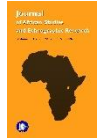




## The discourse of autobiographical intention: An analysis of selected Kenyan autobiographies



Review article



This article is published in Nairobi, Kenya by Royallite Global in the:

**Journal of African Studies and Ethnographic Research**, Volume 2, Issue 1, 2020

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### Article Information

Submitted: 27<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Accepted: 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020

Published: 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest was reported by the authors

Funding: None



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ISSN: e-2708-0811, p-2708-0803

To read the paper online, please scan this QR code



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### Abstract

The death and resurrection of the author has made for interesting discourse since Wimsatt and Beardsley famously attacked the author's intention in writing as a fallacious presumption in 1946 and Barthes declared, in 1967, the death of the author, to when critics such as Carlier and Watts resurrected her/him in the first decade of the new millennium. By anchoring itself on Autobiographical theory, particularly on the tenets of Linda Anderson and Francis Hart, and by lending itself to a critical methodology of textual evaluation, this article particularises the discourse of intentionality in the genre of autobiography by making a close reading of selected Kenyan autobiographies: *Not yet Uhuru*, *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles*; *My Story* and *Unbowed*; *One Woman's Story*. The article argues that the significance of intentionality in authorship gains credence in the emerging critical engagement in marginality, particularly on women's writing, writing on differently sexualised bodies, writing on differently abled bodies and equally significant in the emerging narratives of re-imagining the postcolonial project of national construction and citizenship. The article argues that to thematise these spaces the re-instantiation of the subjective presence of the author in time and place is as significant as the re-instantiation of her/ his voice.

**Keywords:** apology, confession, intention, memoir



### How to Cite:

Nyandoro, G. O. (2020). The discourse of autobiographical intention: An analysis of selected Kenyan autobiographies. *Journal of African Studies and Ethnographic Research*, 2(1). Retrieved from <https://royalliteglobal.com/african-studies/article/view/240>



## Public Interest Statement

The rise of autobiographical writing in Africa has reinvigorated the rich African tradition of narrative telling and refocused interest in the continent's greater need to tell her story in the increasingly complex, dynamic and fast paced global stage by not only reclaiming marginalised subjectivities but also by re-imagining, re-situating and repositioning narratives of national reconstruction and conversations on state and citizenship. A significant attribute to this repositioning is the lending back the subjective narrative voice of the author to reclaim self-speaking position and re-instantiate little narratives of self as the fulcrum of metanarratives of national and global conversations.

### 1.0 Introduction

Intention, however, is further defined as a particular kind of 'honest' intention which then guarantees the truth of writing (Anderson 2001).

As argued by Anderson (2001), an autobiographer attempts to honestly represent a truthful account of private history; adorning a great sense of integrity with the view of winning the reader's trust. W. K Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley (1946), critiqued the author's intention as fallacious and asserted the independence of the text from its author. This position questioned the place of the author's intention in literary texts. Augmenting this position, in 1967, Roland Barthes declared the death of the author (Barthes, 2001) while; Mitchel Foucault argued the case for what he referred to as the 'author function' by which he insinuated that an author does not exist as an individual but as an authority of a given work (Lodge, 2008). Such assertions significantly destabilised the use of author's intention in critical discourse.

Recent discussions by postcolonial critics tend to be sympathetic towards giving voices to diverse, and, especially, marginalised subjects to articulate themselves hence resurrecting the author (Carlier and Watts, 2000). Such sympathies collapse into discussions about autobiography as a site in which marginalised voices such as those of women, the disabled or postcolonial natives can speak themselves into existence. This debate has effectively brought into the fore the presence of the author and, subsequently, his authorial intention in writing, because autobiography resituates the writer into the work (Anderson, 2001). According to Corbett (1992) by resituating the writer into his work and the attendant revival of intentionality serves to collapse literary legitimacy with desired subjectivity. As Anderson argues, intention in autobiography is critical in linking the identity between the author, narrator and protagonist (2001). The linking of author, narrator and protagonist is important to autobiography because autobiography deals with a myriad of issues which fluctuate between contestation and consensus.

