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Emerging trends in Kenyan children's fiction: A study of Sasa Sema's Lion books

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Chapter Five

Retelling Stories of the Marginalized through Children's Literature

Introduction

In Chapter One, I stated that Kenya's history has mostly been seen as that of the elite and the Mau Mau freedom fighters. Rarely do achievements by other characters that do not fit in these two circles get acknowledged. In Chapter Three I argued that the *Sasa Sema*'s Lion series acknowledges women's contribution to Kenya's history, while the previous chapter has argued that the stories of the elite are still an important part of the nation's story because they help in telling Kenya's history of liberation to children.

In this chapter, I examine how the *Sasa Sema* texts attempt to narrate stories of the marginalized, namely the Asians[1] in Kenya, photojournalists and subjugated religious figures represented in this chapter by Elijah Masinde. The term marginalized is here used in the sense of groups of people who are not given much consideration when we are talking about national history or heroes of the nation. The chapter argues that the characters discussed in this chapter, who represent certain groups of people in the nation, have contributed to shaping Kenya's history although their contribution sometimes goes unrecognized mainly because they are pushed to the margins. Mostly people, or groups of people, get pushed to the margins because a society refuses to acknowledge their needs, their beliefs, and their concerns. At other times, people rely on stereotypes which serve in othering specific groups. The texts under scrutiny represent children's literature as a conduit through which some of those subjugated narratives and layers of discourses, which percolate around Kenya's history, get incorporated into the nation's narrative.

[1] The terms Asians and Indians will be used in this chapter interchangeably to refer to the people whose origin can be traced to the Indian sub-continent.

These texts are therefore arguing for the need to imagine a new Kenya where stories of the marginalized are recognised and told.

I start the first part of the discussion by briefly looking at how stereotypes have been used to lump Asians in Kenya, and in East Africa in general, into a monolithic group with common interests and values. Such stereotypes have been a source of disquiet and insecurity on their part.[2] Against this background I look at how Zarina Patel fashions Jeevanjee's story for children in *Jeevanjee: Rebel of the Empire* (2002), in order to understand how this text celebrates the contribution of people of the Asian origin to Kenya's history. I also examine how far Patel subverts the stereotypes that have been associated with Asians. I pay attention to the two motifs that Patel utilizes to narrate Jeevanjee's story, namely: the walk motif and the journey motif. Walking done by characters in this text is like a discovery of Jeevanjee's accomplishments because it is through the walk that the two narrators in text take, and also through their conversation that readers learn Jeevanjee's deeds. These deeds include the buildings which Jeevanjee put up around Nairobi in the early twentieth century, which I read as important memory markers. Jeevanjee's life story further becomes visible through the physical journeys that he makes, from Karachi, to Mombasa, and later to Nairobi. These journeys comprise his life history. It is through part of his journeys that we see Jeevanjee playing an important role in building the Kenya-Uganda railway and also agitating for fair treatment of all people by the British colonial government in Kenya. Patel privileges history in Jeevanjee's biography as a backdrop against which Jeevanjee's work in Kenya should be

[2] Although there has been reenergized focus on the Asian community in Kenya for example through Journals like *Awaaz* and through other powerful bodies like Commission of human rights, there is no doubt that this group has been viewed with suspicion with regard to their identity as Kenyans. Zarina Patel who is Jeevanjee's grand daughter and the author of his biography is in the editorial team of the *Awaaz* journal, and also behind the renovations of Jeevanjee gardens that I discuss in this chapter. She therefore writes Jeevanjee's story from an informed position, because of her research and her relation to the character.

understood. It is my contention that this biography acts as a window through which children can see some of the contributions that Asians have made in Kenya's history.

