THE CONVERGENCE OF SELF AND HISTORY IN ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF'S *THIS CHILD WILL BE GREAT* AND JOE KHAMISI'S *DASH BEFORE DUSK: A SLAVE DESCENDANT'S JOURNEY IN FREEDOM*

JUNE CHEBET CHELULE
C50/8508/2017

A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

2019

DECLARATION

This project is my own original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any university:

Signed…….. Date …….

June Chebet Chelule
C50/8508/2017

This project has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors:

First Supervisor
Dr. Jennifer Muchiri

Signed…….. Date …….

Second Supervisor
Dr. Miriam Musonye

Signed…….. Date …….

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge the support of my supervisors Dr. Jennifer Muchiri and Dr. Miriam Musonye throughout the duration of the research project and during the course work that shaped the ideas and resources for the project. Their guidance has been invaluable and I am forever inspired by their commitment.

I am grateful to my lecturers at the Department of Literature for their dedication during my course work. Special thanks goes to Prof. Ciarunji Chesaina, Prof. Monica Mweseli, Prof. Peter Wasamba, Prof. Alina Rinkanya, Prof. Henry Indangasi, Dr. Masumi Odari, Dr. Godwin Siundu, Dr. Judith Jefwa, and Dr. Makau Kitata who made my studies to be memorable. I am a different person because of my interaction with them.

I appreciate the friendship of all my classmates who include Sifa Toywa, Mercy Maloba, Godfrey Ikahu, Howard Obwao, and Sam Dennis Otieno in the 2016 class; Edna Olondo, Otieno Otieno, Mary Ndungu, Ruth Kitavi and Atem Jurkuch in the 2017 class which I belong; Yego, Munga, Wayne and Rosa Ireri in the 2018 class. I will miss the discussions and rigorous study pressure we shared.

I am grateful to my immediate and extended family who offered me assistance in material and emotional form. I particularly want to thank Charles for his support, dad Wilson, mum Margaret, siblings Mercy, Faith, Kimisoi, and May Chepkorir. We are family and that is something. My nephews Bolton, Dwayne, and my niece Ella- yours are on the way.

I also appreciate my close friends Veronica Cherotich, Joseph Wangila and Grace Odipo for their encouragement all through. I acknowledge all my former colleagues in Kericho and my entire circle of friends, mentors, spiritual parents, students and neighbours. Together we are stronger.

Finally, I give glory to God for the gift of life and for the ability to pursue our passions. His thoughts about our lives are greater than ours. We are yet to change the world in many ways and in our own unique manner. We are the present, we are the future and we do matter.

DEDICATION

To my son Ryan Kipkirui, with love.

To the strong women in my life:
Margaret Toweett Chelule
Mum, we treasure you.

In memory of Grandmother
Rachel Chemibei Toweett
Your legacy lives on in us.

For the future generation that will be after we are gone-
There once was a people.

ABSTRACT

This study examines convergence of self and history in Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's *This Child will be Great* and Joe Khamisi's *Dash before Dusk: A Slave's Descendant's Journey in Freedom.* The autobiographies contain personal and collective memories. Sirleaf captures a period in the Republic of Liberia, a West African nation's history and Khamisi's autobiography is a good record of East Africa specifically Kenya's immediate history beginning from colonial to post-independence times. The study is guided by the autobiographical and new historicism literary theories. The objectives of this study are to discuss the convergence of self and history in the selected autobiographies, to examine how the authors inscribe themselves into the histories of their countries through their autobiographies and to interrogate how the autobiographers interpret the history of their nations through their life narratives. The study is divided into three chapters and a conclusion. Chapter one forms the background of the study. In chapter two, I discuss self-inscription in Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's *This Child will be Great*, and in chapter three I interrogate how Joe Khamisi recalls and interprets personal and collective memories in his autobiography *Dash Before Dusk: A Slave's Descendant's Journey in Freedom*. I have done a brief comparison of the two autobiographies in the conclusion. I have highlighted the similarities and differences in the writing style and on the reflections of the two autobiographers that lead to the convergence of self and history. The study aims to advance knowledge on self and history in autobiographies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Autobiographies can be read as histories of self, family, gender, community, nation, race and continents. They do not begin from a vacuum but are premised on existing historical realities. The historical records of realities define the autobiographer. Roy Pascal in *Design and Truth in Autobiography* argues that "an autobiography is interplay between the past and the present. Apart from being a record of the author's life, it is both a literary and historical discourse" (11).

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson in *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* argue that the authors of autobiographies write to present a history of the self and not history as observed by others. They observe that "the writer becomes, in the act of writing, both the observing subject and the object of investigation, remembrance, and contemplation (5). In Greek, *autos* signifies "self," *bios* "life," and *graphe* "writing." Taken together in this order, the words denote "self life writing." More recently, French theorist Philippe Lejeune has expanded that definition: "We call autobiography the retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his own existence when he puts the principal accent upon his life, especially upon the story of his own personality" (1). Therefore we can conclude that autobiography is a story of an individual's life that is written by him or herself. This is the preferred definition for this study.

This study focuses on two autobiographies namely, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf *This Child Will Be Great* and Joe Khamisi *Dash Before Dusk: A Slave Descendant's Journey in Freedom.* Both recount a personal and collective story. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was an Assistant minister, a Minister and the President of Liberia from 2006 to 2018. Her autobiography captures a period in the Republic of Liberia, a West African nation's history and Africa in general from her birth until her inauguration in 2006. Sirleaf was born in Monrovia in 1938 to a Gola father and a mixed Kru and German mother. In January 2006, she was sworn in as the first elected female African president of Liberia. The country had experienced civil war for fourteen years and her victory ushered in an era of peace.

Sirleaf has co-authored *Women, War and Peace*: *The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building* with Elisabeth Rehn published in 2002 by UNIFEM. They discuss their experiences in war and give their views on the role of women in mediation. In it they argue that problems such as HIV/AIDS are made worse by wars. Jeniffer Muchiri in "The Intersection of the Self and History in Kenyan Autobiographies" observes that "an autobiography allows writers not only to narrate their life experiences but also to weave their personal stories to those of their societies" (83). Sirleaf tells her story alongside the collective story of Liberia. Her physical fields of identity formation include the United States of America where she studied and worked, Barbados in the Caribbean, Brazil and many African countries including Kenya. The autobiography seeks to set the record straight about her origin, her role in Taylor's leadership and extradition, her marriage, divorce and decision not to remarry, her relationships and her ideologies.

Joe Khamisi is a Kenyan author based in both Kenya and the United States of America. His main interest is in non-fiction. Khamisi worked as a journalist, a diplomat, a CEO and a Member of Parliament. Khamisi's autobiography is a good record of East Africa specifically Kenya's immediate history beginning from colonial times to post-independence days especially from the early 1950s up to 2007. It captures sixty five years of his life. His first published book is *The Politics of Betrayal: Diary of a Kenyan Legislator* (2011). It gives an insight into the inner circle of Kenyan leaders and how they make pacts and betray the voters as they ensure they have a grip on power. Khamisi gives his perception of the Moi administration and how Moi betrayed his former loyal allies when he settled on Uhuru Kenyatta as his successor. He chronicles how the people who had been humiliated came together to defeat the ruling party and narrates the Kibaki government key players who include Kalonzo Musyoka. Khamisi claims that he was instrumental in the alliance that saw Kalonzo as deputy president in the second term. The memoir also highlights the events that led to the 'Kibaki Tosha' declaration by Raila Odinga among other key political events in Kenya.

Dash Before Dusk: A Slave Descendant's Journey in Freedom (2014) which is the focus of this study is his second publication. On 7 April 2016, Khamisi released *The Wretched Africans, a narrative on the slave trade in Eastern and Central Africa* which pays tribute to

the thousands of Africans who perished in the 19th century slavery. The fourth book published in 2018 is *Kenya: Looters and Grabbers, 54 Years of Corruption and Plunder by the Elite, 1963-2017.* It reveals the inner details of corruption in Kenya since it got independence in 1963. It is divided into four sections capturing the four presidents' eras of President Jomo Kenyatta, President Daniel Moi, President Mwai Kibaki to the current President, Uhuru Kenyatta. Kenyan bookshops refused to stock it because of fear of legal action which led the author to sell an online pdf copy at a discounted price. A pirated copy was also circulated online which led to heated discussions on social media platforms.

Khamisi's *Dash Before Dusk: A Slave Descendant's Journey in Freedom* addresses challenges in his childhood years, career choices**,** immigration**,** spouse and family support in career, giving back to society and plunge into politics. The geographical spaces he occupies include Rabai in Mombasa, Nairobi, India, USA, Paris, Ethiopia, South Africa and Tanzania. Khamisi is a holder of a BSc. degree in Journalism and Government from the University of Maryland (University College) at College Park 1988. He has worked with several Kenyan and Tanzanian publications as a reporter and editor and in the Kenya Government as a Foreign Service Officer in Paris, Addis Ababa, and Windhoek. During his tenure as a Member of Parliament in Kenya, he was nominated the best in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) administration throughout the five years. This is a kitty that is allocated by the central government to all members of parliament in Kenya to assist in hastening development from the constituency level. However, Khamisi was adversely mentioned for allegations of hate speech by KNHRC report *Still Behaving Badly* 2007.

Both Sirleaf and Khamisi write from the point of view of patriots. They express an attachment and concern for the future of their countries and Africa. Sirleaf reaches the peak of her career and is excited about future prospects. Khamisi on the other hand feels cheated by the system as he claims that voter bribery and his slave descendant background denied him a chance for re-election.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to contribute to the field of literary history as it will examine the autobiographies with focus on how the selected autobiographers recount their personal story as they narrate the collective stories of Kenya and Liberia, and Africa in general, leading to the convergence of self and history. The study is interested in the manner in which the authors inscribe themselves into the histories of their countries by making their personal narratives collective national narratives. Through the study of the two autobiographies, this study seeks to investigate how the two authors place the history of Africa into the literary space and how they interpret the history of their nations in the process of writing life narratives.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To discuss the convergence of self and history in the selected autobiographies.
2. To examine how the authors inscribe themselves into the histories of their countries through their autobiographies.
3. To interrogate how the autobiographers interpret the history of their nations through their life narratives.

Research Hypotheses

This study will be guided by the following hypotheses:

1. There is convergence of self and history in the selected autobiographies.
2. The authors inscribe themselves into the histories of their countries through their autobiographies.
3. The autobiographers interpret the history of their nations through their life narratives.

Justification of the Study

Autobiographies are a valuable source of information and life lessons. Through them, lives of people are documented and preserved. The admirable traits can be emulated and the mistakes that they made can be avoided. Moreover, the autobiographies are like archives which give the authors a sense of immortality even after they die. They live on in their accounts. Self and history studies are important because the past is a part of one's life and it is a source of personal and collective history which must be retrieved in order to understand the present and project the future.

In their autobiographical representations on Africa's histories, different authors highlight that which matters to them most. As such, a comparison of two is preferred to get a broader perspective, minimize subjectivity and give credibility to the study. The two texts under study are both autobiographies of African leaders with many similarities despite differences of gender, historical backgrounds and region. The value of the similarities in the two is the portrayal of the universality of human experiences. The two autobiographies originate from West Africa for Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and East Africa for Joe Khamisi. However despite the geographical distance, the experiences for the two are closely related. The differences of gender and region enrich the study because it reveals that the African story is the same to a large extent in terms of strides and challenges. Moreover the autobiographies cover almost the same period of history from the early 1940s to 2006/2007. Sirleaf is indirectly affected by slave descendants who were settled in Liberia and have been the ruling class for a long time. Khamisi is a slave descendant as his grandparents and great grandparents were rescued slaves settled in Rabai at the Kenyan coast. The modern effects of slave trade history are witnessed in both lives. This study is interested in the both the immediate and distant past African history.

The two authors give us an insider's perspective as they are African born and have worked in the continent and the diaspora, rising to national leadership positions. Both shed light on African nations' collective problems especially caused by poor leadership and provide tentative solutions as they narrate the self. They question the status quo and motivate the readers that they can rise above any challenges and actualize dreams. By doing this, they give the readers hope and improve the lives of the people who implement their suggestions. The aim of scholarly studies is to make a valuable impact on society and I believe the selected field and texts will achieve this.

Scope and Limitation

To have a sustained and focused discussion, this study is limited to two autobiographies: Ellen Sirleaf Johnson's *This Child Will Be Great* and Joe Khamisi's *Dash Before Dusk: A Slave Descendant's Journey in Freedom.* The focus of study is in the convergence of self and history in the two autobiographies. I also refer to other works by the same and other writers, journals, projects or theses on the area of self and history in life writings. Other sampled writing by the same authors has not been selected for study because the study is interested in autobiographies. The focus in the other works is on other topics, events and people more than on the self.

Literature Review

In this section, I review the literature that touches on the nature of autobiography, critical works on the autobiographical domain, works on the texts under study and works on other related studies focusing on self and history. The late eighteenth century marked a period of mushrooming of the autobiography significantly increasing the awareness and importance of the genre. Smith and Watson (2001) argue that 'the practice of writing autobiographically is not new. They claim it has a history extending back to, and perhaps before, the Greeks and Romans in antiquity and extending beyond Western culture. The oral performance of self-narrative has existed in many indigenous cultures prior to literacy—in, for example, the naming songs of Native American cultures, the oral narratives of genealogy and descent among Africans, the communal self-locating of the "song lines" of indigenous Australians, and others' (83-84). William Pitt Scargill is believed to the first modern writer under the umbrella of the newly coined term, 'autobiography'. His autobiography, *The Autobiography of a Dissenting Minister* was published in 1834. More autobiographies have emerged in all parts of the world introducing readers to the lives of renowned and unfamiliar personalities. Satre claims that "man is a signifying being, a creator of signs. The possibility of understanding these signs in their dialectical relationship with historical, cultural and social conditions underpins the intelligibility of both self and history" (Colin 11). The current study also contextualizes the signs in order to interrogate convergence of self and history in the selected autobiographies.

Literature Related to the Autobiographies under Study

Through her autobiography, Sirleaf seeks to define herself in a masculine world of leadership. Juliet Mitchell in her essay "Feminity, narrative and psychoanalysis" in David Lodge *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader,* argues that "the novel starts with autobiographies written by women in the seventeenth century. The writers were trying to create a history from a state of flux they were feeling in the process of becoming women in a bourgeois society" (426). Sirleaf seeks to give her role and interpretation of the history of Liberia. Through introspection and retrospection, she discovers and invents herself. She also tells the story of her people.

Linda Anderson in *Autobiography* notes that there was an absence of women's text from an accepted canon of autobiographical writing in the 1980's. She argues that it was not that women did not write but as with other genres, their writing was "deemed to be unimportant, crude or illegitimate" (86). It failed to live up to the necessary test of 'great writing'. Women autobiographers seek to reinvent themselves as subjects and not objects through self-representation without necessarily resorting to the former 'great men' and individuality notions of autobiographical writing. Sirleaf has done this in her autobiography because she demonstrates that she has a role to play in making Liberia and Africa a better place irrespective of her gender.

Francoise Lionnet in *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity* argues that "enlightenment claims about selfhood and individuality were underwritten by the simultaneous othering of those who had to be spoken for because they were said not to possess reason (slaves, women, children, the mad, the incarcerated, and the disenfranchised)" (5). Such "others" could not freely exercise the same rights as "the man of reason" –the only standard by which universality was to be measured and defined. While Sirleaf portrays her otherness in her gender and native Liberian status, Khamisi seeks to speak for slave descendants and the Kenyan proliteriat.

In "Progress of the world's women 2002, Volume 1. Executive summary. Women, War, Peace: the independent experts' assessment", Rehn and Sirleaf discuss their experiences in war and their assessment on the impact of armed conflict on women and women's role in peace-building. The study focuses on the experiences of women who have lived through war, displacement and the

struggle to rebuild their societies. This is relevant to the current study as Sirleaf expounds on the same experiences in her autobiography. She intertwines her personal stories with these historical experiences she witnessed including during the fourteen years of civil war in Liberia. For example, Sirleaf was one of only four government ministers who escaped assassination after the Liberian coup of 1980 and she narrates how Liberian women were actively involved during the civil war.

Melinda Adams in her article "Liberia's Election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Women's Executive Leadership in Africa" published online on 02 September 2008 comments on Sirleaf's election. She discusses that in November 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf became the first female elected head of state in sub-Saharan Africa. On the face of it, the fact that this important breakthrough occurred in Liberia may seem paradoxical given that Liberia recently came out of years of conflict and is one of the poorest countries in the world. Generally, the advancement of women politically has been associated with the economic advancement of a country (Inglehart and Norris 2003). She notes that Sirleaf's victory is consistent with new trends on the continent regarding women's political leadership. Ten years ago, African women held just 10.7% of the seats in their legislatures, falling below the global average at the time of 12.2%. Today, women in Africa hold 17% of legislative seats, matching the global average. In several countries, women have made far greater progress: They hold nearly 50% of legislative seats in Rwanda (48.8%) and over 30% of seats in Mozambique, South Africa, Burundi, and Tanzania" (219). The data reveals that there is a great gender imbalance in many African countries with men dominating leadership positions. However, there is progress compared to a decade ago. The current study observes that Sirleaf writes from a dual consciousness of her identity as a leader and as a woman. She presents her victory as a collective victory for women. She wants to demonstrate that women can make it in leadership.

Gwynn Thomas & Melinda Adams in "Breaking the Final Glass Ceiling: The Influence of Gender in the Elections of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Michelle Bachelet" published online on 23 Apr 2010 provide a comparative study of two popularly elected women presidents; Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in Liberia and Michelle Bachelet in Chile. They explain that both Bachelet and Sirleaf rose to power in situations that lacked the circumstances identified by current literature as

mitigating gendered barriers to national leadership: neither woman was connected to politically powerful families, they were elected in presidential systems, and they were elected in countries that lag behind regional leaders in terms of women's political inclusion (105-131). In the current study it has been observed that Sirleaf is not limited by her gender. She uses motherhood as an appeal since there is a notion that mothers care more for the welfare of their children. Therefore she portrays herself as the mother of the nation.

Marciana Nafula Were in "Negotiating Public and Private Identities: A Study of the Autobiographies of African Women Politicians" examines autobiographies and memoirs of fifteen African women politicians and former politicians. These autobiographies are considered as part of a distinct sub-genre of African political autobiographies by women and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's autobiography is one. The study interrogates how the African woman's political autobiography represents the public and private subjective identities of African political womanhood. She argues that the women writers' discourses challenge the construction of womanhood in dominant ideological discourses like slavery, colonialism, apartheid, patriarchy, and religion, among others. Her study is guided by African womanist (autobiographical) identity politics. She observes that hybridity of the African woman's political autobiography, its subject, and its discourse are in-between spaces from where the writers contest Western and patriarchal notions of womanhood that silence women's agency. The current study has also selected Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's *This Child Will Be Great* as an example of a text where private and public life converge. Moreover, self and collective identity is of interest in both studies. However, Were's focus is on identity and masculinity hegemony and the current study is focused on self and history convergence.

Most commentaries on Sirleaf are on gender and power relations. The current study is interested in self and history convergence. Gender is not seen to be much of an advantage or disadvantage in the current study because it does not necessarily limit the authors. Sirleaf explains that she would have achieved "far, far less", as a man. She says that she was an exception as a woman and it gave her visibility (315). She seeks to portray that women can achieve as much or more as women once they learn to disregard the attacks on their personalities. Khamisi ignores the gender dynamics and seems to tolerate the patriarchal

society he is raised in. He is however sympathetic of the plight of his mother after separation and of his aunt Regina who dies after years of tolerating an abusive husband.

Joe Khamisi identifies with his slave history in the title of his book. This is a reminder that there are still effects of slavery controlling individuals even if only at the subconscious level. He lacks a solid identity because his grandparents were rescued slaves settled at Rabai at the Kenyan coast. This can come as a surprise since slavery was abolished centuries ago. Serah Namulisa Kasembeli in "The Ghost of Memory: Literary Representations of Slavery in Post-Apartheid South Africa" explores the lasting social and psychic effects of traumatic and repressed slave histories in the ghostly presence of a slave past in the post-apartheid present by framing her literary analysis with the concepts of cultural haunting, collective memory and re-memory. The study argues that the publication of stories regarding slave pasts at this point in time indicates a haunting that is embedded in oppressive slave histories and that contemporary writers are bringing to the surface through their works. Joe Khamisi is one such writer who is directly affected and haunted by a slave history.

Tom Odhiambo in his article "Joe Khamisi: Autobiography of a free slave descendant" published in the Daily Nation edition of Sunday November 16 2014 reviews *Dash Before Dusk*. He commends Khamisi for opening up his life to public scrutiny which is rare for politicians. He explains that Kenyans need to read and reflect on Khamisi's autobiography because Khamisi tells about the troubles that people like him – those generally described by officialdom and supposed natives as aliens – live through in this country. Odhiambo observes that Khamisi makes a case for cosmopolitanism. Odhiambo defines cosmopolitanism as "taking the best of behaviours, thoughts and cultures from your people and neighbours and strangers you meet. It is also about being open to new ideas and challenges". He argues that the simplicity of this story is fascinating and the anecdotes that Khamisi relates speak to big issues such as tribalism, theft of public resources, political chicanery, and cultural changes without preaching. He is implying that Khamisi is non judgemental. Odhiambo observes that the way the narrative is told captures the image of a man happy with his life. However he notes that Khamisi only feels disappointed at the betrayal by his people and the electoral process but is not angry. The experiences that Odhiambo observes are expounded in this study.

In her review titled "Bad politics to censorship, 'slave descendant' tells where the rain began to beat us" Muchiri argues that Khamisi uses his autobiography *Dash Before Dusk* to reveal the source of the nation's current challenges. She argues:

> Khamisi tells the story of Kenya's post-colonial life and reflects on what could have been. It calls to attention the fact that contemporary debates about high corruption among politicians and bureaucrats are not new; they are a carry-over from the first republic. In a sense, he demonstrates that the reasons for Kenya's underdevelopment are based on the parasitic nature of the post-colonial state. He outlines some iniquities of powerful individuals in the first and second republics including smuggling of charcoal to Saudi Arabia, trading of cloves from Zanzibar on the black market, illegal exports of maize and rice to Uganda aboard oil tankers and poaching to meet the needs of illegal ivory trade.

Muchiri observes that with the current news about corruption, one joins Khamisi in wondering loudly if the Government is genuine about its commitment to ending corruption. Khamisi is at the centre of historical events and he uses his autobiography to recall the mismanagement of the country's resources and the creation of a few wealthy to the detriment of the majority Kenyans. His autobiography acts as a warning bell on the dangers of corruption. It is thought provoking since more corruption scandals such as Goldenberg, Anglo leasing, and recent ones such as dams and fake gold scandals continue being witnessed in Kenya.

Miriam Maranga-Musonye in "Navigating Life through Narrative: Analysis of Selected Urban Refugee Childrens Narratives" argues that refugee children use narratives to come to terms with their past, to negotiate new spaces in their adopted country and also to express their vision of the future through the narratives they tell. She quotes Braid (15) who argues that past experience is often an essential resource in making sense of the present and interpretations of the present are also influenced by projections of the future (133-142). This is witnessed in the autobiographies under study. The authors narrate painful experiences in order to come to terms with them in a form of closure. The autobiographies are also premised on the present and how they have been influenced by the past as they envision future prospects.

Autobiographers will focus on personality in terms of personal details to create and reconstruct a narrative of past life and this often generates bias. Truth can only be confirmed by looking at the history of the autobiographer. Muchiri calls for autobiographies to stick to the fidelity of historical truth (86). She further states that, "the relationship between history and autobiographies is seen by the fact that they assemble or create stories from the available archives. Yet this is also the point of departure between these two discourses. While historians work outside the margin of the historical picture, autobiographies become the center of historical picture" (2014:83). The autobiographies under study are drawn from history and sometimes the source is acknowledged. The authors suggest that their nations' stories have not been exhaustively told and they have a responsibility to give their interpretations.

Jelinek contrasts the autobiographies of women and men on several points. Men appear to be distant while women divulge personal details, men attempt to idealise but women appear to be authentic, and men write in coherent wholes but women's writing is fragmentary (Smith and Watson 2001:9). The above differences are of interest and are observed in the autobiographies. Khamisi is distant when discussing his personal life as an adult and has minimal tendency for self-disclosure. He sounds mechanical and official. Sirleaf however 'extends her handshake to a hug'. She creates rapport with the reader and reveals her thoughts and feelings on several topics and this makes her sound truthful and authentic. The differences are understood as a result of the gender socialization the two have been exposed to but the underlying story is overt. They both narrate experiences drawn from personal and collective memories.

Reviewed Autobiographical Studies

Smith and Watson (2001) argue that there are chances that self-writing present inconsistencies or show a shift of view about the self (12). In this case, there will be gaps and questions are raised about the different perception of the self after reading the text. Some writers of autobiographies may perpetrate acts of deliberate deceit. Keen readers will be able to identify lies inherent in the story. Thus, the observer of autobiographical texts must be on the watch-out of these situations when they manifest in the autobiography. Yet there are several arguments that manifest about autobiographical truth.

John Sturrock has noted that, "It is impossible for an autobiographer not to be autobiographical" (52). Herein, autobiographical implies to the level of subjectivity in presentation of self. More recently, Stanley Fish has observed that "[a]utobiographers cannot lie because anything they say, however mendacious, is the truth about themselves, whether they know it or not" (A19). Fish appears to give the autobiographer the power over truth and is actually saying that the self-writer should not be put into probing about the truth or falsity of his or her work (12-13).

Both Sirleaf and Khamisi use their real names and not pseudonyms to prove it is their true life stories and that they have nothing to hide. Moreover Sirleaf dedicates her autobiography to the people of Liberia and to her mother while Khamisi dedicates his to the immediate family and to the memory of departed ones including his mother Maria Faida and his brother Charles. Smith and Watson note that "the convergence of authorial signature and narrator, by contrast, is a distinguishing mark of life narrative" (2001:8-9).

Philippe Lejeune in "The Autobiographical Pact" defines the relationship between authors and readers in autobiographical writing as a contract: "What defines autobiography for the one who is reading is above all a contract of identity that is sealed by the proper name. And this is true also for the one who is writing the text" (2001: 19).5. This is observed by both autobiographers.

