heroes" (46). This figure has had a flourishing afterlife in numerous popular thrillers,

such as those written by the prolific South African author Wilbur Smith, whom *Vanity Fair* described as “a 21st-century H. Rider Haggard”.²²

While Coates’s novel makes the link between popular adventure novels, tourism and travel writing apparent in his description of location, it also foregrounds aspects of the history of nineteenth-century colonial Kenya, which are evidently inserted with the view to establish links between the colonial past and the postcolonial present. Will Jackson points out that “Kenya Colony continues to be associated with a particular combination of romance and adventure almost fifty years after political independence” (345), and *Tears of the Maasai* combines these elements with historical myths about Kenya and the Maasai, revisited for the purpose of understanding the present. In this way, Maasai history in the novel traces the genealogy of their cultural exoticisation and social othering which began with Maasai-British contact.

Through its multiple narratives, the novel also introduces a critique of British colonial conquest and the consequent postcolonial plunder camouflaged as aid committed in East Africa. Western countries continue to use organisations such as the UNDP and AmericAid to justify their return to former colonies. Jackson’s analysis of the Kenyan case reveals that “decolonization restored Africa to Africans,” but “erstwhile settlers needed a new rationale to justify their continued hold over what was left of their former great estates. From settler farms, safari parks emerged, the conservation of nature replacing the trusteeship of ‘backward races’ as the white man’s rationale” (355). Indeed, the white man has to justify his presence in the postcolonial state and relieve the West of overpopulation, unemployment and social misfits. While the

²² See wilbursmithbooks.com.

projects donated by these organisations are crucial to African countries, they do not provide sustainable solutions to problems and the West is still the primary beneficiary. Coates's novel elaborates on the extravagant lifestyle that the UN expatriates lead in Kenya as they indulge in drinking, camping safaris and promiscuity, a lifestyle that cannot be afforded by the majority of middle-class workers in independent Kenya to whom they bring aid (89-91; 287-9).

Underpinning this critique is Coates's incorporation of the Maasai's myth of origin, which explains how the Maasai and their cattle ascended the Kerio escarpment into the East African Rift Valley. The narrative is divided into three parts: the first is named "The Black Rhino," the second is "Eunoto" and the third is "Ascending the Escarpment," all of which mark three major events in Maasai history. The use of allegory to name the plot parts allows the author to reverse the chronology of historical and cultural events. The actual chronology of events should begin with "Ascending the Escarpment," the period after the migration of the Maasai into the East African Rift Valley, followed by "Eunoto," a Maasai initiation into elderhood, and, finally, "The Black Rhino," which represents the arrival of white men in East Africa by train, appearing in a dream vision to the Maasai elder Mbatian. This chronological order of events enables the interpretation of the allegory embedded in the story. At one level, the allegory can be interpreted as follows: the Maasai ascended into the Kerio escarpment, when Maasinda (the son and first descendant of the Maasai as shown in the novel) was a young person who should have gone through Eunoto, initiation, before negotiating the land deal with the British as an elder. The second possibility is that Lenana, son and successor of Prophet Mbatian who died seven years before the coming of Europeans, should have been initiated into elderhood (Eunoto) before his decision to enter into British land fraud when he signed a false treaty to move the Maasai from their fertile ancestral lands so as to be made a paramount chief, a title that is insignificant in the Maasai community. This second interpretation seems to be more productive in analysing the sequence in the novel, although it suggests the traditional linear sequence of events which had been inverted because Lenana cheated his brother Sendeyo out of the succession.

Coates's reversal of the order of events suggests a pre-existing disruption in Maasai history, which explains why recurring conflicts over Maasailand are pegged to this conflict rather than to the British invasion of and other state incursions into Maasai-owned land. This land conflict has garnered the interest of various scholars, notably the historian Lotte Hughes, who explains that the Maasai "hired British lawyers and took the government to the High Court of B.E.A in 1913 to contest the legality of the second move and demand compensation" (*Moving* 4). Hughes contends that "their illiteracy prevented them from writing down their version of events, which has left 'the story' largely in the hands and papers of white men to this day" (*Moving* 4). Here, Pratt's reminder that "while subjugated peoples cannot readily control what the dominant culture visits upon them, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, how they use it, and what they make it mean" applies (7). The Maasai, as Hughes documents, have a specific way of argumentation and through figures such as Parsaloi ole Gilisho, they were able to resist the moves to the extent of deploying British lawyers although they lost the case (*Moving* 128). Extending the legacy of Ole Gilisho, Maasai lawyers, activists, elders and the Kenyan Maasai community at large decide to launch a campaign for "land restitution" and "the return of Laikipia, the two million-acre site of the former northern Maasai reserve and now home to a handful of ranches largely in the hands of the remnant white settler community" (Kantai 107).

A central historical intertext in the novel is the fifth edition of *Peabody's Guide to East Africa* whose excerpts provide both geological and sociological histories of East Africa. This guide was written, as the excerpts in the novel suggest, in the same manner in which early scientific accounts were "organised around various nomenclatures and taxonomies" (Pratt 29). It follows then that this text, as a sub-genre of quasi-scientific travel writing, responds to Empire's "obsessive need to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself" (Pratt 4). The guide's reference to East Africa, at least in this novel, alludes to British East Africa,

which was Kenya, and not the entire region currently named East Africa. The excerpts from *Peabody's Guide to East Africa* that Coates uses as epigraphs create a connection between the three main parts of the story by combining the history of the Maasai, their encounter with the British and its contemporary consequences, which include the return of the white man through other missions such as the UN. *Peabody's Guide to East Africa* becomes Morgan's tool to travel through the region, enabling him to navigate the social and geographical spaces of the area, but it also allows the reader to see places such as Nairobi as they were seen during earlier colonial encounters. Coates's use of this traveller's guide as a readers' guide demonstrates Jackson's argument that "the history of tourism in Kenya is not so much parallel to the history of colonial rule, but, rather, entwined within it" (345). As a narrative technique, the epigraphs from the guide provide threading interludes within the narrative, weaving together not only stories but their temporal significance. The narrative employs flashbacks (analepses) and flash-forwards (prolepses), techniques that allow the narrator to float in temporality, giving accounts of the past and the present in tandem. The omniscient narrator's non-commitment to temporal demarcations and historical veracity allows him to impose dates of important historical events in Maasai history, allowing the reader to navigate across events and interpret them. The information in the excerpts ranges from scientific, geographical and cultural matters to anecdotal tips, all of which allow further exploratory access to East Africa. The first part of the narrative, which is also the longest of the three, provides genealogical, historical and contemporary accounts of Kenya. In this first part, the narrator, through analepses and prolepses, presents 'Maasainess', its myths of origin and some of the current predicaments largely connected to their encounter with the British. Coates's decision to make this part the longest of the three establishes Maasai history, notably the period of colonial contact, which extends into the postcolonial period, symbolized by Jack and Malaika's relationship.

One important consequence of colonial rule is the land conflicts which continue among the Maasai as a result of Britain's exploitation of pre-existing divisions among the Maasai elders, such as the conflict between Sendeyo and Olonana, his brother,

over the succession of power, to secure land for settlement. Hughes points out that before the Maasai-British collaboration that led to land alienation there were conflicts among the Maasai elders regarding succession of power. As a result of these conflicts, the Maasai elder Olonana agreed with British Governor Percy Givouard to move his people from Laikipia to allow British occupation (*Moving* Hughes, 78).

Coates's blending of the fictitious (myths) and the historical (factual) allows a dramatic rendition of myth and invites a critical inquiry into the meaning of such myths in the contemporary configurations of 'Maasainess'. The novel questions how the identity of the Maasai in the twenty-first century is still understood through a blend of facts and fictions around the nineteenth-century contact with the British. By revisiting the colonial moves, for example, the novel echoes Hughes's claim that "current struggles for power, land and resources in Kenyan Maasailand can only be understood in a one hundred-year context" ("Malice" 207). The title of the novel, *Tears of the Maasai*, refers to the Maasai-British contact to show how such imperial frontiers have their consequences entangled within the postcolonial modern state. While shaped by its popular thriller format, Coates's fictional portrayal of this contact and the historical figures involved in it brings to mind Györgi Lukács's argument that the historical novel is able to "restore these real driving forces of human history as they were in reality to recall them to life on behalf of the present" (315).

The novel's prologue introduces the myth of origin of the Maasai race, in which their nativity, traits and physical characteristics are graphically presented (2, 3). This myth appears to be the basis of the on-going stereotypical representation of the Maasai people and it also bears witness to a conscious colonial project to profile and classify races as Charles G. Seligman's work *Races of Africa* suggests. In Coates's version, the Maasai "came from the north, from the basin of the Nile River from which they took their name: Nilotes. Tall. Ebony black. They were a people of great resilience"; "the men as tough as a leather thong" and the women "elegant and graceful. Beautiful" (1). These people were initially believed to be agriculturalists who "tilled the soils of their valley for three millennia. [...]. For all of this time life was good, so

good they needed little governance. When disagreement loomed, the elders would talk” because “[i]n Eden there was no sin” (1). It is therefore important to revisit this myth in an analysis of the changing phases of the representations of the Maasai in cultural productions of various kinds.

The men are also described as intrepid, a trait that continues to be foregrounded in many narratives about the Maasai and a running trope across the representations of ‘Maasainess’ read in this thesis. This kind of description perpetuated racial classification which brought about the controversial ‘Hamitic Hypothesis’, which Edith R. Sanders describes as the belief that “everything of value ever found in Africa was brought there by the Hamites, or Caucasian race” (521). According to this hypothesis, “the Hamites discovered in Africa South of the Sahara were described as pastoralists” and “pastoralism and all its attributes became endowed with an aura of superiority of culture” (Sanders 531). Indeed, Coates’s presentation is conscious of the gaps that such a myth leaves in place, and his story does not end with the myth but complicates it to show that the first ancestor of the Maasai, Maasinda, is a hybrid child, a result of the Nilotes “engulf[ing] their fine featured neighbours [the Cushites], people with brown skin, straight noses and high cheekbones” (2). According to this myth, it is this first descendant, Maasinda, who was given cattle by “the beginner of the earth, the ngai” (3). Notable also is the edenic allusion often associated with Maasai land in particular and Africa in general. This romantic view of Africa continues to attract different people to the Maasai and Africa.

Although the narrator employs the different texts to subvert dominant stereotypes about the Maasai, yet others are propagated because Coates reiterates what had already been said by anthropologists and historians about the Maasai. For instance, Coates taps into the existing archive with images of the Maasai male body as definitively warriorlike in the description of the first descendant of the Maasai, Maasinda, who “grew into a fine young man”, “tall like his father, the Nilote, with long strong muscles, as tight as bowstrings on his slender frame” (2). As Hughes notes, the “stereotypical image of Maasai as essentially war-like” was produced by

“explorers’ travelogues, reiterated and amplified by missionaries and administrators” (*Moving* iv). However, these masculine features coincide “with the elegant fine-boned face and the gentle, slightly almond-shaped eyes of his Cushite mother” (2). Coates indicates that the Maasai originally emanate from a mixture of the Hamites from the Nile valley in Sudan and the Cushites from Ethiopia. However, Malaika, a contemporary descendant of Maasinda, contests this stereotype. She at first rejects her Maasai origins because she finds her community both unjust and violent to women and children (157). Nevertheless, Malaika invokes her Maasai identity when it suits her, for instance during her encounter with Jack Morgan (97). Her father, Mengoru, is of mixed Maasai and Kikuyu blood, since, although he “was considered a Maasai by his tribe, and in his heart felt he was, [...] his grandfather had stolen a Kikuyu girl in a raid and she became Mengoru’s grandmother” (80). Mengoru, like Malaika, plays the tribal card whenever it accrues some benefit. For example, Kikuyu lineage places him in a safe political position given the first Kenyan president Jomo Kenyatta’s claim of “a Maasai connection somewhere in his obscure lineage” (80). These strategic affiliations have social and political implications. During the British colonial rule, Jomo Kenyatta, who claimed to be a Christian, did not take part in the British-German war as his fellow Kenyan Christians did, but instead “took refuge in Maasailand where he was protected by his Maasai relatives, though he still found some time to make money supplying colonial troops with meat (Murray-Brown in Gikandi 366).