These issues include arguments about whether autobiography is based on historical fact or fiction; or, whether autobiography is based on truth or design. Lejeune's definition of autobiography as "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on her/his own life, in particular on the development of his personality" (1982, p.193) situates the author's intention as central in autobiography. Anderson emphasises that this is especially so if it is 'honest,' as it guarantees the 'truth of the writing' (2001). The terms 'honest' and 'truth' as used by Anderson may be contestable. However, by assessing the autobiographer's sense of place; sense of self; sense of history and the motivation for writing it is possible to assess to what extent s/he is trying to wrestle with truth, to use Gusdorf's words (1956). As for Corbett (1992), by resituating the writer in the work it mitigates the danger of anonymity and alienation of the author. Anonymity in autobiography is unthinkable especially because of its proximity to history. As a human subject, the author contextualises the spatial and temporal setting of the text.

It is, therefore, a function of self-representation for the autobiographer to be "knowable" to readers. As Hart (1970) argues, autobiography is a species of history which foregrounds the relationship between narrated events and actual events. He, further, asserts that the historicity of the recreation is imperative, even when the autobiographer knows the terrible elusiveness of that historicity. This article argues that history, truth and integrity can be understood as the quintessential intention of the autobiographer which in turn, are the basic premise upon which autobiographers construct and stage self-identity as a transient process. To demonstrate this position, the article pays attention to three Kenyan autobiographies for illustration: *Not yet Uhuru* (1967), *Walking in Kenyatta Struggles; My Story* (2006) and *Unbowed; One Woman's Story* (2006).

## 2.0 Memoir: Repossessing the Historicity of the Self

According to Hart (1970), memoir is personal history that seeks to articulate or repossess the historicity of the self. Writing retrospectively, the autobiographer reconstructs the past by attempting to retrieve recoverable selves. These selves include childhood, school life, family life, the advent of career among others. The recovery of selves is not an easy prospect for many reasons. At the point of writing, the autobiographer is neither innocent nor neutral about the past. There is kinship between the set of circumstances s/he is immersed in and the trajectory of events s/he would like to ascribe to self. For instance, at the time of writing *Not yet Uhuru* (1967) Odinga has had an acrimonious fall out with Jomo Kenyatta and his colleagues in Kenya's pre independence nationalist movement.

Ndegwa writes his autobiography many years after his own days in power during the Kenyatta state. As they cast their eyes back to the trajectory of their lives autobiographers cannot be said to be innocent in their retrieval of recoverable selves. The private history of the autobiographer is intertwined with the evolving public history of the social structure in which the autobiographer is situated. The historicity of the self is, therefore, anchored on the historicity of

the collective and public social structure. For instance, the evolving discourses of ethnic and civic nationalism and the discourse of globalism and globalisation affect the autobiographical subject's sense of security, belonging and solidarity. Ndegwa recovers the historicity of his private self against the ambivalent but evolving ethnic nationalist patriarchal social structure in Kenya; Odinga retrieves the historicity of his private history against the mutating Kenyan civic nationalist social structure while Maathai retrieves her private historical self as a resistance narrative against patriarchal ethnic nationalist networks, and the patriarchal civic nationalist network.

As the autobiographer retrieves private history s/he is intensely aware that s/he is recreating it for public consumption. S/he is also aware that private history is intertwined with communal and societal narratives circulating in public spaces. This awareness leads to the autobiographer's interpretation of private self-history alongside the interpretation of communal and social narratives within the public domain in view of aligning the narrative with what is in circulation or what would generally be acceptable for public consumption. The autobiographer faces two possibilities: the narrative may align with the general public expectation in view of circulating communal narratives; however, private history may also be antithetical to expected reception by the assumed reader. Either way, the autobiographer is conscious of the likely reception of private history in view of what is generally acceptable to the public.

Similarly, the autobiographer, especially if s/he has led a fairly visible public life, is equally aware that the public has its own presumptions as to what constitutes her/his personality and temperament based on public utterances and actions. These are issues the autobiographer would consider in constructing private history for public consumption, so that the image the public encounters in the autobiography is approximate to the one already in circulation. In the event the autobiographer's constructed image sharply differs with one in circulation the autobiographer would have to employ appropriate defamiliarisation strategies to disrupt the perceived image already in circulation and replace it with another, which would have to be equally believable. Whatever the case, private history which the autobiographer retrieves and stages as truthfully representing self, must be believable to the reader.