Charles Mwangi Njanjo in "A Critical Analysis of the use of space in Aminata Forna *The Devil that Danced on the Water"* argues that space as a tool for literary criticism has not been widely explored in life writings. Stylistic criticism has focused on aspects of journey motif and symbolism. He therefore analyses the writer's use of space. The current study will also discuss geographical space in particular how the diaspora influences the authors' perceptions of their home countries. The two autobiographers spend a significant time of their lives in the diaspora. It enables them to realise their dreams which may not have been the case had they remained in their countries of birth all through their lives risking obscurity. It also gives them education, job opportunities and an exposure to different ways of thinking and doing things.

In "Autobiographics in Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Dreams in a Time of War: a Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter,"* Jennipher Achieng Otieno analyses artistry in Ngugi wa Thiongo's childhood autobiographies. She interrogates how the author employs the various aspects to represent, rediscover and reinvent himself in what she refers to as autobiographics, a term coined by Leigh Gilmore. This study will also be guided by a number of the common features of autobiographies like the authors' intention, gaps, silences, spaces, fields of identity formation and individuality versus collective stories drawn from the autobiographical theories.

Bernard Chweya Nyantino in "Representation of Memory in Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Dreams in a Time of War* and Wole Soyinka's *Ake: The Years of Childhood*" discusses how, Wole Soyinka and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, present their childhood experiences while growing up in colonial Nigeria and Kenya respectively. He investigates how childhood memory shapes the consciousness of the two autobiographers in particular and their societies in general. He examines Ngugi's use of specific sites to organize his memory as a child. These include the family trope, reliance on Kenya's colonial history, the school and use of real pictures to pass his message. The current study explores more than childhood. Experiences are narrated with the heightened consciousness of the adult. Childhood experiences are represented in the two autobiographies from an adult's perspective revealing the writers strides and ideologies. Reliance on history is common in both studies.

In "Mediated Plot in the Construction of the Theme of Struggle in Nelson Mandela's Autobiography*: Long Walk to Freedom"* Jairus Omuteche explains that the autobiography becomes alive and vivid when Mandela captures deep experiences that call for deep reflective portrayal. He says that in *Long Walk to Freedom,* Mandela uses retrospection and introspection in relaying the significant experiences of his life. Both autobiographies selected have used retrospection and introspection. Retrospection is similar to recalling or looking back and introspection is looking within. The writers share their inner thoughts and beliefs.

Henry Indangasi has argued for literariness in autobiographical writings in an article titled "The Autobiographical Impulses in African and African-American Literature" which explains that an autobiography does not just re-tell a writer's life story but seeks to bring out a higher truth using a degree of creativity. He gives an example by mentioning Camara Laye's *The African Child,*

Ezekiel Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue* and Peter Abraham's *Tell Freedom*. He observes that, "these autobiographers in their narratives see themselves as members of an oppressed race championing the cause of freedom" (116). Indangasi recognizes the literariness of autobiography and how it does not only tell the story of an individual but also that of a people. This is similar to what this study intends to do as it will discuss both the personal and collective memories representations. Sirleaf is on the defense of the 'indigenous' Liberians and women whom she feels have been exploited by the elite settlers and the men while Joe Khamisi writes from the point of view of a slave descendant. He feels that they have been treated unfairly by the indigenous communities.

Miriam Musonye *Narrating the Self in a Global Context: The Question of Identity in Refugee Children in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya* examines how refugee children use personal narratives to construct their identity within the context of globalization. She uses nine narratives by children from six African countries for illustration. She argues that refugee children define themselves in terms of a constant crossing, re-crossing, refusal to cross and inability to cross boundaries. Her study discusses space as an important indicator of identity. The current study also explores how the authors use personal narratives to construct their identities within national and international contexts.

Jennifer Muchiri *Women's Autobiography: Voices from Independent Kenya* (2010) analyses the female autobiographical voice in independent Kenya with focus on Charity Waciuma's *Daughter of Mumbi* (1969); Esther Owuor's *My Life as a Paraplegic* (1995); Rasna Warah's *Triple Heritage: A Journey to Self-Discovery* (1998); Wambui Otieno's *Mau Mau's Daughter: A Life History* (1998); Muthoni Likimani's *Passbook Number F.47927: Women and Mau Mau in Kenya* (1998) and *Fighting Without Ceasing* (2005); Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira's *A Letter to Mariama Ba* (2005); and Wangari Maathai's *Unbowed: One Woman's Story* (2006). These are the autobiographies by Kenyan women in independent Kenya. Her study analyses the social issues that the writers express in comparison to the domination of Kenyan male autobiographies. She also discusses the autobiographical voices and identity. Both studies are guided by autobiographical theory tenets and are concerned with portrayal of identity. However the difference is on the focus with the current being on convergence of self and history.

Godwin Siundu argues in "Beyond Auto/Biography: Power, Politics, and Gender in Kenyan Asian Women's Writings" that Kenyan Asian women writers strategically subvert existing cultural representations of the entire community in the male-authored literature and that the works demonstrate a paradoxical tension in which women writers simultaneously disavow male-centered histories of the community while drawing on those histories to further the interests of their lot. He does a reading of Zarina Patel's *Manilal Ambalal Desai: The Stormy Petrel, Kapur-dromson's From Jhelum to Tana*, and Rasna Warah's *Triple Heritage: Journey to Self Discovery*. He argues that these narratives are written within (counter)revisionist modes that appreciate the complexity of history in contemporary Kenya, whereas indeed in any African postcolony, contests over history tend to have immediate, and sometimes violent, implications. He attributes it to the double interpellation of women as doubly marginalized members of a community determined to claim its place in a country that faces resurgent forms of ethno-racial self-affirmation. Sirleaf gives the history of Liberia from the perspective of a woman who is doubly marginalized by her gender and ethnicity. She gives a voice to the marginalized in an attempt at self-inscription and a personal interpretation of history.

The intention is the trigger for the autobiography. Laura Marcus in *Auto/biographical discourses* defines the concept of intention from two levels. It can be defined as the authorial motive governing the production of the text or as an elaborate structure which defines the ways in which the text should be received (3). In this study, an overlapping approach is preferred since the motive defines the type and in turn the type determines the readers' reception.

This literature review reveals that the field of self and history is inseparable from autobiographies. Autobiographies depend on memory and experience which relates to the self and history. The individual is a product of ideology acquired from the exposure to culture and ideals. Therefore they cannot escape from the collective histories. The focus of the study is the convergence of self and history in the two autobiographies. There is a gap which the study intends to fill in the field of literary history.

Theoretical Framework

To achieve my objectives, this study will be guided by New Historicism and Autobiographical theories. Raman Selden, Peter Brooker and Peter Widdowson in *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* argue that new historicists focus on the oppressive aspects of society that people have to overcome to achieve change. It has roots in Marxist thought and desire for political/social change.

The theory of autobiography addresses concerns such as defining tenets, truth, and relationship with history. The mirror image and the self are important ingredients in criticisms of this genre. They should be read as a mirror that reflects the autobiographer's past and present life in line with Jacques Lacan's theory of Mirror Stage in child development. Marcus traces three principal lines of development from Dilthey and Misch. "The first is the autobiographical theory of the existential phenomenologist Georges Gusdorf, in the essay 'Conditiones et Limites de l'autobiographie' (1956). The second is represented in the autobiographical criticism by Roy Pascal's *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (1960) and Karl Weintraub's The Value of the Individual (1978), both influenced by Dilthey and Misch writings on autobiography. It is observed as an orthodox line of liberal cultural criticism. Democratised versions of these earlier questions are noted in recent thematisation of historicity and historical consciousness particularly in working class and women's histories and life histories" (154). These theoreticians will guide the interpretation of the selected autobiographies.

New Historicism

Selden et al provide a background of the New Historicist. New historicism focuses on the past and uses co-texts only from a relatively fixed point in time. Drawing from Michel Foucault works as the background, it is a theory and practice of literary history that challenges the dominance of deconstruction. Foucault emphasized how social and political power works through the discursive regimes by which social institutions maintain themselves. The discursive practices have no universal validity but are historically dominant ways of controlling and preserving social relations of exploitation. New Historicism questions the validity of the master history (182).

According to William Palmer, the New Historicist acknowledges the other voices as history. Palmer observes that the "New Historicist project [is] revisionist; simultaneously widening and deepening and archeologically discovering new dimensions of the accepted master texts" (3). The New Historicist does not just accept the metanarrative of history but, as Palmer suggests, s/he "reexamines the extant master texts of history and the documents from which those master texts were composed, but also digs up and translates new documents, artifacts, social attitudes and situations, and, by studying them, adds to the master text. Literature is often seen as a privileged site where the determinism of history is disrupted, questioned or opened. New Historicism, on the other hand, has constantly demonstrated the malleability, contingency and contested character of the category of literature" (7).

The idea here is to search for that which was intentionally or otherwise sidelined or suppressed in the known 'big' history. Through this theory, the study will proceed to inquire how the autobiographies have engaged with, discovered and rediscovered various histories, and how they have over time redefined the narrative.

The Theory of Autobiography

The theory of autobiography is largely associated with Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) who sees human sciences as grounded in the understanding of human life and experiences. Laura Marcus discusses that in the course of his studies, Dilthey realised that the biography and the autobiography are both central in the discipline of human sciences. Thus, experience becomes a major aspect of autobiographical criticism since self-writing is a reflection of one's life. He emphasized on historicity as a medium shared by all and auto/biography as a mode of understanding, of self and other, which takes a variety of forms (135).

Georges Gusdorf highlights the mirror mechanism of the autobiography. The analogy of the mirror is that it reflects the true image of who we are. The mirror will reveal the good and the bad things in our images without concealing others. Gusdorf's argument is that the autobiography is a mirror in which one reflects his or her own image, truthfully (40). Marcus argues that sincerity of the autobiography is determined by the inner compulsion to write of the self (3). Before the Renaissance period, people were not preoccupied with themselves.

Renaissance brought an era where individuals started paying more attention on the self. The danger of individuality is narcissism where there is self-absorption. The autobiography is intrinsically conceived from a model of selfhood. The autobiographer is in the quest to connect the past and the present simultaneously as the subject and object.

Cynthia Merrill in "Mirrored image: Gertrude Stein and Autobiography" posits that the autobiography is said to be conceived from Jacques Lacan's theory of the Mirror Stage. According to Lacan, this is a psychological development stage where a child recognizes him or herself in front of the mirror and thus becomes conscious of the selfhood. Often, it occurs when the child is about eighteen months old. It allows the child to realize that he or she is different from others but needs others to determine the distinction of self. According to Merrill, like Narcissus in the Greek mythology, what the child sees in his or her own reflection is an illusory image of perfection. As a result, identity is constituted from a vision of the self as other and the resulting internalization of the idealized other. Merrill discusses that the autobiographer grapples with the doubleness of identity (12).

Autobiographers may either consciously or unconsciously avoid mentioning any weakness and shortcoming on their part because they want to get the readers empathy. This is evident in the current study as the two feel that they have made significant contributions in their countries and they deserve recognition but the mistakes they have made are downplayed.

In this section, I have examined the theoretical framework used in this study. The research makes use of autobiography and new historicism to read and interpret the narrated histories in the selected autobiographies. It interrogates how the self and the history converge, examines how the authors inscribe themselves into the histories of their countries and how they interpret their respective nations' history in the process of writing life narratives. The next section deals with the methodology used in this research.

Research Methodology

This study is interpretive and relies on textual analysis. I began with a close reading of the two texts which formed a base for the research. I also sampled works on the nature, function and theories of autobiography and new historicism; and books written by the same authors and they formed a part of the secondary texts. I then did library based research for past critical works, theses and projects discussed in the literature review. I also sourced electronic sources from the internet for a broader perspective. I did interpretation guided by the objectives and theoretical framework of the study. Through the new historicism theory, the study inquires how the autobiographies have engaged with, discovered and rediscovered various histories, and how they have over time redefined the recorded narratives. Their interpretation of their nation's history and the inscription of self into the collective history followed the revisionist nature advocated as a departure from the rigidity of the master history. The basic tenets of the autobiography theory that guide the study include sincerity, intention, and inner compulsion to write; conditions and limits of self and world; private and public; subjectivity and objectivity; the interior spaces of mind; personal being and the public world, including that of the literary market place. These are the qualities of autobiography as a genre and they are of interest in the discussion of self and history convergence in the texts under study.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One outlines the background of the study. In it I have given the introduction, the statement of the problem, the objectives, the hypotheses, the justification, the scope and limitations, the literature review, the theoretical frameworks, and the methodology used in the study.

In Chapter Two, I discuss self-inscription in Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's *This Child will be Great* guided by triggers for the autobiography, truth, authenticity and silences within the subtitles Family as a Field of Identity Formation; Professional Life and Self-Inscription; and Political Career in Narration of the Nation. I examine how the author inscribes herself into the histories of Liberia and Africa through the autobiography and how she interprets the history of her nation through her life narratives. I discuss her family's history and early years weaved within the story of the early Monrovia and Liberia which includes Johnson and Tolbert presidency. I also analyse her narration of her marriage, motherhood, professional and political career which is

intertwined with the story of Liberia's history of leadership and instability in the years of President Tolbert, Doe and Taylor.

In Chapter Three I discuss how Joe Khamisi recalls and interprets personal and collective memories in his autobiography *Dash Before Dusk: A Slave's Descendant's Journey in Freedom.* I examine how the author inscribes himself into the history of Kenya when he works in many fields including as a journalist, a diplomat, and a Member of Parliament. I interrogate triggers for the autobiography, truth, authenticity and silences used to bring out convergence of self and history within the sub titles Family and Slave Descendant History; Professional Advancement in Self Actualisation and Political Career for Agency. I discuss how Khamisi narrates his early years and the memorable historical events like independence and new African leadership policies. I discuss how he interprets the history of Kenya, East Africa and other African countries that he works and lives in through his life narrative.

In the conclusion I have done a brief comparison of the two autobiographies. I have highlighted the similarities and differences in the writing style and on the reflections of the two autobiographers. I have also summarized the manner in which the two autobiographies have achieved the convergence of self and history.

CHAPTER TWO

SELF INSCRIPTION IN ELLEN JOHNSON-SIRLEAF'S *THIS CHILD WILL BE GREAT*

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the convergence of self and history in Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's autobiography *This Child Will Be Great*. I examine how Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf inscribes herself into the history of her country and how she interprets the history of her nation in the process of writing her life narrative. Smith and Watson in *Women, Autobiography, Theory* observe that autobiography has been employed by many women writers to write themselves into history (5). They comment that questions of agency become central to discussions of women's autobiographies. These questions are concerned with how the women negotiate a primarily masculine terrain of autobiography, questions of identity, self-awareness and repression (23).

Sirleaf signals to the reader that her story is intertwined with that of her nation and its history because she tells her story alongside the collective story of Liberia. In her prologue she writes: "If asked to describe my homeland in a sentence, I might say something like this: Liberia is a wonderful, beautiful, mixed-up country struggling mightily to find itself" (1). She continues to give a description of the geography, natural resources, linguistic groups, and complexity in the history of the Republic of Liberia. She admits that all the groups in the country were settlers the last being the resettled slaves after abolitionists efforts.

The Republic of Liberia is home to former resettled slaves and other ethnolinguistic groups that settled from other parts of Africa. The author reveals that: "there are some sixteen ethnic groups speaking some sixteen indigenous languages plus English" (1). This is an example of an African country that has ethnic diversity. They are all Liberians having migrated from many parts of Africa and the last group from America. It is evident that no single group can claim ownership of the country. Sirleaf attempts to unravel the puzzle of Liberia. After reading the autobiography, one begins to understand the dynamics of history and socialization of the people of Liberia. One feels an attachment to the country since she makes it appear attractive.

James Buchanan and Robert Tollison in their article "A Theory of Truth in Autobiography" explain that the autobiographer cannot escape history that manifests in records of actions, words, and experiences (509). Sirleaf does not separate her personal from the collective nation's story. She has a great love for her country and its people. She dedicates the autobiography to them and to her mother.

Sirleaf is aware of her role as an African woman leader. She is also privy to the dynamics of power and the effects of neo colonialism on the continent. She is sensitive to the need for women empowerment and protection. She represents these interests in her life and recounts how she approaches each with intelligence in her autobiography. Susan Stanford Friedman in her essay "Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice" examines how women have been denied a sense of individualism in autobiographies. She argues that women develop a dual consciousness of the self as culturally defined and the self as different from cultural prescription. The description is compared to W.E.B. Du Bois's identification of double consciousness for blacks living in a dominant white culture. She argues that women's sense of collective identity can be a source of strength and transformation (Smith and Watson 1989:75-76). This is witnessed in Sirleaf's autobiography where gender and ethnicity played a big role in her presidential campaign. She used her gender and the native Liberian alienation status to her advantage as she promised to fight for the women's rights and for an all-inclusive government. This made her a popular presidential candidate among the native Liberians and the Liberian women who campaigned for her.

Muchiri explains that the autobiography reflects an author's pursuit for voice; the desire to be heard. It allows writers to define themselves as individuals, distinct from those images fostered by society or by cultural stereotype (2010:45). Sirleaf writes to tell her personal story. She wants to inscribe herself into the history of the nation, continent and world. She reveals her identity as she writes about herself within her fields of identity formation.

Family as a Field of Identity Formation

Sirleaf feels that her story is worth sharing. She discusses her past because it has been instrumental in shaping her present and projecting her future. She makes allusions to several texts and we can see that she is a well read and informed protagonist. She often uses humour and satire holding the attention of the readers as they can connect with her. Anderson quotes Karl Weintraub who announces at the beginning of his book that he is searching for 'that proper form of autobiography' in which 'a self-reflective person asks "Who am I?" and "how did I become what I am?" (19). *This Child Will Be Great* is a good attempt to answer these questions. It makes the reader to feel like they 'know' the author. She boldly reveals her experiences, memories and thoughts. This makes the reader to understand what influenced her actions and what made her to be the person that she is.

Roy Pascal points out that the writer talks about himself and past experiences in the autobiography (1). An autobiographer is likely thinking that his presence and contribution to the world are of great significance that should not go unnoticed. Additionally, the autobiographer is obviously aware of the inevitability of death and is driven to present him or herself to the world as a self-satisfying venture (5). Through the selection of the title *This Child Will Be Great*, it is evident that Sirleaf wants to be remembered as a great woman. She narrates that an old man came to her home to visit the family and pay his respects when she was a new born. He looked at her and turned to her mother "with a strange expression," with the prophetic words: "Oh, Martha," he said. "This child shall be great. This child is going to lead." (7) This was a source of humour to her family for a long time because her life was far from great. She says they would 'laugh and laugh and laugh' (7). Sirleaf recalls that her family would remind her of it when things were tough for her. They questioned the truth of this statement. She says:

> Perhaps I was watching all my friends go off to college abroad while I stayed at home in Monrovia, trapped with an abusive husband, four young sons, and no future in sight. Perhaps I was struggling to pursue my education, build my career, and divorce that husband without losing everything I had. Or perhaps I was being hauled off to prison by order of my nation's president—or maybe even plotting an escape into exile to save my

> life. “Where’s all this greatness that was predicted?” my mother would ask. Sometimes she laughed, sometimes she cried. Always she prayed. “Where’s that old man now?” (7)

She gives a foreshadow of the events that she went through to reveal that there was a time in her life when she was almost losing hope of achieving anything worth being called great. The paragraph gives a summary of her future challenges.

Sirleaf notes that whenever she reflected on the prophecy of the old man and as her greatness unfolded, her scientific orientation of self-determination would clash with the Presbyterian teachings of predestination she had received. She muses, “Which one, I have long wondered, is the way life really is?” (8). This observation reveals her religious identity. Sirleaf demonstrates that the old man’s prophesy of greatness eventually came true and that she is indeed great because she made a name for herself in her nation, regionally and internationally when she was elected president and in her long career in the professional and political spheres. She narrates the strides she has made and consciously strives to be a role model for other women seeking leadership positions.

Sirleaf claims her identity through recalling her family lineage. She was born to a Gola father Jahmale Carney Johnson. The father of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was the son of a Gola chief named Jahmale and one of his wives, Jenneh, in Julejuah, Bomi County. Jahmale his father had learnt many languages and dialects of the local people during his travels, and became a negotiator when there was conflict between the indigenous people and the settlers in Monrovia. Sirleaf’s grandfather was named Jahmale, the peacemaker by virtue of his mediation. President Hilary Wright Johnson, the eleventh president of Liberia who was the first to be born in Liberia, used to visit the family as a result of this. He advised for Sirleaf’s father to be sent to live with a settler family. Sirleaf’s grandfather followed his advice.

Jahmale Carney Johnson was around fifteen or sixteen years of age when he was assimilated and given the name Johnson. He was expected to discard his old identity in a kind of rebirth in order to fit in. Sirleaf discusses the ward system.

She explains:

> the ward system flourished in early Liberia because it met the settlers' crucial need for cheap labor. Those early transplanted families, not having enough children themselves, needed help with the heavy housework of the nineteenth century: hauling water, collecting firewood and coal, cooking, cleaning, and tending crops. At the same time, it was, in many villages, an African tradition for chiefs and wealthier villagers to have guardianship of children whose parents were either dead or too poor to care for them. The extended family system in Africa assumes that everyone is his brother's keeper; it is one of our strengths. Likewise, it was common at the time for chiefs who formed alliances with other tribes or chiefs to offer women as wives and children as wards to validate the agreements. The American Colonization Society, recognizing how the tradition could be used to spread Christianity among the indigenous population, encouraged the settlers to take local children into their homes. (8)

Sirleaf recalls the stories her father told them when she was a girl about his assimilation into the family as a ward. His assimilated family the McGrity's were good to him and treated him well but he was made aware that he was not an automatic member of the family and he had to earn his place. He was subjected to harsh punishments. "He was once stuffed into a large bag and hung over an open fire as punishment. He wasn't held there long enough to be injured, just long enough to make the point" (10). The cruelty must have been carried over from the slavery past that the settlers had come from. It is ironical that freed slaves continued with the cruelty they had been liberated from. Cyril James in *The Black Jacobins* describes the gruesome means that the owners used to subdue the slaves:

> irons on the hands and feet, blocks of wood that the slaves had to drag behind them wherever they went, the tin-plate mask designed to prevent the slaves eating the sugar-cane. Whipping was interrupted in order to pass a piece of hot wood on the buttocks of the victim; salt, pepper, citron, cinders, aloes, and hot ashes were poured on the bleeding wounds. Mutilations were common, limbs, ears, and sometimes the private parts, to deprive them of the pleasures which they could indulge in without expense. Their masters poured burning wax on their arms and hands and shoulders, emptied the boiling cane sugar over their heads, burned them alive, roasted them on slow fires, filled them gunpowder and blew them up with a match; buried them up to the neck and smeared their

> heads with sugar that the flies might devour them; fastened them near to nests of ants or wasps; made them eat their excrement, drink their urine, and lick the saliva of other slaves. (12-13)

The former slaves resettled at Liberia prove to behave in an almost similar way as slave owners. This leads one to question the oppressed who often behave similar or even worse than the oppressors even though they should have learnt lessons while in captivity. Interaction between the other indigenous groups and the Americo-Liberians was one of domination. They were given food, shelter and education in exchange for free labour. Sirleaf narrates these experiences because she wants to prove that the settlers were harsh to their wards.

Sirleaf observes that all Liberians are Africans. Those who were there before the settlers came are Africans and the settlers themselves are African slave descendants (60). She explains that the settlers tried to disassociate themselves from their African heritage because it connoted slavery that they were running away from. It is ironical that she had to go out of her country to learn this history while at Harvard. In her case, History is like a palimpsest in which there are several layered meanings and what is taught in school is that which serves the ruling class at a particular time.

The author uses both her names as they reveal her identity. Leigh Gilmore in *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self Representation* discusses the significance of names. She says "it identifies a person within a historical context of place and patrilineage, and focuses attention on the solid corporeality to which it refers. Ultimately, it seems to mark a ground zero of representational vercity" (65). Johnson is her family name and Sirleaf is her husband's name. In her twelve years as president of Liberia and in her autobiography, she is known as Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. She discusses how early on during her historic 2015 campaign for the presidency of Liberia, rumors began to circulate about her ethnicity. Her detractors began whispering that she was an Americo-Liberian, a descendant of one of those first American-born founders of the land and thus a member of the elite class that had ruled Liberia for long. She claims that, "This was an explosive charge. Given the historic cleavage in our society and the long-standing divide between the elite settler and indigenous populations, many Liberians wanted nothing to do with another Americo-Liberian president" (8).

Smith and Watson argue that one's conviction to become the author of one's self, claiming the authority to tell the 'true story of one's real life requires that one puts into consideration the social and historical context within his or her writing space (3). Sirleaf discloses the source of her surname to avoid being confused to be the former Americo Liberian president's relative. Sirleaf's father benefited from his assimilation by getting a solid education ending up what she refers to as 'a poor man's lawyer' (11). He later became the first Liberian from an indigenous ethnic group to be elected to the country's national legislature. His ambition was to become the first native house speaker. Sirleaf reveals this to portray that she was inspired by her father's ambition.

Martha Cecelia Johnson (Johnson-Sirleaf's mother) was born in Greenville to a German father and a Kru mother. Martha's mother, Juah Sarwee, was a native farmer and market woman from Greenville, Sinoe County, who fell in love with a trader from Germany. At the start of World War I, Liberia, eager to display its loyalty to the United States, declared war on Germany and expelled all German citizens (9). Her husband left Liberia and was never heard from again. Martha was a fair-skinned child with long, wavy hair and could almost pass for white because of her German father. The Dunbars, "a very old and very prominent Liberian family, dating back to one of the first groups of settlers" (12) became her foster parents. She took the Dunbar name, went to school, and received the best education possible in Liberia. She was even sent abroad to further her studies for a year.

Sirleaf gives a history of her siblings' names. The first child was a son, named Charles after Charles Dunbar. Next came a daughter, named Jennie after the grandmother. She was third, named after a friend of their mother, and then another son, named Carney after the father (15). It is evident that names are symbolic because her parents have used them to honour and remember close ones. The children are given names that represent the memory of close friends and family.

Sirleaf's first description of her father reveals her admiration. She says that both her mother Martha and her foster grandmother Cecilia were won over when he proposed. She describes:

> He was a handsome man, my father—tall, brown-skinned, and stylish, with a special, jaunty way of walking that proclaimed his confidence. When he proposed to my mother and asked Grandmother Cecilia for her daughter's hand, both women were won over. Both women immediately said yes. And so my parents, a son of a Gola chief from Bomi County and a daughter of a market woman from Sinoe, were married. I can imagine them as a young couple in Monrovia: hardworking, ambitious, eager to create a better life for themselves and their family. They would work hard and together create a better life. (13)

Sirleaf foreshadows misfortune in the family when she concludes: "And so they did, until a sad and sudden turn of events knocked our family off the ladder of success" (13). As we read on we learn that she is referring to her father's stroke that reverses the upward mobility of the family.