To trace historical ‘Maasainess’, Coates foregrounds the prophetic vision of the Maasai Laibon Mbatian, who foresaw the coming of the white people in East Africa.²³ Because the prophecies came true, Mbatian remains an important figure in Maasai

²³ Laibon is a Maasai word that translates as ‘prophet’ in English but also ‘foreseer’ and, in other instances, ‘medicine man’ or ‘witchdoctor’. Read uses the word ‘witchdoctor’ to denote the Maasai ‘foreseer’.

history today. His vision and subsequent warning to his people and the way it was heeded or disregarded have greatly influenced what is considered to be ‘Maasainess’ in the twenty-first century, especially in Kenya. Mbatian’s vision is described in the novel as follows:

I see a large black rhino cutting a line across the land. There are pink men on his back. I see the end of my children and of the land. Do not move from your land, for if you do you will die of a terrible unknown disease, your cattle will perish, you will fight with a powerful enemy and you will be beaten. (5)

This vision of the Maasai elder enabled him to caution his people on how the consequences of this incursion could be minimized. However, his successor, Lenana, ignored the warning and “promised his people that by giving some of their best land to the white man, they would appease the invaders and avoid further tragedy” (6). Lenana’s complicity with the British led to the fulfilment of Mbatian’s prophecy, leading to the land struggles of the Maasai in Kenya that continue today. Lenana colluded with the British to convince the Maasai to move from their most fertile lands. These are what Parselelo Kantai refers to as “Anglo-Maasai treaties” in which “the British persuaded Maasai elders to thumb-print” their concession to relinquish their land (in Musila 153). These treaties were instrumental in framing the Maasai as tourist objects rather than serious pastoralists because of the heavy infringements later imposed upon their rights to grazing lands. These moves led to the most deadly tragedies in the history of this community when, according to *Peabody’s Guide to East Africa* quoted by Coates, the arrival of the white men brought “the rinderpest, which decimated the Maasai herds, and the smallpox, which inflicted a most horrible death on every second man, woman and child” (9).

The novel also gives an account of the Maasai’s strong leadership which the British acknowledged and were wary of, but they nevertheless took advantage of the rifts existing within it. The conflict began when Lenana “stole succession by [his] trickery” from his brother Sendeyo (11). This goes against Hughes’s views that the

Maasai's illiteracy made them vulnerable to exploitation and land alienation, an assumption that continues to blur British perceptions about the Maasai almost a century after colonialism as Musila suggests in the context of the legal procedures following Julie Ward's murder (*Moving 4; A Death* 133). *Tears of the Maasai*'s narrator also suggests that the lack of formal leadership played a role, but offers a precise description of Maasai pre-colonial leadership, which was systematically structured (5). He notes that "the Maasai were reluctant to change the old ways" (5).

However:

The customs from Maasinta's times had seen them grow in strength and wealth so they found no need for formal leadership. The warriors, or moran, had their age-set leaders to coordinate military campaigns. The elders provided wisdom and moral leadership, whilst a few exceptional individuals, the laibon, provided spiritual guidance. (5)

Coates subverts stereotypical explanations of illiteracy and unstructured leadership in pre-colonial African societies by showing up the flaws in such narratives. The novel's narrator, for example, states that there is "no need for formal leadership" while he continues to show how organized the Maasai were before the British encounter (5). Their leadership was hierarchical, based on age-sets, with the Laibon who was the top authority and a spiritual leader.

Coates presents the post-independence situation of the Maasai and the land disputes as the result of the Maasai prophet Lenana's corrupt deal with the British Governor, when he signed over land in exchange for an empty ceremonial favour: he became a paramount chief and was paid a "coat, plus six pounds, thirteen shillings and fourpence a year" (65). It is after this second agreement that Lenana dies and Naisua, his youngest wife, becomes the clan leader, a position that brings her into closer interaction with Colvan, the governor's representative and translator who speaks Maa. The author introduces the love affair between Colvan and Naisua, an actual romantic development that mirrors the fictional romance between Morgan and Malaika, to show the duplicity of British colonial dealings with the Maasai. While Colvan is

portrayed as sympathetic to the Maasai, his criticism of the deal and his role in it are conveyed in the narrative as unuttered thought: “*I am sorry that I am part of this travesty. And I am angry, because we have not only taken your land but also your dignity*” (67; emphasis in the original). Coates bases this character on the historical Colvile who was Governor Percy Girouard’s translator. According to Hughes, “indulgence of Maasai workers by Delamere and Colvile in particular was not simply a matter of ‘spoiling their pets’; this was a two-way street whereon a mutual admiration society formed,” (*Moving* vi) and Coates’s portrayal of Colvan’s interaction with the Maasai suggests just such an exchange, facilitated by his ability to speak their language. Coates’s characterisation of Colvan as a translator between the Maasai and the British forms an interesting counterpoint because it suggests an affinity with the Maasai that goes beyond the expediency of forging alliances and gaining trust. While this invites a sympathetic reading of the character, his failure to reveal the truth to his lover Naisua makes such a reading impossible. In fact, according to Ole Mootian, who was interviewed by Hughes, “... Colvile, [...] was pretending to be a friend to the Maasai, but he was also a snake ... these White people who liked the Maasai, it was not the Maasai they liked, it was their land they wanted” (*Moving* 232). A more plausible view of the character’s behaviour is suggested by Hughes’s argument that the Maasai-British relationship was “embedded in the idea of blood brotherhood between two peoples, and shared notions of racial superiority”, but that the British colonial agents were “still primarily motivated by land greed” (*Moving* vi). In Coates’s version of these events, Colvan’s allegiance to the colonial cause trumps his loyalty to Naisua, who becomes the embodiment of the familiar trope in which African land and African women’s bodies are symbolically interchangeable, noted by literary scholars like Florence Stratton, amongst others. According to Stratton, the woman’s body in most male literary writers’ works “takes the form of a [...] fecund, nurturing mother; and it is frequently associated with African landscape that the speaker seeks to explore or discover. As embodying mother she gives the trope a name: the Mother Africa trope” (113). Colvan’s character can be likened to the British medical doctor, Norman Leys, whose sympathy for the Maasai earned him a demotion, being transferred from East Africa to

Nyasaland. However, Colvan's bond with the Maasai was not sincere but strategic. In the context of the actual land disputes, Hughes comments that "settlers such as Colvile, Delamere and Berkeley Cole also spoke up for the Maasai, and acted subversively towards government, but can hardly be included in this spectrum since their motivation was largely selfish" (*Moving* iii). Delamere's family still owns land in Laikipia today.

The lack of agency that Naisua exhibits in the relationship with Colvan is also symbolic of how Africa and the Maasai community, said to be fierce and strong, failed to resist colonial domination. Colvile's sexual relationship with Naisua is emblematic of the "white mischief", to borrow James Fox's 1945 book title, perpetrated on the Maasai and other Kenyans during the colonial period.²⁴ This moment, which was characterized by violence and anxiety, continues to haunt the Maasai and Kenyans today. Dr Leys once predicted that "the true story of how the British relieved the Maasai of their land would never come out" except in "a sensational novel" (in Hughes, *Moving* 5). As Brantlinger points out, "literature is not factual enough to suit some historians," but "a literary text is just as much a fact as a government document" (56). Indeed, *Tears of the Maasai* is one such account of the colonial misappropriations of lands and peoples from which the contemporary struggles of the Maasai community derive. Coates's novel, in spite of its flaws, could be said to "[reinstall] historical contexts as significant and even determining, [and] in so doing, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge", as Linda Hutcheon argues in locating history in the postmodern (89). The juxtaposition of history and fiction in *Tears of the Maasai* invites a reading such as the one Musila

²⁴ *White Mischief* is a book based on the murder of the Earl of Erroll, Josslyn Hay, in Happy Valley, Kenya. Josslyn Hay was notorious for his affairs with married women.

deploys in the reading of Julie Ward's murder. It is a reading of "versions of truths and their attendant fictions" (3), and for my case versions of fictions and their attendant 'truths'. These truths are availed through pointers to history and particular historical figures such as the British governor, settlers and colonial administrators.

The link between the Maasai past and present, between colonial Kenya and the postcolonial state, is represented by the love affair between Jack Morgan and Malaika, whose story becomes central to all the other stories in the narrative. This relationship between Mengoru's daughter and a white expatriate replays the colonial romance between Naisua and Colvan while also exposing the dangers then and now of such a romance for the Maasai. However, *Tears of the Maasai* also reveals the irony embedded in claims of Maasai innocence, suggested by the Edenic myth, and in the claim of well-meaning Euro-American benefactors, who bring aid to Africa after decades of looting and plundering. Musila describes the roles and position of the white people in postcolonial Kenya as "occupying a deceptively isolated position both geographically and politically, primarily visible as tourists, diplomats, expatriates, largely isolate white Kenyans, and as part of the vast humanitarian industry in the region" (151). On the other hand, some Maasai individuals behave in ways deserving of criticism too. For example, Mengoru's horrendous activities as a Home Guard are shown to be still useful in post-independence Kenya as high officials such as the Minister for Lands, Mr Onditi, use him for ivory smuggling (84-85). The excerpt from *Peabody's Guide to East Africa* at the beginning of Chapter 7 explains that, "[d]uring the Emergency, the Home Guard was responsible for undermining and neutralizing the Mau Mau organization through their spy network and punitive measures" (79). Coates foregrounds the fact that the postcolonial state inherited corruption from the colonial government when he interrupts the description of Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta's inaugural speech with Mengoru and Onditi's discussion about ivory smuggling (83-84). This juxtaposition of corruption and pursuit for independence problematizes the notion of 'freedom' in the postcolonial state.

A similar critique of post-independence power play as a continuation of colonial exploitation of the lives of people, notably women, is evident in Mengoru's attempt to manipulate his daughter, Malaika, whom he did not raise, to marry a Maasai so that he can use her marriage to gain political support from fellow Maasai and patronage from government officials like Onditi. The narrator explains that Mengoru "believes that if he could get into the Party's inner circle, the rewards would follow. Nicholas Onditi wanted to cement the loyalty of the Maasai block in parliament" (85). Therefore, Mengoru's plan is "to arrange a traditional Maasai wedding, invite all Maasailand and have Onditi as guest of honour. The minister would be delighted [...] if Mengoru's own daughter were the bride—a traditional bride" (87). Mengoru's desire to use his daughter as bait for political gain exemplifies the postcolonial exploitation of women to the benefit of a few African elites, recalling the role Naisua plays in the colonial alliances forged between the Maasai and the British. Mengoru, one might argue, treats his daughter like an object to be traded, along the lines theorised by Rubin, to consolidate alliances between men, in the same way Naisua's relationship with Colvan confirms what Hughes terms the "blood brotherhood" between the British and Maasai (*Moving* 43,185,196; "The Traffic" 174). Coates's novel implies that Maasai women's position remains precarious by equating Malaika, who asserts her independence and resists the constraints of tradition, with Naisua.

Tears of the Maasai portrays contemporary 'Maasainess' in complex, historically inflected ways that refuse the simplification of already existing stereotypes, although these do surface in the narrative. The open-endedness of the novel also suggests the refusal of easy resolutions that are often the trade-mark of popular adventure novels.

The Genealogies of Violence in Read's *Waters of the Sanjan*

Similarly, Read, like Coates explicitly claims affiliation with the Maasai in the autobiographical framing he provides to *Waters of the Sanjan*. The title of the novel, which is an English equivalent of the Maa phrase "*Inkariak-oo-Sanjan*," is literally translated as 'the waters of the sweethearts', and refers to a place located at the North side of the Serengeti (Read, *Waters* x). Read explains that the story he recounts was

told to him when he was young, but he disclaims the novel's historical veracity because of its lack of research. He claims: "this book is not claimed to be a History of the Maasai for the period in question, for the simple reason that no research, as such, has gone into this book; the Masai people having no way of recording their history other than by word of mouth" (*Waters* ix). However, Ole Ntekerei Memusi, who wrote the preface to the book, endorses it as "an Historical Novel" because "the events portrayed were not unusual in the life of a warrior of those times. The customs and traditions are accurate; the places where events took place are real and to date still go by the same names" (*Waters* xi). Whereas Read's view of the historical novel as based on research registers conventional notions of historical veracity based on documents in archives, Ntekerei Memusi privileges the oral transmission of history and lived experience, suggested by Read's description of the source of his story.