In the second part of the chapter, I discuss the biography of a famous photojournalist in Kenya, *Mohamed Amin: The Eyes of Africa* (2000) by Edwin Nyutho that certainly furthers the argument started on Jeevanjee because Amin belongs to the Asian community. However, emphasis here is laid on the fact that Amin was a photojournalist. I focus on photojournalism as a genre that is generally marginalized in the Kenyan media. I am aware that photojournalists do not fit in the broad consideration of minority groups encompassing racial groups, gender, religious groups, and ethnic groups, but I assert that photojournalists get marginalized because of the way their work is usually taken for granted. More often than not the work photojournalists do is overshadowed by the story. In other words, credit goes mostly to the news writer and not the person who captures the images that make the story. In examining Amin's career as a photojournalist, I pay attention to how Nyutho employs the motif of the journey and foregrounds the traits of courage and determination in presenting Amin's adventurous life to child readers. It is through the many journeys that Amin undertakes in his life that we witness the stories he covers. I also pay attention to episodes in Mohamed Amin's career that the author superimposes [like coverage of war and famine scenes] to present Amin as a risk-taker. It is Amin's risk–taking character, the kind of stories he covered, his ability to get recognition for his work globally, and certainly the nature of his death which make him heroic and a celebrity all over the world. The spirit of determination that Amin adopts is not only important in shaping the young readers' aspirations but it also makes Amin a hero figure in the readers' eyes. I assert that inclusion of Amin's biography in the Lion series argues for recognition of photojournalists as forming part of the country's heroes and history because their work partly determines what

kind of knowledge gets disseminated to the public. The images recorded by photojournalists are also a documentation of history and therefore they are an important aid to understanding the past and a source of raw material for tomorrow's historians

In the third part of the chapter the text *Elijah Masinde: Rebel with a Cause* (2000) by Ezekiel Alembi is examined. I pay attention to how Alembi employs devices like the fantastic and suspense in narrating Masinde's story to children. Alembi employs these two devises to figure Masinde as a cultural hero and a religious activist who fought against injustice in both colonial and post colonial Kenya. Through this biography Alembi demonstrates the injustices that were meted to Kenyan peoples both in colonial and the postcolonial eras which Masinde fights against. The marriage between the images of the fantastic and reality in this text presents Masinde as a hero in the eyes of the readers, while suspense helps to keep the children interested in the narrative. Masinde's biography demonstrates how the *Sasa Sema* project is keen on archiving the contribution of marginalized religio-cultural figures to Kenya's history. Elijah Masinde's movement, *Dini ya Musambwa*, represents the earliest anti-colonial resistance that emanated from faith movements. Although faith movements have been given some amount of analysis by historians, such movements have not found enough space in literary discourse. I therefore argue that through the Lion books children's literature is presented as channel through which such movements find a voice in Kenyan literature.

By including figures like Mulla Jeevanjee, Mohamed Amin and Elijah Masinde in a series of books that seeks to archive stories of heroes and historical figures of the nation, the Lion series shows that there is a more

complicated national story than a focus on the Mau Mau and the nationalist elite would suggest (Lonsdale & Odhiambo (2003: 5).

I now examine the stereotypical perceptions that have characterised the existence of Indians in East Africa in general and Kenya in particular, and afterwards I proceed to discuss the biography of Mulla Jeevanjee.

Stereotypes Associated with the Asian Community in Kenya

In the various attempts to imagine a Kenyan nation, there has been a tendency to see the Asian immigrants in Kenya as a monolithic minority existing in categories that more often than not, are stereotyped. Sometimes individual aspirations of some Asians are smothered and their voices muted in an endeavour to project a general view and tendency of their communities, which demonstrates the extent to which culture stops being "an expression of the people [to become] an imposition on the people" (Jonathan Culler 1997: 45). The Asians in Kenya have among other things, been looked at from a totalizing view that has tended to dismiss almost the whole group as being politically detached. For instance, even after a few Asians had given a hand in fighting colonialists, after independence, nationalist African politicians continued to disparage them and as such they became like victims (Ojwang 1997: 10). Ojwang asserts that as late as 1996, a leading Kenyan politician, Kenneth Matiba, castigated Kenyan Indians for exploiting the country and not taking an active role in the country's political issues.

> Matiba said Asians were only interested in what they could get out of the country's commerce and industry but not in reinvesting in its future. They participate in other areas of the country's life periphery and when they are in politics it is to support the status quo.[3]

[3] Features Africa Network, "Matiba Says he will Stop Exploitation by Indians", *Kenya News* 18th May 1996, African Online. Quoted in Ojwang (1997: 11).