Sirleaf pays tribute to her parents whom she credits with bringing her and her siblings up in the right way and ensuring that they do not severe ties with their roots. Her mother makes a great impact on her as she is always there to support and pray for her. She dedicates her autobiography to the memory of her mother when she writes: "To all the people of Liberia who have suffered so much and now look forward to reclaiming the future. And in memory of my mother, Martha Cecelia Johnson, who instilled in us the value of hard work, honesty, and humility." Liberia can be seen symbolically in this context as her first mother and Martha as her biological mother and character molder.

There is a strong influence of her mother throughout Sirleaf's life which she reveals right from the start of her narration in the chapter titled *The Beginning*. She says she would ask where the prophesied greatness was and could always pray about it (7). We can see the mother's presence and impact on her life from childhood. Martha Cecelia Johnson opened a school and became a minister in the Presbyterian Church, traveling throughout the countryside to preach the Word of God. It was rare for women to preach at the time and sometimes she went with the children. Therefore, the mother influences Sirleaf to be a pioneer by doing this work that was dominated by men. Sirleaf also becomes a politician and the first female president in Africa. Sirleaf recounts an incident that she failed to remember her verses in church as her first realization that public speaking was not easy. It is her mother's patience and understanding that makes her get over it and stop panicking from that time onwards (17-18). She claims that all she ever wanted to

be as she grew up was an English teacher like her mother (31). They were close and she lived with her until the time of her death. She even attributes her not remarrying to the companionship she had with her mother since people get married for companionship (166). Her other siblings had families with spouses and young children but she was divorced with grown children. Sirleaf claims that her mother was a strong woman and she believes she got her strength from her (126). It is evident that she learned to be independent minded and self-dependent from her. She also got a pioneering spirit from her being one among a few women preachers. Moreover, she refined her speaking skills in church and made revolutionary speeches later on in her adult life.

In a flashback, Sirleaf takes the reader on a trip of the former Monrovia. Monrovia, originally Christopolis, was renamed in 1824 in honour of U.S. President James Monroe. She gives a history of the city and a description of how it was when she was growing up. She writes:

> The Monrovia of today is a grand but wounded city, the bruised and battered capital of a bruised and battered land. The Monrovia of my youth was a different place: simpler in feel, smaller in scale. We loved it dearly, but in truth it was not much of a city, more like a large village by the sea. There were no public transportation system, telephones, or streetlights, and very few cars. We walked to school, walked to church, walked to our neighbors' houses. When we went out of town, we traveled in hammocks or canoes. Nor was the city dotted with the grand, imposing buildings later built by Presidents William Tubman, William Tolbert, and Samuel Doe and badly damaged during the wars. The Monrovia of my childhood was zinc houses and hilly dirt streets, papaya trees and cassava plants, flowering gardens and wooden outhouses: simple, friendly, close-knit. Home. (13)

Metaphorical use of words like wounded and bruised is meant to invoke in the reader a sense of loss. It reveals the pain that she feels at the current state of the city. This comparison reveals that she misses the Liberia of her childhood. From the comparison, it appears that she has a sense of home lost because the city has changed. She has nostalgia for the former city.

Sirleaf gives an account of her early years in which they lived in a two-story concrete house with coconut trees growing in the yard. They drew water from a well in the backyard. She claims that she was something of a tomboy growing up and loved to climb coconut trees and to play football with the boys in a nearby field using old tennis balls discarded by one of the few

foreigners who had visited town (16). Projecting herself as a tom boy suggests that she wants to be seen to possess masculine traits associated with leaders. Leadership is not necessarily masculine but women often lack many opportunities as discussed by Virginia Woolf in her essay "A Room of One's Own". Woolf suggested that women need to be given opportunity to explore their potential in the same way that men are empowered. Anderson acknowledges Woolf's pioneering efforts. She explains: "Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) plays a role in present-day debates about writing and sexual difference" (92). She reveals that Woolf found herself intrigued by what she called 'the lives of the obscure', the forgotten lives mostly of women, who had been marginalized by the Dictionary's selection of 'great men' (95). Sirleaf is writing with this consciousness of double marginalization of being female and African. She suggests she was as well prepared as any man, socially, intellectually and otherwise for her role unlike other women who may have been limited by resources or education.

The Monrovia that Sirleaf grew up in had a cosmopolitan setting which consisted "settler families and Gola families and Mandingo families and many other folk" (15-16). She recalls sharing when on Sundays her mother would bake cornbread, sending children around to the neighbors to borrow any missing ingredients. This has since changed. Jennie her sister later looked back after the 1980 coup and pointed out that they looked at each other as Liberians growing up. There was no feeling of hostility and everybody seemed to love everybody else (164). Political incitement led to ethnic animosity between previously peacefully coexisting neighbours. Sirleaf hopes to bring back the old unity during her tenure as president.

Sirleaf recalls the time she fell into a pit latrine and was rescued. She writes:

> The toilet itself, with its rough plank boards stationed around and above the hole in the ground, was less pleasant—especially the time I fell inside. I was so small at the time, perhaps three or four, and someone had taken me out to sit me on the boards and left me there. When I fell in, I screamed and screamed, and my poor mother came flying from the house calling "My baby! Save my baby!" By the time she reached me, a passing neighbor had already pulled me out, and together they washed me off. Possibly this was one of those times during my childhood when my sister Jennie took the opportunity to recall the old man's predictions of greatness. (16)

This event elicits humour and empathy at the same time. She is portraying that she was not always well off and has been in similar and even worse situations as the struggling population. The thought of falling into a toilet is terrible and sympathy is invoked. She is telling her people that she is one of them and that she understands their struggles. She claims one of the men who rescued her is still in Liberia and keeps reminding her that she owes him her life. She reveals that they later built an in-house toilet when the family's financial situation improved.

Muchiri explains that "the experience presented in the autobiography is not merely personal, but an interpretation of the past and the author's place in a culturally and historically specific present" (2010:30). Sirleaf had extended family ties and was close to both her maternal and paternal relations. Sirleaf reveals that she was mentored by Grandma Cecilia, her foster grandmother, whom she describes as: "a lady who wanted them to be ladies and gentlemen too". She taught them how to dress, how to speak properly and politely, how to eat at the table with good manners and dignity. She pays tribute to her (18). Cecilia is Americo-Liberian and this is evidence that a number of the settlers treated their adopted children as family despite the negative picture Sirleaf tries to portray of the Americo-Liberians.

When school closed for vacation, the family would leave Monrovia and travel upcountry to spend the better part of vacation with the paternal grandmother, Jenneh in Julejuah a small village of several hundred people located some twenty miles from Monrovia (20). Sirleaf cherishes this memory. There were few cars in Monrovia at the time and even fewer paved roads. Getting to the hinterland was a challenge. The mother refused to be carried in hammocks as she found it demeaning to the carriers. She therefore taught them to respect everyone irrespective of class. Sirleaf reveals that she was sensitive and considerate. The children thought the village life was wonderful. They learned to swim, in the clear, warm waters of the river that separated the village itself from the farm among other activities. They also learned cultural rites and myths like about Poro and Sandee, the traditional male and female secret societies whose rites initiate boys and girls into manhood and womanhood. When the children disappeared, people said they had been swallowed by the devil. They had actually been taken into the bush for their initiation ceremonies (20). The memory is included

to reveal that her people had an already entrenched culture and were not barbarians as suggested by the settlers.

The importance of language is seen when Sirleaf is grateful for her knowledge of Gola. By spending time in the village, they picked up a few words of Gola which later proved useful. There is foreshadowing of how the few words saved her from a terrible fate at one of the most frightening moments of her life. This suspense captures the interest of the reader. It was important to her father that the children remain connected to their indigenous roots. She imagines he might have played the city life and embraced Americo-Liberian hegemony but he did not (21). She is therefore grateful to her parents because they did not cut ties with the extended families enabling her to have an identity. The influence of her religious mother is demonstrated when Sirleaf reveals that in her moments in prison she was always praying because of her religious upbringing. Her parents had been raised as Presbyterians, but many of the people in her father's village were Muslim, including her uncle, Zwannah Ginde, a local Paramount chief, who introduced the children to accepting the Muslim faith as part of their national culture. Muslims, Christians, and practitioners of tribal religions generally coexisted without tension or grief (21). This appears to have influenced her stand on religion in Liberia.

Sirleaf cherishes the company and support of her parents and siblings Jennie, Carney, Charley. She has a glorious memory of the father who remained in town for most of the vacation, but would make the trip out sometimes, for an extended weekend or for the Christmas holidays. She recalls: "I can picture him now, standing tall in the canoe as it crossed the river, his loaded rifle on his shoulder as he took aim at a fat pigeon or a monkey. It was a big deal when he came; all the villagers would rush out to greet him and show their respect" (21).

We can detect the respect that Jahmale commanded from her and the entire community. The visits stopped when he became sick. The stroke affected his right side, and he later moved but with great difficulty. He had to drag his foot along the floor as he moved. Right after the stroke his speech was thickened and slurred.

After her father's stroke, their lives changed dramatically. His colleagues vanished and the family income plummeted (26). This is a contrast to his former life and it shocks the family. Sirleaf reveals that she had a happy childhood; rich and easy in the things that matter: health and safety, love and family, a sense of stability and of security. Her father's illness signaled an end to her childhood (23). She recalls that the healthcare was rudimentary at the time and the father believed that he has been bewitched. She quotes him "I have been witched," he said, his speech slowed and thickened. "Someone has put juju on me" (26). She explains:

> Juju is West African voodoo, witchcraft, sorcery. Its origins date back thousands of years, its reach stretches across the continent, and a belief in its power and effectiveness remains strong among many Liberians of all classes, as would become violently and devastatingly evident to the world during the civil wars that roiled our land in the 1990s. (26)

This is the power of African superstitions and it is detrimental for him as he did not focus on scientific remedies but gave in to depression when the country doctors did not heal him. She describes her parents as: 'strong and faithful mother', and 'charming and ambitious father crippled in the prime of his life' (309-310). The memory she has of her mother is one of a faithful person because she stood with her family throughout her life. She was also strong because she never gave up even after the pain of losing her husband at her prime.

Sirleaf also pays tribute to her two biological grandmothers. They do not seem to have talked much due to the language barrier but she admires their tenacity. She says:

> Neither one of my grandmothers could read or write any language—as more than three quarters of our people still cannot today—but they worked hard, they loved their country, they loved their families, and they believed in education. They inspired me then, and their memory motivates me now to serve my people, to sacrifice for the world and honestly serve humanity. I cannot and will not betray their trust. (22)

We can see her trying to associate with the illiterate people through them. However she describes herself as belonging to both worlds of affluence and lack. This is a contradiction because she had earlier on suggested that she was not priviledged. She later indirectly agrees she had advantages when she says "In truth, I stand with a foot in both worlds" (22). Sirleaf is

inspired by the strong female characters that she interacts with. She learns perseverance and pioneering from her mother who was a teacher of English and a preacher. She also learns from Cecelia and the two biological grandmothers.

Muchiri argues that conscious fictionalizing should be avoided in autobiography (2010:33). Most of Sirleaf's early family history occured before her birth but she vividly narrates like she witnessed it. It might be exaggerated as she even goes to the extent of imagining how her parents felt. It would be more believable if she would acknowledge the narrators voices or informers identities in her autobiography. Sirleaf gives a history of her parents' relationship. Martha was a teenager the day Jahmale passed the Dunbar house and saw her in the yard. He asked for her hand in marriage four or five years later after he had divorced his first wife.

Jahmale Johnson is portrayed as one who had a fast lifestyle. Sirleaf describes her father as a worldly man who spent much of his personal time away from the family and out on the town. She adds that he was good looking and had many friends. He also chased women with great enthusiasm and energy (17). She justifies that polygamy was the dominant form of marriage in Liberia, and most of West Africa, before the arrival of settlers and colonists. The settlers also took up the practice of having concubines and "outside" children (17). She however accepts that her mother, a devout Christian, must have been pained by her father's wanderings. She took her solace in religion and then she went out and created her own life. The difference between polygamy and infidelity is not clear. The Africa society excuses polygamy which is seen as a norm, tolerated and even celebrated. The reasons for the divorce of the first wife are not discussed and there is no mention of any step siblings. The autobiographer is at liberty to decide what details of their life they want to include or omit and these gaps and silences reveal some message to the reader. Maybe she does not want to spoil the memory of her immediate family with the unknown history of her father's past.

Ellen Sirleaf got married to James Sirleaf when she was seventeen years old. They met at the movies on an organized date in her last year of high school. James Sirleaf was the son of a Mandingo father and a mother from a prominent and established settler family, the Coopers. The Mandigos are Muslim and Sirleaf reveals that they do not participate in the indigenous rites. She claims they have often been wrongly regarded as foreigners and not part of the native Liberians.

Sirleaf admits that she was deeply in love and wanted very much to be with James who was renowned as Doc. She also knew that her educational prospects were not assured because of the family's financial constraints caused by her father's sickness. Therefore she gave in to tradition and convinced her mother that she wanted to be married. Her parents had made it clear that they would not allow them to engage in premarital sex because of questions of morality. Her mother warned her against temptation (28). In the Christian religion, sex before marriage is considered a sin and getting children out of wedlock would bring shame to the family. Sirleaf is revealing that she was immature and unprepared for marriage. Her flashback reveals they got married for the wrong reasons and this may be the reason why the marriage did not last.

Sirleaf recalls that her brother stepped in for her father who had had a stroke and could not move easily when he walked her down the aisle. She comments that "it was a bittersweet moment for all involved, but the local newspapers had a good time with it. They called it a *tom-tom*, or small, wedding, because the bride, and half the wedding party, was so young. Clave was my maid of honor. We were both seventeen" (29). The wedding was featured by the media and this reveals that Sirleaf was in the limelight at a tender age. Her sister Jennie feared her "ambition and drive would be quickly squashed beneath the requirements of good Liberian wifehood" (29). Sirleaf admits she was worried about it herself when she had two children in one year while her friends went off to college abroad. She envied her friends who proceeded with education.

The reader empathises with the author as she describes the responsibility of motherhood. She lived at the farm until James got a better job at the Ministry of Agriculture and they went back to Monrovia. She had four children when they moved back to the city (32). Second wave feminist critics as discussed by Selden et al. have argued that women are disadvantaged by biological experiences such as childbirth and discourses that promotes patriarchy (121). In Sirleaf's case, we can see that motherhood almost cut short her dreams. She felt trapped in it although she was committed to her children. She admits that she loved her children but she was not ready to live the life of the many Liberian women whom she saw toiling (33). She describes the comic figure she was in the company of her children as she went about her business together with her sister's children. Jenny had gotten married after her studies and she also lived in Monrovia with her husband and three sons.

Personality is important in determining the course of the author's life. Sirleaf has a restless spirit and there is always something more that she aspires to do and to be wherever she goes. She is not one who could easily settle into a routine. Sirleaf claims that she realised flaws in her marriage when she lived with her husband in the United States. She remembers: "That was when the problems began" (35). She claims that James Sirleaf was jealous, controlling and possessive. It was during their stay in the United States that she got to see the other side of her husband. He had a drinking problem and disliked the fact that she worked a lot yet they needed money. She worked at McDonalds to be able to afford their upkeep but the husband felt he needed more attention. He also did not like the fact that she was a cleaner. Sirleaf reveals the lowly work she did to identify with the workers and to reveal that she sees dignity in earning an honest living to make ends meet.

Sirleaf also narrates about herself as a victim of domestic violence. Her husband James often pulled out a gun and used it to threaten her including one time in Madison when he used it to strike her on the head for neglecting to make his dinner (39). This made her to start thinking of a way out. Once back home, she took solace from her career. He became more abusive and unfaithful which led her into another relationship making matters worse. Her friend Clave warned her that he would kill her one day. She explains how their son intervened one day when his father pointed a gun at her and this signaled to her that it was time to walk away (41). Sirleaf is not bitter but appreciates the role of the challenges she faced in making her hardened and a better leader. These challenges include her failed marriage. She says that she learned a valuable lesson of depending on herself as no one is guaranteed to be there (36). She uses her autobiography for carthasis. Many victims of trauma retell their experiences and are relieved of the pain. She does not reveal any present negative emotions but it is obvious that it is a painful memory and she was disappointed.

There are double standards that the society applies on the genders with the female being expected to comply with the norms more than the male. Sirleaf interrogates the negative connotations when she was portrayed as an 'adulteress' by the media. She recalls that the attacks were "devastating" (145) and they made her feel "stripped naked". She was disrespected as a divorced woman and she found the labelling to be humiliating (145). She had to struggle to

safeguard her reputation when the media portrayed her as one who had extra marital relationships which is something that is not tolerated of women in the African context. She reveals that marital status is a question "commonly asked of women who succeed in the professional or political world" (313). She was not spared as she had to bear more blame for her failed marriage. Sirleaf is indirectly asking the society to treat women the same way they do men. Lionett argues:

> The female writer who struggles to articulate a personal vision and to verbalize the vast areas of feminine experience which have remained unexpressed, if not repressed, is engaged in an attempt to excavate those elements of the female self which have been buried under the cultural and patriarchal myths of selfhood. She perceives these myths as alienating and radically other, and her aim is a more authentic image. (1989:91)

By revealing that she had an affair, romances and a close relationship, she is acknowledging the place of her sexuality. She also puts to rest any rumour that may have been spread by agreeing that it happened and she does not regret it because she is human. History repeats itself as both the mother and daughter became widows and single mothers at a young age.

Sirleaf explains why she did not remarry. In the African setting, marriage is taken with so much seriousness that an attempt to walk away leaves one with stigma and some form of identification with the former husband. She also explains the issue of naming and identity for her and her children. Remarrying would mean taking on another man's surname and losing her former success and identity alongside her children's who bore their father's name. She wanted to retain that part of her life with her children which she considered a very important connection to them. She put her children's welfare before her own happiness. She argues that if she had remarried when the children were still young and at home, it would have introduced another element into their relationship. She considered stepfamilies to be challenging to navigate. The thought of a new father figure who may end up mistreating her children motivated her as it does other divorced women to raise their children alone. Luckily, it did not prevent her from being the best version of her probably because of her immediate family's solid support and her tenacity.

Leaving her children in Liberia to go for further studies in the USA was a difficult decision for Sirleaf. The separation was painful and it later haunted her when the youngest child reminded her that she was not there when he was growing up. They were separated a second time when the father got custody after divorce. Nevertheless, Sirleaf is proud and protective of her four children as she says:

> No mother can fully ever state the importance of her children in her life. Because I had my children when I was very young, in some ways I was more like a big sister to them than a mother, especially during the early days. In a way, we grew up together, my boys and I; we played ball together, we swam, rode bikes. But because the family also broke up and because I was separated from them so often as I tried to build my career, there was, and still is, some disconnect with each of them, except perhaps for Rob. The truth is, they have also borne a lot: the worry and the upheavals of my career. (314)

Many mothers make sacrifices often infringing on their personal happiness for their children's comfort and success. This is the reason for the feelings of guilt that nagged her when she was away and stayed with her for life. She feels that even though she rose to the highest position in the country, she missed out on the joys of motherhood as she has a disconnect with her children. She was often out of the country on study or exile and it is only Rob that she was allowed custody after he insisted on living with his mother.

After divorce, Sirleaf did not change her name. She explains that everything that she had achieved was in her husband's name and she had to retain this identity. She got married when she was seventeen years old and she had established a professional name for herself in this name. She was not ready to start over (313). Sirleaf also chose to retain this name and identity in order to command the respect given to married people in her society and have the advantages of both status. Sirleaf did not remarry but mentions that she had romances. She explains that having a relationship without marrying enabled her to have closeness to and connection with another person, but in the context of her own choosing and at her own time and pace. It allowed her to pursue her professional goals without having to make the sacrifices necessary for a marriage and it allowed her children to maintain their primary place in her life. She dedicated

her time to her children and profession. This reveals that she is a responsible mother as she wants the best for her children.

Lionett examines the textual mechanisms that generate the journey of ethnic self-scrutiny, the slippage between particular and universal, individual and collective, daughter and mother(s), and the self and its mythologies. She demonstrates that "the collective functions as a 'silverless' mirror capable of absorbing the self into a duplicitous game in which one code, singularity, is set aslant by another, syncretic unity with the universe, thus preventing narrative closure" (1989:115). Sirleaf has a great pride in her family throughout the autobiography. She reveals that Africa has a close knit extended family system and parents can take care of their children's children. Sirleaf is grateful for this culture and for the support that she gets from her siblings and mother throughout her life. She is also close to her sister Jenny and she consults her family before making major decisions such as running for the presidency. She would not have been able to advance in her education and career were it not for her immediate family. This sometimes intrudes on her sincerity because she has to be sensitive about their views and often refers to them making it sound she is telling their collective autobiography.

Sirleaf inscribes herself into the history of her country by discussing her family. She narrates her grandparents' history beginning from her Gola grandfather whom she uses in giving her interpretation about the early years. She also hints at existing conflict because her grandfather was a mediator between the settlers and the other ethnic communities. She links the personal history of her German grandfather with the history of the strained relations between Liberia and German. This denied her maternal grandmother a husband and her mother a father. By revealing her maternal family history, Sirleaf is also able to explain the source of her light complexion.

In justifying her failure to remarry, Sirleaf reminds us that she was in pursuit of professional excellence. She did not want to get bogged down again in a marriage that would lead to a conflict between her professional and personal lives. Therefore her professional advancement was important to her.

Professional Life and Self Inscription

Sirleaf attended the College of West Africa, a preparatory school, from 1948 to 1955. She reveals that it was a prestigious institution that opened her up to the possibilities in life. She does not dwell much on her early education but she recalls being teased because of her complexion.

> The only problem at school was that some of my classmates teased me about the fairness of my complexion. They said I was too light to be a real African and called me Red Pumpkin, a name that hurt me to the bottom of my soul. Many days after school I cried on my way home. Many nights I went to bed praying to God to let me wake up black. It was the one wish I ever wanted in all my life, to wake up black. It never happened, of course, and my mother would tell me to stop wasting time and energy regretting things that could not be helped. (27)

Skin colour is often either an advantage or a disadvantage. Her mother's light skin colour gave her priviledges but Sirleaf claims that she hated it since it earned her a nickname in school. She wanted to identify more with her indigenous African Liberian side. Therefore, having a fair skin due to her German grandfather inconvenienced her.

Sirleaf had taken typing in high school and so was able to secure a job as a secretary for the Stanley Engineering Company after her marriage. From there she moved on to a job at the Elias Brothers' garage, where she worked as an assistant to the head accountant. That job was the start of her career in finance. Growing up, all she had ever wanted was to become an English teacher like her mother and the idea of pursuing accounting or economics had never crossed her mind. She took the bookkeeping job for the money, and because the owner of the garage would sometimes let her borrow a truck at night so she could drive to the beach, children in tow and pull sand to build the blocks for their first house. She muses "So often it is the small decisions in life that end up shaping our future the most" (32). The job that she did not take so serious formed a foundation for her future career and by extension her greatness.

Sirleaf wanted more than what life was offering her and felt depressed at some point while she was working in Liberia. She discloses:

> I looked around and saw the lives of so many Liberian women, all of these incredibly hardworking market women and housewives and mothers, and what I saw was that their lives were drudgery, a simple trudging from day to day to day. I did not want that; that was not the life for me. My own mother had struggled and beat the odds, clawing her way up from the unrelenting grind of rural African poverty, and I was not about to fall back into the hole. One thing I had always believed in was my own potential, and I knew it did not lie in filing papers and collecting payments as the secretary in an auto garage. Nor, as much as I loved my children, did it lie in simply raising them. (33)

This can be construed as a kind of pride and feelings of superiority. She suggests that she is better than the people who do the jobs that she describes. It is also an indicator of ambition. It is admirable that she did not let her current situation define her and instead waited for the right opportunities to make a difference in her life. She was able to rise from obscurity to the global limelight. Sirleaf demonstrates that she is a hard worker and a networker who uses her contacts to get new jobs and for information or counsel. Sirleaf inspires the reader to rise and make full use of their potential by setting targets and persisting until they achieve them.

Sirleaf found a way out of her feelings of entrapment when she got a scholarship to study in America. She recalls:

> Doc and I flew to Madison in the fall of 1962. When I stepped off the plane that first crisp September morning, I was both heartsick at having left my children and excited beyond measure to be in America. Here, finally, was the land about which I had heard all my childhood, the place from which the founders of our nation had come, the place everyone in Liberia wanted to see. I was anxious, thrilled, and determined. I was also a little cold. (35)

She had mixed feelings because she was in the place that she had always wished to see but she had left her children in Liberia. It is often a dilemma that mothers find themselves in when they want to advance in their education yet they have children. The repercussions were felt later on when she blamed herself for missing out on her children's life at a crucial stage. Sirleaf felt like a part of her was missing and that it was a failure on her part to be away from her children.

Even though Sirleaf blames the settlers for their American influence, she was also 'Americanised' because she was influenced by and often made reference to American culture and history in her autobiography. Smith and Watson refer to Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in which he argues that man is a product of ideology. This clashes with the individuality in autobiographies. We are hailed or interpellated by state apparatuses such as religion, family, education and media. They influence our way of thinking and make us willing subjects in a capitalistic society therefore maintaining the status quo (1989: 21). Sirleaf was excited when she first arrived in America because she says she had heard so much about this land in her childhood, the place from which the founders of their nation had come (35). This is ironical since she struggles to claim that Liberia existed before the settlers arrived. She compares Liberia to the state of Ohio in terms of size (1) which reveals that she writes with the American reader in mind. She was in America in 1963 when President Kennedy was shot and kept going back later after her first visit for work and further education. Sirleaf discusses America as it was at that time. She is a product of the American education, culture and beliefs.

The American influence is also revealed on a national level when Sirleaf gives examples of manipulation of third world countries by superpowers. One instance is when Sirleaf discusses that America made Liberia an ally because of the cold war. The excesses of the leaders were covered up on condition that they had their support. They later reduced aid when they no longer needed them (169). This reveals the way super powers use the developing countries to advance their own agenda often not caring about the impact on the lives of the citizens.