Set after the First World War when British forces moved south from Kenya to occupy the then German East Africa, later to be known as Tanganyika, *Waters of the Sanjan* is built around the heroic pursuits of the protagonist, Dangoya, who leaves home on a quest for wealth, during which he endures hardships but eventually returns home in triumph. The protagonist's birth was enigmatic as he was born very frail, such that it took some days for people to be convinced that he would live. His mother was pregnant with her lover's child before she married her betrothed. The Maasai have it as a common practice, although not a rule, that a girl is allowed to have a lover or lovers apart from her fiancée. Another example in the novel is Ngenia, Dangoya's wife, who, "although married to him, [...] Ngenia [shows] hospitality to his guests and to those of her choosing [...] all the children she bore would be considered his" (90). This example both registers a standard stereotype through which 'Maasainess' is presented and a practice in a particular historical time. Dangoya's surrogate father dies four months after Dangoya's birth and his mother is left to raise him on her own as his grandfather also died, leaving Dangoya without any immediate male role model. However, Dangoya grows into a fine, brave man who leads the Loitayo clan in decision-making and in warrior escapades. Dangoya's fame is sung throughout Maasailand as he was feared for his bravery, but his first cattle raid proves fatal as he

loses most of his warriors and his own eye is permanently damaged. He marries Ngenia, who later dies of “the Arab” disease (146-7). He also has a lover, the prophetess Muriel, whose dream brought her before the great *Laibon*, Mbatian. Dangoya, together with his friend Lengerebe, is enlisted into the German colonial army where they train in how to use firearms and become soldiers, fighting for the Germans against the British. Like Coates, Read revises the history of the contact between the Maasai and the colonial powers, in this case German and later British, in his novel, which traces the violence of contact and its aftermath.

Dangoya’s conversion from a Maasai warrior into a German soldier, which makes him a traitor to his own people, should be read within the context sketched by Hughes, who further explains that, “their power on the wane and their herds depleted, many Maasai military units had become guns for hire, fighting other people’s battles and getting paid in stock” (*Moving* 108).²⁵ He becomes part of the German army that controls the Maasai and other colonial subjects, which entails a total shift of values and loyalties. This fact becomes vivid to him only when he deserts and decides to go back home to resume his warrior leadership. At this point, his brother-in-law and fellow sergeant Quatlema “sent a message to the British, to inform them [Dangoya has come] to fight them” because he “wants him killed” (199) for deserting from the German army. The novel ends with Dangoya’s violent death, which is graphically rendered to show the mutilation caused by colonial wars on African soil. When the

²⁵ Abdulrazak Gurnah’s novel *Paradise* develops a character similar to Dangoya, Yusuph, who was pawned to a merchant by his father but deserts the house of the merchant because of the mistress’s seductive moves towards him and joins the German army as a porter. Dangoya, like Yusuph, was once a head porter to Sindoff and later was enlisted as a soldier into the German colonial army from which he deserts; he is eventually murdered by the British soldiers.

British shoot Dangoya, “his brain exploded and he fell headlong, the warrior son of the Loitayo clan, lying slain on the alien soil of the Mbulu tribe, the scars of the vultures of long ago erased forever by the explosion in his head of that fatal bullet” (200). This scene can be read as symbolic of the infamous scramble for Africa when European powers, through cartographic designs that imposed borders and maps, splintered communities for their own economic interests. Maasailand was split into two when Europeans “drew a line from Lake Victoria to the Indian [Ocean] – straight except where it curved around Mount Kilimanjaro – which divided the British from the German sphere of influence” (in Saitoti, *Worlds* xiii). Read’s historically sensitive portrayal rests on an understanding of the complex motivations and circumstances that shape Dangoya’s life and fate as a Maasai warrior who finds himself in a radically shifting world in which his personal ambitions are thwarted and corrupted.

A contextually relevant text here is Joseph Thomson’s *Through Maasailand*, an account of his massive 1883 expedition into Maasailand, which opened up the African Savanna for European invasion. Thomson remarks in his account that “a more charming region is probably not to be found in all Africa” (in Hughes 237). Hughes adds that Thomson’s view of “the northerly or higher plateau of Maasailand, including Laikipia, had the look of a little Britain in Africa” (*Moving* 48). These descriptions precipitated the occupation of northern Maasailand by the British. Read introduces this moment of first contact from the Maasai perspective when the narrator remarks that “it was about this time that [Dangoya] first heard talk of strange people with white skins and hair like sansevera, wild sisal” (10). This fascination with and anxiety about the arrival of the white people or strangers in African societies are also expressed by other societies in early modern African writing, such as Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s *The River Between* (1965).

Read’s novel, however, traces this genealogy of violence to contact with Arab traders before the arrival of the Europeans in East Africa, extending the notion of violence to include the long-term implication of contact or, to use Rob Nixon’s term, “slow

violence". Nixon defines slow violence as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction across time and space, an attritional violence that is not viewed as violence at all" (2). This kind of violence, Nixon continues, is "neither spectacular nor instantaneous but instead incremental, whose calamitous repercussions are postponed for years or decades or centuries" (2). The colonial incursions into the Maasailand through colonial administration and settler economy have left notable repercussions which continue to unfold with time. For example, the narrator notes that "it is said that some morans have done business with the Arabs, exchanging lion fat and elephant teeth for wire, blankets, beads, and many other things" and Dangoya's mother refers to the "Arab sickness" resulting from contact between the Maasai and the Arab traders (168, 130). The novel, in a chapter titled "The Survivors", portrays how this disease had killed many people and cattle (146). Whether the Maasai were literally infected by the Arabs or became sick after this contact is unclear, but historical accounts show that "when British administration was established in the 1890s, the Maasai were recovering from a devastating blight – rinderpest, bovine pleuro-pneumonia, smallpox and drought" (Hughes, *Moving* 1).

More spectacular examples of violence are Read's portrayal of the Germans and British, who first intimidated the Maasai warriors with "guns" and then approached the elders with "gifts" (100). Pratt's argument that the exchange of power in colonial contact relations is "radically asymmetrical" is evident in the power imbalances in the relationship between the Maasai and colonial agents portrayed by Read (8). By using the conflict between two imperial powers, Germany and Britain, as the framework for his critique, Read shifts the focus from early colonial incursions and contact to the subsequent conscripting of Maasai men and men from other communities into the German and British forces. This conscription was based on the principle of co-opting them as colonial subjects but withholding any rights such a status might imply; a situation mirrored by the pervasive imposition of forced labour for various colonial endeavours. The Germans, for instance, "gained a reputation for rounding up tribesmen for forced labour" (193) and forcefully intruded into the Maasai territories, using some warrior elders like Dangoya to shield them against resistance and

retaliation. Dangoya and his friends enter into a forced agreement with Sindoff, the German administrator, who asks them to take him to “Loita to visit the great witchdoctor Sendeu” (173) in exchange for guns. He reneges on this agreement when they reach the Ngorongoro crater and threatens to shoot the Maasai men if they persist in following him (182).²⁶

This portrayal of the Maasai as subordinates and at hand for European manipulation intersects with Coates’s portrayal of the colonial ‘romance’ between the British and the Maasai, and the consequences for the Maasai whose lands were appropriated in corrupt deals with these agents of empire. Although the initial approach of the German administrator to the warriors seems to be considerate and respectful, he gains more confidence as they advance into the Savanna, asserting his control through access to Maasai herds and women (183). As Sindoff’s host, Dangoya encourages this access by asking Sindoff why he does “not spend any nights with our women,” (182) a portrait of Maasai hospitality that evokes Rubin’s theory that men forge alliances through trading women’s bodies, as mentioned earlier in my discussion on Coates’s portrayal of the relationship between Naisua and Colvan. Sindoff, who is said to have had “good intentions” at first, “weakened that evening when he saw a girl who attracted him, and from that time on various girls visited him regularly in his tent at night” (183). There is no indication in this description of whether the women are told to visit him or choose to visit him, but this act of “offering hospitality” demonstrates Rubin’s claim that, “if it is women who are being transacted, then it is the men who give and take them who are linked” (*Waters* 183; *The Traffic* 174). In fact, Dangoya who wanted guns from Sindoff “became quite earnest, anxious to assure Sindoff that

²⁶ Sendeu, spelled Sendeyo in *Tears of the Maasai*, is the prophet Mbatian’s son whose brother Lenana cheated him out of succession to power after the death of their father, Mbatian (Hollis, *The Maasai*).

all possible care would be taken to provide him with a pleasurable companion”; while Sindoff, who wanted to be escorted to the Maasai elder, did not “wish either to upset Dangoya or jeopardise his future” (183).

The futility of this gesture is immediately apparent as the narrator recounts an instance when “[t]he new lieutenant assigned to the platoon sent out parties to bring in cattle from neighbouring manyattas”, which “brought together the various tribesmen in a common distaste for their overlords. Not only was the slaughter of cattle indiscriminate – it was unpaid for” (192). The emasculation and eventual demise of the Maasai warrior are, ironically, facilitated in this process intended to strengthen and protect the position of the Maasai through an act of ritual gift-giving, albeit one of a questionable nature.

Read’s portrayal of ‘Maasainess’ sheds some light on the Maasai’s exchanges with the colonial agents. Apart from the Arabs, Germans and British, the Maasai fostered various local multicultural relations. These relations were possible for two main reasons: firstly, the nomadic nature of the Maasai allows them to move around, raiding cattle and, in some instances, people; secondly, German and British invasion into other tribes who were brought into close proximity by the Germans and the British through migrant labourers and the creation of local military forces. The narrator consistently refers to the non-Maasai as the “*Olmeg*”, a misspelling of the Maa word *Ormeek* which is used to identify anyone who is not Maasai and most recently also used to mark urbanised Maasai who have adopted non-Maasai languages and ways of dressing. (I will revisit this aspect in the next chapter when discussing Mr. Ebbo’s song, “Mi Mmasai”). Although the Maasai have interacted with other cultures throughout their history, they have always had a way of describing other people as aliens. The word *Olmeek* (“*Olmeg*”) is used as a “term [that is] entirely derogatory and in Masai parlance embrace[s] anyone of whatever tribe who was not a Masai” and “a man was born a Masai or an *Olmeg*” (10-11). The term has also acquired new connotations over time. Dorothy Hodgson, for example, uses it to differentiate between different types of Maasai masculinities resulting from Maasai

colonial contact. According to Hodgson, “*Ormeek* [...] is a Maa word which emerged in the early colonial period as a derogatory label for ‘modern’ Maasai men, and thus refers to historically subordinate masculinity” (“The Production” 123). Dangoya, who represents the Maasai values in the narrative, is born of a Sukuma mother and a Maasai father and he agrees to marry a girl from the Mbulu tribe whose brother he works with. Singira, Dangoya’s mother, was taken from the Sukuma during a cattle raid and was adopted as Maasai. According to the narrative, the Maasai and the Mbulu are hostile neighbours, but Dangoya is accepted by them in “an [sic] Mbulu marriage ceremony [...] with drink and food, and an agreement on Dangoya’s part to pay an agreed number of cattle to Quatlema’s father as soon as the war was over” (196). However, the warrior hero is eventually killed because of this affiliation with the Mbulu, who, being traditional enemies of the Maasai, betray him to the British. To return to the gendered dynamics of Maasai identity, the examples above suggests that Maasai identity is assigned to both men and women, they become Maasai through marriage, or adoption.

As suggested by the portrayal of Maasai hospitality enacted through the giving of women’s bodies, *Waters of the Sanjan* represents Maasai women as exploited others within their own communities. This is made apparent by Dangoya’s claim that “only Masai are warriors and do no work. [...] Olmeg must work – like women and donkeys!” (173). Moreover, the narrative highlights forms of physical servitude through the ways in which Maasai women are physically tortured through hard work. For instance, Singira, the protagonist’s mother, was “a small child not four rainy seasons old [when] she had been brought home as a prize captured in a raid on the Sukuma tribe” (2). Singira’s life among the Maasai is continually cast in the shadow of captivity and servitude. Her ornaments mark her as a married woman and are symbolic of her servitude, as the narrator points to “the wire round her legs” which “became shackles of agony,” but she “could not let Dangoya see her distress as her tears mingled with the rain on her face and went unnoticed” (8). Singira’s misery continues after she is widowed and forced to live with her in-laws who mistreat her, especially when her plan to go back to her parents is discovered and the family head

“ordered her to be taken to the centre of the manyatta, stripped and beaten” (6). Read describes Singira’s public beating and humiliation in graphic terms –“with back raw and seeping blood, Singira made no sound and when the whipping was over walked as best [sic] she could to her house” – which are later echoed in the description of her son’s mutilated body at the end of the novel (6).