Diverse publics influence the autobiographer's self-construction. This is because; the autobiographer sees in the public the significant other or the double self. For instance, Maathai, finds her narrative space in the tortured past of her private history as a divorcee and as a struggling single mother. Her construction of self is, therefore, intensely aware of her alienation from a functional family as understood by patriarchy which often includes the father as a figure head. Because patriarchy is often constructed around ethnic networks and patronage her alienation from the family set up effectively alienates her from the patronage of ethnic networks.

Her past is also informed by a symbolic divorce from statist patriarchal networks. This happens when she engages the ruling elite in a struggle to protect Uhuru Park from an intended construction of, Times Towers, a building expected to host the headquarters of the then ruling

party KANU. The construction of Times Towers would have been at the expense of the park. These struggles lead to her falling out with the political class which has significant influence in the state. This is evident throughout her narrative in her choice of characterisation, theme and language use. The emphasis in her character selection and the painting of character portraits is on the connectivity and solidarity of women throughout the world to confront local challenges unique to them. Wangari, thus, projects unique subjective identities such as sexualised bodies (her divorce symbolising her body as a discarded body within the context of a heterosexual social structure) into collective public identities galvanised by universality.

The presence of the other in the autobiographer's self-construction bears itself out in form of the audience that the autobiographer seeks to address. Maathai situates her autobiography in a global context because her audience is global. The global context of Maathai's audience can be discerned from her language use. For instance, in her entire narrative she offers explanations to places that would be familiar to her local audience, or draws allusions from other places to demonstrate local situations or to describe local places. For instance, in explaining how useful Uhuru Park is to Nairobi city dwellers, she compares it with Hyde Park in London or Central Park in New York City. This need to appeal to a global audience greatly determines her choice of subject and themes. Themes such as the protection of the environment from depredation; the struggle for human rights and dignity of the down trodden; the struggle towards greater co-existence among people of diverse ethnicities in view of ethnic cleansing; rallying citizens of the global south in an appeal to the global north to write off debts for the poor countries among others; are themes that are in consonance with the perception of many global cosmopolitans.

Odinga's intended audience is national as he sets out to explain the immediate set of circumstances in context. The acrimonious fall out with pre-independence nationalists foregrounds Odinga's intention to retrieve the historicity of the self as it has strong allusion to the past. Ndegwa writes his autobiography several years after being in positions of influence and the ethnic patriarchal patronage with which he and the elite of his time constructed during the Kenyatta state. At the time of writing, Kibaki, a fellow member of his ethnic community is president partly suggesting his nostalgic identification with the Kenyatta regime.

The autobiographers' awareness of various publics they address dominates self-interpretation and thematic thrust in the narratives. For instance, an event such as Mau Mau which is narrated by each of the autobiographers is interpreted according to these stated perspectives. Maathai condemns both protagonists in the war hence suggesting a neutral stance. She condemns the colonial hegemonic practices that lead to the war but on equal measure condemns the bloodletting from both sides of the protagonists. She imprints the image of a universal arbiter who realises that though the Mau Mau war was particular to the Kenyan colonial history the dehumanisation on both sides was a universal assault of human sensibility. In her analysis, she asserts that three things led to the uprising land: freedom and governance. However, she avoids

being sentimental and objectively shows how Mau Mau equally hurt innocent people. By contrast, Odinga strongly condemns the label Mau Mau which he says is colonial abuse for all members of the Kikuyu community. According to him, the proper name for the insurgents was the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (a military wing of the Kenya Parliament). He also demonstrates the contributions of other ethnic communities most notably Asians, Maasai, Luo and Kamba in the Movement. Odinga attempts to give the movement a national character.

Ndegwa foregrounds the movement's ethnic character. Ndegwa's interpretation of the character of the movement is consistent with his narrative perspective of the Kikuyu ethnic hegemony. Although he is urbane by training and outlook his narrative is consistent in its reification of the messianic motif of his hero, Kenyatta, whom he sees as a Kikuyu patriarch and the justification of the Kikuyu ethnic hegemony. By focusing on the audience the autobiographer reconstructs self as consistent, focused and purposeful. The art of autobiography, argues Mandel, "is the conscious shaping of the selected events of one's life into a coherent whole" (1968: 216). This is because man's life does not contain artistic unity. No living man can decide the terrain of events in his life nor fully determine the circumstances of his existence.