Upon the return of the couple to Liberia, Sirleaf became the head of a division at the Treasury Department. She considers it the beginning of her professional life. She says:

> All the ambition that I had tampered down during those early days of marriage and motherhood came roaring to the surface. At the Treasury Department I had found my niche. At the department my position as chief of the Debt Service Division focused on domestic debt and debt relief. (40)

Sirleaf worked too long and too hard and it affected her marriage as her husband became unhappy and abusive.

Sirleaf inscribes herself into the history of her country by recalling the speech that she made attacking the government in 1969. She was representing the Treasury Department at a conference organized by the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID). Among the Harvard people in Monrovia at the time was the economist Gustav Papanek. He had suggested to President Tubman that the administration conduct a conference on the country's economic future (53). She gives her interpretation of the state of the economy by revealing that she pointed out "The economy was in trouble; the country was standing on the wrong foot and wobbling. The policies weren't working. Someone needed to stand up and say something, and I saw no reason why that someone should not be me" (54). This portrays her as a bold leader. She argued for a partnership between the government and its people for economic advancement through tax payment and service delivery. She argued that for such a partnership to succeed, people must believe their government to be honest, efficient, and willing and able to mobilize the resources it collected for the common good (54).

Sirleaf also recalls she suggested that the deliberation of the conference must acknowledge achievement but also recognize the failure which may have led to relative economic stagnation. She noted that no one had asked why the revenue growth decline had occurred in the first place. She argued that perhaps it was the collapse of the world markets for iron ore and other exports or it was a ripple effect of the government's long-standing tax loopholes for foreign businesses or perhaps it had something to do with government corruption and the system of kleptocracy. She observed there was only so much one could steal from an economy and expect the economy to keep prospering. With little regard for this situation, she pointed out that they still indulged in obvious public wastes (55). This speech was daring and it brought her to the limelight.

Professor Papanek, who later revealed in an interview that he had given her a chance to speak because he saw her potential, offered her an opportunity to leave the country citing concerns about her safety after attacking the government. She took the US Agency for International Development Scholarship exam and passed (56). Sirleaf attended graduate training then moved to study Economics and Public Policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government from 1969 to 1971, gaining a Master of Public Administration. She says she acquired leadership skills here and that she performed very well in her studies.

For many women, education is seen as escape from patriarchy and as an equalizer. Sirleaf even went to the extent of calling her lecturer to inform him that she is a performer and she would not like the particular unit to spoil her record. This proves that she was almost desperate to perform well. She narrates she told him, "Look, I am an A student in every other course. If you fail me in econometrics, you know you're going to ruin my transcript!" She says she is not sure she deserved the B scored, but the rest of her grades were As at Harvard (62). This portrays her to be brave and persistent because not many students can have the courage to call their lecturers about grades. One of her professors Dr Martin Kilson made Sirleaf to realise that to understand a nation's future, one had to first understand its past (58). She read history that revealed that there were organized kingdoms but slavery interrupted with "development and political evolution of West Africa and scattered its people into small, autonomous ethnic communities that were far more easily dominated than an empire would have been" (59).

Sirleaf was travelling back to Liberia when news of the death of President Tubman broke. The whole country was in shock because he had been president for so long. She was coming back home to a different country as it was the end of an era. Sirleaf received both formal and informal education in America. The courses in accounts, leadership and management assisted her in her profession. The interactions and connections that she made prepared her for her future as a networker. Through her exposure and good performance, she developed confidence in herself and in Africa. Working at a cafeteria made her to appreciate the position of the lowly paid and humbled her. It also made her to appreciate the positions she later found herself in because she began from the bottom. Upon her return, Sirleaf worked as an assistant minister in the Tolbert regime. After feeling sidelined, she got a job at the World Bank as a loans officer in 1973. She considered it a period of growth, connection and respite. She moved to Alexandria, Virginia with her mum and her son Rob. She found Washington fascinating but a city of many contrasts in the affluence and poverty dwellings and lifestyles (76). Her first posting was to Barbados in the Caribbean. She had good relations because of their common history which earned her a promotion. She then worked as loans officer in Brazil where she had a language challenge as she did not speak Portuguese. She was promoted as senior loans officer in the East African Division. She says it was like a coming home and she built "strong professional relationships in Kenya, Tanzania and other countries" (77).

The Organisation for African Unity (OAU) had been pushing for African presence in the institution and she was among those given "a great deal of opportunity" (78). She says that the head of the division Alan Berg stood up for her when a colleague questioned her ability and she didn't let him down as she worked efficiently (78). She found some officials to be too domineering and arrogant as they lectured presidents and ministers in some foreign countries like small children (79). She therefore learnt the importance of respect and etiquette from this observation. Sirleaf gives her interpretation of the World Bank policies. She does not like the way poor African countries were at a disadvantage as they were not given subsidies yet the United States and Europe were. They were also unable to negotiate and made promises they couldn't sustain leading to stoppage in funding. Sirleaf reveals that Asian coutries didn't just take what was handed but determined their own agenda and was much more developed. She is proud of Botswana as it has a driven economy and doesn't need the World Bank (80). She benefitted from this exposure by learning the policies of the World Bank and making connections that would later come in handy in her life. She also developed bargaining power for her country because she was privy to the in house policies of negotiation.

In "Mothers displacement and language", Bella Brodzki discusses that in the case of the female autobiographer who is compelled to strive for modes of expressions and self-representation in a patriarchal world not generous enough to make room for her, double displacement is both a way of reading and writing and a way of life (Smith and Watson 1989:156). This is an aspect of the autobiography. Sirleaf narrates herself as an independent individual first and secondly as a woman. She exploited the immunity that her gender was supposed to offer her for example when she says she was bold to criticize President Tubman as a junior official in the Treasury Department because she knew that she was a woman and their society did not jail women for merely speaking out (56). She was later to be proven wrong when she was jailed by Doe (141). She also reveals that she was too busy to worry about people who doubted her position and ability and in her own words suspected her of being a 'token' when she was working at the World Bank (77). This suggests that she faced the stereotype directed at women who have positions in a male dominated world. They are usually suspected of being in relationships with influential men. She concludes that criticism is a part of leadership but suspicion is more for women leaders.

Sirleaf was seconded as a World Bank staff member to work for the Liberian government in 1975. She became the first female cabinet minister in the Tolbert administration and the President of the Liberian Bank for Development and Investment at the Samuel Doe government. In November 1980, she went back to the World Bank after publicly criticising Doe and the People's Redemption Council for their management of the country. She had made another speech during a graduation ceremony at the Booker Washington Institute in which she warned that the current government was a recreation of the same old story only with different characters. President Doe sent her to jail after an attempted coup by Thomas Quinkwopa but agreed to release her after a call from the World Bank.

In 1981, Sirleaf moved to Nairobi, Kenya to serve as Vice President of the African Regional Office of Citibank. She resigned from Citibank in 1985 following her vying as vice President and later senator in the 1985 Liberian general election. She had been imprisoned for a speech she made at the United States criticizing the Doe government and her passport was confiscated. She later went to work for Equator Bank as a vice president and director. She reveals that the position enabled her to continue with her African agenda and to travel to Shanghai and make connections that would later benefit Liberia (165). She proves that her profession empowered her to become a better president when the time came for her since it is important for a president to have good relations with other leaders. She also emulated the positive traits and avoided the mistakes made by leaders like Milton Obote of Uganda.

The Rwandan genocide which took place between 7th April and 15th July 1994 was a mass killing of Tutsi and moderate Hutu by soldiers, police and militia. It was organized by members of the core Hutu political elite mostly in top government the entire world was shocked. The victims were dehumanized and the perpetrators acted after incitement from the media. Neighbours killed each other and others had to kill in self defence. The genocide was triggered by the assassination of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana. An estimated five hundred thousand to one million Rwandans were killed by militia using machetes and rifles.

Sirleaf was appointed as the Director of the United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa at the rank of Assistant Administrator and Assistant Secretary General in 1992. During her time at the UN, Sirleaf was one of the seven internationally eminent persons designated in 1999 by the Organization of African Unity to investigate the Rwandan genocide. She reveals that the genocide was premeditated because the UN had information of stored weapons but Kofi Anan the then secretary did not act. Sirleaf compares Liberia to Rwanda and acknowledges that the cleavages if left unaddressed can lead to genocide. Many nations came together to form the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a result of the genocide.

Sirleaf resigned from the United Nations in 1997 to run for the presidency of Liberia. Anderson argues: "There remains, therefore, if our emphasis shifts to the future, a political imperative for women to constitute themselves as subjects if they are to escape being never-endingly determined as objects" (90). Women have to cut a niche for themselves in the society and show that they are capable as women and the autobiography presents a good opportunity. The manner in which Sirleaf always rose in her career portrays that she was a skilled worker. She learned the importance of commitment to work from her professional experiences. She also learned how to take criticism positively and how to ignore her detractors. She narrates these experiences to demonstrate that she is well prepared to govern Liberia. Sirleaf was able to see how other nations become successful in her interactions with the leaders in the course of work and she believes that she is the best placed to bring peace and unity to Liberia.

Roy Pascal explains that an individual tends to detach him or herself from others, and begin thinking about him or herself to be somewhat at the focal point of living space (1). This is evident in the autobiography. Sirleaf has the authority to give her life story as she is the only one who can recollect the parts that made an impact on her. She also has authority to tell the African story having been born in the continent where she has spent a substantive part of her life. Sirleaf inscribes herself into the history of her country by discussing the contributions she made in her professional and political appointments.

Political Career and Narration of the Nation

Sirleaf was right in the middle of the happenings in the Republic of Liberia and interacted with former Presidents William Tubman, William Tolbert, Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor on both a personal and professional level. Therefore she knows what they did right or wrong and she narrates from an advantaged position of insider knowledge. She gives her interpretation of the history which she was at the centre. It is ironical that Sirleaf exonerates herself from any wrongdoing yet she was always a part of the system. She uses the autobiography to remember her past, discuss the present and project the future. Sirleaf recalls the flurry of activities that accompanied a president visiting their home (17). She also narrates stories of President Johnson visiting her grandfather (9). This is evidence that Sirleaf was born into a politically connected family.

The autobiography gives agency or voice to marginalized groups. Sirleaf identifies herself as an 'indigenous' Liberian first, then as a woman of African descent. She presents herself and the groups she seeks agency for as discussed by Gayatri Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The subaltern refers to the marginalized groups such as women and minority groups as discussed by Selden et al. These groups are voiceless because the dominating groups inhibit and ignore their opinions as they want them to speak their language. Therefore, they are gagged or they are ostracized when they appear to have divergent views. Sirleaf often spoke out when she saw things were not being done right leading to her being seen as a rebel. She was referred to as 'Africa's iron lady' and she accepted the tag and goes further to demonstrate that she can compete equally with the men in politics. She claims that she was able to transverse the country in her campaigns with much vigor. She wants to be taken seriously and to be given support to make positive changes in her people's lives. She is aware of her role to reverse stereotypes of women in leadership and Africans ability to govern self. She also represents what she believes to be the marginalized inhabitants of Liberia.

Sirleaf blames the former presidents for the mess that the country is in. She says "So, during the campaign for president, when my detractors began implying that I was descended from the settler class, that I had no understanding of the hard and difficult lives of indigenous Liberians, I had to set the record straight" (22). The settler class is believed to have been priviledged and this

caused the resentment that culminated in civil war. However, Sirleaf is often subjective in her portrayal of the Americo-Liberians. She seems to blame the whole group for the leaders' mistakes. It is unjust that these slave descendants are being subjected to blame for being who they are. They just happened to find themselves in the particular side of history. She has also benefited in her interaction with them although she does not admit it. She calls the settlers "the colonists who spoke English and retained the dress, manners, housing, and religion of the American South" (5) to allude that they colonised the native Liberians. Having a German grandfather must have given her advantages too given the superiority attitude light skin attracts in Africa. Moreover, both her parents were brought up by settlers and they benefitted by getting a decent education.

Sirleaf inscribes herself into the history of Liberia by merging it into her life history through retrospection. In her prologue, she goes back to the nation's ancient history by narrating how the republic came to be centuries ago. Liberia became a republic after freed slaves were resettled in it. In her prologue, she introduces the nation's complexity. "Liberia is complicated. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, Liberia is a conundrum wrapped in complexity and stuffed inside a paradox. Then again, it was born that way" (1). Sirleaf gives her interpretation of the reasons for the animosity between the Americo-Liberians and the people they found already settled which eventually culminated in civil War.

According to Sirleaf, the division began with the creation of the republic. Liberia became a republic after these settlers declared independence on July 26, 1847 in a document that referenced the oppression of African Americans in the United States and stated that such persons were being driven to make new lives for themselves in Africa. The initial settler group, and those who followed, came to call themselves Americo-Liberians. Sirleaf claims that the immigrants were far more American than African. They had adopted the cultures, traditions, and habits of the land of their birth, and these they brought with them when they came. The settlers created symbols for the new nation that reflected their American identity and emigrant sensibility. She observes that the Liberian flag mimics so closely the American flag, the only difference being the number of stars and stripes. The Liberian seal features not

only a palm tree, representing vast natural resources, but also a sailing ship to represent the settlers who came from across the seas (5). She writes:

> The settlers of modern-day Liberia decided they would plant their feet in Africa but keep their faces turned squarely toward the United States. This stance would trigger a profound alienation between themselves and the indigenous peoples upon whose shores they had arrived and among whom they would build their new home. Alienation would lead to disunity; disunity would lead to a deeply cleaved society. That cleavage would set the stage for all the terror and bloodshed to come. (6)

The autobiography argues that the already existing groups were excluded from power and the African identity was disregarded. By 1867, the ACS had sent more than 13,000 emigrants to Liberia. The settlements gradually expanded. Historians suggest as many as 70 percent of African Americans sent to Liberia were told they would be freed *only* if they "agreed" to "go back" to Africa.

There were also the "recaptives"—men, women, and children who had been snatched or sold into slavery but then rescued mid-Atlantic from slaving ships. Having abolished the slave trade throughout the empire in 1807, Britain sought to compel other nations to follow suit, using its mighty navy to enforce an embargo of slave trading throughout the Middle Passage. Many of these people—Ibo and Fulani, Kongo and Yoruba, Bantu and Fon—had been taken from points hundreds of miles south and west of Liberia, from parts of what are now Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Congo. To return them to their respective homes was impossible, so instead they were "liberated" in Liberia or Freetown. The American settlers dubbed this new group "Congo People," because they were assumed to have come from areas in and around the Congo River basin (14-15). Sirleaf gives this information to explain the diversity that exists even among the late settlers.

After Liberia declared its independence, Joseph J. Roberts, a freeborn black born in the American state of Virginia, was elected Liberia's first president. Sirleaf emphasizes that for many years every president of the country would come from Montserado County, most of them from Monrovia: the City on the Hill. Sirleaf demonstrates how the Americo-Liberians have

related with the indigenous peoples and how they have excluded them from rightful ownership of the nation. She seeks to interrogate the official history of Liberia as narrated by the Americo-Liberians. Through the autobiography, Sirleaf protests the injustice of such subjective history. Were observes:

> Liberians were taught to remember "the past of the nation" as an American-Liberian past. The history books recommended by the state were written from the perspective of Americo-Liberians, such as Doris Banks Henries, an African American woman married to a Liberian. Doris claimed that Liberia "sprang forth from the un-named, unexplored, uncivilized forests of West Africa in 1822". Indigenous Liberians are featured as villains who were a threat to the well-being of the settlers. Her version of an oral history in a tale she wrote about the legendary Fort Hill battle of 1 December 1822 reads: "The courageous settlers were outnumbered and on the verge of being overwhelmed by the barbaric Africans until a woman named Matilda Newport fired a canon with her pipe" (59). To celebrate this history of the Americo-Liberians, Matilda Newport Day was made a holiday until Liberians began to question the truth of this narrative, after which it was abolished. (202)

Sirleaf is protesting the injustice of such subjective history. She does not like the way the elite settler class sought to portray the other groups. She therefore seeks to make their story heard in her autobiography. She wants to demonstrate that there were a people with established values and culture before the arrival of the last group of Americo-Liberian settlers. Sirleaf was exposed to and influenced by the writing of J. Gus Liebenow on the past African empires and the present True Whig Liberian party holds on the nation. He theorized that "a small elite settler class maintained an essentially colonial relationship to the great majority of indigenous Liberians, monopolizing power and privilege even in the face of superficial societal change" (57). This is evidence of the power of reading. She discovers information that she would not have got if she had not done her own research. She also seems to take it so seriously with a danger of radicalization. She focuses on the lack of privileges in her campaign and promises to remedy it. She hopes to reverse the status quo.

William Tubman, who was president for twenty seven years, was a part of the elite Americo-Liberian group. His mother, Elizabeth Rebecca Barnes Tubman, was born a slave in Georgia and he had immigrated to Liberia with her parents after the American Civil War. His father's father, William Tubman, arrived earlier, emigrating from the state of Maryland, after he and his parents were freed in their slave owners' will. Sirleaf suggests that he was a capitalist and a dictator because only a few people became rich and he discouraged opposition. However, he had claimed to give opportunities to all Liberians even encouraging dropping of the elitist term Americo-Liberian (24). He was known as uncle Shad and she describes him as having a "powerful combination of charm, charisma and great political acumen" (24). He was a close friend to Sirleaf's father and it is this connection that might have assisted him to be elected to the Liberian House of Representatives.

Sirleaf discusses issues such as exploitation of Liberians by Firestone and the Liberian Mining Company during Tubman's era. She opines that "President Tubman's Open Door Policy, announced at his inauguration in 1944, was essentially a plan for unrestricted foreign investment. Foreign companies were invited to operate in the country free from restrictive rules and regulations and granted favorable terms along with an impressive array of tax deductions and exemptions". The policy spurred the introduction of lumber milling, tree plantations, and especially the mining of iron ore in places such as Nimba County. Among these companies was the Liberian Mining Company (48). The foreign companies owned mostly by Americans made huge profits that often surpassed the country's annual income but it didn't benefit the people much. Firestone had given a loan to the government in the 1920's and they were given 99 years land lease. Workers were poorly paid and housed. Child labour was another concern. She discusses it because she wants to prove that the company's presence in the country has not benefited the country. Other companies she mentions are LAMCO the Liberian American-Swedish Minerals Company who built better facilities that the Liberian Mining Company (49) and the Liberian maritime program. This is the reason Sirleaf called Tubman a benevolent dictator when recalling the news of his death from prostate cancer surgery complications (63). She argues that he had many opportunities to improve the country but he only focused on himself and a few elites.

President Tolbert was nicknamed Speedy Tolbert and Sirleaf feels that he was sincere in his efforts but was derailed by people close to him who did not want the status quo to change. She reveals that "William R. Tolbert was an ordained minister and former president of the Baptist World Alliance, a quiet, religious man who had spent twenty years in Tubman's shadow as vice president. No one knew what to expect when he took the head office in the wake of Tubman's death" (66). Tolbert introduced reforms and identified with his African heritage. There was a lot of hope as the new leadership seemed committed to the people. Sirleaf got the offer of a new high level position in the newly christened Ministry of Finance (formerly the Treasury Department) as deputy minister, charged primarily with responsibility for fiscal and banking policies. The minister of finance was Stephen Tolbert, a University of Michigan graduate with both bachelor's and master's degrees in forestry. He was the brother to the president. This reveals that the president was corrupt because he gave his brother the job. This is nepotism and misuse of power.

Sirleaf inscribes herself into Liberian history by revealing her impact as she served from 1972 to 1973 in the Tolbert administration. She gave a speech questioning the history and ideals of her country at her alma maters graduation ceremony in 1972. She interprets the state of the nation at the time by revealing she warned that failure to embrace the African heritage and the sidelining by the elite class created classes and might lead to war. Her prediction came to be true eight years later. Tolbert summoned her after the speech was made public and told her: "You know, people do not usually challenge the government they're in!" he thundered. "You don't say things that will put the public against the government. We are not going to tolerate that. This is very serious" (72). She was however left to go on in her position. She soon felt sidelined and used her connections for a job at the World Bank. She calls it a strategic retreat (76). This means that her heart was always in Liberia.

The World Bank seconded Sirleaf to work for the Liberian government when the new minister James T Philips called that he wanted her on board after the death of Stephen Tolbert in April 1975 (80). She must have had conflicts with the former minister as she went back to work at the ministry after his death. She observed that the country was facing economic challenges and the opposition led by Gabriel Baccus Matthews was gaining ground. In 1979, President Tolbert

focused on arrangements for hosting of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) meeting in Liberia which Sirleaf finds to have been too expensive. She calls it a men's club and a dictators' club and the meeting is a men's night out (84). This is quite satirical and reveals the gender inequity in the continent's leadership positions. Sirleaf gives a history of its formation by President Tubman, President Sekou Toure of the Republic of Guinea and President Kwame Nkurumah of Ghana. It was founded in May 1963 in Addis Ababa Ethiopia. She feels that the present OAU now the African Union is changing nearly thirty one years later.

Demonstrations were held in the streets of Monrovia over dissatisfaction caused by the governmental plans to raise the price of rice in 1979. Tolbert ordered his troops to fire on the demonstrators, and seventy people were killed. Rioting ensued throughout Liberia and as many as 140 people were killed during the Rice Riots as they came to be known. There were also huge losses caused by property damage and theft (88). Tolbert did not follow the advice of the committee he had selected to give recommendations. Sirleaf was one of the members. They had suggested release of detainees and government liberalization but he tightened his grip. He released the opposition leaders he was detaining and opened the university he had accused of radicalization but Sirleaf narrates that she sensed that a change was coming. People had been radicalized and they wanted better services and inclusion in leadership. Sirleaf suggests that had President Tolbert accepted a liberal government, Liberia would have been spared of the years of war that were to follow.

Sirleaf served as the first woman Minister of Finance from July 1979 to April 1980 after the Minister was fired in a reshuffle. It was a short period as Samuel Doe led a bloody military coup d'état on April 12, 1980. Tolbert and twenty-six of his supporters were murdered. This ended the 133 years of Americo-Liberian political domination. Doe formed a military regime known as the People's Redemption Council. Sirleaf discusses the tension that followed after Tolbert was executed in the mansion. At the time of the coup, Sirleaf reveals that she was at the house of her 'longtime friend'. Thirteen of Tolbert's Cabinet members were executed publicly ten days later. Doe would announce over the radio that Sirleaf was needed at the Executive Mansion. She would go each morning to explain the economic aspects of the government and it was a form of torture as she didn't know whether they would let her go home or shoot her when they no longer

needed her (98). The soldiers even took her to view the body of the slain president. She found her brother at one time among the prisoners and on inquiring Doe did not also know why he had been arrested which indicates that he was not fully in charge of his government (101). Even her sister Jennie had fled the country with her husband (104). This was embarrassing to her because people close to her considered her to have betrayed them.

Doe later credited Sirleaf being spared from executions to her mother who had once been hospitable to him. Sirleaf claims that her mother did not remember. The relationship of Doe and Sirleaf can be questioned as she later accepted a post in the new Samuel Doe government and was willing to make it run efficiently. She claims that she decided to go along with it for the sake of the country. The silence can be interpreted for a deeper insight. She had been active in creating awareness on the need for locals to be integrated in power and she must have celebrated their takeover. She says that she wanted to assist and salvage the situation in the country but she was considered a betrayer by the former administration and a part of the old system by the progressives (104). This is expected because of her initial collaboration with Doe.

Sirleaf uses her autobiography to settle scores with Doe. She had started off relating well with him but she feels that the killings were unjustified. Tipoteh the new minister for planning and economic affairs justified the killings on a trip to Washington and New York when Sirleaf led a delegation to meet Citibank official and seek financial aid (105). This led to her walking out of the meeting. She said the coup would have been accepted if the killings had not taken place. Jack Clark the vice president of Citibank suggested that she might want to leave Liberia (106).

Sirleaf reveals:

> Doe had a tremendous opportunity in the first days, weeks, and months after the coup. His popularity was sky high; walking through the streets of Monrovia, he was greeted by cheering, chanting crowds numbering in the thousands. Many of those who would naturally oppose his new administration had fled, and though there would be some scattered, disorganized attempts at counter rebellion in the first months, they would quickly fall apart. Doe held in his hand an opportunity for meaningful change in Liberia. But instead of grasping it, he tossed it away. The bottom line is this: Doe got greedy. He

> got greedy and the people around him got greedy too, and collectively they began to feed off the state's largess like a pack of hyenas. Money poured out of the government's coffers at an astonishing rate. Any attempt to formulate a vision for moving the country forward was soon abandoned; what rose in its place was a kind of copycatting of the past. (107)

Doe was the first native non settler Liberian president. He was expected to improve the lives of the formerly alienated Liberians but he left them disillusioned. This is the reason Sirleaf is rebuking his actions. Many Liberians fled the country after the excess of the ruling soldiers was witnessed and the economy was ruined. Sirleaf could not just watch without speaking out even though it cost her job and freedom.

Women are portrayed as agents of change in Liberia. Sirleaf recalls "market women taunting those they felt had oppressed them for so many years: the members of the elite class" (95). They chanted: "Congo woman born rogue, native woman born soldier!" (95). They implied that Doe who was a soldier was one of their own and those who had been ousted were born by the settlers (Congo). The natives thought that this leadership would bring positive change in their lives. Disillusion was to follow when Liberia endured tribal and civil war for fourteen years from 1989. Sirleaf narrates the excitement to portray the woman as active participants in revolutionary events. She is also justifying her willingness to serve in the regime even though they acquired power illegally.

Sirleaf was placed under house arrest in August 1985 and soon after sentenced to ten years in prison for sedition, as a consequence of a speech she gave criticising the Samuel Doe regime. She called them 'idiots' and suggested that they were not educated (123). Samuel Doe pardoned and released her in September following international calls for her release (131). She had initially planned to run as vice president of Jackson Doe. Due to government pressure, she was removed from the vice president ticket and instead ran for a Senate seat in Montserrado County (133). She was disappointed but accepted it. Sirleaf refused to accept her senate seat in protest of the election fraud that saw Doe elected with a large house majority. This reveals that she is a principled person as she stood her ground to the end.

On November 12, 1985, a failed counter-coup was launched by Thomas Quiwonkpa, whose soldiers briefly occupied the national radio station. Government repression intensified in response, as Doe's troops retaliated by executing members of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups in Nimba County. There was an attempted coup against the Doe government by Thomas Quiwonkpa on 12th November 1985, and Sirleaf recalls 13th November when she was arrested by Doe's forces (141) as the worst day of her life. She juxtaposes it with inauguration which was the best day of her life (137). Sirleaf came close to being killed and used her gender appeal to convince the soldiers who arrested her to be spared. A Gola man came and offered Sirleaf protection after asking her to speak some Gola words to prove that she was indeed one on this night when she was almost raped. This reveals that tribalism plagued the country as the man was willing to protect her because of their similar ethnic background. This is the incident that she had hinted at when she was appreciating her father for ensuring they learned a few Gola words. It is scary to imagine what happened to those who did not have their tribesmen among the soldiers. Sirleaf witnessed other prisoners who were taken to be killed at night. They pleaded with her to save them but she was powerless at the time. This is a traumatizing memory and narrating it reveals her sacrifice for the nation and helps her to heal.