The exchange of women is a prominent feature of both novels which registers it as a significant aspect of ‘Maasainess’. In *Waters of the Sanjan*, Dangoya’s mother is a Sukuma and his wife during his time as a German soldier is from the Mbulu tribe. Dangoya is given a wife by his colleague at work, his fellow sergeant, Quatlema who “obliged Dangoya by producing a girl for him, his own full sister” (196). This exchange echoes Rubin’s exposition of Levi-Strauss’s kinship principle in which she argues that “the social relations of a kinship system specify that men have certain rights in their female kin, and that women do not have the same rights either to themselves or to their male kin” (177). The narrator says the girl “like most Mbulu women [...] was exceedingly good looking, with small, fine features, slender-boned and pale-skinned” (196). The actual exchange is made obvious during the wedding day when Dangoya is given his bride, Quatlema, “forcing the girl’s legs apart, [...] turned to Dangoya and asked as Mbulu custom dictated, ‘Are you satisfied with your purchase?’” (196). Quatlema’s action, displaying his sister’s body and his subsequent question to Dangoya, resembles a merchant’s act in displaying a commodity; the girl is treated as if she were such a commodity on sale. This kind of auction confirms Rubin’s observation that “kinship systems do not merely exchange women” but they “exchange sexual access, genealogical statuses, lineage names and ancestors” (177). This kind of exchange is also evident when Dangoya’s Mbulu wife would not leave with him when he decides to go back home and the same brother whose alliance with Dangoya eventually receded following Dangoya’s desertion determines this fate. In other words, the woman (who was incidentally nameless) was just a Delilah figure offered to Dangoya as bait for his future extermination. Read’s presentation of Dangoya as a tragic hero is reminiscent of the rupture of the African landscape in the hands of the colonial powers during their scramble for its resources. This rupture

though, as represented by the hero's death, is the opposite of Nixon's slow violence; it is "immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into sensational visibility" (2) albeit with lasting invisible consequences.

Conclusion

The analysis of the portrayal of 'Maasainess' in two historically inflected novels by white male writers in this chapter presents a panoramic view of 'Maasainess' through the use of historical causality to interpret current predicaments of the Maasai. The reading of the two novels has revealed that 'Maasainess' or the image of the Maasai and its circulation in various literary cultural productions was conceived during the early colonial contacts as the historical materials suggest. The texts analysed here show how the Maasai today are still grappling with a history that has shaped them as victims of their colonial experience. The two novels trace the trail of blood shed during the contact between the Maasai and the Europeans whose violent consequences still haunt the Maasai and 'Maasainess' to date despite claims of 'blood brotherhoods', Maasai gullibility and complicity in their marginalisation. The two novels in this chapter enable us to question the different myths and romantic views of both the Maasai and the Europeans. The violence visited upon the women in Maasailand, for example, remains largely unrecorded because historical accounts focus on Maasai warriors and prophets, British settlers and male colonials. Both writers are male and it is the warrior story that is given "concentrated visibility" while the women suffer slow and invisible violence (Nixon, "Slow Violence" n.p.).

CHAPTER FIVE: Strategic Exoticism and Positive Nostalgia: Celebrating ‘Maasainess’ as Cultural Capital

Svetlana Boym’s reminder that “the nostalgic is never a native, but rather a displaced person who mediates between the local and the universal” (12) is important in this chapter where I reflect on the self-conscious exoticisation of Maasai identity by Maasai and non-Maasai musicians. In this final analytical chapter, the focus of the thesis shifts to recent configurations of new Maasai identities by musicians. This chapter shows how the Maasai artists use popular music videos to attempt to counter entrenched stereotypical cultural representations by recalibrating them and mobilising them in concert with other identity markers that are conventionally not associated with ‘Maasainess’. These visual representations of contemporary negotiations and performances of Maasai culture are partly mediated by elements of urbanisation and technological advancement, which in turn configure alternative redeployments of the standard tropes of ‘Maasainess’. Through a reading of selected music videos, including Abel Motika’s “Mi Mmasai”, James Lekishon Ole Kamwaro’s “Tapala” and Shengena Gospel Panorama’s “Simu ya Mukono,” I trace the ways in which these musicians craft a metaphorically ‘nomadic’ rather than static notion of Maasai identity. My discussion pinpoints ways of speaking about or articulating Maasai identities in popular cultural expressions and performances that simultaneously destabilise, incorporate and reinvent pervasive stereotypes. I argue that the artists express what Sarah Brouillette terms “strategic exoticism” (43) in reference to postcoloniality as a cultural and literary industry. She explains that

Strategic exoticism indicates a set of textual strategies that communicates at all [sic] because the author and the *actual* reader likely share assumptions about the way culture operates, and concur in their desire to exempt themselves from certain undesirable practices. (43)

The musicians discussed in this chapter, through their strategic positioning, employ postmodern parody which, Hutcheon argues, “marks [a] paradoxical doubleness of

both continuity and change, both authority and transgression” (35). Hutcheon points out that:

Parody has perhaps come to be a privileged mode of postmodern formal self-reflexivity because its paradoxical incorporation of the past into its very structures often points to these ideological contexts somewhat more obviously, more didactically, than other forms. Parody seems to offer a perspective on the present and the past which allows an artist to speak to a discourse from within it, but without being totally recuperated by it. (*A Poetics* 35)

Hutcheon’s explication of parody with its emphasis on the relationships between self-consciousness in the deployment of stereotypes for the sake of subversion, and the ability of such strategic exoticisation to instruct those who consume literary products, is productive for my reading of the musical performances in this chapter. The selected videos demonstrate that (1) Maasai identity rejects confinement and assumes a nomadic stance by its border-crossing play with identity; (2) popular culture is a fluid genre that facilitates the reconfiguration of Maasai identities; and (3) popular music genres like rap and gospel enable various new expressions of this fluid, nomadic performance of ‘Maasainess’. The chapter is divided into two sections: In the first section, L-Jay Maasai’s music video “Tapala” is discussed in relation to the nomadic as an identity index, whereas ‘Maasainess’ as a commodified cultural template is discussed in my analysis of Shengena Gospel Panorama’s “Simu ya Mkono”. In the second section, I focus on Mr Ebbo’s music video, “Mi Mmasai,” in which the self-conscious parodic mimicry of stereotypical ‘Maasainess’ ridicules these stereotypes and draws attention to embedded prejudices.

The focus on popular art forms and especially music in this chapter enables me to reflect on the potential of popular genres to subvert stereotypes; especially in the context of identities which have been systematically fossilized and perceived as frozen in time. Popular music has the potential for achieving various forms of ideological subversion, but it also cannot escape being complicit with the capitalist project of the global music industry on which it relies for distribution and marketing.

However, experimenting with currently popular genres in an act of mimicry allows these musicians to achieve what Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture*, calls “a double articulation” (86). Bhabha, elaborating on how colonial mimicry works, points out that “[m]imicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualises power” (86). I would like to extrapolate from Bhabha’s idea of double articulation in my own analysis of musicians whose deployment of the stereotypes constitutes an in-joke, which deliberately unsettles the reductive use of those stereotypes. The musicians discussed here all interweave elements of ‘Maasainess’ like language, costumes or melodies with contemporary popular music modalities in their songs and their accompanying videos. This attempt to sing new popular and gospel music using traditional styles can be read as what Walter Mignolo terms “delinking”, by which he means to “become epistemologically disobedient, and to think decolonially, dwelling and thinking in the borders of local histories confronting global designs” (137). Mignolo notes further that decolonial thinking involves the acts of “delinking” and “border thinking” as attempts to dissociate from “territorial and imperial epistemology that invented [...] categories and rankings” (135) such as third world and the first world and the forms of exclusionary inequalities that undergird these categories. Popular cultural art forms tend to be self-consciously suspicious of “categories and ranking” and, as Karin Barber notes, they often “flourish without encouragement or recognition from official cultural bodies, and sometimes in defiance of them” (2).

The music videos that are analysed here can be roughly categorized under the rubric of what is known as Bongo fleva (flavour) in the Tanzanian context and popular music in Africa. Bongo fleva is “the localication or Swahilization of global musical forms such as hip hop, rap, reggae, zouk and rumba by incorporating Tanzanian musical and linguistic elements” (Sanga, “Mzungu” 192). I qualify it further as musical productions by new generation artists with a local (African, Tanzanian) twist, open ended in their blending of local cultural forms and Euro-American forms such as American rap and hip hop. Tanzanian Bongo fleva musicians

such as X-Plastaz, Mr Ebbo and Wagosi wa Kaya are known for their incorporation of traditional music and local languages in their lyrics. X-Plastaz, whose dominant style is rap, use Kiswahili, Haya and Maasai chants in their lyrics. Wagosi wa Kaya use different Kiswahili intonations inflected by accents from local languages spoken in the Tanga region, while Mr Ebbo uses Maasai inflected Kiswahili and Maa words in his music. Shengena Gospel Panorama uses Maasai dress and Maasai intonation in their Kiswahili lyrics, and they also sing in Pare language. In the Kenyan context, Emmy Kosgei is known for using Kalenjin and Maasai lyrics in her songs, while L-Jay Maasai, whose song I analyse here, uses Maasai lyrics with some Sheng and English. While in the Tanzanian context Kiswahili is dominant with ethnic inflections in intonation, in Kenya local languages dominate the popular music productions. Therefore, I argue that the three artists discussed in this chapter mimic stereotypical images of Maasai identity in order to disavow them by incorporating other local and global musical styles.

Nomadic Sensibilities and Commoditization in L-Jay Maasai’s “Tapala” and Shengena Gospel Panorama’s “Simu ya Mukono”

Contemporary popular musical productions express nomadic sensibilities. The urge to return to their traditional cultures and draw styles for their musical performance coincides with how ‘Maasainess’ is reconfigured in popular visual arts and music. By nomadic sensibilities here I mean the tendency of the artist to roam or wander in and out of different traditions in search of musical aesthetics. While for Braidotti, nomadism “translates into a style of thinking,” for me it is a particular aesthetic of representation (1). For Braidotti, this nomadism “allows [her] to think through and move across established categories and levels of experience” (4). Similarly, the popular musicians move across cultural and temporal domains, traditional, modern, African and Euro-American in search of musical aesthetics. Despite the fact that ‘Maasainess’ is often represented as a simplified conventional image, the audio-visual materials discussed in this chapter present nomadic embodiments; which do not easily fall into existing templates of reading ‘Maasainess’. In other words, these videos

deploy what Braidotti in a different context describes as a “critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour” (5). L-Jay Maasai’s music video “Tapala” and Shengena Gospel Panorama’s “Simu ya Mukono” amply illustrate this concept. As popular gospel musicians they depart from the classical church choir traditions and subscribe to what has now come to be known as “*Muziki wa Injili*” which still translates as gospel music, a broad category which could include classical forms of gospel music but, in the East African context, this phrase means something specific. Sanga describes *Muziki wa Injili* as “characterized by the employment of body movement, incorporating improvisation and featuring the use of electric guitars and keyboards. The music is performed in various global and local popular music styles such as rumba, soukous, reggae, zouk, rhythm and blues (R&B), rap, salsa (*charanga*) and taarab” (“The Practice” (146). With this in mind, I analyse L-Jay Maasai and Shengena Gospel Panorama’s musical performances as contemporary forms of *Muziki wa Injili*. Bhekizizwe Peterson’s remarks on Kwaito, the South African urban musical genres resonate with aspects of Tanzanian popular music. Peterson writes:

In some cases, songs seem to have been consciously composed with more than just a hint that their status as ‘complete pieces’ is dependent on their performance. The words are framed through a range of aesthetic devices that are best conveyed through performance: irony, allusions, puns, accent on words and the accent of the singer’s voice are just some of the aesthetic strategies. (205)

Peterson’s remarks above encapsulate what the music videos selected for this analysis are capable of achieving through performance. It is through their playful use of language, parody, irony, allusions and notably the Maasai warrior aesthetics through costumery that the musicians’ project of challenging stereotype is completed in the context of performance.