What individuals like Matiba may not have noticed however is that the culture of being in the periphery may have been caused by circumstances in the country that tend to sideline the Indians. The history of Indians in Kenya is certainly not that of political apathy. As we will see in this discussion, the biography of Jeevanjee demonstrates that the very early days of organised African nationalism saw the Indian support for the nationalist movements. Some Indians also came out in support of the Mau Mau insurgency in 1952, while others played a central role in organising labour trade unions (Mangat 1969: 176). Such contributions sometimes go unnoticed because, over the years, Indians have been looked at with suspicion leading to their exclusion from Kenya's public discourses.

It is not only in postcolonial politics that the Asians have met with criticism. Dan Ojwang argues that much of the early colonial complaints about the "Asiatic menace" established a trend in which the nuances of Asian identities would be flattened out to create an image of the Indian as a uniformly rapacious, unhygienic, and duplicitous character (2004: 28), images that sometimes contribute to their marginalization. Such images are also reflected in Bharati Agahanada's (1972) writing, who posits that the white expatriates in East African thought of Asians as

> … sneaky, mistrustful, they stick to each other and do not mix with others, they are arrogant, they cheat in business, they are cowards, their houses are dirty, they are obnoxiously thrifty, they lower the living standards of their neighbours because they do not spend money even though they could afford luxuries and encourage other people's wealth; they are clannish, they monopolize trade within their fold, they are not trustworthy in business nor in social matters (170).[4]

[4] Seidenberg April (1996: 181) also quotes William McGregor Ross (1927) and argues that [e]ven European women, those long-suffering helpmates isolated in their farms sent a frantic telegram to London asking for "assistance to protect us and our children from the terrible Asiatic menace that threatens to overwhelm us".

Some of these stereotypes are still prevalent in Kenya today because of their constant repetition. It is however important to note that even though Asians are viewed as engrossed in entrepreneurship, they have contributed to the history of Kenya in many other useful ways. And in fact, although the economic role of the Indians has often been cast in a negative light, they nevertheless contribute to the growth of Kenya's economy. Their contribution is however overshadowed by the stereotypes, which have influenced the Asians to resort to a culture of silence because they are always pushed by established circumstances to occupy marginal spaces with faint and remote prospects of moving to the mainstream of the nation's activities.

Asians have also been looked at as outsiders in the East African region. In an article published in *The East African* Magazine in Kenya's *Daily Nation* newspaper in May 2005, Mwangi Githahu contends: "The Kenyan South Asian community is viewed by other Kenyans with suspicion, with doubts of its sincerity and with xenophobia".[5] This xenophobic gaze, Githahu shows, has been a source of some disparaging comments from middle class Kenyans and politicians towards Indians in Kenya. Githahu quotes a former Kenyan Member of Parliament, Martin Shikuku, who referred to the South Asians as "paper citizens" (Ibid).[6] Such comments by politicians like Shikuku demonstrate that Indians are viewed as the "Other" – outsiders who are not true Kenyans. In an article "We're Kenya Damu" published in *Awaaz*, a journal that carries essays, commentaries and opinion pieces on issues pertaining to South Asians in East Africa, Sunny Bindra writes: "For too long, we were the 'in-betweens', the 'unmentionables' who were expected to know

[5] Mwangi Githahu, "Talking to Kenyan Asians" (2005) http://www.nationmedia.com/EastAfrican/16052005/Features/Part23.html

[6] The words "paper citizens could be taken to mean that Indians are not Kenyans by birth but by registration, and that they might carry Kenyan passports, but lack commitment to the country.

their 'place' (the duka [shop])".[7] Bindra who is an Asian writes from an insiders view and articulates the stereotypes that have characterised their existence in Kenya. He counters these stereotypes and argues that businesses established by the Indian community form part of the commercial base of the country. It is possible that some of these stereotypical characteristics may sometimes be portrayed by some Indians, but what I find problematic is the way characteristics exhibited by a few are made to represent the identity of a larger and a much more complex and dynamic group. Such representation has a negative consequence of shutting out any good that this group may have offered the country in the past, or even in the present.