Even though Sirleaf did not break her resolve not to accept her seat in the Senate, she was released in July 1986. Her sister Jennie led people in rallying for her release (152). She secretly fled the country to exile in the United States later that year during her son's wedding. This is another loss as she missed her son's wedding because she knew nobody would suspect she could escape at such an important occasion. Peter Johnson a man from Doe's tribe had warned her that she was in danger (159). Her friend Clave came to her aid when her house was broken into and connected her to Gabriel Doe who organized a plane for her (160). Clave also gave her accommodation and ensure she was safely out of the country. Jennie and Clave were always supportive to her and she pays tribute to them by acknowledging their actions.

The autobiography is used to recall and record history. Sirleaf discusses the Liberian coup, attempted coups and wars that reveal the deep strife and animosity caused by ethnic divisions. Siundu (2011) observes "works by Kenyan-Asian writers occupy a slippery space between autobiography and biography in the sense that even though they set out to write the lives of other people, these biographies tell the stories of the authors just as much as they do of the subjects"

(118). He uses the term "auto/biography" to recognize the split between the two different yet related narratives, virtually all of which are tied to the wider discourse of Kenyan national historiography. This is the nature of biographies and autobiographies. Sirleaf sets out to tell her personal story but tells the collective narrative of Liberia. Her autobiography also qualifies as a biography of other people, places and events. She explains that the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), a rebel group led by Charles Taylor begun taking over parts of the country. In 1989, while in the Ivory Coast, Taylor assembled a group of rebels into the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), mostly from the Gio and Mano tribes (173). In December 1989, the NPFL invaded Nimba County in Liberia. Thousands of Gio and Mano joined them. The Liberian army (AFL) counterattacked, and retaliated against the whole population of the region. A war was raging between Krahn on one side, and Gio and Mano on the other in the mid-1990s.

Taylor controlled much of the country by the middle of 1990, and he laid siege to Monrovia. In July, Yormie Johnson split off from NPFL and formed the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), based on the Gio tribe. Both NPFL and INPFL continued siege on Monrovia. In August 1990, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), an organisation of West African states, created a military intervention force called Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) of 4,000 troops, to restore order (182). President Doe and Yormie Johnson (INPFL) agreed to this intervention but Taylor did not.

On September 9, President Doe paid a visit to the barely established headquarters of ECOMOG in the Free Port of Monrovia and he was attacked by INPFL, taken to the INPFL's Caldwell base, tortured and killed. It was recorded in a globally publicized video footage (187). Sirleaf comments that Doe did not deserve to die in such a gory manner despite his weaknesses. She claims that Yormie Johnson the mastermind of his death is senator in Liberia and claims it is proof of the tolerant nature of the people. She initially had hopes in Doe's presidency being the first 'native' president. She says that she often visited him and asked why he was not keeping his promises but he denied making any promises (117). She blames his age and illiteracy for the failures.

The Liberian war lasted fourteen years and it claimed the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and displaced a million others into refugee camps in neighboring countries and internally. Some 600 people were shot by police in a church (180). The situation was so bad that one man told a reporter for *The Boston Globe*, "The dogs ate the dead, and we ate the dogs" (178). There was a humanitarian crisis. Sirleaf and her family were in the United States during this time. This is a trait of the political class who can incite and even fund violence but when things go wrong they have an exit plan. Sirleaf comments:

> Life in America is less strenuous, in many ways, than life in Africa; the daily basics of survival in suburban Alexandria were so much more easily met than in struggling Monrovia. What's more, most of my family, save my oldest son, was in America, along with many, many acquaintances and friends. My work was there, and my career was thriving. It would not have been difficult to let the troubles of my homeland drift gently to the horizons of my mind. (165-166)

This proves she was comfortable away. Unfortunately the people who had no means were left in Liberia to face the war. Sirleaf regrets comments that she made on an interview with a journalist which implied that she was supporting the destruction of Monrovia (179). She uses the autobiography to correct any misconceptions it created.

At the beginning of the First Liberian Civil War in 1989, Sirleaf supported Charles Taylor's rebellion against Doe. She helped raise money for the war because she was convinced by Tom her friend and Taylor's close associate (173). She later opposed Taylor's handling of the war and his treatment of rival leaders such as Elmer Johnson and Jackson Doe who were killed. She also met with Taylor and realized that he did not have any concrete plans to improve the country but was egocentric and only aimed to get power (176). Americans were being evacuated on her return from Liberia. Many people died in the war. Some people were beheaded in the streets.

The nation held the 1997 general election, which Sirleaf returned to Liberia to contest. Sirleaf ran as the presidential candidate for the Unity Party and placed second in a controversial election, getting 25% of the vote to Charles Taylor's 75%. Taylor instilled fear in the voters and claimed that a woman could not govern Liberia. One of the slogans that the youth chanted was:

"He killed my ma. He killed my pa. I will vote for him" (218). This reveals that they were held hostage and felt like they had no choice but to elect him.

Sirleaf narrates how she left Liberia and went into exile in Abidjan, Ivory Coast after controversy about the results and accusations of treason (221). Samuel Dokie was abducted and brutally murdered along with his wife and two other relatives in December 1997 (223) leading to mass demonstrations in Monrovia (224). He was in the opposition and Taylor was implicated. The Second Liberian Civil War began in 1999 when Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, a rebel group based in the northwest of the country, launched an armed insurrection against Taylor. In March 2003, a second rebel group, Movement for Democracy in Liberia, began launching attacks against Taylor from the southeast. Peace talks between the factions began in Accra in June of that year, and Taylor was indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for crimes against humanity the same month. By July 2003, the rebels had launched an assault on Monrovia.

Under heavy pressure from the international community and the domestic Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement, Taylor resigned in August 2003 and went into exile in Nigeria (240). A peace deal was signed in Accra on August 18. Gyude Bryant, a political neutral, was chosen as chairman in a transitional government after the war, while Sirleaf served as head of the Governance Reform Commission (242). She stood for president as the candidate of the Unity Party in the 2005 general election and was placed second in the first round after footballer George Weah (263). Sirleaf earned 59% of the vote versus 40% for Weah in the run-off elections. The announcement of the new leader was postponed until further election investigations were carried out after Weah disputed the results (267).

Sirleaf was declared the winner of the Liberian election on 23rd November, 2005 (268). Her inauguration was colourful and was attended by many foreign dignitaries who included African head of states, United State Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and then First Lady Laura Bush. Sirleaf recalls her inauguration took place on 16th January, 2006 and says that this was the best day of her life. She recalled all her past tribulations and wished her mother had been there to witness it (271). The presence of high profile guests suggests that Sirleaf is an international figure. She places herself on a pedestal and sees her victory as a global victory.

Siundu observes that the works by Kenyan Asian female writers reach beyond the usual desire for communal inclusion into the mainstream national histories and culture to pursue forms of strategic subversion by showing the ways in which women are doubly excluded from national and communal narratives on account of racial difference and womanhood in a patriarchal society (2011:118). Sirleaf claims that Taylor used her gender to campaign against her suitability to be president. She also reveals that Larry her campaign manager found out that some people not ready for a female president. However, a few needed a change and were positive. She writes:

> But many people were not only willing but ready to give a woman a chance. "Men have failed us," people said over and over again. "Men are too violent, too prone to make war. Women are less corrupt, less likely to be focused on getting fancy cars and fancy homes for themselves". (250)

The past failure of male presidents worked in her favour because she was elected to give women a chance to remedy the former ills.

In what appears like womanist efforts as expounded by Alice Walker *The Colour Purple* and other second wave feminists, Sirleaf supported and incorporated women into her government. The women include Jewel Taylor the wife of Charles Taylor who formed part of the new government after her endorsement of Sirleaf in the presidential elections. Sirleaf claims that she thought Jewel wanted her own identity. She suggests that women can forge their own identity independent from the men. Jewel had wanted Sirleaf to grant Taylor clemency but she claims that it was not part of their agreement (283). Sirleaf seeks to sets the record straight on her role in Taylor's repatriation and sentence. Sirleaf reveals that she handed him over after much international pressure. The collective identity of women as a marginalized group is influential in her elections and Sirleaf pays tribute to the women of Liberia. She reveals how they grouped themselves and "labored and advocated for peace" (271). They also campaigned for her to be elected. She suggests that it is time women are given space to lead as they are good in leadership. She also wants to point out that they participate in democratic processes and can support one of their own.

Autobiographies are used to pay tribute to mentors and to acknowledge the role of other people in authors' achievements. Sirleaf pays tribute to Larry Gibson her campaign manager. He had done a research on the possibility of her winning and informed her that it was likely that there would be a run off. He assisted to design her posters and gave suggestions of photo postures. They also countered the claim that she was old by portraying she had energy when she was captured dancing in her campaign and mingling with Liberians. Her sister Jennie would compare Liberia to a young sick child who needed an elder woman to nurture. Sirleaf and her team countered the men who claimed she was unsuitable because of her gender by reminding voters of her past record. They had spared resources for a run off and they intensified their campaign in the second round. Her campaigners also avoided abusive language and focused on giving promises based on the needs of Liberians. They were therefore able to win in the second round.

Sirleaf also pays tribute to great leaders among them Thomas Sankara whom she describes as the young charismatic leader of Burkina Faso who had implemented a revolutionary government committed to women's rights, improved education and health care, and the fighting of corruption (171). He was killed in 1987 and Sirleaf claims Taylor was later implicated in his murder (172). She acknowledges global leaders such as Robert McNamara whom she worked with at the World Bank and pays tribute to Kofi Anan former UN Secretary who she worked with. By doing so, she is putting herself in their league. She is also revealing that they have influenced her positively and she has learnt from their mistakes.

Sirleaf attributes her achievements to her professional background and to the connections that she kept who often assured her of a fallback when things got tough. Her family and friends such as Clave gave her solid support. Her 'long time' friend and close relationship is not revealed as she is probably protecting his privacy. She however admits to having her friends and relatives working with her in government one being Minister of Foreign Affairs yet she criticized past presidents for nepotism. This is hypocritical as she had promised an all-inclusive government.

After the euphoria of victory, Sirleaf and Liberia had to deal with reality. She notes that she faced 'a humongous task'. Sirleaf presents the state of Liberia thus:

> In the chaos of war, our HIV rate had quadrupled. Our children were dying of curable diseases such as tuberculosis, dysentery, measles, malaria, parasites, and malnutrition. Our schools—those that remained—lacked books, equipment, and, most critically, teachers. Our clinics and hospitals—those that remained—lacked doctors, nurses, and supplies. The telecommunications age had passed us by. We had a $4.7 billion international debt owed to the World Bank, the IMF, and other donors, lent in large measure to some of my predecessors who had been known to be irresponsible, unaccountable, unrepresentative, and corrupt. (276-277)

Sirleaf accuses her predecessors for the mess and gives updates of how they have handled the challenges. The World Bank wrote off some loans and her government embarked on improving the economy. Her government introduced free and compulsory education (292). Sirleaf claims that she wanted to see the children of Liberia smile again (291) through access to education and maintaining peace in order to heal them.

The early exposure to politics gave Sirleaf a taste of the public limelight and set a background to her future as a politician. Sirleaf reveals the family had political inclinations and she was well positioned. She implies that politics came natural to her. Anderson poses the question of status. She asks if we have believed all subjects in the same way and if all signatures have had the same legal status. She refers to Nancy Miller (51) who suggests that women are less likely to be believed than men (3). Male protagonists have been central in autobiographies. Sirleaf is able to get over all the gender constraints through hard work, right connections and strategy.

Conclusion

I have discussed how the author inscribes herself into the collective history of Liberia by locating her within the family, community and career fields. She gives her interpretation of the historical events that she finds herself at the center of. Her family is her formative identity field. The geographical spaces that she inhabits, her religion, ethnicity and nationality all shape her consciousness and ideology. The autobiography is rich in both personal and collective history.

Sirleaf takes us on a journey of her family's history; her experiences with abuse; motherhood at a young age; escape through education; flight motif; relationships and leadership. Sirleaf claims that she does not regret anything about her life. She says "In fact, I can honestly say I have few regrets at all when I think back over my life. There is nothing I would have done differently. Everything I did, every action I took, matched the circumstances of the times. If I could live my life again, I would live it exactly the same way" (315). She even sees going to prison as a great lesson in leadership and accepts prison as one of her fields of identity formation. This reveals that Sirleaf is a person who chooses not to be limited by her past. Buchanan and Tollison observe:

> The self is defined by the objective historical records of his or her life. It is easy to agree that an individual is born at a specific place in a given time, lives in a certain geographical location and environment, is educated or not, gets employed at a given work station and lives to unique experiences. It is these circumstances that define the self in the autobiographer. (508)

Liberia has a dark history of assassinations, civil wars and diseases such as Ebola outbreak. However, Sirleaf is optimistic that Africa can overcome these and other problems which include electoral malpractices and mismanagement. Her ability to rise above the challenges is an admirable trait.

I proceed to discuss the recalling and interpreting of personal and collective memories in Joe Khamisi's autobiography.

CHAPTER THREE

RECALLING AND INTERPRETING PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE MEMORIES IN JOE KHAMISI'S *DASH BEFORE DUSK*

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine how Joe Khamisi recalls and interprets personal and collective memories in his autobiography, *Dash Before Dusk: A Slave's Descendant's Journey in Freedom*. I have identified the convergence of self and history in the autobiography. I demonstrate that the author inscribes himself into the history of the country of birth through the autobiography and interprets the history of his nation through his life narrative. I have discussed this under the headings family and slave descendant history, professional life in self actualisation and political career for agency. They cover the author's major fields of identity formation.

Roy Pascal explains that "autobiographies mean discrimination and selection of endless complexity of life, selection of facts, distribution of emphases and selection of expressions. Since autobiographers write from their own experiences, their work should qualify for testimonies to history regarding time and periods of life that they lived" (5). In this autobiography, Khamisi narrates the events that were occurring both in the personal and public domain at the time he was born. He explains there was segregation in Kenya due to the colour bar policy of the British colonialists. He takes us back to slavery from which his maternal grandparents (the Stephens) and his paternal great grandparents (the Khamisis) were rescued; the colonial times; struggle for independence and independent Kenya.

Smith and Watson observe that truth and authenticity of the autobiography is supported by actual dates, events, names and places (2001:5). Khamisi claims in his preface that he has tried as much as possible to give a truthful account of events from memory. He acknowledges the sources of some of the information pertaining the family tree as notes of his father Francis Khamisi before his death in 2000 and an interview with his mother Maria Faida at Rabai in 2010 (vii). He also refers to stories narrated by his maternal grandmother Nyanya Pauline who was a rescued slave sometimes known as recaptives. Truth and authenticity are supported by paratextual elements; actual dates, names and events. He also includes photos in the autobiography of his time in most of the places he has visited, the people close to him and of artefacts found in Rabai mission

museum that link it to a slave history. The pictures nclude the bell that was used to warn former slaves of recapture, and chains that were used by the slave captors.

Khamisi inscribes himself into the history of his people by discussing events that occurred from the time he was born, during his childhood, and as he worked in various capacities. Pascal argues that autobiography depends on the seriousness of the author, the seriousness of his personality and his intention in writing (60). In telling his life narrative, Khamisi puts himself at the centre but intertwines it with a history of his family, community, nation and continent. In a dry journalistic tone with very little signs of fictionalization, he leaves the reader fascinated by the interesting description of Rabai, Mombasa at the Kenyan coast and the nation's political history.

Khamisi also describes the history of Kenya's neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia, Namibia, Somalia, Tanzania and other regional and international states. He projects himself as a cosmopolitan. Khamisi aims at celebrating the milestones that he has overcome, and at exposing the greed in the society by revealing the rot and excesses of past regimes. He has witnessed colour discrimination, favoritism, tribalism, nepotism and overall corruption.

Muchiri argues that "reading Kenyan autobiographies allows one to understand, through personal narratives, the history and the making of the Kenyan nation" (2014:83). Even though he does not consider himself as purely native, Khamisi takes the reader from the pre-colonial slave trade period; the colonial Kenya of the 1940s to the early 1960s; independence in 1963 and post-colonial era to the modern times 1963 to 2007.

Khamisi recounts important events in the history of colonial Kenya which include MAU MAU activism, the state of emergency in 1952, regional political organizations, Legco elections, Lancaster house conferences of 1960, 1962 and 1963, self-governance and independence in his autobiography. He discusses key historical events in President Jomo Kenyatta's era of 1963 to 1978, President Daniel arap Moi from 1978-2002 and President Mwai Kibaki's first term of 2002-2007.

Family and Slave Descendant History

Joe Khamisi was born either on 31st December 1943 according to his mother Maria Faida, or 1st January 1944 according to his father Francis Joseph Khamisi (1). It is interesting that even his date of birth generated a controversy which has continued to be witnessed in a major part of his life. At this time, his father was away as he was working in Nairobi as a full time secretary general of Kenya African Study Union (KASU) which was being changed to Kenya African Union (KAU) in readiness for Kenya's struggle for independence. Khamisi narrates his family history together with the global and national histories. He uses his autobiography to recall world history and places himself at the centre of many historical events. Khamisi reveals that his father Francis Khamisi was among founder members of Kenya African Study Union (KASU) together with, among others, James Gichuru and J. D. Otiende.

The birth of Khamisi in 1944 was during World War II (1939-1945) around the time of the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium. This is the last offensive by the Hitler led German army that signaled the end of the Second World War in 1945. Khamisi links his birth to this global historic event. He narrates that his mother walked three kilometres to Mazeras to get a vehicle to Mombasa then walked half a kilometer from Mwembe Tayari bus stage to the hospital. He is the second born and his elder brother is Charles. He refers to his mother as a "peasant woman" (1) to signal his background. One gets to know that he was not born to a wealthy family but into poverty even though it might be expected that he always led a life of priviledge since his father was a political leader. He reveals that this was not always the case.

Khamisi reveals his identity through his family lineage which is one with a slave ancestry. He inscribes himself into the history of the nation by tracing his origin with an aim of setting the record straight and putting any rumours by his political opponents about his slave origin to rest. He situates his family's history within the slave trade history in East Africa by tracing his family tree from his great grandparents on the paternal grandmother Nyanya Emilia's side and his maternal grandparents' side. His paternal grandfather's side is not clearly outlined as his grandmother was a single mother and he claims his father did not know his father. However he knows his grandfather's name and one step sibling of his father.

William Ochieng observes that autobiographies provide interpretations of events, not merely records as is the case in history. Khamisi draws from his family's history to reveal his identity and to interpret the history that was passed to him by his parents and grandparents. Khamisi's maternal grandmother Pauline was joined to her lifelong husband Stephen Sepetu at the Church Missionary Society (CMS) mission in Kenya started in 1844 by two German missionaries Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebman. It was the first settlement for rescued slaves (3). "In the late 1880 when the Sultan of Zanzibar issued letters of freedom, former slaves were told to choose their future husbands or wives from a multitude of people from the station. They would be wedded and settled on small plots of land surrounding the mission. These two were among them and they were settled at Kinyakani on a three acre plot overlooking the main Mombasa/Kaloleni road" (4). Pauline was captured while still in pre-teens on her way from fetching water somewhere in the Tanganyika interior (5). Her community the Zaramo inhabits an area around Dar es Salaam. He does not remember much about his maternal grandfather Stephen. Together they had five children: Francis, Livingstone, Leones Matano, Regina and Maria his mother.

Kalekwa, his paternal great grandmother, got married to Khamisi Sadala who had retired from the British Army and were settled at Simakeni. Both were from Nyasaland (Malawi). They bore his paternal grandmother Emilia and Juma Sadala. Kalekwa was bought by missionaries because "she was considered too young for the overseas market" (7). Nyanya Emilia was born in Rabai but was not married when she became pregnant by "a man who came to Rabai from Sagalla in the Taita hinterlands" (7) Frederick Elijah Mwangombe. Khamisi's father was born in Simakeni and he adopted 4th August 1913 to be his official birthday. The day of his patron Saint Francis of Assisi (8). This reveals that he is also a Christian. His mother could only remember that he was born either at the beginning or at the end of a big war. She does not specify which war but it must be the First World War (1914-1918) since he was an adult at the time of the Second World War when Khamisi was born. At the time he was born, the Africans were not educated and there was poor record keeping of births. Khamisi is the name of the father of Nyanya Emilia. The family did not associate with or identify with the father of Francis Khamisi.

In justifying his choice to celebrate his birthday on 31st December, Khamisi says "I chose it only because it gives me an illusion of heavenly superiority; of being able to close the gate on the last day of the year to all sinners and do-gooders just like St. Peter has done for more than two thousand years as per the Christian belief" (2). This allusion is an indicator that he has been greatly influenced by the Christian religion. He refers to the Bible to signal his identity as a Christian. It can also be observed that he always wanted to feel powerful. Apart from the reason given for selection of his birthday, Khamisi was flattered when the children in school called him Kimbo, the brand name of a popular cooking fat, since it implied he was 'as strong as the man with thick biceps on the can' (36). It is human nature to love power and recognition.

There was a tradition of burying the umbilical cord to signify ones origin and territory. Khamisi reveals it did not happen to him as it is only his mother and two nurses who were present in the hospital's delivery room. He claims that it does not matter how his cord was disposed but what matters is that he was born and he is alive. In his own words he says "What is important is that I am here-more than six decades later-with abundant memories of the past and a story to tell" (2). He implies that he does not want to regret that which he cannot change. He is also not tied down by customs and traditions but he is a man of the modern times. He captures the reader's interest by foretelling that he has an interesting story to tell.

Smith and Watson (2001) argue that an autobiographical writer presents the subject in the past, before he or she is born, present when he or she is alive. It is only logical that an autobiographer writes before death (5). Joe Khamisi in the first part of his title *Dash Before Dusk* signifies that he is aware that dusk is approaching. It can be taken to be reference to his childhood when he had to be home before dark or as a rush to tell his life narrative before the end of his life. The title is an allusion to his father's policy when he was young. They had to be home before dark (53). Khamisi demonstrates that he is first of all his father's son since he is his mentor. His father was a journalist and a politician just like him. He was a strict disciplinarian, maybe a little too hard, but with age Khamisi is able to see through his tough exterior and to love him for who he is. He says: "My father was a strong character in my life. Despite everything that happened in my childhood, I was convinced he was a good, loving father. He gave us a good Christian upbringing and core values I have cherished throughout my life" (101). He believes that this

discipline sheltered them from negative behavior. Therefore, he pays tribute to his father in the title and in his autobiography. We see him trying to follow in his footsteps through his careers of journalism and politics.

Khamisi also pays tribute to his brother Charles. He says that he was special to him because they had been through so much together and they knew each other better than anyone else. They were usually bought 'look-alike' clothes and people thought they were twins (149). He says that when he died, he found it was difficult to fathom how life would be without him (150). This shows the bond between the two brothers. He is a central part of his life and most of the childhood memories are narrated in the plural "we" to include him as they have similar experiences.

The title's second part *A Slave Descendant's Journey in Freedom* reveals Khamisi's identity as a descendant of slaves. He recounts his family's slave history and notes that Rabai is now a museum. The stories that he heard in his childhood seem to have given him a kind of fascination with slavery. He takes pride in this identity and through his writing; he makes one to feel like it is a priviledge to be a slave descendant. When they visited Kinyakani, Nyanya Pauline his maternal grandmother told them many stories about her childhood. Sometimes she would sing for them. Most of the stories revolved around her experiences at the Rabai mission, the night singings, the weddings and deaths. He would recall her suitor Stephen and how they fell in love at first sight leading to matrimony. She would describe her Arab captors as smelling like spices and her journey as a slave girl on the journey from Tanganyika to the Kenyan coast. These stories shape him into embracing a slave ancestry which he did not witness more than his native heritage which he is a part of. He reveals that slave trade commodified humans since they were measured by their monetary value. Khamisi gives a description of the slave ship that carried his maternal grandmother Pauline and the general conditions of capture, marching and holding. It is similar to many historical texts on slavery.

Cyril James explains:

> Some of the slaves were born in Africa and were sold during the transatlantic trade where they endured marching to the coast and the middle passage. The slaves were collected in the interior, fastened one to the other in columns, loaded with heavy stones of 40 or 50 pounds in weight to prevent attempts at escape, and then marched the long journey to the

> sea, sometimes hundreds of miles, the weakly and sick dropping to die in the African jungle. Some were brought to the coast by canoe, lying in the bottom of boats for days on end, their hands bound, their faces exposed to the tropical sun and the tropical rain, their backs in the water. At the slave ports they were penned into “trunks” for the inspection of the buyers. Night and day thousands of human beings were packed in these “dens of putrefaction” so that no European could stay in them for longer than a quarter of an hour without fainting. The Africans fainted and recovered or fainted and died, the mortality in the "trunks” being over 20 per cent. (7-8)

The experiences are traumatizing and the worst part is that the slaves are forever separated from their families. Khamisi reveals that he uses his autobiography to explain how the Khamisis and the Stephens involuntarily came to Kenya. He reiterates that the slaves who were rescued from the sea and their descendants who were born in Kenya have made significant contributions to the evolution of the Kenyan nation (243). His comments reveal that he seeks to represent this group which he feels have faced rejection in the country.

Khamisi gives the history of Mombasa. Some believe it was founded around 900AD. It was ruled by different powers until independence when the British government handed it over to the new Kenya government. “It was originally administered by Arabs until 1505 when the Portuguese invaded the East African coast and destroyed the town triggering a war that lasted 200 years. It was during this time that the Portuguese built Fort Jesus. By 1698 the Portuguese had been defeated and they left the region for good. The Arabs relinquished the town to the British in 1887” (4).

Kinyakani was Khamisi’s first home as he recalls that he spent part of his childhood with his mother Maria and Grandmother Pauline. It is evident that he formed a bond with his maternal extended family. He also lived with his paternal grandmother at Simakeni and with his father in Majengo. He loved Rabai and has many memories to recount. He familiarizes the reader to life at the Kenyan coast. He also has painful memories such as his parents’ separation. He gives an account of the separation, his early education, and the father’s relationship with a Kamba lady, his remarriage to Mary Tabu, his father’s professional and political career and their challenges.