James Lekishon Ole Kamwaro (stage name L-Jay Maasai) is a young Kenyan gospel artist who started his music career as a popular rap singer and later switched to gospel

music. Born of Maasai parents in 1993 in Narok, Rift Valley, L-Jay Maasai moved to the Nairobi capital where he produces and performs most of his music. At the age of twenty, L-Jay Maasai received two Groove Awards for Male Artist of the Year and Song of the Year in the Rift Valley category. His music is characterised by a fusion of Maa and Swahili lyrics which he raps. As his stage name indicates, L-Jay Maasai alludes to his Maasai cultural heritage blending it with an abbreviation that puts him on the same wavelength with African American hip hop stars like LL Cool J; fashioning his personal brand as an artist. His performance costume in all his songs bears imprints of Maasai regalia in the form of the Maasai *shuka* or stylish modern tailored outfits with trimmings of Maasai *shuka* fabric. He has taken Maasai dress further to form his own clothing line with the brand name, Endauwo Wear with which he partners the international clothing line Anglohili. L-Jay's adaptation of the Maasai dress is an interesting contrast to Budgor's attempt to impose an American brand on the Maasai context. L-Jay Maasai's music video performances are characterised by vigorous dancing and body movements, some of which feature complex choreographed hip hop moves. However, in some of these songs, L-Jay Maasai includes the traditional Maasai dancing styles such as jumping for the men and shoulder shaking for the women. L-Jay Maasai's songs include "Masai for Christ", "Iyayo" – onomatopoeic word which mimics Maasai chanting; "Laleiyo" – means Maasai traditional music; "Maa Leji" – which is an artistic formulation of the Maa verb, "maaleji", meaning I will not be deceived; "Tapala" – which means 'stop'; and "Olomayana" – which means he who is blessed. In his song "Olomayana," he collaborates with celebrated Tanzanian gospel musician Rose Mhando who also uses Maasai attire and Gogo chants in her own music. In another song, "Laleiyo", the Kenyan female musician Shiru wa GP (Mary Wanjiru) is featured singing her lyrics in Kikuyu language. His most recent song bears two titles, a Kiswahili verb "Ukitafuta" and a Maa phrase "Keretisho Enkai ang" which together translate as "When you seek God, He will help you".

"Tapala" is L-Jay Maasai's single released in 2014, featuring a fusion of Maasai dancing and urban hip-hop styles. Like all his songs, "Tapala" is a gospel song that

seeks to evangelize his Christian faith. The song invites listeners to abandon wicked ways, captured in the Sheng phrase *vitendo kiduni*, an equivalent of *vitendo vya kidunia* in standard Swahili that translates as worldly acts that Christians ought to abandon and turn to God.²⁷ This message is embedded in two Maasai words: *tapala*, which means stop, and *belekenya*, which means turn. The word *belekenya* then becomes a metaphor in this song because it implies movement from one ideological position to another as exemplified by the dancing moves.

The word *belekenya* is used in the song to correspond with the dancing that goes with this chorus. The body turns to all directions during the singing of the words, *Belekenya, Belekenya doi belekenya*. The choice of the word *Belekenya* by L-Jay Maasai is deliberate and contextual. Instead of using the Maasai word *iridu* which means repent, the core theme of the song, L-Jay Maasai chooses the simple verb *belekenya* which corresponds with action illustrated through the dancing in the video. Along with the hurried body movements, the chorus is sung in a very fast pace to suggest urgency and the word *belekenya* is sung while the singers are turning in various directions as they sing and dance. This turning to all directions also hints at the need for a panoramic view in life as opposed to limited perspective. Using gospel music as his entry point, L-Jay Maasai enacts a nomadic move by fusing urban hip-hop and conventional Maasai dance, as he mediates multiple cultural spaces: the traditional, the Christian and the urban.

²⁷ Chege Githiora, in his article “Sheng: Peer Language, Swahili Dialect or Emerging Creole”, defines sheng as an age-marked, urban dialect of Kenyan Swahili whose outer form is pidgin-like.

The choice of a beachside hotel and a boat on the water as setting for the video offers a tranquil and serene background for the video but also disrupts the neat lines drawn to demarcate social contexts which the Maasai can inhabit. The notion that the Maasai belong to the Savannah represents a complex stereotype which is “an arrested, fixated form of representation” (Bhabha, 75). In its place, the luxurious boat and hotel in the video offer an alternative location for the performance of ‘Maasainess’, here represented by the typical warrior figure who now, parodically, returns the touristic gaze while inhabiting the space conventionally reserved as leisure destination for wealthy European and American tourists. Unsettling the fixity of the stereotype, this warrior is himself a consumer of leisure culture rather than being the object offered for consumption as part of the African experience.

L-Jay Maasai’s self-conscious performance of Maasai identity embodies the “double articulation” Bhabha discusses by both critiquing the stereotype of and deploying ‘Maasainess’ as a cultural commodity for local and global consumption. L-Jay Maasai presents the warrior as both a symbol of tradition and a postmodern appropriation of images of the past. The nomadic artist also exploits his traditional heritage and Christian worship cultures for the purposes of commoditization of culture and art. James Ogude observes a similar pattern with Kenyan popular musicians where he notes: “The other thing that is occasioned by the movement of traditional music to an urban space is that its performance is ultimately turned into a commodity, for those who are prepared to pay for it, by detaching it from specific rituals and contexts in rural areas” (160). By detaching gospel music from the church setting and traditional dance from Maasai ceremonies (herewith marked by the appropriation of the title *Laleiyo* – traditional Maasai music for one of his songs) and performances for tourist entertainment, L-Jay Maasai thus may be said to subvert both the conventions of Christian tradition and Maasai culture. Christianity’s notions of cultural purity and moral insularity are here brought into question. While L-Jay Maasai cashes in on the same notions of exceptionality of his Maasai culture and the Christian tradition, he simultaneously subverts both. However, L-Jay Maasai does not adapt any existing Maasai traditional lyrics, as is the case in Ogude’s study where musicians adapt

traditional music and modify them or simply introduce modern instruments to the lyrics. L-Jay Maasai rather composes, performs and appropriates the already existing iconicity of the Maasai warrior, while counting on this iconicity and recognisability to set him apart from other gospel musicians, in an industry with more or less recognizable conventions and styles. In effect, he is investing in an already growing industry of commoditizing ‘Maasainess’.

L-Jay Maasai’s use of Maa language, a language that marks his ethnicity and automatically excludes other people, is paradoxical. The paradox unfolds when his song suggests a change through the word *tapala* (stop) and turn through his use of the word *belekenya*. While the word *tapala* suggests completeness, or a radical change, the word *belekenya* allows for a gaze to all directions, the deserted past, the aspired to future and the material present. This rather affirms what Henri Bergson says of the past, that it “might act, and will act by inserting itself into a present sensation from which it borrows the vitality” (in Boym 16). Interestingly, L-Jay Maasai through the two words performs his own life as an embodiment of three temporal spaces, the past from which he is redeemed but to which he artistically returns, the present in which he performs and the future he is creating.

The word *belekenya*, which is repeated in the chorus with its corresponding swift dance moves to all directions, while urging people of different age groups to turn around their lives, expresses the need to live according to the current temporal beats. L-Jay Masai uses the dance to warn people not to abandon tradition completely or assign it to the past or embrace it alone and shun other influences brought about by modernity, as the word *belekenya* as used in the chorus excerpted here shows:

Kila mutu belekenya
 Everybody should change
 Selengei belekenya
 Ladies change
 Ooo muran belekenya bekekenya doi belekenya
 And warriors change, change urgently change

Nooo yeo belekenya
O mothers change
Nooo mbapa belekenya
And fathers change (“Tapala”)

Although L-Jay Maasai’s musical performances in “Tapala” and his other songs reconfigure the dominant tropes of ‘Maasainess’, namely the warrior trope, they do so as a way to utilize a cultural capital afforded by ‘Maasainess’. L-Jay Maasai is aware of the fact that his audiences are familiar with the visual signifiers at play in his performance, the warrior image and its accompanying Maasai *shuka*. However, L-Jay Maasai unsettles this familiarity through featuring the warriors in a modern musical track that echoes Bongo fleva and *Muziki wa Injili* more than it does the traditional Maasai *Laleiyo* often associated with the Maasai warrior. The only undoing in these kinds of appropriations is the reproductions of stereotypical images of the Maasai which privileged the male warrior image as its visual signifier for a society’s identity with women, male elders and children. L-Jay Maasai’s dancers in “Tapala” are dressed like the Samburu-Maasai warriors who wear wraps around their hips with a bare chest adorned with strings of beads. These Samburu warriors and other Maasai are commonly known for their work as watchmen, tour guides, performers in staged cultural performances similar to the ones once performed at the Mayers’ Ranch, Kenya cultural Bomas and the “Out of Africa Sundowner” at the Kichwa Tembo tented Safari camp in Kenya (Bruner, “The Maasai” 882).

Fredric Jameson’s claim that “the becoming cultural of the economic, and the becoming economic of the cultural, has often been identified as one of the features that characterizes what is now widely known as postmodernity” provides a useful lens through which to view the commoditization of ‘Maasainess’ by Maasai artists such as L-Jay Maasai (61). The cultural and linguistic fusion allows L-Jay Maasai to position his music in the global platform of popular music or world music industry. When fused with contemporary popular music cultures, Maasai culture, considered pre-modern or primitive, claims a space in the making of new global cultures which defy

spatial confinements. Appadurai, in his work on *Modernity at Large*, argues that “in the peculiar chronicities of late capitalism, pastiche and nostalgia are central modes of image production and reception” (30). For musicians to enter into the global market, they need to improvise competitive ways of self-articulation and yet adapt what is already familiar in the market. ‘Maasainess’ lends itself to commoditization through the warrior image which already has currency in both local and global imaginaries, allowing the artists to tap into these ideas for rebranding their cultural products. This rebranding also redeems ‘Maasainess’ from the pedestal of cultural exoticisation, in the sense that L-Jay Maasai does not simply imitate Maasai music and reproduce the warrior image but rather repurposes the Maasai artefacts and cultural images to lend a unique signature to his music. L-Jay Maasai’s musical productions, from his debut gospel song “Maasai for Christ” to his latest “Ukitafuta” or “Keretisho Engai ang” (When you seek God, he will sustain you) articulately destabilize cultural exoticisation albeit in ambiguous ways. While “Maasai for Christ” is salient in resisting stereotypes, by almost didactically telling people that the Maasai are not backward and they too can perform modern music like other people, the other songs are parodies which either mimic or satirize those stereotypes. ‘Maasainess’ then functions as a form of camouflage for L-Jay Maasai that allows him to disrupt the exotic. Looking at L-Jay Maasai’s musical oeuvre, there is a steady development in blending different musical and dancing styles. His music grows more complex in each new production, textured with various styles whose origins are not easy to decipher as either Afropop or American hip-hop. L-Jay Maasai’s musical costumery features contemporary hip-hop trends such as distressed denim, a style which owes its origin to the cultural punk movement of the 1970s. This, combined with the Maasai wraps in a gospel musical performance, disrupts the conservative moral codes of Christianity. L-Jay Maasai’s musical videos therefore fuse the modern styles and the traditional styles, the local and global through his conscious rejection of confinement in language, dancing styles and costume which evinces a postmodern fluidity in art production and consumption. He could therefore be considered a “cosmopolitan nativist” who, as Tejumola Olaniyan describes in another context, is one who

“borrow[s] tools from wherever in defence of African ways of knowing and being conceived as embattled by Euro-American cultural imperialism” (77).