As a child, Maathai is brought up in Mr. D. N Neylan's farm where her father worked as a driver. Unlike the other autobiographies under discussion, she does not display any sense of criticism or resentment to the person or character of Mr. Neylan though he is a colonial settler. She does not portray any sense of resentment to the relationship between her father and Neylan which she describes as cordial. On the contrary, she demonstrates the positive aspects of Mr. Neylan. For instance, she gives an example of a time she is detained on her way to Limuru by authorities on suspicion that she was Mau Mau. It takes Neylan's intervention for her to be released. Her education from primary school to university, she avers, is largely in Roman Catholic institutions. Most of the teachers are initially white sisters and later, at university, American whites. She narrates glowingly about the positive influence of these acquaintances in her life. She is, especially, fond of her experience in the US which she believes opens her eyes to the global context of things (2006). This global perspective enables her to extend her identification horizon to other humans and environment.

Mandel (1968) asserts that even when s/he does not say so, the autobiographer's narrative is designed to make a fable of her/his life, to tell the story, to create a pattern of incident, to make a dramatic point. By trying to recollect the historicity of the self's past, the autobiographer enters the narrative both as the narrator and the protagonist. As a first person narrator, the autobiographer selects what to remember so that s/he paints self in positive light. As protagonist, the autobiographer constructs self as the hero of the narrative by selecting heroic actions contextualised in time and space.

For instance, Odinga emphasises his prominent role in the release of Kenyatta from prison and his radical position against colonial government. Ndegwa emphasises his role in the transient

period between the colony and the post colony arguing that the nascent post independent government required pragmatic politics and not the politics of ideology espoused by Odinga, Mboya and Kaggia. Wangari emphasises her efforts in seeking global interventions to resuscitate collapsing instruments of the civic nationalist state and to protect the state from a highly divisive competition of ethnic nationalism. In this way, selected autobiographers project themselves not only as products of history but rather as shaping the history of the state.

Anderson (2001) has drawn our attention to the fact that the creation of a consistent pattern in man's life is a major weakness of autobiography as it creates the perception of a universal subject. Yet, according to Morris (1966), autobiography is a species of history – a narrative of events occurring in time. For, autobiography to be a species of history, there has to be a relationship between events narrated by the autobiographer and actual historical events. The historicity of the recreation is imperative, even though the autobiographer knows the terrible elusiveness of that historicity (Hart,1970). The historicity of autobiography and its fiction are constructed concurrently. Mandel (1968) has argued that when an autobiographer recreates her/his past s/he may choose to: justify past actions; confess a life of misdeeds; look at the past as an inventory of events; look at her/his role in history or a given culture; or look at her/ his life as an end in itself or as a means to an end. By writing consciously, the author makes decisions about what to put in and what to leave out at every turn.

### **3.0 Confession: Essentialising the Truth of the Self**

Hart (1970) argues that confession is personal history that seeks to communicate or express the essential nature or the truth of the self. It is essential the autobiographer wins the trust of the reader. To do so, s/he creates the impression that all s/he is narrating is the basic truth. The assumption here is that, by reading an autobiography one would get to know the essential nature of the author; the truth of his being. One would have to believe that the autobiographer truthfully bears out private life unheeded for the world to see. Truth, therefore, becomes the quintessential intention of the autobiographer. According to Mandel (1968, p.220), the autobiographer "...may never falsify her/his facts for a fictional purpose without giving up her/his claim to the name of autobiographer". The ambivalence between history, truth and fiction makes autobiography have an aspect of unreliability in its manipulation of truth. This makes Hart argue that unreliability is an inescapable condition in autobiography not a rhetorical option (Hart,1970).