He was raised by his grandmother Nyanya Emilia from the age of two and she became like a second mother to him.

Khamisi's first childhood memory is when his parents separated when he was two years old and Nyanya Emilia came to Kinyakani where they were living with their mother and maternal grandmother. She took them to Simakeni despite the mother's pleading. This was a difficult time for him and his brother as they were still young and needed a mother's love and care, and a father's presence and mentoring. He was raised by his paternal grandmother and for some time they had neither mother nor father. They sometimes visited the mother but being in her early twenties, "she took to drinking *mnazi* (a local alcoholic drink), lost weight and her face became pale for lack of nutrients" (11). They were stopped from visiting her. He explains that they loved their grandmother and she loved them too but she was not the mother and this made a difference. This is evidence that a mother is irreplaceable in a child's life. Negative effects of a broken family are acutely felt in his narration. Autobiographies are used to get over traumatizing memories and this is what Khamisi sets out to do. He narrates the painful memory to not only to get the readers' empathy but also to reconcile himself with his past and get closure.

Khamisi explains that he was too young to ask why the parents separated but they had not lived together too long as his mother had been living with her mother and mother in law most of the time. His father worked in Nairobi after their wedding as an assistant personal secretary at the Meteorological Department. "He was moved to Station 710 of Cable and Wireless Ltd to become the first African broadcaster. He worked there until he was appointed the first African editor of Baraza, a Kiswahili newspaper in 1937" (14). He implies that his father focused on his career to the detriment of his young family. Khamisi reveals that he once saw a photo of his parents wedding day dated 1941 "which clearly indicated that the union may have been doomed from the start. Maybe the stony expressions on their faces signaled the pain in their relationship" (12). This description is humourous at the same time melancholic. It also reveals that he was keen and observant. Khamisi was told that his father had wanted to be a priest. The father claims he quit but the grandmother claims she went and threatened to kill herself if he did not leave being her only child. Khamisi is grateful to Nyanya Emilia because if his father had become a priest he would have never been born.

Another reason Khamisi suggests caused the separation was his father "Considered himself too educated to be married to a peasant primary school dropout whose furthest point of travel was the mission school. The fact that he had travelled many miles to foreign lands made him wiser and modern, he thought" (14). This appears like his own interpretation. The parents had a bitter separation as they did not talk again for the rest of their lives. His father willed that Maria should not attend his burial and they respected his wishes when the time came. It was tough for the two children as they found themselves in situations where they were supposed to choose between the two. The reader empathises with him because it is emotional. It influenced him later on as an adult to ensure that his children did not suffer a similar fate. He uses his autobiography to let out pent up emotions and to achieve catharsis.

Rabai was home to Khamisi from the age of two to five and he says that it was a lot of fun. He loved Rabai. He remembers the fishes *papa* (shark) cooked in coconut and *nguru* (king fish) fried in oil as irresistible. Both were buried deep for seasoning purposes. He recalls the palm and mango trees; the tangerines and mango fruits; the guavas; cassava, coconuts and sweet potatoes. Rabai was agriculturally very fertile. He describes the importance of the coconut tree. He says "It yields products that range from roofing materials and broom sticks, hair and cooking oil, to refreshing soft and alcoholic brews. *Mnazi* is the primary drink of intoxication" (15). He notes the negative effects of the *mnazi* alcohol which is addictive and "drinkers end up ruining their lives and becoming social misfits" (17). He remembers a children's play song they sang about the coconut tree as evidence that the tree features in poetry and songs because of its commonness and importance.

Since Mombasa was originally administrated by Arabs until 1505, Arabs owned all the shops at Rabai trading Center when Khamisi was a child. He reveals that they were kind and generous and allowed credit facilities to the locals. Khamisi was brought up in a cosmopolitan area characterized by peaceful co-existence of different ethnic communities and nationalities. He recalls the food and culture in his childhood. They ate a lot of ugali and cassava in his childhood. He preferred ordinary ugali made from maize meal to cassava ugali. For vegetables, they had *mchicha* or *mvuna* and bitter *msunga* in the dry seasons. Thin long sticks were fitted together to

make circular walls plastered with muddy soil and roofing was made from thick layers of wild grass packed together when building. Slave descendants built their houses in a square or rectangular shape and theirs was built in this manner (18). The bats are a nuisance that he cannot forget in Nyanya Emilia's house. As a child, Khamisi equated bats with evil since they descended at night and light had been equated with good and night with evil. They also slept upside down eyes directed at the humans below. Their presence at night is a scary childhood experience similar to the time a snake was found under his pillow. He recalls a previous story of a snake having come close to him as a child, narrated by his mother, and he developed a morbid fear for snakes (19). Many fears are developed in this manner as childhood is a formative stage of life.

One of Khamisi's painful experiences when growing up at Simakeni is when he injured his back after he fell while swinging on a coconut tree. It became a permanent injury. They played games like football, marble contests and mocked the girls by joining them in hop-skip-and-jump. They also played cards and invaded farms to eat tangerines, oranges and mangoes until some farmers complained and threatened them with witchcraft. They made toy cars using sticks, cardboards and soda tops as wheels. They used charcoal chalks to decorate them and write real slogans like they saw on real vehicles like *Delimeli* corrupted from Daily mail the bus that brought mail from Mombasa to Rabai. They liked the name of a cigarette brand *Clippe*r and rolled up coconut reefers in a piece of paper to resemble cigarettes and smoke. This made them cough but he never took to actual smoking his entire life (21). These are memorable events that made him enjoy his childhood.

Khamisi uses his autobiography to pay tribute to his mother and grandmothers; to Juma Sadalla who is a representative of war veterans; to his uncles and aunties; and to his hardworking father who was a Legco representative and was curtailed by his slave origin and tribalism. Khamisi does not spare the evil people in his family as he calls one of his uncles "the devil in the family" (9). This is the son of Juma Sadalla the brother of his grandmother Pauline. He does not mince his words. He does not praise nor flatter and he does not also judge or critique harshly in his autobiography. He just gives a narration of facts as he witnessed and interpreted them. He admits his failures and celebrates his breakthroughs.

The two brothers moved to Majengo when Khamisi was five years old but his grandmother remained in her farm. Khamisi observes that his father seems to have been fascinated by the name Mary. His mother is Maria Faida a version of Mary, he dated a Kamba lady called Mary and he married Mary Tabu in 1952. It is ironical that *Faida* is benefit in Swahili while *Tabu* means trouble and the two women represent these traits for Khamisi. There was a lot of antagonism in their home as the two brothers did not accept their step mother. Khamisi recalls that each time they offended her she reported them to the father and they were whipped. This went on for a long time. Khamisi explains that it reached a point where he hated everything including his father and life. He believes that the stepmother did not treat them the way their mother would have. They had to light the primus stove and make their own *ugali* when they came from school. They would then walk a distance to get sour milk to eat with the *ugali*. He used to wail loudly when he was whipped but it reached a time when he just kept quiet as a sign of protest. Other forms of punishment included kneeling down and writing one sentence repeatedly until an exercise book got filled. His father later stopped the punishments. By then, Khamisi and his brother had decided to stop the antagonism for the sake of peace (60). He says that by late 1959, the tension had eased. The autobiography helps him to achieve closure in the narration of these painful experiences. It is therefore therapeutic.

School holidays were something to look forward to because Khamisi and Charles would visit his grandmother at Simakeni where there was a lot of freedom. His father forbade them from going to the beach (60) and had curfews but Nyanya Emilia let them climb trees and attend weddings up to the wee hours of the morning (57). It is during one of the visits that Juma Sadalla, the hunter brother of his grandmother died in his sleep. Sadala was buried at a cemetery in Rabai called *Mtakuja* which in Kiswahili means 'you will come here'. This is a reminder that death is inevitable. Khamisi also lost his maternal uncle Francis to what was rumoured to be syphilis and Regina who became sick and gave up living because of domestic abuse (61). Her husband Athanas went back to Tanganyika and married another woman.

Majengo had street theatres called *sarakasi* and commercial mobile cinemas among other forms of entertainment that Khamisi appreciated (35). He also recalls the *mwomboko* traditional music that the Kikuyu community had every Sunday afternoon in their social club. There was no ethnic

tension at this time and communities peacefully co-existed. This was to later changed in the 1992/97 tribal clashes and in the multiparty elections. We can sense that he is nostalgic of his childhood. His life moves too fast after school and it can be sensed from the tempo of his narration.

Traditions and superstitions versus religion played a big role in the author's life**.** Rabai was home to the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the author was active in church from a young age. However, Khamisi was brought up by his grandmother and traditions played a big role in his life. The Mijikenda have customs and beliefs and Khamisi presents himself as one who was integrated into most of them. He therefore qualifies to be one but he does not consider himself purely native. There are rites for each stage of life from birth, initiation into adulthood and marriage. Superstitions included belief in jinni (spirits) and ghosts; rain makers; night runners; and witchcraft. Khamisi discusses the ancient custom that used to happen when a child was born. Old men would have a ceremony of burying the umbilical cord to signify belonging. The forefathers believed that "the burial place of one's placenta defined one's origin and outlined the beacon of one's territory" (3). This did not happen to him. He was born in a hospital and even if he had been born at home, his father was away and he did not live close to his paternal relatives often tasked with such customary duties. The fact that he mentions it signals that he would have wished to have been born in a place where he would have had a more solid sense of belonging. He reveals that palm wine plays an important part in the customs of the coastal Mijikenda people. *Kuhaswa* is a special blessing given to prospective marriage partners and palm wine is part of it just like in other traditions. One must pour a little wine to the ground to appease the spirits in Mijikenda culture.

Khamisi was not psychologically prepared for circumcision and detested the man who performed the custom. He describes him as dirty and smelly (22). He remembers the pain in his penis and collapsing on the ground then crying to sleep in his grandmother's arms. He says he was not even ten years of age. Circumcision is supposed to signify crossing over from childhood to adulthood. It is also initiation into a community. Through it, he becomes part of the Mijikenda but he does not acknowledge this significance because he associates more with his slave ancestry.

Christianity had an impact on Khamisi. He was influenced by the religious teachings which instilled in him values and morals. It also made him to learn how to manage time when he became an altar boy. This was a task that he had to wake up very early to do as it was competitive because many boys liked it. Part of the reason for the popularity of the duty was the wine and he believes it was the smell that made them happy afterwards. He sang at the church choir and memorized the Latin lines for mass. His ability to distinguish right from wrong can be attributed to the teaching he received. He reveals that he wished to be like Jesus (40). This molded his character early on because of the faithfulness expected of him from the church. The values are manifested in his adult life because he portrays himself as one who values integrity.

Naming is a signal of identity and history. On a personal level, people were named after relatives and close friends or selected names based on people they looked up to. On the public domain, places were named after heroes or the traits and characteristics they showed. Khamisi was given only one name Joseph after his father when he was born. His full name would have been Joseph Francis Joseph Khamisi which he thinks 'didn't sound clever.'(3) He called himself Matano after his maternal uncle Leones whom he admired. Leones Matano was a musician and Khamisi dreamt of being one in future. Naming himself after his maternal uncle signified that he identified more with his mother's side as a child. Khamisi selected the name Lawrence upon confirmation after Lawrence Kazungu a friend and classmate of his father at Kabaa High School. Kazungu was the first town clerk of Malindi (40). Khamisi selected this name because he must have admired some traits in him and he was one of his role models. Khamisi later dropped all the extra names and retained Joe Khamisi through a gazette notice. He wanted to create his own identity. He must have realized that he could be his own man and he did not have to be seen in the shadow of his mentors.

Names were also derived from traits associated with people or places. Both Khamisi and Charles his brother were nicknamed fire brigade because of the uniform that his father bought them which resembled the uniform of the fire brigade. The village name Simakeni roughly means 'don't be shocked' (3), and it is about twenty five kilometers North West of Mombasa. Mombasa was named Mvita locally which literally means the place of war. Some people suggested the name Rabai was derived from Kiswahili *raha hii* translated as a place of pleasure. The Buxton

School was named after John Buxton a leading British anti-slavery campaigner in the 1800s. History is preserved in names because they will always serve as a reminder of the origin and the identity will be archived in the memory.

Subjectivity is detected in the autobiography. Smith and Watson (2001) argue that it is the mandate of the autobiographer to recollect the past from sketches into a chronological story that defines his or her history. The history presented of the self is by the autobiographer, often from a subjective level, and is not dependent on the perception of others (5). It is clear from the first pages that Khamisi does not associate with the natives. He does not focus on his paternal grandfather's side even though he knows he is from Taita. However, it can be deduced that the value of marriage or lack of it may have alienated the family from the paternal grandfather's side. Khamisi also demonstrates that he does not like the existence of his step parents. He chooses to largely ignore the existence of his step siblings in the autobiography. He briefly mentions them when remembering how losing his brother Charles was a big blow since he was the only brother he grew up with and the rest did not understand their former hardship. He claims that "they were much younger and a little removed from my experiences" (150).

Both parents remarried and had other children. He complains of ill treatment by their step mother but acknowledges they did not initially accept her. He claims that his father was reduced from a patriarch to taking orders from his wife. We can see from his reaction that some children find it difficult to embrace separation. He mentioned that his mother later raised "her own children" (139) after getting married to a man he never wanted to know. He later bonded with her but largely excluded details of the rest of the family from his autobiography.

Khamisi also sounds biased in his depiction of some communities. In describing the people he saw on the way to Kisumu, he says of the Duruma community: "The Duruma I saw at Samburu reminded me of my step-mother Tabu when she first came to us; simple in demeanour, but callous in determination" (55). This is a generalization portraying his ethnic sterotype. He also seems to have many disappointments from members of the Kikuyu community. He claims that his father had been selected to translate Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography to Kiswahili but Jomo Kenyatta selected a Kikuyu instead. He also mentions that upon his father's return from India, he

was fought by another Kikuyu tribesman for his non militant approach towards freedom fight in his newspaper and he decided to go back to the coast.

There was a party on 12th December, 1971 the Kenyan Independence Day, in the Washington DC residence of the Kenyan Ambassador to the United States of America Leonard Kibinge. Khamisi first met Doretha Savage, his wife to be, on this day. He describes his first impression of her as "A chocolate-complexioned lady in a long, black cocktail dress and a jet black afro. She was of a medium height, extremely beautiful and slender" (97). He claims that it was love at first sight and he proposed after a year of courtship. He was twenty eight years old at the time. They got married the next year on 28th October, 1972 in a Catholic church near the American University in Washington DC. The best man was Katana Ngala, son of Ronald Ngala who was a student. He observed that as he writes they have been married for fouty two years (100) despite their small wedding. The venue of the first meeting is significant because it reveals the company that Khamisi kept. He attended parties held at the ambassadorial residence and was close friends with Katana Ngala whose father was a national leader. He reveals the people he associated with and therefore places himself in the league of these people.

The parents of Doretha: Ephy and Mattie Savage in Union South Carolina gave their blessings and welcomed Khamisi to the family. He connected their slavery past to his. His slave history seems to influence his spouse selection too. They are both black descendants of slaves from different countries. Khamisi decided it was time he took his wife to meet his parents. He was anxious for their acceptance but knew that marriage was supposed to last for life and he wanted to cushion his children from what he had gone through in his parents' separation (101). He resigned and they travelled to Kenya to meet his parents at the end of 1972. We can observe that Khamisi respected both parents but did not rely on them to make his decisions. He wanted their blessings yet he was already married and did not plan to dissolve the marriage.

The couple rented a house in Nairobi and they found life in Kenya difficult having come from a country with "almost assured precision" (102). His wife Doretha initially had no friends so she endured long periods of loneliness in his absence; electricity and water supplies was often disrupted; the roads were either muddy or dusty and garbage was rarely collected; there was an invasion of all sorts of insects, rodents and lizards into their home; and his little pay was

barely enough to save after paying rent and food expenses. Khamisi contrasts Kenya with America when he mentions these challenges. It is evident the service delivery was not effective in Kenya because of corruption and laxity which made life difficult in the capital city. The economic conditions improved when Doretha met a group of American women married in Kenya and she began buying food supplies at cheaper prices. They were able to save for emergencies. Their daughter Maria, named after his mother, was born on 15 September 1973. At the time, medical services were efficient and baby formula was given out for free unlike the present riddled with corruption. Khamisi suggests that the present population lack basic needs because of greed and mismanagement.

Khamisi travelled with his family in almost all his appointments. This is admirable as he wanted them to be a central part of his life. He portrays himself as a committed family man and reveals that he later built his family a home in Mtepeni village, Mtwapa Mombasa (183). He had mentioned earlier on that marriage was a lifetime commitment to him. He did not want his children to suffer the pain of separation like he had. Therefore, he ensured that they did not miss out on the presence of both parents by relocating with them.

Professional Advancement in Self Actualisation

Khamisi began his education at Isaac Nyondo Primary School within the compound of the CMS mission in Rabai aged four years (14). Church Missionary Society (CMS) mission in Kenya was started in 1844 by two German missionaries Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebman. They are the pioneer missionaries. The school was named after the second African to be baptized at the mission. Bai Joyce was his nursery teacher. He remembers playing with his friend Josiah. He says he was not good in numeracy but understood English which was drawn from familiar objects. He went to Kindergaten at Makupa in Majengo (30) after his father moved back to the coast. He describes Bai Nora and he remembers the rhymes they sang (31). Khamisi joined Standard one in 1960 at six years of age (35). He recalls that he was chubby and the children called him Kimbo the brand name of a popular cooking fat (36). He also recalls the story of a boy whose truancy eventually led him to crime and prison (36). This influences him to avoid truancy and crime. Khamisi mentions the events and names of his friends and teachers to give credibility to his autobiography and to corroborate his claims.

The British influence is seen in the Kenyan education system before independence. Khamisi recalls Coronation day in 1953 which was a national event in the colony. Queen Elizabeth II was being crowned after the death of King George VI. It was declared a public holiday in Kenya and pupils carried miniature Union Jack flags. It was a celebration each year after this (39). The British colonies had to plead allegiance to the monarchy. The locals may not even have understood what it was all about. Khamisi highlights the events that helped to shape him to be the person he became as an adult. He recalls that he had a close brush with death by almost drowning in a school trip to Malindi (41). He says that he often wondered if it is the prayer that he whispered that saved him. This reveals the impact of Christianity in his life. A bigger boy rescued him.

Khamisi and his brother Charles started a Soccer team called Majengo Stars but they had to disband it due to lack of money for footballs and uniforms (42). They also controlled the gramophones as DJs every end of the month when relatives got together for drinks and dance. Christmas was the most enjoyable period since it meant new outfits and gifts from relatives (43). This is the time that they appreciated the good cooking of their stepmother. Khamisi was once conned of his Christmas savings that he intended to buy a shirt with when he gambled at Mwembe Tayari market and he promised himself never to gamble again. (44).

Khamisi admits that both he and his brother Charles failed in Kenya African Primary Examination (KAPE) exam in 1958. Charles worked as a mechanic apprentice but Khamisi decided to try again. He says "I wanted to do well in school, get a good job, move away from Majengo and drive a car" (48). This reveals that he was ambitious and tenacious. It would have been easier for him to take the easy way out but he chose that his failure would not deter him. A car is a status symbol in Kenya and it is the class consciousness that motivated him. He decided to repeat in order to have a better chance at joining high school. He moved to Buxton only to discover he was not registered to do exams at the end of the year. He settles scores with the headmaster who was close to them by exposing this injustice. He did an equivalent in March and passed. Khamisi joined the Kenyan Indian High School open to Africans because the color bar had been lifted. He says he worked hard in his studies and toned down on his rebellious attitude.

Khamisi admits he was not the brightest in class but he was competitive (49). He had to drop out of school when his father lost his political seat. Khamisi is a good role model as he refused to be put down by all these challenges.

During his childhood, Khamisi hawked a party newspaper *Sauti ya MADU* (The voice of MADU) during the weekends. The printing machines were at his father's private office along Moi Avenue in Mombasa. In what appears to be a preparation for his journalism job, he stapled the papers, sometimes fed the machine with ink and went around town selling the newspaper (47). He grew up at a time of heightened political activity in Kenya and he gives his interpretation of these events and how they had an impact on his life and other Kenyans. Khamisi discusses the history of the Hola massacre, which was featured in the March 1959 edition of the party newspaper. Hola was a camp where detainees classified as 'hard core' were held. They often refused to perform manual labour or obey colonial orders. The camp commandant outlined a plan that would force 88 of the detainees to bend to work. On 3 March 1959, the camp commandant put this plan into action – as a result of which eleven detainees were killed at a fracas with warders. The matter was discussed in the British House of Commons and there was a loud outcry from Africans but the state of emergency was not lifted and arrests of MAU MAU sympathisers continued (48). He uses his autobiography to record this history from his point of view. We can see that he is sometimes removed from the events at the time but they are important as they were a precursor to independence.

Journalism is seen as the author's natural field since he first began writing as a writer of letters for people who were illiterate in his neighbourhood and was paid fifty cents the first time. He says that he believes this was his "first paid assignment as a freelance writer" (70). He later realized he could make money by singing and begun sneaking out at night. This is after he was given five shillings for imitating an aspirin advert gig and it motivated him. He had a soft spot for songs and music because of his uncle Leone Matano who was a musician, and maybe because of the carnival mood of the coastal life. However, he knew his father did not like the career. The opinion of his father was important to him because he respected him. His music career ended when his father caught him sneaking back to the house after midnight. He later bought a trumpet with the money his father had been saving for him and joined a band but he

later got bored of it (69). Khamisi is adventurous in these exploits. He tried many fields and there was no way that he could have failed in all.

An insurance company offered Khamisi his first formal employment in 1961 after his father lost in the legislative council election (65). He asked to be paid two hundred shillings but he was offered two hundred and forty which he claims he mostly gave to his father to assist in the family upkeep. This reveals that he was responsible. His father soon got a job with East Africa Power and Lighting Company (EAPLC) and relocated to Nairobi with his wife. He worked only a few weeks then he moved to the *East African Standard* as editor in chief of the sister paper *Baraza* (66). Khamisi had enrolled at a commercial college and got a Pitman's certificate in typing. He had practiced on his father's typewriter and believes that his typing speed is very fast. He applied for and got a job as a copy holder with the *East African Standard*. He reported to work in Nairobi on 7 May 1962. Khamisi moved from unmerited to merited promotions**.** He did not get his first trainee job at the *East African Standard* purely on merit. He puts in brackets: "with the help of my father of course" (70). This reveals that employment was determined by the person you knew. It is possible that he would not have got any opportunity of advancement if he had not been connected. Many people with potential are never discovered because of nepotism and tribalism.

Khamisi joined the newspaper and had to learn on the job. He was initially poor at the job due to his limited education yet he was in an industry that required a proper grasp of facts and fluency in language. He describes an instance where he wrote such a bad news report that the editor stormed into the newsroom in anger, reprimanded him using English words whose meaning he had never heard and tore it up. He was demoralized and distressed but was consoled by deputy editor Marsden and he worked harder on his stories from there on (73). Khamisi transferred to the T*aifa* branch of the Nation Media Group which he says he felt represented the future of journalism in Kenya (75). It was owned by H. E. Prince Karim Aga Khan but both *Taifa* and *Daily Nation* were run by a young cadre of African writers who were innovative and adventurous (75). He made many friends and sampled the city's bars and restaurants. Khamisi moved to the Voice of Kenya (VOK) on 1st July 1964. He got a chance to venture into news broadcasting during this time (77). Khamisi attended a two-week media workshop in Moshi Tanzania in 1962

organised by the US Information Service for upcoming Eastern African journalists. He learnt the fundamentals of news reporting, copy editing and reporting (78).

African representatives attended three conferences at the Lancaster House in London before independence. Khamisi reveals that his father was among the African LegCo members to attend the first one in January 1960 where no agreement was reached. He puts his father on a pedestal by revealing the senior positions he held and his contributions to the nation. He is his role model. A framework for self-government was negotiated in the second one held between February and April 1962 and the third was held between 25th September and 6th October 1963 to finalise constitutional arrangements for independence. Khamisi was working in Nation Media in 1963 and was at Uhuru Gardens to witness the hoisting of the Kenyan flag when Kenya attained self-rule on 1st June 1963. Kenyatta received the original copy of the first constitution of newly independent Kenya from Prince Philip husband to Queen Elizabeth. Khamisi and his friends celebrated in Jeans Bar in Nairobi West until morning (73). He uses his autobiography to inscribe himself into the history of the nation by revealing that he witnessed these historic developments. He portrays the mood of the people at the time which was one of great optimism.

KANU won the May 1963 election and Jomo Kenyatta was named prime minister. He became president on 12th December, 1963 when Kenya became a republic. The British monarch withdrew their governance and the new African dominated Kenyan leadership took over. Khamisi discloses that disillusion soon set in as the new government failed to deliver the promised jobs, good houses and big cars to the Africans. There was an attempted mutiny of soldiers on 2nd January 1964 at Lanet in Nakuru Riftvalley and President Kenyatta was worried since many soldiers were Kalenjin and Kamba (74) former first and second world war veterans and not from his Kikuyu ethnic community. This reveals that the country was already polarized into ethnic divisions as loyalty was expected from one's own community and not from others. At this time, Khamisi was working with *Taifa.*

Jaramogi Oginga Odinga the vice president fell out with President Kenyatta. Khamisi reveals that Jaramogi wanted foreign owned corporations to be nationalized and the settlers' farms to be seized. The president sought to reassure settlers that they were free to stay and his government would protect them. He had stayed in England and had even married a Briton. He admired their

style and believed in a free economy (86) but Oginga Odinga favored communism and had warm relationships with China and Russia. The ideological differences led to a fall out between the former allies. Kenyatta called the Limuru conference "to tame the wave of Odingaism and take control of both the party and the government". Khamisi claims that the public broadcaster VOK was used as a propaganda tool against the opposition (87). There was ethnic tension between the Kikuyu and the Luo. The position of vice presidency which Odinga held was abolished and replaced by eight regional party vice presidents. Soon after, Oginga Odinga left KANU and formed the Kenya People's Union (KPU) which lasted three years before it was proscribed. Oginga Odinga and his colleagues were then sent into detention (88). This signaled the beginning of dictatorship and intolerance to opposition in Kenya.