The Indian character has also seen more textual violence in Kenya's literary writing. In Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road*, the Indian is figured in terms of his exploitative tendencies. For example, the Indian employers at the Construction Firm, Patel and Chakur Contractors, pay their employees meagre wages. The Indian supervisor is also a nuisance to his African subordinates which perpetuates the stereotype that Indians are selfish, and they exploit the native population. And in the play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo, the Indian character is fixed as one whose primary interest is economic exploitation. He is an enemy of the people's revolution whose strange dialect serves to rationalize class distinction: "True! True! Ewen in holy religion … there are vorkers … Brahmins and untouchables" (1981: 40). What I find revealing in this text is, the Indian character has no name but simply an Indian, just like the Banker who accompanies him [the Indian] to convince Kimathi to make a confession to the colonial authorities. Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo place Indians in the same standing as the foreign bankers in the country, in this case suggesting that Indians are mere extensions of western bourgeois class, consequently making a connotation that their history is that of the exploiter.

[7] http://www.mashada.com/forums/index/show_topic/23/16812/index.php

In Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*, the Indian trader is described as a very thrifty and stingy person who demands payment for every little thing he lends out, a stereotype that Ngugi perpetuates through the character of Gikonyo. When Gikonyo comes from detention we are told:

> Instead of buying clothes for himself or his family, Gikonyo did what the Indian traders used to do. He bought maize and beans cheaply during the harvest, put them in bags, and hoarded them in his mother's smoky hut…. He argued: they (his mother and wife) have been naked for the last six years [when he was in prison]. A few months of waiting won't make much difference (56)

Gikonyo's stock, we are told, was only sold at a higher price later when other households had cleared their foodstuff – earning a lot of profit. Comparing Gikonyo's actions to Indian shopkeepers, Ngugi ratifies Bharati Agahanada's assertion quoted earlier that Indians are "obnoxiously thrifty". Ngugi further uses Gikonyo to perpetuate the stereotype that Indians are stingy. This is seen in Gikonyo's response when Mumbi insists that she would not let him repair her mother's Panga [a big farm knife] without payment. Gikonyo answers: "I am not an Indian shopkeeper" (80), implying that Indians will charge for every service that they lend, or for every little thing that goes out of their hands.

From the foregoing, it seems that Kenyan politicians and literary writers as well, have repeatedly measured the Africans' declining economic status against the prospects of a world dominated by Asian capitalist megalomaniacs, leading the common man to believe that he would be better by eliminating the Asian (Seidenberg 1996:187). Such an outlook has caused the sidelining of the Indians in national politics because they are viewed as exploiters who other businessmen, especially African businessmen, should be wary of.

It is however important to note that although Indians have been cast in stereotypical manner, these stereotypes have certain origins. Most Indians came to East Africa as railway builders and after its completion many chose to remain and involved themselves in many businesses that became a source of the stereotypes. In addition, the Indian character cannot be looked at as a one sided person – that is, one who has been sinned against, because such a perspective carries with it instances of avoidance. As Godwin Siundu (2005) argues, "stereotypes are never entirely abstract but, on the contrary, built on historical occurrences involving access to political and economic resources" (204). For example, it is essential to note that in colonial times Indians occupied a space in between the colonialists and the colonized Africans in the pre-independence hierarchy. Generally, Indians in East Africa had been cast in the role of secondary colonizers, not having as many rights as the European overlords, but allowed nonetheless to occupy positions above those of the African people (Ojwang 2004: 215). Thus, while Africans were restricted to the agricultural labour in the rural areas in the early days of colonialism in East Africa, the Indians were commonly granted licenses to operate in the growing urban centres (Mahmood Mamdani 1976). Moreover, in colonial Kenya Africans were only allowed to go to Asian locations during the day to work for them, showing that Indians were placed at a higher position than Africans. It therefore became difficult for Africans to accept Indians during and after colonialism.

Having looked at some of the stereotypes that have been used to frame Indian identity in Kenya, I now examine how Zarina Patel uses children's literature to structure characters that have been victims of such stereotypes, and to what extent she attempts to subvert these stereotypes.

Representing the Indian Character: Mulla Jeevanjee, the Entrepreneur

> Apart from being a brave entrepreneur who had amassed a fortune, he built a large part of early Nairobi and even owned a newspaper, the forerunner of our present *East African Standard*. He owned ships that sailed the high seas between East Africa, India and Arabia…. He led the political struggle against the British colonialists in Kenya in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Patel 2002: viii).
>
> …
>
> We don't hear that much about what the Indians … or the Arabs did in those days (Ibid: 52).