Shengena Gospel Panorama is a group of two male singers, Erick Kazoka and Joseph Mnjokava who are famously known as Maasai singers because of their signature Maasai traditional regalia in their musical performance. The singers are originally from the Pare ethnic group located in the Southern part of Mount Kilimanjaro and the group is possibly named after the Shengena peak, which is the highest point of the Pare and Usambara mountains. Shengena Gospel Panorama singers sing in standard Kiswahili, Kiswahili with Maa intonation and Pare. Their songs include “Simu ya Mukono” (Mobile Phone), “Nahavache” (Thank You), “Vuteni” (Pull), “Acha Kubisha” (Stop Arguing), “Kasheshe” (Commotion) and “Mollel” (a name of a Maasai character in the song who is infected with HIV/AIDS).²⁸ In this discussion, I will focus on their song “Simu ya Mukono” which is sung in Kiswahili laced with Maa intonation. Of interest here is Shengena’s musical performance, which appropriates the Maasai regalia and dancing styles while their video background features elements of Maasai lifestyle such as cattle and Maasai traditional houses. “Simu ya Mukono” is a song about the challenges of the mobile phone, a new technology which is both helpful and destructive. In the song, the singers are lamenting the moral depravity attendant on the misuse of mobile phones. As a result, the song suggests that the mobile phone be prayed for. In reading this song, I am

²⁸ Mollel is a name of one the Maasai clans. Shengena Gospel Panorama’s choice of this clan name for their song is allegorical in the sense that the character in the song, Mollel, becomes a metonym for the clan and the Maasai as a whole in their encounter with HIV/AIDS. The naming of this song clearly reappropriates two pervasive stereotypes about the Maasai. First is the popular belief that Maasai men who belong to the same age group have free access to each other’s wives and thus render themselves vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. The other notion is Maasais’ claimed immunity to diseases and rejection of protection. Both perceptions culminate in the generalisation that the Maasai are impervious to change.

interested in how cultural capital can be appropriated and how styles are cannibalized, as Jameson argues in the case of postmodernism (*Postmodernism* 18).

In the East African context, the use of Maasai regalia, chants and warrior's weapons such as the shield by popular musicians in their musical performance is an emerging trend. As Peterson notes in the case of Kwaito performances, "of the many sites of visual representation, ... the body of the artists as a site of signification ... animate and constantly reinvent the artist and song in ways that go beyond the imperatives of marketing" (209). Both secular and gospel musicians deploy the warrior image as a trope for artistic self-profiling in local and global contexts. Remmy Ongala (famously known as Dr Remmy), X-Plastaz, Rose Muhando and Shengena Gospel Panorama are a few examples of the prominent figures. For Dr Remmy, the Maasai regalia is emblematic of a unique African culture. In a 1997 interview with Werner Graebner, Dr Remmy explains that he dresses like a Maasai in the Worldbeat performance because "the Masai [sic] are the ones in Tanzania that show the strongest commitment to African culture and lifestyle" (in Sanga, "Postcolonial" 70).²⁹ This statement co-opts stereotypical perceptions of Maasai culture, in part because of the global legibility of the visual signifiers of Maasai culture. In some respects, this legibility and recognisability lends itself to appropriation for popular cultural performances such as music. This figuration within Worldbeat informs local cultural appropriations by musicians who want to create their musical profiles both locally and globally. In his analysis of Dr Remmy, Sanga points out that "the search for difference and the need to make music accessible to other cosmopolitans lead musicians to select a few

²⁹ Wordbeat is a concept that is described as, "a certain sensibility - namely, the fusion of disparate musical styles in ways that are only possible from a globalized, multicultural perspective" (allmusic.com). This musical sensibility has led to annual musical festivals which celebrate music from varied cultural backgrounds worldwide.

musical aspects that act as tropes, emblems or representations of their specific local cultures while using global styles” (“Postcolonial” 69). In the Tanzanian context, ‘Maasainess’ is a dominant trope emblematic of both African and Tanzanian culture.

It is in this same spirit that Shengena Gospel Panorama appropriates the figure of the Maasai warrior to construct their musical identity in performance. Despite the fact that the Shengena duo has their own Pare cultural experience, language and emblems, they choose Maasai identity as a recognizable cultural icon. They sing some of their songs in Pare language and dramatize the Pare dance in songs like “Mayange” and “Nahavache”. To return to Jameson’s concept of cannibalisation, he explains that it manifests as pastiche which is “the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask” (*Postmodernism* 16). This linguistic mask, he argues, is “a neutral practice of such mimicry [...] amputated of the satiric impulse” (*Postmodernism* 17). Shengena Gospel Panorama’s imitation of the Maasai style is what Jameson calls “blank parody” because, contrary to the parody in L-Jay Maasai and Mr Ebbo’s mimicry which satirizes stereotypes, the duo in Shengena Gospel Panorama are not self-consciously ironic or satiric in their performance of ‘Maasainess’. As a result, their performance of ‘Maasainess’ becomes “a statue with blind eyeballs” unable to see the potential embedded in their performance to subvert stereotypes (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 16). As emerging artists, the Shengena duo’s focus is to find a unique way of performance which will ensure their visibility in the music scene. The Maasai regalia and intonation readily ensure their visibility and even popularity in the region, but their core mission is to evangelize through music and not to subvert stereotypes. In fact, they capitalize on the Maasai cultural capital to popularize their music.

The song “Simu ya Mukono” (the mobile phone) critiques the ways in which society compromises morality through its use of technological gadgets such as the mobile phone, while it simultaneously attempts to deploy the symbolic effect of the mobile phone as a conduit for cultural transmission.

When you write text message, you use a touch stick
Hii ni wisi mutupu, Masai naikemea
This is pure theft, I (Masai) rebuke it
Imerembwa rembwa ee kualalisha uongo
It's decorated to justify lies
Si wa wakristo, sio nani uongo ni kawaida
Christians or non-Christians lying is normal

The mobile phone, as a cultural conduit, is condemned for bringing moral decline in the society, thus the need to “rebuke it”. Here, the Shengena duo warns the audience of the trickery of new technology and how it is implicated in the destruction of morality in the society. In this case, the song advocates rigidity and forecloses the chances for mediation between tradition and modernity. In this critique of the use of mobile phones, these gadgets become metonyms for the uncritical appropriation of new cultures. But, in the process, these critiques reinforce stereotypical conceptions of the Maasai as culturally conservative. Interestingly, the duo is building upon existing sub-texts of Maasais’ ambivalent relationship with modernity, notably the telecommunication industry in both Kenya and Tanzania frame the Maasai in such a light. Safaricom for example has a network coverage commercial that features a Maasai in the Maasai Mara who rescues a tour vehicle which breaks down in the middle of the wild through a phone call. What these commercials emphasize is the ability of their network coverage to access the most remote places, and capitalizing on the claimed Maasai imperviousness to change, they prove that Safaricom is a user-friendly mobile provider.

“Simu ya Mukono” exhibits what Boym calls nostalgia as “an historical emotion,” which is “actually a yearning for a different time [,] [...] a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress” (8). In an attempt to contend with the vices of modernity easily transmitted by mobile devices such as the mobile phones, “Simu ya Mukono” revisits the past and regards it as a glorious one that we can easily imitate. The track suggests that the mobile phone is complicit in the

exacerbation of social crises such as divorce, AIDS prevalence and under-age pregnancies. It further alludes to the Mwalimu Nyerere era when house telephones were the main means of telephonic communication.³⁰ This past was not necessarily devoid of moral lapses; it was “merely better time, or slower time – time out of time, not encumbered by appointment books” (Boym, “Nostalgia” 8). The kind of nostalgia that popular cultural pastiche celebrates is the one that visits the past and returns to the present, modifying whatever is there and blending it with what is at hand. In the verses below, the duo laments how the mobile phones are destroying the moral base of society, reducing it to a state of anarchy:

Ndoa nyingi nafunjika, sababu ya hizi simu
 Several couples divorce, because of these phones
 Ukimwi naongezeka, kisa simu sa mikono
 AIDS is prevalent, because of mobile phones
 Mimba nyingi mashulenii, ni masimu ya mukono
 Many underage pregnancies, are a result of mobile phones
 Kipindi ile ya Mwalimu simu
 During Mwalimu’s (J.K. Nyerere’s) era phones...
 silikuwa sa waya kubwa na senye heshima
 were landline telephones, big and grand

Shengena Gospel Panorama’s musical performance embodied in Maasai regalia is an example of artistic appropriations of cultural signifiers both visible and invisible. The

³⁰ The first president of Tanzania is often referred to as Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere, following his profession as a teacher, and was also considered a strict disciplinarian in his leadership. The Tanzanian public in general is nostalgic about his leadership. The country’s political history is demarcated by two major temporal sites: Mwalimu’s times and post - Mwalimu time. Mwalimu’s time is considered to have been good economically and morally.

duo taps into the deeply embedded stereotypes about the Maasai in order to present a moral lesson. The deployment of the Maasai in this song is double edged: as icons of traditional values which are not corrupt and as a symbol of conservative ideals which are resistant to new cultural adaptations.

Mimicry and Cultural Self-Reflection in Mr Ebbo’s “Mi Mmasai”

Born in the Arusha urban terrain (at Suye ward) to Maasai parents, Abel Loshilaa Motika, famously known as Mr Ebbo or Masai in Tanzanian’s music scene, began his musical endeavours in the mid-1990s in the Tanga region where he lived at the time, after which he moved to Dar es Salaam, the country’s capital. Motika died in Arusha at the age of 37 of what is reported to be leukemia.³¹ Although born in Arusha city, Mr Ebbo claims affiliation with the *Kisongo* Maasai (Thompson 493). *Kisongo* is one of the two main sections of Maasai, believed to be the largest section which occupies the Southern part of the rift valley which is in Tanzania. *Kisongo* is also a geographical location which is occupied by the Maasai people in Arusha, Tanzania. Mr Ebbo’s music includes “Mi Mmasai” (I am Maasai), “Maneno Mbofu Mbofu” (Falsity), “Kamongo” (Lungfish), “Mbado” (Not Yet), “Fahari yako” (Your Pride), “Ubinafsishaji” (Privatization) and “Africa Mashariki” (East Africa).

Mr Ebbo’s musical performance invokes self-reflection and cultural criticism through parody, irony, caricature and humour. For example, Mr Ebbo claims that the Maasai regalia and self-articulation of cultural identity form part of his personal branding as an artist. For Mr Ebbo, Maasai attire is a marker of identity and personal branding which identifies him in the public arena. Katrina Daly Thompson in her essay ““I am

³¹ See www.allafrica.com’s article named “Tanzania: Shock as Mr Ebbo Dies at 37.”

Maasai’: Interpreting Ethnic Parody in Bongo Flava”, explores Mr Ebbo’s use of Maa pronunciation and Kinyume style and how these destabilize the privileges of Standard Kiswahili. Thompson argues that Mr Ebbo’s use of Kinyume and Maa intonation affirms instead of subverting stereotypes. Thomson further seeks to differ from hip-hop approaches which consider stated authorial intent as undermining stereotypes. She for example agrees that Mr Ebbo deploys parody through his musical persona, but she maintains that his use of parody further perpetuates the stereotypes. I find Thompson’s essay useful particularly in the ways she articulates the use of *Kinyume* and Maa intonation as ways of critiquing the privilege accorded to standard Kiswahili in Tanzania despite its multilingualism. However, Thompson emphasizes that Mr Ebbo’s parodic play with language reaffirms stereotypes and undermines his intent to subvert these stereotypes. Thompson maintains that her analysis “aims to show that [Mr. Ebbo’s] use of parody does not simply challenge but also reproduces influential images and stereotypes of the Kisongo Maasai, a group Ebbo himself does not straightforwardly belong to” (498). I would like to differ from Thompson in this argument by showing how Mr Ebbo’s linguistic play, and his musical performance through the warrior trope does not reproduce stereotype but creates a parodic in-joke which turns out to be what Bhabha calls a “double vision”. Mr Ebbo in all his performances “wears the iconic red *lubega* (Maasai *shuka*) and beaded jewellery” (Thompson 498). To understand how Mr Ebbo’s self-reflection enables a deflation of stereotypes about ‘Maasainess’ one needs to read his song lyrics along with his performance. Mr Ebbo’s song “Mi Mmasai” parodies Maasai stereotypes in order to downplay them through self-ironising. As Ogude reminds us, “when traditional music gets defamiliarized in the city, it becomes a parody of its old self” (152). Mr. Ebbo’s musical performance then becomes what Bhabha in a different context refers to as “camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part metonymically” (89). Since Mr Ebbo is aware of the circulating stereotypes and how Maasai identity is calcified, he acquires what Bhabha calls a “double vision” as a result of mimicry. Bhabha notes that “the menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority”