Tom Mboya, a government minister, was shot dead on 5th July 1969 along Moi Avenue at the CBD. He was credited with air lifting many Kenyans to the USA. He had worked in the labour movement as a secretary general and was considered a possible successor to President Kenyatta (90). The ethnic tension between the Luo and the Kikuyu was further aggravated. More people were killed by the president's security during a scuffle at the burial of Tom Mboya in Rusinga islands on 11th July. Nahashon Njenga, a Kikuyu was arrested, tried and convicted for killing Tom Mboya and was sentenced to death (91). Khamisi captures the mood in the country at this time. There was tension and mistrust no doubt as nobody felt safe. The government which was supposed to protect its people was being seen as facilitating loss of life. Earlier on, Pio Gama Pinto had been shot outside his home along Lower Kabete road in Nairobi on 25th February 1965 (90). He was a Kenyan nationalist of Goan origin and a close ally of Oginga Odinga. Khamisi describes him as "a journalist and a socialist who participated in Kenya's struggle for independence." After the two murders there were fears that political killings were on the loose (91). This is a sad period in the Kenyan history. Khamisi reveals the disappointment of Kenyans in the African led government by recalling these killings in his autobiography.

The situation in the Kenyatta days was replicated both by Presidents Moi and Kibaki governments. Khamisi reveals that many senior government appointments were made on the basis of nepotism and ethnicity. He has evidence of appointments in the Kenya gazette where eleven out of twenty permanent secretaries appointed on 22 November 1974 were from the

Kikuyu ethnic group (106). State officials interfered with the media and there was propaganda against the opposition and Khamisi witnessed it because he was working at the Voice of Kenya (VOK) currently renamed Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). He describes how the public broadcaster was used by the state to spread propaganda during the conflict between President Jomo Kenyatta and his former deputy Oginga Odinga (88). The national broadcaster was instructed to "demonise Oginga Odinga and his group as enemies of the nation" (87). This can be seen as the genesis of the country's ethnic animosity and tribalism. It also indicates that the regime was intolerant to opposition. More interference occurred during the North Eastern *shifta* (bandit) skirmishes. He gives credibility to his claims and makes his narration authentic by revealing he was at the centre of these events as an employee of VOK, the national broadcaster.

Khamisi recollects that J.M.Kariuki was found murdered in March 1975. He had become renowned as 'the voice of the poor'. Daniel Arap Moi then the Home Affairs Minister had told parliament that he had travelled to Zambia but his badly composed body is found in Ngong forest (123). This is another assassination perceived to be politically motivated after Tom Mboya and Pio Gama Pinto. However, many Kenyans do not know this history as it is not included in the Kenyan curriculum. There seems to be protection of criminal past behavior and justice for the victims is rarely served. The autobiography effectively fills in the gaps that partial history has left by recalling and recording the events.

Ottaway, an American journalist, exposed corruption in Kenya after relations soared with the US over deportation of their citizens. Khamisi was working at the Ethiopian embassy at the time. Close relatives and friends of the president who included Mama Ngina, Basil Criticos and Beth Mugo were implicated in poaching and illegal jewel trading. Khamisi notes that "scandal after scandal appeared. Greedy individuals close to the president were on an orgy of looting the country. Apart from poaching, charcoal was smuggled to Saudi Arabia, Zanzibar cloves were traded on the black market; maize and rice exported illegally to Uganda and *Harambee* turned into a cash cow for the rich" (114). It is unfortunate that scandals of this nature exist in Kenya to date. Whistle blowers are also punished the most recent being John Githongo and Miguna Miguna.

Khamisi uses his autobiography to expose the weaknesses of the previous governments. He settles scores when he exposes the early tribalism that denied his father opportunities during President Jomo Kenyatta's regime and the rot and corruption that denied him and others better jobs and services in President Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel Moi, and Mwai Kibaki's era. Many leaders he mentions to be close to the first president were from the Kikuyu community signaling tribalism which he condemns since it is impunity.

Khamisi was anxious when he made his first overseas journey in 1965 for a nine month attachment at the *Times of India* in Bombay. It was his first time to use air travel (79). Before this, he had heard a lot about India from his father who spent time in Bombay in 1947. His father had been concerned about the class differences (78). Khamisi was not impressed by Bombay. It was very hot when they arrived (80). Khamisi also sympathized with the eunuchs (people with gender identity disorder) and untouchables condemned to live their lives as forgotten human beings (83). He also did not like the slums and the organization of the city, the beggars, the greasy spicy food, the slums and the gooey spit of chewed *paan* they have to avoid on the streets (84). This reveals that he dislikes all forms of discrimination and suffering by the less fortunate in the society. He also reveals that he detested that their rooms were rat infested. He was happy to come back to Kenya because they missed their friends and family as well as beer and *nyama choma* (85). The visit made him appreciate Nairobi for its organized Central Business District away from residential areas. He narrates to make the reader aware that home is always the best place to be and it is good to protect and preserve what they have because it can get worse.

While in India, Khamisi visited interesting places like the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra, museums in New Delhi, beautiful gardens in Calcutta and historical sites in Keralal in the south-west (85). Many Indian friends asked about wild animals or if Kenyans had to kill a lion to get a wife. This was based on exaggerated accounts of the Maasai culture. Others wanted to feel the rough texture of their coarse hair because the Indians have soft texture hair. Khamisi also learned about Bombay Africans taken during the slave trade (84) and compared their story with his as a descendant of slaves (243). Khamisi was glad to be back in Kenya at the beginning of 1966 but he was informed that Nyanya Emilia died when he was away. She was aged eighty. The loss left a gap in his heart as she had raised and always protected them. She was buried at the Langata cemetery and Khamisi visited the grave to pay his last respects (85).

Khamisi returned to work at VOK where he witnessed interference from the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Peter Gachathi, among other top Kikuyu government officials. He gives details of their transmissions that had to be seen to support the government. This continued for decades (89). He gives the actual names to corroborate his claims. It is during his time at VOK that Khamisi met Bob Grant the Voice of America (VOA) correspondent in Nairobi. He gave him some translation assignment and in 1969, he was offered a job in the Swahili Service in Washington DC. He accepted the offer and moved to VOA during the first week of November 1969 (90). White people did menial jobs in America and this surprised Khamisi as he had thought it was reserved for black people. He observes "We had been independent for six years but the superiority complex among Kenyan whites was only contrasted by Africans' low esteem" (91). Colonial hangover was still present in Kenya as the white people were thought to be superior. He reveals this experience since the exposure boosted his confidence when he realised that all races are equal and he was working in a position that many white people did not qualify for.

Smith and Watson observe autobiographers can only exist in a community or culture of consciousness of the self. Since the authors of the autobiography write to present a history of the self and not history as observed by others, the self is the focus unlike in history where the other is the focus (5). Khamisi recalls global and national history with focus on how it impacted on his life. He reveals that he was not as busy in the Washington DC office as he had been in Kenya and he made good use of the free time to proceed with his education. He is revealing that he is a focused and hardworking person. His most memorable assignment was when he was sent to Lyndon B. Johnson Space Centre in Houston Texas in 1970 to interview the astronauts and the support staff in the first manned landing in the moon of 20th July 1969. The first landing of man on the moon is of global importance in history. Khamisi puts himself at the centre and enables the reader to share the excitement he and the people who witnessed it felt from this event.

Prof. Ali Mazrui his fellow 'coastarian' inspired Khamisi (95). He discloses that he had two goals when he left Kenya; to get international experience in broadcasting and to further his education. He considered himself lucky to be in America thought as the land of opportunity having had all his expenses covered by his employer. He settled on George Washington

University and passed the preliminary tests. He took additional courses at the University of the District of Columbia. Khamisi applied and got a job at the Department of Information as Information Officer Grade I after relocating back to Kenya with his wife. It was a one year temporary appointment with effect from 11 April 1973 to be confirmed depending on performance. He recalls the time he was seconded to the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) after the birth of his daughter to assist in press coverage coordination during the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund presided over by Robert McNamara the World Bank President (104). He reveals "Nairobi was spruced up" (104) and he was later given a letter of commendation for a job well done.

The mayor at this time was Margaret Kenyatta daughter to the first president and she served from 1970 to 1976. Khamisi claims that she was considered by many as one of the best mayors Nairobi ever had. He is also indirectly revealing nepotism because she was mayor at a time that her father was the president. It was accepted to be quite ordinary to give preference to friends and relatives for plum jobs. Khamisi compares the Nairobi of those years to the current and says Nairobi was still 'the city in the sun' unlike the present one which is dirty and overpopulated.

In 1974, Khamisi's name was recommended by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the position of press attache. He was selected to go to Ethiopia. He looks forward to better living conditions in Addis Ababa after the struggles in Nairobi. Khamisi is impressed by the flambouyance of the Ethiopian people and they settle in to free comfortable quarters and enhanced pay. Emperor Haile Selassie a close friend to President Jomo Kenyatta is put into detention by military on 12 September 1974. He had met with Jomo Kenyatta in 1936 when he was a student of social anthropology at the London School of Economics. Kenyatta was later made a conference secretary in the 1945 Pan African conference in a series from the movement first established in 1919 by W.E.B. Du Bois (127). Khamisi uses his autobiography to recall these important negritude movement conferences.

Autobiographies are read as biographies of other people, places and events. Khamisi has the authority to tell the African story. He is witness to history in Kenya and the diaspora. He was in Ethiopia during the assassination of the Derg leadre Lt Gen. Andom on the night of 23 November 1974. He explains it was not the only death. "At the military barracks, fifty-nine former leaders, military officers, diplomats and monarchists were lined up and executed in cold blood. A year later, Selassies's body was found in prison" (112). This signaled the end of the monarchy replaced by military rule. The ousting had been hastened by international media coverage of drought compared to the emperor opulent lifestyle and corruption. The brutality describes reveals that the country was in a crisis. Khamisi narrates as a warning to those in power that they should be sensitive to the needs of the common citizens or risk a similar rebellion. He also gives it to sensitise on the power of the media.

Ambassador Nicholas Mugo was in charge of the Ethiopian embassy and Khamisi reveals that they did not have good working relations. It is during this time that corruption was exposed in Kenya and the ambassador blamed him for not stopping the journalist Ottaway from writing the expose. Khamisi describes Nicholas Mugo as a quiet soft spoken man who often came out as a disinterested, docile individual (115). Khamisi blames him for the corruption expose by the *Washington Post* because he refused to meet the journalist Ottaway and do damage control. He also tried to have him disqualified from a job interview with claims of absconding after hiding the letter inviting him for the interview. When he wanted to leave, Mugo in his capacity as ambassador refused to give him clearance in terms of authorization for expenditure to have his personal effects transported leading to a one year wait for other options (120). He compares Mugo to the Titanic captain who ignored all safety precautions leading to the sinking of the ship. He claims that he had hubris and power fixation which blinded him (122). The intensity in these depictions reveal that Khamisi is using his autobiography to settle scores with Mugo and the elites of the time. When working at the Ethiopian embassy, he notes that there were only three non-Kikuyu and the ambassador Nicholas Mugo was the husband of the president's niece Beth Mugo. He exposes nepotism and tribalism by revealing that those in power misused government positions and resources to benefit their families.

Khamisi applied for a job, and successfully attended the interview in Kenya. He began working at the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife in 1975 as the public relations officer. He was "the minister's personal assistant, speech writer, travel consultant and companion" (124). The young minister was Mathews Ogutu an engineer by profession. At this time, there was controversy over wildlife conservation. Elephants were being massacred by poachers and flamingoes were dying of poisonous chemicals from fish factories emissions in Nakuru. Top government officials were involved. He recalls Ras Makonnen a Scottish national who was pained by wildlife destruction and often sought to expose the people behind it to the president but was always constrained by the presence of Mbiyu Koinange Kenyatta's closest friend from "expressing his honest opinion freely and frankly" (128). Ras is seen as an influence on him to realise the evils of poaching. He also reveals how the president was made inaccessible and unaware of the evil his closest friends and relatives were doing.

It is almost impossible for authors to avoid idealisation because of the human narcissist tendencies. There is a temptation to portray a perfect picture of self and this is the case for Khamisi to a large extent. Smith and Watson (2001) argue that in most cases, autobiographers write to present their achievements, lives and experiences with which they obviously hold high esteem about. As a result, the question of subjectivity and objectivity which defines truth or falsity becomes a crucial concern in autobiographies (5). However, Khamisi is not afraid to admit his own failure and shortcomings even though he cannot escape from some subjectivity in his autobiography. He is uncomfortable that he had to do propaganda and protect a government that was doing many evils in his capacity as information and public relations officer but he did it anyway. It can be noted that Khamisi is a beneficiary of these governments that have serious flaws and can be included among the people who contributed to the current mess in the country. He can be implicated and blamed for the way things later spiral out of control although he portrays himself to be 'clean'.

Khamisi projects himself as an international figure. He was posted to Paris France on 21 July 1977 and he reported with his family. He was going to work as Tourist Officer for France, Spain, Luxembourg and Belgium. He was impressed by the Eiffel Tower and other sites; and by the fashion sense of the French. He compares the love of pets by the Parisians to the love of goats by Africans only that "pets are for patting and company while goats are for food"

(129). He learnt that Europeans valued food and had courses and associated culture with wines while Africans ate for existence (133). Adopting took time as they had to take language lessons. He found out the French were intolerant to those who do not speak their language. He was once given a card with French word *partir* and he celebrated thinking he had been invited for a party only to learn the word means to leave (131). The friend was informing him that he was leaving soon (*Je vais bientot partir).* He notes that black hawkers were harassed more and that there was racism even for black French citizens. Narrating these experiences gives him a chance to project himself as a cosmopolitan. It also enables him to be a voice for the disadvantaged African in Europe who has to contend with harsh weather, racism, language barrier and cultural differences.

During his stay in France, Khamisi learned that the challenges of tourism were poaching given that the French love animals. They were angered by alleged animal killings in Kenya. Africanisation efforts that included Asian exclusion by the Kenyatta government suggested Kenya was racist and they avoided visiting. Idi Amin had earlier deported Asians from Uganda and there were concerns that Kenya would do the same. Another hindrance was the threats of terrorism. Khamisi did marketing of the country's scenes and wild animals resulting to change in perception. He observes that it is the wild animals that are the main tourists' interest in Kenya as there are better and safer beaches in other parts of the world. Therefore, wildlife conservation is important.

Khamisi also visited Spain, America and Israel in his work in Europe. He claims that his efforts in making Israeli connections led to the building of Kikambala Paradise Beach Hotel which was later bombed in a terrorist attack in 2002 (134-135). He therefore inscribes himself into the history of this hotel and documents his contribution into the country's economy through his autobiography. He reveals that he went to Florida in the United States where some people did not even know that Kenya is a country and thought that "Africa was one single country like America" (133). He was impressed by the night courts in Spain and suggests that Kenya should try the same (138). Khamisi and his family spent two and a half years in Europe and he declined to take up the next assignment offered in September 1979 to Stockholm Sweden. He reveals that he was tired of the harsh winters. He was not impressed

by the way the French left their pets to defecate all over the streets. One had to walk intentionally avoiding the dirt like they are in a land mine. Once again he reminds the reader that the best place to be is one's own home.

Siundu in *Imagining Home and Community in East African Asian Writing*s *A Reading of Moyez Vassanji and Yusuf Dawood's Novels* (2009) interrogates the way the writers imagine homes and community within the trajectory of post-colonial and cultural studies. He argues that East African Asians enjoy priviledges such as economic dominance because of their touch with histories of the region, contemporary geopolitics and the thinning of boundaries that have allowed them to formulate multiple consciousness in the construction of their identities. The study is an example of how immigration can be advantageous as it places the subjects in a better place than what the home offers. Khamisi fully explored the diaspora opportunities and forged a double identity as an immigrant and as a citizen in Kenya and in America. He also has ties with Malawi and Tanzania because his grandparents were from these countries. He gets benefits that would not have been possible had he selected a singular identity.

Family is important for Khamisi because he was concerned about his maternal aunts and uncles. He kept track of them and knew what they were going through, when they died and what caused it. He also visited them when they were alive. He came back to Kenya to find that his uncle Sepetu the mosquito catcher had died. It was only his mother and Matano that remained in his maternal side. Nyanya Pauline had earlier died from age related ailments.

The 1982 attempted coup d'etat affected Khamisi's business. Khamisi recalls that it was a Sunday. He had begun his own tour business in Kenya in the early 1980s in Mombasa and his wife Doretha managed this company. The coup was a failed attempt to overthrow President Daniel arap Moi's government on 1 August 1982. A group of soldiers from the Kenya Air Force took over Eastleigh Air Base at 3 a.m. Soldiers led by Senior Private Hezekiah Ochuka stormed to the Voice of Kenya radio station and broadcast that the military had taken over the government. There were plans to bomb state house but loyal officers planned a counter attack and defeated the rebels in the station by killing some and capturing others. Leonard Mambo Mbotela then informed Kenyans that the civilian government was back in power. The coup left more than a hundred soldiers and about two hundred civilians dead.

The negative global publicity had a crippling effect on the Kenyan economy especially in the tourism sector. Khamisi recalls the attempted coup d'etat because it led to a collapse in his business. The tourists who were to fly in cancelled their reservations and his business got huge losses. This is the time that he felt the most vulnerable as he had no savings and he had a family to provide for. He says that he realized he had made a mistake to resign from a stable government job and venture into business but he did not regret it (142). He admits that he did not have the patience needed in Business as he wanted to be "many different things as if the world was coming to an end tomorrow (142). This is a genuine description of self since he has a record of quitting and relocating many times.

Khamisi got back his old job at the VOA and moved to America on 25 August 1983 (143). This proves that he was a diligent worker and an asset to the station. His wife Doretha worked at a bank and they were able to buy a three bedroomed house in Maryland. He continued studying and got his degree on 21 May 1988 at University of Maryland, University College. Khamisi celebrates his success in a self-portraiture. He narrates how he overcame early challenges through ambition and hard work. His achievements are chronicled and he demonstrates that he did not take shortcuts in life but created himself over time and had the best plans for his people. From this autobiography we learn that failure in exams and dropping out of school need not signal the end of formal job prospects or educational pursuit. Khamisi worked a second job as a waiter in the USA at the time he was studying to make ends meet when he relocated (145). He had a drive and determination to succeed.

According to Karl Weintraub, man's task is, like autobiography's, to arrive at some form of self-realization. He explains: "We are captivated by an uncanny sense that each one of us constitutes one irreplaceable human form, and we perceive a noble life task in the cultivation of our individuality, our ineffable self" (Anderson 4). Khamisi portrays himself as a role model. When describing his feelings on the day he is awarded a Bsc degree in 1988, he recalls the hurdles he overcame right from the time he enrolled in school, the challenges of a single parent family and the challenges of trying to provide a decent livelihood for his family. He marvels: "A dream had come true. I was convinced without doubt that everything was possible. Without a Form Four education, but with a strong determination to succeed, I was able to plough through well-paying

jobs and live a decent life" (147). He is proud that he did not squander the chance he was given or bought his certificate like some people do but he took the hard route. He says that his achievement set an example to his children that dreams are there to be realized and failure can be transformed into success.

America was going through changes and Khamisi gives a history of the situation in the 1960/70/80s. He recalls that things had changed from the time he left in 1965 after the first three and a half years at VOA. Mushala a friend of his had been killed by robbers who stormed a private party and the incident horrified Khamisi. He observes that "Dr Martin Luther King had been assassinated in April 1968 and blacks were still bitter. America was going through the hippie and black power revolutions, people were smoking marijuana freely and openly; the moral fibre had disintegrated and young people were engaging in free sex" (144). Crime was on the rise as weapons were easily acquired. However there were more job opportunities and ease of goods purchasing in the United States compared to Kenya. This is the reason why he opted to stay. After five years at the USA, working in VOA and having secured a green card, Khamisi relocated back to Kenya. He had a degree and he says he wanted something more than working on Swahili translations (151). This reveals that he was ambitious and could not settle easily into routine. He also missed home.

At this time, employment in Kenya was determined more by favours more than by qualifications because Khamisi was appointed Senior Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asia Division in 1989, with connections from Bethwel Kiplagat the Permanent Secretary. He was later sent to open the Kenyan Liaison Office in Namibia a role he became excited about. Kenya had been selected by the United Nations to be one of the several countries to play a peace keeping role in Namibia. His family joined him after nine months. He notes that he was made a KANU life member no 20068 even though he did not apply and he resigned from life membership in 2002. The government made it compulsory for government officials to be party members. The party and the government represented the same symbol since it was single party until 1992 when the constitution was amended to allow multi party. However, there were repercussions if one failed to pledge allegiance to the ruling party. It could even lead to

termination of work or detention. This is another evidence of misuse of power as the government used state resources and employees to ensure they remained in power.

In the mid-year of 1990, the assignment in Namibia came to an end and Khamisi relocated back to Kenya. He reported to the Ministry of Foreign affairs and was made deputy to the chief of protocol. His work involved dealing with international state officers. Another of their duties included drafting delegates list for presidential overseas travel and booking hotel rooms. He recalls the fun moments he had in his interactions with politicians like Mulu Mutisya who was "a legislator that spoke very few English words" (173). He had to intercept his speech with a visiting British legislator. These are the kind of people who worked in the government since literacy was not considered important as closeness to the right people or the president himself. Khamisi resigned in 1991 when he felt that he should have been made chief having deputized Njuguna Mahugu the outgoing chief of protocol. This is a kind of protest signaling his pride but it was also irrational because he sacrificed a lucrative position.

Khamisi accepted a job offer from the Safari Park Hotel as Public Relations Manager in January 1991. This is a hotel in Thika Road in Nairobi owned by a South Korean group. He joined at a time that the hotel was undergoing re-building and expansion. He run commercials on TV to advertise, and was offered a two year training opportunity which he declined as he realized that he was not ready to begin a new career as an hotelier. He resigned after a little over a year because he was not getting the job satisfaction out of it (176). Generally Khamisi was at home and most comfortable in journalism.

There was proliferation of news events of the 1990s which Khamisi described as a period of devastating political upheavals in Sub-Saharan Africa (177). Kenya carried out the 1992 and 1997 general elections both marred by tribal clashes (178). Khamisi describes the situation at the Coast after the violent attacks on 13 August 1997. The target was upcountry people whom the locals blamed for their lack of land and jobs. Among those killed and over one hundred injured were Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo and Kamba. The attacks were politically instigated (182) and they disrupted tourism. Khamisi took advantage of these news to make a living when he covered these and more news as an independent journalist.

Khamisi set up a bureau at Chester house in Nairobi and made contacts with media organisations around the world unrepresented in Africa. He became a group correspondent for the Argus group of Newspapers in South Africa which was later renamed the Independent Group of Newspapers. His stories were carried in the *Johannesburg Star, The Cape Argus, The Mercury, The Daily News, and The Sowetan* among others (178). Khamisi projects himself as an internationally acclaimed journalist. He also covered stories for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and Radio 702, both based in Johannesburg. He registered a media company Copy Deadline Ltd and hired a fellow journalist to assist. They covered breaking news from Kigali, Rwanda during the genocide era, Mogadishu, Somalia after civil strife and cessation, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Congo, Burundi and South Africa all facing crises (177).

Autobiographies are like archives of history. Khamisi uses his autobiography to continue with his journalism because he compiles and broadcasts events that he reported on and those that directly affected him. His autobiography is like an archive of these events. Kenya was attracting attention because of "Moi's bad governance" (179) and his organization covered issues of corruption and human right's abuses in the government. They reported on the suppression of the media, the detention of political activists, the tribal clashes in the Rift Valley and the destruction of the forest cover by unscrupulous loggers (180). South Africa was just coming out of apartheid and the people were curious about Kenya. There was a record of human rights violation by President Moi's government. He observes that the 1990's recorded many political upheavals and he thrived best in African chaos. A South African liason office was opened in Nairobi after Presidents de Klerk and Moi visited each other. It was promoted to an embassy after South Africa became independent. Kenya also opened an embassy in Pretoria.

There was fear during this time because the government was intolerant to opposition. Khamisi sensed he was being monitored by the Kenyan Embassy in Pretoria during this period because his stories were widely used in South Africa (180). Khamisi confirmed his insecurity when he was warned by a senior female government official at the Norfolk hotel. She claimed that he was one of those planning to overthrow Moi's government. She was later elected a Member

of Parliament in the Grand Coalition government of Mwai Kibaki. He does not mention her name but his description matches with Sally Kosgey, a former head of civil service and secretary to the cabinet. He came up with an escape plan to Tanzania but it did not get to the extent of need for escape (181). The United Press International (UPI) sought his services in his office in Nairobi. This was a boom to his business as it was one of the leading news agencies in the world. He was unfortunately forced to close down the company in February 1998 after the internet became the new medium of communication (184). This made independent news coverage less profitable.

Nyanya Pauline who was a strong influence on Khamisi was from the Zaramo community in Tanzania. No wonder Khamisi felt at home when he worked in Dar es Salaam as from June 1998 as chief editor of a weekly newspaper *The Express* owned by Media Holdings Ltd (186). He was given a one year work permit. In September 1999, after one and a half years at *The Express*, he joined a rival publication the *Business Times*. He was given a deportation order to leave Tanzania within seven days on 17 December 1999 for criticizing the Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) led government in his writing. It is interesting that he took his criticism across the border. He portrays himself as a person who will not just watch as things go wrong but will voice his opinion. However, he reveals that he should not have been vocal as he was a foreigner. His work permit was later restored but he did not go back.

The height of Khamisi's professional career was when President Moi appointed him the Managing Director of the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) after being connected by Lee Njiru the president's press secretary. It was an exciting moment as it was aired at the top of the news. He reported on 17 February 2000 (197) and lost his father the same year in March to prostate cancer. Leaders who sent messages of condolences included President Moi, Taaita Toweett and Dr. Gikonyo Kiano then surviving LegCo members. They are prominent national leaders and he suggests that his father is one of the icons of newly independent Kenya. Khamisi reveals that he received promotions, accolades and opportunities for his diligent work. He had a long career as he explored both the private and the public sectors. This inspired him to venture into politics.

Political Career for Agency

Marcus explains that the autobiographer is usually interested in understanding the self and explaining the self to others (3). Khamisi reveals that he resigned from KBC on 15 August 2002 to join politics. He claims that his entry to politics was a realization of his life-long dream of following in his father's footsteps (206). Although President Moi partly financed his campaign for the Bahari parliamentary seat with a contribution of two hundred thousand shillings, Khamisi ditched KANU in 2002 for Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Many politicians defected from KANU in 2002 because the constitution had been amended and President Moi was not contesting. Politicians who were drawn from the opposition and former KANU rebels came together to oppose Uhuru Kenyatta who had been nominated by President Moi as his preferred successor. There was a lot of euphoria in the country because change was certain after twenty four years of Moi's leadership.