The selves which the autobiographer intends to recover are entangled in a complex web. While some are better suppressed and forgotten some call for elucidation and celebration. While some are within the public domain and can be corroborated by both oral and written sources some are intensely personal and private. Autobiography is a self-conscious exercise to use Anderson's words (2001). The retrieval and reconstruction of these multiple and complex selves is not an easy task. As Mandel warns, the challenge for the autobiographer is that he "...cannot

capture the entirety of his life and personality – many social roles, his self-deception, his image as reflected in the eyes of his family, friends, enemies” (1968, p. 223). This requires that the autobiographer selects carefully what recoverable selves represent the image which s/he intends to construct and stage as constitutive of self-identity.

At the time of writing Maathai is a world renowned environmentalist; a government agent serving as assistant minister in the Ministry for Environment and Natural Resources; a Member of Parliament courtesy of a party whose support has an ethnic character; a long serving member of the Civil Society; a divorcee among others. These selves cannot be weighted at the same level and achieve equal import. She cannot for instance, foreground the fact of having been sponsored to Parliament by a political party with an ethnic outlook without compromising the global cosmopolitanism of the identity she would like to project. Nor can she dwell too much into the detailed circumstances of her divorce. In like manner, Odinga wanting to project the image of a nationalist down plays his intimate relationship with communist and socialist countries although they supposedly fund his activities (Branch 2012, Hornsby 2012, Ndegwa, 2006). Silences are, therefore, complicit in the autobiographical project.

Ndegwa having presided over the Kenyatta state when the post-colonial state entrenches the post-colonial challenges (which have continued to derail nation statist cohesion such as the land problem, ethnic tensions, an escalating debt crisis, a large gap between the rich and the poor and corruption among others) cannot foreground them without compromising his spirited campaign for the legitimacy of the Kenyatta state.

Every autobiographer implicitly or explicitly professes to say nothing but the truth about what s/he has selected to make public (Mandel, 1963). Although Maathai does not explicitly swear that she will say nothing but the truth, she implicitly does so by the many claims she makes in various intersections of her narrative. Anderson (2001) has drawn our attention to the possibility of presenting truth in terms of constant reiteration of avowals and disclaimers. For instance, at one moment in the narrative, the narrator’s husband wants to get to office through the electoral process in which he and she canvass for popular mandate from the citizens. During the campaigns her husband makes many promises which the narrator suspects he may not fulfill. She foregrounds a conscionable mind as she cautions her husband from making promises that are untruthful. In so doing, she calls attention to her commitment to truth and honesty and therefore to the fact that the events she is narrating are equally truthful. According to the narrator, as soon as Mwangi wins the elections she follows him up on his electoral promises:

“What are you going to do with all the people you promised the jobs to?” I asked.

“That was the campaign”, he replied. “Now we are in parliament”

“But they might not vote for us next time”, I urged him to remember.

“Don’t worry, they won’t remember”.



I couldn't believe what I was hearing. "Excuse me?" I cried. "Of course, they'll, ask, 'where are those jobs you promised?'" (Maathai, 2006, Pp. 126-127).

By foregrounding the deceit of Mwangi, the narrator is calling attention to her commitment to truth. This incident she argues is the basis for the painful episodes in her private life which lead to the disagreement, separation and divorce with her estranged husband Mwangi Mathai. That is beside her second reason, which is that it is probable that Mwangi's friends incited him against having a better educated wife. According to her, Mwangi does not appreciate her efforts as a wife and mother even as she wraps these functions with her professional duties. She regrets that Mwangi does not recognise the support she accords him in his political campaigns. She dismisses Mwangi's accusations of adultery as hearsay. The reader, however, discerns the treacherous nature of truth when she claims that she had preferred that the matter be tried out of public view to avoid 'washing dirty linen in public' to ostensibly protect the children (145).