(88). Mr. Ebbo's musical performance in which he mimics the Maasai stereotypes enables him to disrupt the order in which Kiswahili is privileged as a language of Tanzanian modernity while other ethnicities are made invisible. In fact, Mr Ebbo is strategically positioned at the cultural contact zones between Kiswahili modernity and Maasai ethnicity where he negotiates for the visibility of the linguistic costellate that Kiswahili made invisible. To illustrate this point, Mr Ebbo dramatizes the Maasai as an aquaphobic who would not travel on water. In his lyrics he sings, "Nataka Kwenda Zanzibar lakini siamini, gari ya kwenye maji nawesa kuzama chini, bora simba ale mimi si samaki jamani" ("Mi Mmasai"). In these verses, Mr. Ebbo expresses his desire to travel to Zanzibar islands but he is afraid that the boat will capsize and he, being Maasai is not willing to be swallowed by fish, he would rather be mauled by a lion. In these lines, Mr. Ebbo parodies the Maasai as being confined geographically and at the same time undermines that stereotype with another – nodding to the ubiquitous lion that is associated with Maasai bravery – by showing that the Maasai dies bravely despite the water phobia. Ironically, the Maasai movements between mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar where they work in the tourism sector as security guards, tour guides and as "beach boys" are notable. Lauri Hooli, in his essay "From Warrior to Beach Boy: The Resilience of the Maasai in Zanzibar's Tourism Business" notes that "more than one thousand Maasai annually seek seasonal livelihood opportunities in the island [Zanzibar] and the number is growing" (n.p). Interestingly this Maasai migration to Zanzibar began when "a British resort owner employed his Maasai acquaintance to be a night guard on his resort construction site" (n.p). Hooli adds that "several Maasai are taking language, IT, and social media courses either in the informal 'Beach-boy School' or in the private education institute that are both mainly targeted towards the informal workers in the tourism sector" (n.p). For Mr. Ebbo the stereotype he plays out becomes a powerful subversive tool when he continues to show that the Maasai is brave enough to face the lion therefore it is demeaning for them to be swallowed by fish. Also the Maasai being a nomadic society, movement is imperative and journeys are part of the predicaments of the Maasai. In fact, the first African from East Africa to travel by sea to Europe was "Molonket Ole Sempele, a Keekonyokie Maasai" who "sold some cattle to pay for his

passage by sea to the United States in 1909, to seek higher education" (Hughes, *Moving* 131).

Mr. Ebbo's song deconstructs conventional representations of 'Maasainess', especially the mockery associated with how the Maasai speak Kiswahili and other languages like English. Thompson argues that Mr Ebbo's Maasai-Swahili code switching "suggests his attachment to his own language and ethnicity and refusal to fit into mainstream Tanzanian language, a refusal some may interpret as an inability" (511). I seek to differ with Thompson's observation here because, according to the interview she conducted with Ebbo, he states his intention to correct the stereotypical notions that people have towards the Maasai. I read Mr Ebbo's integration of Maa grammar into Kiswahili, a national/regional *lingua franca* as a re-insertion of Maa into the region's cultural matrix from which it is often excluded. This language mixture becomes a strategic infiltration of popular cultural idiom that makes 'Maasainess' urbane.

Appadurai's concept of nostalgia, like Boym's, revolves around the idea of fantasy and a particular yearning for the past. Appadurai's qualified nostalgia as "imagined nostalgia", which he describes as "nostalgia for things that never were" which "thus invents the temporal logic of fantasy and creates much deeper wants than simple envy, imitation or greed could by themselves invite" (77), captures Mr. Ebbo's feeling about 'Maasainess'. Mr Ebbo's deliberate articulations of his culture in heterogeneous communities in the age of globalisation is seen as an "imagined nostalgia". In these endeavours, the Maasai are seen as representative of traditional society and a direct antithesis of modern urbanised communities, often separated by an opaque wall from their ancestral communities. However, there is, if any, a perforated wall that separates the so-called traditional communities from their urbanised descendants because of the constant exchanges between the village and the urban space. Like the relationship between the pre-industrial metropolis and its colonies, the movement of people, their cultural values, food, raw materials, processed goods, and songs, the relationship between the urban and the rural in postcolonial Africa is marked by a two way traffic

of social cultural exchanges where art, like the other commodities, is constantly transported, modified and consumed by both the rural and the urban.

In view of Mr. Ebbo's critical stance, it is important to consider Ella Jiji's comment on modernity in Africa "as a long decolonizing process" because she understands the vexation posed by "stable categories of the modern (implying westernized, colonized, urban, literate, and so on) and the traditional (implying local, vernacular, rural, oral)" (3, 14). Jiji further points out "these categories are always already blurred through movements of bodies, ideas, texts, and cultural scripts" (14). Cultural exchanges have similarly altered portrayals, performances and lived experiences of 'Maasainess' that challenge the fixed stereotypes this study explores in the preceding chapters.

Mr. Ebbo both appropriates from a modern genre, hip-hop, through which he plays his music, but he also strategically appropriates a Maasai persona through language play in order to destabilize prejudices about 'Maasainess'. His use of non-standard Swahili in his songs, argues Thompson, "may function like other urban youth languages, language games, hip hop performances, and even anti-languages – deliberately flaunting the 'misuse' of standard Swahili in order to critique the dominant ideology that standard Swahili is superior to non-standard Swahili" (509). In the early 1980s, these artists were commonly condemned for violating standard rules of Swahili in their attempt to use "luga ya mitaani", translated as street language. The standardization of Kiswahili began when the colonial administrators, in efforts to translate books into Kiswahili, replaced "Ajami, the Arabic-based Swahili alphabet that had been in use for centuries, to Latin script" (Mazrui 41). This shift had its consequences where "colonial translation was affecting the Swahili language itself, allowing functionaries to control its development in the 'modernist' direction of their choice, toward what eventually became known as 'standard Swahili'" (Mazrui 41). Mazrui also notes that Julius Nyerere used Kiswahili as an "instrument of literary and linguistic modernization" (41) in the early years of independence. Indeed, Kiswahili has functioned as a unifying language and a language through which mass literacy was acquired throughout the country. However, Mr. Ebbo who subscribes to the hip-

hop culture which is subversive of standard norms and formality in nature, resists the homogenizing power of Kiswahili which renders the country's linguistic heritage invisible. Mr. Ebbo appropriates the humour that the Maa accent attracts and subverts the stereotype often associated with Maa accented Kiswahili.

Apart from using non-standard Swahili, Mr Ebbo is notorious for his use of what Thompson calls "Kinyume", by which she means "a Swahili language game similar to verlan and Pig Latin, in which syllables are transposed" (506). For example, in "Mi Mmasai" he pronounces place names like Dar es Salaam as "Saridalama," Mikocheni as "Michokeni," Buguruni as "Burugunyi". According to Thompson, "Ebbo's kinyume feeds into stereotypes of Maasai ignorance of standard Swahili" (511). However, Kinyume is a common style used by small linguistic communities such as families or peers in school who are linguistically mutually intelligible. Kinyume is not a formal language register and not necessarily dominant among underprivileged and uneducated minorities. Like the "luga ya mitaani", this linguistic play and attempt at language diversification often faces resistance from standard language categories which strive to maintain their hegemony.

The language play that happens in "Mi Mmasai" suggests that 'Maasainess' once calcified as rigidly traditional now celebrates fluidity. The nomadic identity shifts away from its conventional signification, high cultural seriousness, ethnographic and anthropological markers. In popular cultural expression such as music, 'Maasainess' finds new forms of mobility, levity, and trickery. Mr Ebbo, L-Jay Maasai and Shengena Gospel Panorama represent a sample of "the emergence of a host of local popular and ethnic or popular cultures" which are "a welcome bonus of postmodernity," although "by definition [they] renounce the old European hegemonic project" (Jameson, "Globalization" 67).

Mr Ebbo, like many other popular artists, takes part in "negotiating and enacting [his] African identity through the lyrics and performances" and simultaneously "resist[s] negative images about Africa and Africans within what these musicians describe as mental slavery or cultural inferiority" (Sanga, "Mzungu" 197). Mr Ebbo articulately

and through his music asserts his pride in his Maasai identity. In an interview with Thompson in 2006, he states, “We’ve got our own beautiful culture and we need to be respected for that [...]. Discrimination against the Maasai exists. We are working hard to reduce it” (497). It is in this context that Mr. Ebbo’s songs engage with stereotypes through self-affirmation. Commenting on Mr. Ebbo’s song “Fahari Yangu” Mwenda Ntarangwi states that, “for Mr Ebbo, to be African requires a very deliberate sense of pride in self, pride in who one is and especially in one’s African identity” (39). It is in this spirit of self-assertion that Mr Ebbo’s “Mi Mmasai” disrupts the postcolonial ambivalence to carry one’s identity and yet embrace postmodern fluidity. In the context of Tanzania where Kiswahili has united approximately one hundred and twenty tribes, Mr. Ebbo’s cultural pride is purposive in both recognition and celebration of a multicultural national identity.

Mr Ebbo’s music is characterised by language and cultural fusion, often Maasai, Swahili and English. Like most contemporary popular musicians, Mr Ebbo is influenced by American hip-hop culture which has over the years blended into East African popular culture. These artists merge rap with traditional dancing styles (Maasai in Mr Ebbo’s case). In his performances, he figures himself as traditional Maasai through his performing costumes and language. Barber rightly argues that African popular art forms also “raid European [and American] art forms, seizing on formal and thematic elements with a grand disregard for the conventions that sustain them” (36). Therefore, the emerging cultural productions of this current era exhibit a clear sense of mimicry as well as nostalgia in which old and new, local and global forms are performed. Put differently, popular art productions are a result of a celebration of a postmodernity, which breaks away from hegemonic modern civilizations and moves towards a complex global modernity.

Conclusion

The analysis of the three songs and the musicians behind their production shows emerging discourses about ‘Maasainess’. It is evident that ‘Maasainess’ is reconfigured in ways that are not easily underpinned by the existing templates of

cultural exoticisation. ‘Maasainess’ is seen as raw material and not necessarily a product that is easily appropriated and circulated. L-Jay Maasai’s and Mr Ebbo’s musical productions express possibilities of creating cultural products out of aspects of ‘Maasainess’. One of these products for the two of them is a personal brand carved out of the iconography of Maasai culture. It is thanks to their self-branding using ‘Maasainess’ that these two are celebrated musicians in the region. L-Jay Maasai and Mr Ebbo had earlier attempted to produce rap and R&B respectively, but neither was successful. It is after their return to the Maasai language and attire that they both became celebrated icons in East Africa and internationally. Due to their direct attachment to the Maasai identity, the two artists are different from Shengena Gospel Panorama. While they consciously deploy parody in order to deflate stereotypes of the Maasai, the Shengena duo is interested in cultural pastiche capitalizing on the marketability of the Maasai image. The music videos analysed here show that they borrow from traditional and modern, classical and contemporary, local and international forms. This therefore shows efforts to break away from hegemonic modern discourses and traditional ones and at the same time demonstrate emerging parallel modernities. This chapter analysed the various ways that ‘Maasainess’ is reconfigured through popular art forms, both secular and non-secular. Through the analysis of the three songs, it is shown how stereotypes about the Maasai are subverted through mimicry of those stereotypes. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that ‘Maasainess’ is celebrated as part of the contemporary cultural fabric in East Africa and Africa at large. The analysis shows that a move away from the binaries that initially exoticised Maasai cultural and literary representations enables a focus on how ‘Maasainess’ can be understood as a parallel modernity and not an antithesis to it.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Emerging Perspectives on Reconfiguring ‘Maasainess’

In this study I explored ‘Maasainess,’ a term which signifies a set of images and ideas about Maasai identity being appropriated by different literary and cultural creators in their representations of that identity. The stereotype of the Maasai as a male warrior has been circulated in different local and global imaginaries since colonial times. In particular, the male warrior image with its captivating visibility obscured the possibilities of understanding Maasai identity in its complex negotiation of impinging influences, which can constrain or provide opportunities, in relation to traditional notions of cultural identity. By looking at texts produced by Maasai and non-Maasai authors and musicians, this study shifts the focus from the gendered warrior trope, which is not sufficiently representative of ‘Maasainess’, by offering a wider range of readings from multiple genres. I argue that ‘Maasainess’ is more multifaceted than what is conveyed through the image of the male warrior, who signifies a short period in the life cycle of Maasai male identity because warriorhood is a transitional stage. The comparisons implicit in this study show that ‘Maasainess’ is appropriated and reconfigured in ways that engage the dominant stereotypes discussed here as a means of self-definition in relation to shifting social and cultural parameters. An important aspect of this research is the broad range of texts from different cultural contexts discussed in order to include the perspectives of both Maasai and non-Maasai authors and to achieve an inclusive and nuanced overview of the subject. The study demonstrates that ‘Maasainess’ is a nomadic signifier which defies confinement in the reductive images of male warrior and wounded woman.