Khamisi uses his autobiography to chronicle these and earlier historical events in Kenya and Africa, to explore a certain time period, and to enshrine his community. Smith and Watson note that:

> When life narrators write to chronicle an event, to explore a certain time period, or to enshrine a community, they are making "history" in a sense. But they are also performing several rhetorical acts: justifying their own perceptions, upholding their reputations, disputing the accounts of others, settling scores, conveying cultural information, and inventing desirable futures among others. (2001:10)

This is witnessed in the autobiography. Khamisi was born in the Native Civil Hospital at a time of heightened political activity leading to independence. He gives a history of the hospital which was built in 1908. It was then located where the General Post Office is currently in Mombasa next to the Makadara recreational grounds. It was moved in 1957 to the Tononoka area, overlooking the Nyali creek. Europeans had Mombasa Hospital then called English Hospital built in 1891 and the Asians had Aga Khan Hospital built in 1944.

Segregation was common in all hospitals, schools, hotels and other common places. Africans were at the lowest status. All black people were classified natives which he claims is: "a derogatory term of racial iniquity common in British colonies". The segregation of blacks by the colonialists was so much that they used the word *toto* (child) to refer to grown men. According to Khamisi, they were all called natives because they were not considered intelligent but were thought to be foolish (2). Khamisi writes to give voice and agency to oppressed minorities. Julia Swindells observes that:

> Autobiography now has the potential to be the text of the oppressed and the culturally displaced, forging a right to speak both for and beyond the individual. People in a position of powerlessness-women, black people, working class people-have more than begun to insert themselves into the culture via autobiography, via the assertion of a 'personal' voice, which speaks beyond itself. (Anderson, 103-104)

Right from the start of his autobiography when Khamisi refers to his mother as a peasant and even before in the title of his book, he signals that he is a representative of the voiceless and marginalized slave descendants, and the economically disadvantaged Kenyans who lack basics.

In the early days, Arabs occupied third place in the race tier. It was the Europeans then the Asians then the Arabs and finally the blacks who included African natives and dark skinned Arabs referred to as *Washahiri* (4). Khamisi's grandmother Emilia worked as a domestic worker, care-taking children in a European household of British descent. She would take bread remains to eat with her tea without milk. She also confesses to spoon-feeding the children hard liquor to get them to sleep. This is wicked but it amused him (8). This reveals that the blacks did not have good relations with the colonialists.

In asserting the relationship between the autobiography and history, Smith and Watson posit that autobiographies should be read as historical documents and analysis of movement of time (2001:10). Khamisi gives a history of the events that happened in Kenya a decade prior to self-governance. He narrates the events slightly before, during and after the State of emergency (45). There were reports about oath-taking activities and secret meetings in forests upcountry in 1951. He also heard about MAU MAU; a group that was demanding land rights from the Europeans. Chief Waruhiu who was a collaborator of the colonialists was killed in 1952 and one thousand

British troops were flown into the country after this incident to deal with the MAU MAU rebellion.

The colonial government declared a state of emergency with a shoot on sight order in October 1952 and detention camps were set up with rampant torture, disease and starvation. Members of the movement and their sympathisers were held in these camps. Khamisi recalls that Dedan Kimathi was arrested and executed in 1957. He was like a mythical character to Khamisi since most of the names of the freedom fighters were from the central region and he says they considered them tribal leaders. Moreover, it is a distance to the upcountry region from the Kenyan coast.

Khamisi gives a history of political organisations formed after Kenya African Union (KAU) was accused of working with the MAU MAU and banned in 1953 until 1955. Africans in all other parts of the country except Central Kenya were allowed to form regional political parties in the rest of the country from 1955 to 1958. Francis Khamisi, his father, formed Mombasa African Democratic Union (MADU). Kalenjin Political Alliance was formed in the Rift valley, Kenya African People's Party in Western, Nairobi District African Congress in Nairobi, Maasai United Front in Maasailand, Abaluhya People's Association, the Abagusii Association of South Nyanza District, the South Nyanza District African Political Association, the Nyanza North African Congress, the Taita African Democratic Union, the Nakuru District Congress and the Nakuru African Progressive Party (46). It is not surprising that the nature of Kenyan politics is ethnic based to the present. Khamisi had an early exposure to politics at the age of thirteen. He says he became "an active youth member of the party" (47). He joined other activists singing freedom songs led by a trade unionist leader from Western called Menya. We can see that he was nurtured into his future political career.

Africans lived in Majengo but they had Arab landlords. It was a near middle class location (33). Khamisi recalls that their house in Majengo was always a beehive of activity (49). They had important visitors such as Masinde Muliro, Martin Shikuku, Daniel arap Moi, John Keen and Justus ole Tipis who later became national leaders in independent Kenya. Ronald Ngala visited too. These are the people recorded in history as national leaders and he puts his father

in their league. He is revealing the reason for his admiration of his father and also revealing that politics is his natural field.

Kenya held Legislative council elections in 1957/1958 and Khamisi accompanied his father on his 1957 campaigns for a seat at the LegCo. He liked the ululations, chanting and attention he got as his father's son. This prepared him for his future as a politician. Francis Khamisi lost to Ngala but beat Edward Binns in another round of elections held in 1958. International leaders that visited their home included Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and Christhoper Kanyama Chiume a close friend of Hastings Kamuzu Banda the future president of Malawi. This reveals that Khamisi was mentored by this interaction and he sees them as his role models. His father is presented as a national and international leader since he interacted with these highly acclaimed leaders.

Khamisi accompanied his father to Kisumu to visit Jaramogi Oginga Odinga who was recovering from a bout of Malaria. He is revealing that his father interacted with the prominent personalities in Kenya's history and so he was also nationally renowned. The trip was his first time to go out of Mombasa. He was excited to see new places and to chat freely with his father unlike in the hostile home environment. He describes the places, people and wild animals they saw on the way and his impression on them. They slept at his father's house in Nairobi and proceeded the next day to Kisumu. He recalls that he was unable to eat his chicken at a hotel in Kisumu because he did not know how to use a knife and fork. The trip is memorable because he met Jaramogi Oginga Odinga who was to be a powerful player in independent Kenyan politics.

Khamisi interacted with politicians in his job as a journalist. He recalls the visit by Moi to America in 1987 and how he was embarrassed when he refused to answer questions directed to him about human rights violation in Kenya (146). He hosted President Moi in Namibia as the liaison officer. During his posting as deputy chief of protocol, he learnt about President Moi's closest allies. He discloses that "In hotel room allocations, preference was given to the Foreign Minister and the Comptroller of State House who were always placed in rooms closest to the president. This was done to facilitate access and communication with the President" (171). He is revealing that he had made connections with people in high positions because he wants to put himself in their level.

President Moi had powerful cabinet ministers and officials like Nicholas Biwott, Mark Too and Ezekiel Barngetuny. Khamisi mentions that they were accommodated near the presidential suite. Majority are from the Kalenjin community of the president which reveals tribalism. The president's private doctor Dr. David Silverstein was also allocated a nearby room. This is misuse of state resources for personal gains because they were selected based on personal relationships and not state interest using tax payers' money. The death of Foreign Affairs Minister Dr Robert Ouko in 1990 shook the country and Khamisi later formed part of the parliamentary committee selected to investigate and he says they did not find evidence that directly implicated the president but suggest that he should be investigated (219).

Buchanan and Tollison comment that autobiographical truth depends on the factually observable biography of the writer. They argue

> Biography should be seen as the observable life of a person by another individual. Thus, as autobiographers write, they remain subject to the scrutiny of the readers who also form the community and society of the writer. The autobiographies are read by people familiar and related to the autobiographer and those who are not. Yet, it is these people that have to validate the truth and reliability of the autobiography because they have limited or more knowledge about the self-presented by the autobiographer. As a result, the autobiographer, aware or not, is constantly being probed for the truth by the reader. (509)

Historical records have captured the events that Khamisi narrates in his autobiography.

Khamisi won the Bahari Constituency parliamentary seat and served in the Ninth Parliament from 2003 to 2007. He discovered that the major problem of his people was landlessness and he sought to fight for them. He seeks to set the record straight on his fall out with Karisa Maitha who was Kibaki's point man at the coast and had earlier on supported Khamisi's candidature. Karisa had been appointed Minister for Local Government but President Kibaki transferred him to the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife after corruption allegations. He seeks to correct any misconceptions that might have been created about their conflict.

The ninth parliament was the first official opposition led government made up of coalitions. It signaled the rise of the new left and there were many challenges especially from ideological conflicts and corruption. Khamisi seeks to justify his past actions as a Member of Parliament. He

reveals that he had called for Karisa Maitha's resignation and probing by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) after corruption allegations and this led to their conflict. Karisa called a meeting in Bahari and questioned Khamisi's origins, speaking in Kigiriama which is the local language, and their political war made headlines for weeks.

Maitha died in 2004 while on an official visit to Germany leading to a by election in Kisauni that revealed the prejudices between the Mijikenda and the others in the intolerance revealed during the heated campaigns (210). There are many memorable events that Khamisi recalls. He inscribes himself into the history of the country by enumerating his contributions such as new bills and development in his constituency. There was fallout between President Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga who was part of the coalition that ensured the opposition won. Kalonzo Musyoka later broke away from Raila's camp and Khamisi moved with him. Khamisi recalls the Post-election violence of that year caused by the alleged rigging of Presidential elections and refers to his first book *The Politics of Betrayal* for details on these coalitions and divisions (226).

Politicians invest a lot of money and energy into campaigns in Kenya and Khamisi describes the pain he felt when he lost in the elections after being voted the best in CDF use for the five years he served (229). He refers to Ngumbao Kithi, a Coast based writer with *The Standard*, who took notice of this in an article on 29 March 2007. Apart from putting Bahari on the national map as the constituency with the best run CDF, Khamisi had opened an office and made himself accessible to his constituents. He had sponsored bills to make their lives better and he had high hopes of reelection. People immediately stopped coming to look for him and he was in deep sorrow. He compares it to Sigmund Freud 'denial of reality' (227). He was not prepared to lose since he thought that his constituents would vote based on his performance. This is a repeated scenario in most parts of the country. Kenyans get carried away by euphoria and party popularity. The most popular party in the region ensures victory for the contestants. His loss can be linked to his fall out with Raila Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) which was popular at the coastal region.

Smith and Watson argue "autobiographical claims such as date of birth can be verified or falsified. However, autobiographical truth is a different matter; it is an intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding" (2001:13). Khamisi claims that he had purchased an air ticket for travel out of the country whether he won or lost and

he left for New York. The country was rocked by post elections violence and one might argue that he was leaving as is the habit of leaders who have the means to escape when things go wrong. However, we can detect sincerity in his narration. Khamisi imagines that the 2013 loss for Prime Minister Raila Odinga and Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka must have been a 'stinger' as they immediately lost all priviledges yet they had come so close to power. Khamisi lost his mother in 2010 (225) and he felt alone having lost his father ten years earlier.

Khamisi refers to his first publication *The Politics of Betraya*l which is a political memoir that he wrote after losing in the 2007 parliamentary elections. He says he had been collecting newspaper cuttings as a hobby and he compiled the book from them (229). He mentions in the preface that he avoids mentioning occurrences included in this earlier book. Roy Pascal gives the difference between an autobiography and a memoir. An autobiography proper attention is focused on the self, whereas in a memoir, focus is on others, events or places (4). The first publication was a memoir but the next is the autobiography which focused on self. He mentions many key political players in both texts and unreservedly comments on their conduct. This is brave as he does not fear to be victimized. Khamisi tried to regain his seat in the 2013 elections but he was not elected.

Khamisi observes that greed is the problem in the society and President Kibaki did not make it better. He recalls scandals such as Goldenberg where no one has been persecuted. He hopes that President Uhuru Kenyatta will make a difference but he is skeptical. He explains that the Kenyatta name did not resonate well with people at the coast because of land grabbing associated with the first president Jomo Kenyatta, father to the current president (233). He is also the third Kikuyu president and there was a feeling of 'Kikuyu-fatigue' at the coast. He claims William Ruto the running mate would have been preferred because the coastal people had a softer spot for Kalenjins than they had for Kikuyus (234). His discussion on the tribe of leaders is a candid representation of the Kenyan society stereotypes. He is a representative of the majority and he is honest whereas other politicians might pretend that the prejudices do not exist to safeguard their reputations.

Conclusion

I have discussed how the autobiography gives a self and a group history. Khamisi inscribes himself into the history of the country in his service as a journalist, an information officer, attaché, public relations officer, tourist officer, liaison officer, Chief Executive, Member of Parliament and writer. He also demonstrates how his father contributed as an African nationalist before independence and in his work in the public and political spheres.

Khamisi managed to graduate with BSc degree on his second relocation to America. Having begun as a form two dropout, this is no mean feat. He visited and lived in many African nations, Europe, Asia and America. He is able to give suggestions for the best practices from each place. He is a patriot because he is prepared to expose evil even with the likely repercussions that he faces from his writing considering that the status quo has remained in Kenya. Khamisi made an effort to give back to society when he was elected as a Member of Parliament. He notes that the people are too demanding of politicians and this can encourage corruption. The autobiography ends on a very pessimistic note but his questions are worth pondering if the country hopes to have an end to the evils he describes.

Khamisi points out that he identifies himself as a full-blooded Kenyan and a third generation Kenyan Mnyasa. He claims that he is using his autobiography to clear the air about his ancestry and to answer questions that people have been asking about his origin (243). He tells his personal story together with the collective story of the descendants of slaves. Khamisi is controversial because he feels that his origin denies him certain privileges and instead of denying it he chooses to identify more with it. It is a form of protest. He gives voice and agency to the colonized Kenyans, the slave descendants, the economically challenged Kenyans and abused women.

CONCLUSION

In this conclusion, I observe that there are points of convergence and divergence in the authors' depictions. The study's major objective is to discuss the convergence of self and history in the selected autobiographies. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Joe Khamisi were both born and have worked in Africa; were both born into once politically connected families; have worked in the diaspora; and have risen to high leadership positions in their countries. Despite the challenges in their countries, positive changes are witnessed. Liberia marks the end of fourteen years of civil war when Sirleaf is sworn in as President and there are economic growth initiatives. Kenya ushers in pluralism and democracy. The two countries have faced common challenges and the authors have given suggestions for better leadership based on their experiences.

The autobiographies are confessional as defined by Rita Felski in her essay "On confession":

> Confession is a type of autobiographical writing which signals its intention to foreground the most personal and intimate details of the author's life. Like consciousness- raising, the confessional texts makes public that which has been private, typically claiming to avoid filtering mechanisms of objectivity and detachment in its pursuit of the truth of subjective experience. (Smith and Watson 1998:83)

Both autobiographers inscribe themselves into history by recalling the events that made an impact on both personal and collective levels. They both refer to historical records to validate truth. Sirleaf includes a bibliography of her reading. Moreover, there are irrefutable facts in her autobiography for example that Liberia was in civil war for fourteen years. Similarly she uses the names of former Presidents Johnson, Tubman, Tolbert, Doe and Taylor; she acknowledges the input of her sister Jennie and her friend Clave and she describes places such as Monrovia. Khamisi also refers to many names of past Kenyan politicians and government officials to validate his narration. He also includes proper nouns of places like Mombasa and names of family members.

Paratextual elements such as pictures and actual name of the memoir writer are also included in both autobiographies. The authors' names and photos are on the cover page of the autobiography signaling ownership. The two protagonists also use the first person narrative voice to reiterate

ownership. The 'I's in the autobiographies represent their subject positions in relation to the groups they give agency.

The two autobiographies attempt to correct misrepresentations in the history of their countries by telling it as they witnessed it. They give their interpretation of key events such as political assassinations, attempted coups and acute disillusion caused by poor governance. The two autobiographies expose corruption and mismanagement of resources. Khamisi worked in the Kenya Government and as a Foreign Service Officer in Paris, France; Addis Ababa in Ethiopia; and Windhoek in Namibia. He was witness to the nepotism and issues like poaching carried out by relatives and friends of people in power. Sirleaf witnessed foreign owned companies such as Firestone exploiting the country and the devastations of war in Liberia. Sirleaf uses her autobiography to give a self-representation which has been preceeded by a self-realization and of awareness of the uniqueness from her gender differences as discussed by Lionett when she suggests "it is the foregrounding of our *differences* which can ultimately unite us as a powerful force of resistance against all repressive systems of ideology" (1989 xi).

Sirleaf portrays herself to have been close to her mother but Khamisi associates more with the father. There is an element of gender conflicts and neglect of women by the husbands in both autobiographies. Regina was a victim of domestic abuse like Sirleaf. Her husband Athanas was abusive and she chose to remain in the marriage, stopped eating, lost the will to live and died. Martha Johnson is saddened by her husband's unfaithfulness and Sirleaf is divorced. Spousal support is evident when Khamisi travels with his wife. She encourages him to do his best and she has to adjust any ambition of her own to fit into his. It seems that she chooses to serve her family first. Khamisi is also committed to his family. Sirleaf is not as lucky in spousal presence. She is ambitious and her husband does not support her which leads to their divorce. Women are seen to make sacrifices for their marriages but men are portrayed as egocentric.

Khamisi claims he thrives best in Africa's chaos in reference to the nature of journalism but Sirleaf has seen the worst side of war in Liberia and celebrates the peace after her inauguration. Sirleaf travels to America and she works in and visits other African countries. Khamisi has also lived in America, India, Windhoek and Paris and the exposure has made him sensitive to the

different approaches that he feels can benefit his country. He benefits when he goes to America for further studies where he is able to complete his secondary education and to get married to an American of African descent. Sirleaf also benefits from her American connections. She makes friends, gets employed and develops skills and connections which prove valuable in future.

While both Sirleaf and Khamisi have been affected by the slave trade history, they are victims from different perspectives. Khamisi is on the side of the slave descendants but Sirleaf writes as a representative of the marginalized natives. Both present a valid case for each side. History places one in a side of advantage or disadvantage and it is their choices that makes a difference at the end. Sirleaf is optimistic of positive changes in future but Khamisi sounds pessimistic. Things appear to be going from bad to worse in Kenya. Khamisi misses the past because the current state of affairs in Kenya reveals a bleak future. Sirleaf uses her autobiography to invent desirable futures. She projects what she desired to be, what she has become and what she hopes to accomplish in future for herself and for Liberia. She hopes to "launch serious and fundamental reform". She predicts that she will bring change through her leadership.

Marcus observes "the true autobiographer is in some way driven by an inner compulsion to write of the self, and that the autobiographical act must involve a degree of difficulty and struggle both in 'grasping' the self and in communicating it" (3-4). Both authors inscribe themselves into the history of their countries and Africa as they write about themselves in different fields of identity formation such as the family unit, ethnicity, gender, spaces, nationality and race.

Sirleaf gives her interpretation of her collective memory which includes her country's slave history, democracy and dictatorship, battle with corruption, fourteen years of civil war, election malpractices, coup d'etats, political assassinations and poverty. These problems are also common in the autobiography *Dash Before Dusk* which is a good record of Africa's political upheavals that include slavery, colonization and civil wars. Khamisi is an activist against public resources plunders through his exposé in the autobiography. He is privy to former Presidents Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi's style of leadership from his interactions while working. He is also exposed to the murky nature of politics as a Member of Parliament during President Kibaki's regime. He narrates what he witnessed in Kenya, Africa, Europe and America. He wants to make the readers aware of past mistakes in order to have a change for a better future.

Deirdre Heddon in *Autobiography and Performance* argues that autobiographies use persuasion as a writing strategy. They employ autobiographical recall, a strategy which invests the subject with agency and narrative authority and enables the author "to talk out, talk back, and talk otherwise" (3). Sirleaf uses emphatically convincing language more than Khamisi which reveals her insecurity compared to Khamisi who is confident. She makes a strong case for herself and the voiceless groups that she hopes to represent. She also defends her legibility and ability to lead. Heddon also argues:

> Autobiographers use persuasion in their writings for self-clarification, self-explication or self-justification. Thus, autobiographies can be productively used to explore the relationship between the personal and the political, engaging with and theorising the discursive construction of selves and experience. (162)

This has been observed in these two autobiographies under study.

Sirleaf and Khamisi succeed to present their life stories to meet most requirements needed for an autobiography proper. They present their life achievements and memorable incidents as they retell the histories of their countries. A reading of the two autobiographies reveals ideologies that influence the authors, and experiences that have shaped them. They have chronicled events in Kenya and Liberia. The gaps, silences and omissions can be detected and they reveal much more than what is offered freely by the authors. Subjectivity can be detected and separated from objective truth. Moreover, both autobiographers are public figures and they have been under the scrutiny of their subjects; the citizens of Liberia and Kenya. Therefore their biography is found in historical records and within the public domain. However, their interpretations cannot be used to replace other formal historical records.

Works Cited

Anderson, Linda. *Autobiography*. Routledge, 2001.

Buchanan, James M., and Robert D. Tollison. "A Theory of Truth in Autobiography." *Kyklos* 39.4 (1986): pp. 507-517.

Campbell, Colin. "Romanticism, introspection and consumption: A response to Professor Holbrook." (1997): pp. 165-173.

Colin, Davis. Historical Reason and Autobiographical Folly in Sartre and Althusser Author(s): *Sartre Studies International, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2004), pp. 1-14*. Berghahn Books Stable https://www.jstor.org/stable/23513028 Accessed: 07-02-201911:28 UTC.

Folkenflik, Robert. *The culture of autobiography: Constructions of self-representation*. Vol. 6. Stanford University Press, 1993.

Gilmore, Leigh. *Autobiographcs: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self Representation*. Cornell University Press, 1994.

Gusdorf Georges. *Conditions and Limits of Autobiography* in J. Olney (Ed). *Autobiographical Essays theoretical and critical.* Princeton University Press. 1980.

Gwynn Thomas & Melinda Adams *Breaking the Final Glass Ceiling: The Influence of Gender In the Elections of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Michelle Bachelet* Pages 105-131. Google Scholar 23 Apr 2010.

Heddon, Deirdre. *Autobiography and Performance*. Palgrave, 2008.

Indangasi, Henry. "The Autobiographical Impulse in African and African-American Literature" *The Americas before and after Columbus*. Kampala: USIS, 1993.

James, Cyril. *The Black Jacobins*. Random House, Inc. 1963.

Kasembeli, Serah. "The Ghost of Memory: Literary Representations of Slavery in Post-Apartheid South Africa." Doctor of Philosophy Degree Dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 2018.

Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. "Still Behaving Badly": *Second Periodic Report of the Election-Monitoring Project*. KNCHR, 2007.

Khamisi, Joe. *The Politics of Betrayal: Diary of a Kenyan Legislator*. Trafford, 2011.

_____. *Dash Before Dusk: A Slave Descendant's Journey in Freedom*. Kenway Publications, 2014.

_____.*The Wretched Africans, A Narrative on the Slave Trade in Eastern and Central Africa*. Jodey, 2016.

_____.*Kenya: Looters and Grabbers, 54 Years of Corruption and Plunder by the Elite, 1963-2017*. Jodey, 2018.

Lionett, Francoise. *Postcolonial Representations: Women, Literature, Identity.* Cornwell University Press, 1995.

_____. *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portaiture*. Cornwell University Press, 1989.

Lodge, David. *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. Longman, 1988:426

Maranga-Musonye, Miriam. "Navigating Life through Narrative: analysis of Selected Urban Refugee Children's Narratives" *The Nairobi Journal of Literature* Vol 7 (2013): 133-142.

Marcus, Laura. *Auto/biographical discourses Theory Criticism Practice*. Manchester University Press, 1994.

Melinda Adams *Liberia's Election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Women's Executive Leadership* in Africa. Google Scholar 02 September 2008.

Merrill, Cynthia. "Mirrored image: Gertrude Stein and autobiography."D *Pacific Coast Philology* (1985): 11-17.

Muchiri, Jennifer. *Women's Autobiography: Voices from Independent Kenya*. VDM Verlag, 2010.

_____. "The Intersection of the Self and History in Kenyan Autobiographies." *Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies* 1.1-2 (2014): 83-93.

_____. "Bad politics to censorship, 'slave descendant' tells where the rain began to beat us" *Daily Nation* 28th Mar 2015.

Musonye, Miriam. *Narrating the Self in a Global Context: The Question of Identity in Refugee Children in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya*. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2011.

Njanjo, Charles. A Critical Analysis of the use of space in Aminata Forna *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. Unpublished MA Literature Project, University of Nairobi, 2017.

Nyantino, Bernard.C. "Representation of Memory in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Dreams in a Time of War* and Wole Soyinka's *Ake: The Years of Childhood*." Unpublished MA Project, 2014.

Ochieng, William, R. *Place of Biography in Kenyan History: 1904-2005*. Mountain View, 2005.

Odhiambo, Tom. "Joe Khamisi: Autobiography of a free slave descendant" *Daily Nation* Sunday November 16 2014.

Omuteche, Jairus Mwenje. "Mediated Plot in the Construct of the Theme of Struggle in Nelson Mandela's Autobiography: *Long Walk to Freedom*." Unpublished MA Project, University of Nairobi, 2004.

Otieno, Jenipher. A. "Autobiographics in Ngugi wa Thiongo's *Dreams in a Time of War: a Childhood Memoir* and *In the House of the Interpreter."* Unpublished MA Project, University of Nairobi, 2014.

Palmer, William. *Dickens and New Historicism*. St. Martin's Press, 1997.

Pascal, Roy. *Design and Truth in Autobiography*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960.

Rehn E; Sirleaf E J. Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-Building. *(Progress of the World's Women 2002 Vol. 1)* United Nations Development Fund for Women UNIFEM New York 2002. pp. 219.

Selden, Raman, Peter Brooker, and Peter Widdowson. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. Pearson, 2005.

Sirleaf, Ellen Johnson. *This Child Will Be Great.* Harper, 2010.

Siundu, Godwin. *Imagining Home and Community in East African Asian Writing*. VDM, 2009.

_____. Beyond Auto/Biography: Power, Politics, and Gender in Kenyan Asian Women's Writings. *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 42, No. 3, Asian African Literatures / Gaurav Desai, Special Guest Editor (Fall 2011), pp. 117-131: Indiana University Press.

Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson, eds. *Women, Autobiography, Theory A Reader.* University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.

_____.*Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives.* University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Walker, Alice. *The Colour Purple.* Harcout Brace Jovanovich, 1982.

Were, Marciana, "Negotiating Public and Private Identities: A Study of the Autobiographies of African Women Politicians." Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, Stellenbosch University, 2017.