Gusdorf (1956, p.118), however, warns that the whole truth of life can never be known because while the autobiographer is writing he is "but part of the whole and he can have no distance or detachment". For instance, when Maathai arrives from the USA she comes with a hand written letter of offer for employment sent to her by a professor in zoology. To her dismay, she finds that the professor has already recruited someone else for the position. The other person, she tells us, shares the same gender and ethnic community with the professor and she believes it is the reason why she is left out. The narrator concludes that she is discriminated against because of her gender and ethnic difference. An interesting parallel, however, can be drawn on how she gets a job to teach at the department of veterinary medicine (she is not trained in veterinary medicine). While she is job hunting, she gets to live with her brother in law, Nderitu Mathenge, who is a Dean in the School of Veterinary Medicine. Through Nderitu she is introduced to Professor Reinhold Hofmann, who had been sent by the University of Giessen to establish Kenya's own Department of Veterinary Anatomy in the school of Veterinary Medicine. Hofmann takes her up as an assistant in microanatomy. Although she draws conclusion on her exclusion from the department of zoology, as having been on the basis of what she considers to be ethnic reasons; she fails to notice that she gets her job in the School of Veterinary Medicine courtesy of nepotism (due to her relationship with Nderitu).

Truth is not only evasive. It can also be inclined to a high degree of discomfort to any individual attempting to wholesomely confront it. Autobiographers do not always foreground truth in a direct sense. One of the ways that autobiographers confront the elusive question of truth is by silencing some aspects of the autobiographer's lives that may be inconvenient to the portraits that they tend to construct. For instance, Duncan Ndegwa consistently avoids drawing clear portraits in his role as the vice chairman in GEMA. Odinga in his autobiography accuses

Kenyatta of being a puppet of Britain and Mboya of US. He vigorously defends his friendship with East as part of the non-alignment that Kenya had chosen.

Matiba (2000) narrates an account that suggests that Odinga is not entirely truthful about his relationship with the east. According to Matiba, in 1963, the Bulgarian government gave the Kenyan government 96 scholarships. The Kenyan government selected students who were to receive these scholarships. At that time, Davidson Ngini had taken over from Mrs. Brotherton at the Higher Education section. The Bulgarian government had sent an aircraft to collect them. Departure was to be at 7.00 A.M and Ngini had lined up his students at the airport by 5.30 A. M. and had all been checked in by 6.00 A.M. As they sat in the departure lounge ready to leave, they could see the aircraft they were going to fly in being serviced and they waited calmly and eagerly ready to board. However, just about 7.30 A.M three buses full of students selected by Odinga arrived. While the other students in the departure lounge stared in disbelief the buses drove off, the steps to the aircraft were removed, the doors were closed, the engine started and within 15 minutes or so the plane was airborne and off it went. The government selected students were left stranded at Nairobi. Eventually, the Indian government had to intervene and some of these students were taken to study various technical courses in India.

Truth is an ambiguous and elusive term. Some of the challenges which Mandel (1968) notes which militate against truth include the fact that life is too big, too formless, too pointless, too ugly in some details and too tedious in the hands of a great man to be rendered in all its complex reality. "One of the joys of reading autobiographies" asserts Pascal (2015, p.75), is "watching a wrestling with truth". Howarth (1974) argues that the theme of autobiography is life. Every autobiographer attempts to reconstruct his life as he conceives to have lived it. According to him, autobiographers attempt to curve public monuments out of their private lives. To engage in the description of the personal life, the autobiographer acts like an artist attempting to paint a self-portrait (Howarth, 1974). Like a painter, the autobiographer works with reversed images beaming from the mirror. The autobiographer struggles with the contradiction between the illusion and the reality about the self.

#### **4.0 Apology: Realising the Integrity of the Self**

According to Hart (1970) apology is an autobiographical intention which seeks to demonstrate or realise the integrity of the self. This is important if the autobiographer is to win the trust of the reader as honest and truthful and to help establish the integrity of the narrative. This may involve making known to the reader past actions which s/he knows the reader is unlikely to approve of in order to suggest that s/he holds a different view of those actions now unlike then. This may play a great role towards sanitising self-image and projecting self as an ordinary human being capable of making mistakes. The autobiographical self maybe projected as a single rhetorical self or as many contradictory and unstable selves (Hart, 1970).