My reading of Ole Kulet’s novels provides the foundation for this study’s exploration of the notion of ‘Maasainess’ because of his potential as an insider who uses his own biographical subjectivity to portray contested Maasai identities. Each of his novels discussed here presents a different historical moment in which the Maasai are renegotiating space within a larger social and cultural context. During the colonial

period, the Maasai characters encounter formal education which conflicts with their ways of life. It is at this juncture that Lerionka in *Is It Possible* becomes ambivalent about how to hold a spear and sticks and books simultaneously. The spear for community protection and the sticks for grazing are symbolic of the precolonial nomadic lifestyle among the Maasai. In what looks like an intergenerational sequel, Lerionka's legacy lingers on in Ole Kulet's subsequent characters, such as Leshao in *To Become a Man*, Joseph Malon and Anna Nalangu in *Daughter of Maa* and Ole Kaelo's daughters in *Blossoms of the Savannah*, Taiyo and Resian. In their different contexts, these characters are forced to navigate multiple cultural contexts in different temporalities. Some of these characters succeed, like Lerionka, while others are destroyed by conflicting forces, like Leshao Ole Merresho who tragically dies after attempting to raid cattle, an act that was criminalised by the colonial administration. Others, like Anna Nalangu and Joseph Malon in *Daughter of Maa*, find a better balance, whereas the Ole Kaelo sisters, Resian and Taiyo in *Blossoms of the Savannah*, have to resist oppressive acts such as circumcision and forced marriages in order to attain their education. The failures and triumphs of the different characters in these novels suggest that 'Maasainess' is negotiated at porous contact zones. What Ole Kulet reminds his readers of is that cultural identity is surviving because of its potential to negotiate with and adapt to other cultures. In exposing the different temporalities of 'Maasainess', Ole Kulet is self-reflexive of his own process of cultural adaptation and negotiation, evident in how he chooses to focus on current concerns pertinent to the Maasai, such as FGM, wildlife conservation and land issues.

The juxtaposition of Maasai and non-Maasai writers in Chapter 3 provides a different angle from which the portrayal of 'Maasainess' is considered by focussing on their different appropriations of the warrior trope. This chapter stands out in its potential to show how the image of the Maasai as a male warrior can be deployed to different ends. While the Maasai autobiographers are adopted by the National Geographic Society, which dictates a particular framing of cultural meaning, they use this as an opportunity to educate American audiences about the Maasai by lecturing, appearing in documentaries and writing autobiographical accounts of their lives as Maasai men,

which relies on the warrior trope, as signalled by the titles of their books. However, Ole Saitoti and Lekuton manage to resist the static configurations of the male warrior by drawing new nomadic maps and reversing the colonial trajectory, thus expanding the journeys of the Maasai and resisting confinement in outdated stereotypes. On the other hand, Hofmann and Budgor demonstrate Western fetishization of the warrior's body and resilience. While Hofmann's autobiography is an "exotic tale of love and adventure", Budgor's is a "quest to become the first female warrior". This thesis argues that Hofmann appropriates a conventionally masculine stance in her pursuit of the man she refers to as "my Maasai", which challenges Western notions of femininity but confirms Western notions of racial superiority and entitlement in its appropriation of 'Maasainess' as a cultural commodity, as is evidenced by the spate of best-selling autobiographies she subsequently published (*The White 5*). Budgor's stated aim to advocate for the rights of the Maasai women by challenging their exclusion from the rites of becoming a Maasai warrior while appropriating that right for herself, blithely ignorant of the privileges that allow her to do so, demonstrates her lack of understanding of or interest in the realities of Maasai culture and lived experience. Ostensibly challenging gender roles in her claim to Maasai warriorhood, her autobiography in fact asserts the most obvious markers of Western femininity, registered in the "Princess" of the title and the cover image.

In Chapter 4, I focus on how Coates and Read configure 'Maasainess' by "romancing the past" as they rehearse Maasai history as a way of exposing the residue of colonialism in the postcolonial situation of the Maasai. I explore the trail of violence that was initiated by colonial rule which imposed curtails on the Maasai nomadic lifestyle with reference to Nixon's notion of "slow violence", evident in the consequences of British land grabs and the confinement of the Maasai in reserves in order to farm or create nature reserves. These two novels place 'Maasainess' in a historical trajectory that traces the changing configurations of Maasai identity.

The concluding analytical chapter, Chapter 5, engages recent cultural productions in the East African region in the form of popular music which is 'in tune' with the

current demands of postmodernism, globalisation and late capitalism. This chapter is key in its potential to demonstrate how popular culture subverts stereotypical images of the Maasai. Enhanced by the new media and musical performance, the musicians self-consciously perform strategic exoticisation of the Maasai culture in order to challenge the stereotypical images of the Maasai. These musicians, I argue, utilize performance through dance, language and costume, as both visual and mobile signifiers of 'Maasainess' to create their self-branding and simultaneously reinscribe Maasai cultural heritage into the East African cultural fabric.

Each genre has in turn demonstrated its potency in configuring 'Maasainess' in ways that enhance its nomadicity. For instance, Ole Kulet's fiction is placed within the Maasai community where it performs a deep self-reflection on the society. His fiction carries a specific socio-cultural agenda in each novel, making him a critic of his own society. For Ole Kulet, the most important social template of the Maasai is the one created by the Maasai themselves, and it is this template that he constantly questions through his nine novels, four of which I subjected to close analysis in this study. On the other hand, the autobiographies by Ole Saitoti, Lekuton, Hofmann and Budgor emerge from tourism and the framing of the National Geographic Society. Given these contexts, the autobiographies either reminisce nostalgically about the past or contest and problematise the colonial and touristic representations of 'Maasainess'. While the two female autobiographers rely on the colonial library for ideas about being Maasai and consequently appropriate the warrior figure to write their stories, Ole Saitoti's and Lekuton's writing is inspired by their own experiences as actual warriors, although they are shaped by the National Geographic Society's cultural framing. Frank Coates, a former UN expatriate in Kenya, and David Read, a former settler in *Olmolog*, West Kilimanjaro (a part inhabited by the Maasai), use their experiences with the Maasai as an anchor for their stories. In their endeavour, both Coates and Read romanticise the history of the Maasai and disclose the slow violence that was visited upon the Maasai by Europeans, especially during the twentieth century. These two settlers, Read being an actual former settler while Coates becomes a literary settler who settles on the Maasai subject, have gained authority to author

‘Maasainess’ through their experiences with the Maasai in East Africa. In the case of musical performance by the Maasai and non-Maasai artists, we see how the artists appropriate specific aspects of ‘Maasainess’ and employ them for self-fashioning in the postmodern context. The Maasai artists in particular employ parody to ridicule stereotypical representations of the Maasai, which they themselves subversively rehearse.

The various texts in this study demonstrate the potential in viewing the nomadic lifestyle of the Maasai as a discursive tool to understand the dynamism of ‘Maasainess’. The Maasai nomads usually move from one place to another to allow for regeneration of exhausted flora, which also allows for the utilization of resources by other herbivores inhabiting the Savannah, notably the Wildebeest that migrate annually between Maasai Mara, the Kenyan side, into Serengeti, Tanzania. Landscape (particularly land inhabited by the Maasai, often referred as the Savannah) emerges as a powerful visual trope in the various texts and music videos in this study. The land conflicts which emerge in the different texts read here animate conversations around the intersections between the Maasai, their land use habits and nature conservation. Implicitly or explicitly addressed, the tensions between private land ownership, government intervention, environmental conservation and Maasai livelihoods emerge as unignorable in attempts to think through what ‘Maasainess’ is and means now. Ole Saitoti emphasizes in his work the need to recognize the Maasai’s ecological understanding for sustainable environmental conservation instead of criminalizing their livelihood. Ole Kulet, in his two recent novels, *The Vanishing Herds* (2011) and *The Elephant Dance* (2016), emphasizes the centrality of the Maasai in environmental conservation, not only locally but also in the broader African context.

My study attempted a survey of available literary and cultural productions on ‘Maasainess’, but I recognize that the texts selected are not representative or comprehensive in surveying the portrayal of ‘Maasainess’. These texts were selected for their specific situatedness within the broad spectrum of literary and cultural products on the Maasai. This study read a total of ten texts and three music videos,

but there is still a corpus of audiovisual materials, autobiographies, children's stories and oral genres which requires further research. It would be interesting to explore the relationship between wildlife conservation, ecotourism and the marginalisation of indigenous communities in East Africa. It is also important to focus on issues of voice, immediacy and focalization which affect the ways in which 'Maasainess' is both presented, perceived and circulated through new media such as film and music. Modern media forms have facilitated a wealth of oral accounts, which testify how certain individuals, especially Euro-American women, end up marrying Maasai men in pursuit of an ideal male or ideal masculinity and how they fail to bridge the cultural divide. This new version of sex tourism as a form of neo-colonialism invites study, given the popularity of the Maasai warrior as trophy husband.

'Maasainess', as a cultural reservoir in its multifarious facets is currently appropriated in ways that contribute to the African cultural renaissance. This is summarized in Abel Motika's line, "Nadumisha mila ile wengine lishashindwa", which means, "I maintain the culture that others have abandoned" ("Mi Mmasai"). By celebrating 'Maasainess' through adapting its cultural signifiers in fashion, music and film, these new genres "voice [...] the [once] silenced and marginalized" Maasai identity (Sanders 19).

Reflecting on Braidotti's assertion that "identity is retrospective, representing it entails that we can draw accurate maps, indeed, but only where we have already been and consequently no longer are" (35-36) situates my interest in configuring 'Maasainess'. The passion to write a project on 'Maasainess', or imaginative portrayals of Maasai identity, for me can only be imagined in retrospect. This passion is submerged in the ambivalence of being a woman and a Maasai who has managed to transgress the expectations of a society, of men, to inhabit a designated place in destiny. The passion to write a project on 'Maasainess', exploring the representations of Maasai identity in various literary and cultural productions, is an act of resistance: resistance to stereotypes resulting from normalized conceptions of women and of the Maasai. This resistance is encapsulated in an experience I once had: walking home

after visiting a relative in our village in Arusha one evening in the year 2003, I met a man who was probably a few years older than me. He boldly asked my name, then proceeded to ask the familiar ‘let’s get acquainted questions’ that often precede flirtatious encounters. Learning that I was about to embark on my undergraduate studies, he gave a categorical observation: “but a woman will always end up in the kitchen”. I would not recognize this man if I met him again, nor do I even recall his name, but the observation stuck with me. Being born Maasai, in urban Arusha, at Olorien, a village which features multiple ethnicities, I became a Maasai at a cultural ‘contact zone’, to borrow Pratt’s concept. This cultural mosaic is in part a product of a history of migrant labour from central Tanzania, at the Bwana (Sir) Miller Coffee Estate. In this context, my Maasai identity is often qualified as that of the Mwarusha Maasai (Maasai agro pastoralists), a community derogatorily considered ‘spotted’ Maasai, so named for the root of the word, *Arusha*, ‘*Arus*’, which means spotted. Despite a sense of displacement caused by its various nomadisms, I embrace my identity as Maasai, because, like Braidotti’s polyglot for whom “being in between languages constitutes a vantage point in deconstructing identity” (12), it has enabled me to critically engage my own position by undertaking the academic journey of which this thesis is the result. Having had the opportunity to pursue formal education, my academic journey has been an expression of resistance to the placement of women in the kitchen, while it also sets out to challenge stereotypes of the Maasai people and the prejudices that derive from these. This subject position, as a ‘spotted’ formally educated Maasai, allows me to draw the maps and make connections between being a woman and being Maasai.

In reading the various texts in this study, I show how literary and cultural products animate discussions around images, tropes and identities which are often taken for granted. This agency to reconfigure Maasai identity is productive in re-inscribing Maasai identity into the East African cultural fabric from which it was almost made extinct through the touristic gaze and the agents of anthropological nostalgia who maintain and reduce Maasai identity into a single static visual image. In configuring ‘Maasainess’ in fiction, autobiography and music, I aim to reinsert this cultural

signifier into the on-going conversations in the postcolonial cultural site where ‘Maasainess’ has held a peripheral role.

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