An autobiographer is really writing a story of two lives: his life as it appears to him from his own position, when he looks out at the world and his life as it appears from outside in the minds of others. The tension between two autobiographical lives is exhibited in the conflict between the autobiographical situation which the autobiographer recognises and attempts to manipulate toward some truth or integrity as his relationship with his recoverable past (Hart, 1970). For instance, as a man Odinga cannot detach himself from his gendered body. How he interpellates the social structure is partly informed by his masculinity. Odinga's human agency as a nationalist and advocate of justice and human dignity is undermined by constructed gendered thoughts emotions, desires and actions. The patriarchal social structure in which he is situated inscribes his gendered world view and consciousness. He describes an incident in his life which he appears to regret:

I treated my wife as I handled my students. I gave her a timetable by which she was to suckle, wash and care for the child. For my wife this was the last straw. Like me she is hot tempered, though her temper cools fast. But from the beginning of our marriage I had treated her like a child, ordering her to prepare food, garden our plot, keep the chicken, clean the house, and mend my clothes exactly as and when I demanded. After the birth of our son we had a very harsh quarrel which I knocked her down. I was shocked by my own action when I thought about it. The following morning my wife left me (Odinga 1967, p. 53-54)

By making public this spectacle, Odinga attempts to sanitise his credentials as an agent of equity and social justice. A major argument in postcolonial discussions is how under the guise of national stability states elide differences and perpetrate oppression on marginalised women, ethnic groups or citizens considered to be of lower classes. The narrator's emotions thoughts and actions exist within the spaces of interaction between the narrator and the other as they are situated within the social structure. In many instances, in the narrative forces beyond the narrator instigate a chain reaction of emotions and actions in the narrator which the narrator appropriates as if they were innate. Nevertheless, by been critical about some of his uncomfortable selves the narrator wins the sympathies of the reader.

One of the early influences on the Odinga's consciousness is Carey Francis. Francis determines that the narrator should join Maseno School for his education. This early acquaintance with Carey Francis leaves a lasting influence Odinga's personality and character. Not only does he take after Francis as a Math's teacher, he, especially panders to the moral rectitude of Francis' s inclination by becoming a student pastor at Makerere (Odinga, 1967). He also takes to dressing like Carey Francis by wearing Khaki shorts and a shamba jacket. Despite this obvious influence by Carey Francis on him and despite the active role that Francis plays to bring Odinga to the fore as

amongst the earliest elite in Kenya, Odinga suggests that it is a mark of his great sense of integrity that he is able to stand up to Francis's patronage not only for himself (Odinga) but for other African teachers at Maseno school.

The colonial structure is dynamic and retains its institutions in the post colony. A significant number of events make this clear to the reader. For instance, colonial institutions influence the structure and ideals of the nationalist movement by identifying leaders within the movement who could assist in its transition. Taking advantage of various interests within the African leadership the colonial structure plays the leaders one against the other and especially, as Odinga suggests against him and the others African leaders as result of 'the awful nonsense to which Odinga Odinga stands committed' (1967, p.161).

Odinga opines that the colonial structure enlists Jomo Kenyatta, whose freedom from jail the he (Odinga) had tirelessly fought to achieve. Frustrated by the Odinga's insistence on Kenyatta's release and by perceiving him as an impediment to the colonial structure's creation of an alternative leadership within the nationalist movement, Odinga avers that, the colonial structure reinvents Kenyatta's image and negotiates with him with the possibilities of working together with him in the post colony. The colonial structure subverts Odinga's resilient struggle for the release of Kenyatta to derail his nationalist liberation agenda. More ironically, Renison, initially, attempts to recruit Odinga to connive against Kenyatta, an attempt which Odinga asserts to have rejected (Odinga, 1967). By directly striking a rapport with Kenyatta behind Odinga's back the colonial structure determines how Kenyatta is to be reintegrated into public life. In Odinga's opinion, upon Kenyatta's release the colonial structure arranges to surround him (Kenyatta) with a new group of advisors which creates a rift between Odinga and Kenyatta (Odinga, 1967). Odinga's interpretation of his relationship with the colonial structure, as well as his relationship with Kenyatta and the sense of betrayal it beholds, helps Odinga constrict self-image of a great nationalist of high integrity.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The autobiographer's initial intention may not satisfy the reader. This is because the author's initial intention may prove illusory. One of the challenges in constructing intention is that recollection in autobiography is never simple. Nevertheless, for the autobiographer to fully emplot her/his life into a single narrative, s/he has to confront the diversity of self and confront that reality with the autographical intention of memoir, confession and apology as and when necessary to weave the narrative.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Bionote**

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