I have started this part with the two quotations from Jeevanjee's biography because they are significant to my discussion. The two are significant in the sense that they portray the author's standpoint concerning the contribution of Indians to Kenya's history on the one hand, and the limited recognition that has been given to this group on the other. The first quotation that appears in the author's preface prepares the reader for a journey through Jeevanjee's life, which explores his accomplishments. But when gauged against the second quotation, one easily discovers the author's argument that Indians have not been given the recognition they deserve – most probably they have not been regarded as claimants of fruits of independence (Odhiambo 2003), despite their participation in agitation for freedom and building the economy hinted at in the first quote. As a member of a minority herself and a granddaughter to Jeevanjee, Patel privileges history as a backdrop against which Jeevanjee and Asians in Kenya in general should be understood. This history is seen through her probing into Jeevanjee's past, which uncovers his work as a railway builder, a nationalist and an entrepreneur.

In the text *Jeevanjee: Rebel of the Empire* (2002), Patel utilizes the motifs of walking and journeying, plus dialogue between two characters. She employs a conversational mode between Amina and her cousin Kazungu who tell us the story of Jeevanjee. Amina is carrying out a research on Jeevanjee, and having read about his accomplishments, she asks her cousin, Kazungu, to help her trace some of the buildings that Jeevanjee put up in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, when Nairobi was founded. Patel imagines a space through which her characters "walk us in the city" and in this process we discover some of Jeevanjee's accomplishments. This style of walking in the city, I argue, makes events in the past become an intelligible experience to children in the present. Within the first chapter of the book we are told Amina and Kazungu "walked out of the garden and turned towards University way, walking up Muindi Mbingu Street" (4); "As they approached the central police station…" they saw buildings that were "on wooden little legs" which were built by Jeevanjee (6); to Moi Primary School where "they saw a stone building" that was also built by Jeevanjee, which is part of the school (9); to the corner of *Biashara* street which was called *Bazaar* Street in Jevanjee's time (13), and back to Jeevanjee Gardens[8] (15). Walking in this text becomes a process of discovery, which is supplemented by the information Amina has read. These two factors [walking and the research] cement Jevanjee's story. After tracing the buildings put up by Jeevanjee the two cousins settle back in Jeevanjee gardens and through their subsequent conversation, readers understand Jeevanjee's life as one that comprised journeys. Journeying in Jeevanjee's story takes place at the level of physical movements across geographical spaces. These journeys are across seas and within Kenya, in the process of which he builds his life. Jeevanjee travels from India to Mombasa, and across Kenya where he is involved in railway building, and his journey ends in Nairobi. This journey can be read as Jeevanjee's quest for new locations; his business entrepreneurship starts in

[8] Jeevanjee Gardens is a public park, which Jeevanjee donated to the city of Nairobi**.** It is a favourite resting place for workers tourists and the residents of Nairobi (Patel 2002: vii-viii).

Karachi, and it is the quest for new economic amelioration that facilitates such journeys.[9] In this case walking and journeying become sources of memory about Jeevanjee.

Patel uses her two narrators to voice her standpoint that the buildings put up by Jeevanjee are an "historical treasure" (7), as seen in the following conversation:

> "Do you think the students who go to Moi Primary realise that they are schooling in a historic building?" thought Kazungu out loud.
> "I hope so," replied Amina. "Imagine, every day they are surrounded by history!" (10).

By positioning the buildings that Jeevanjee put up as part of Kenya's history, Patel argues for Indians to be viewed as people who have been in Kenya long enough to qualify as its real citizens, as opposed to the stereotypical description of Indians as "paper citizens". Important in the two narrators' discussion throughout the text is the way Patel portrays them as knowledgeable about some of the places associated with Jeevanjee, which allow them to narrate the story from a position of advantage. For example, Amina's choice of Jeevanjee as a research topic is said to have been influenced by the fact that she knew about the Jeevanjee gardens in Nairobi. Such a supposition may influence children into reading the story to discover more information about Jeevanjee, especially those who have prior knowledge about the gardens. However, while children in the city of Nairobi would be able to identify with Jeevanjee gardens, and thus be curious about its origin, it is possible that many children in Kenya, especially those from locations away

[9] Godwin Siundu argues that journeying is apparently a common motif used in most writing by and about migrants. Siundu asserts that these journeys are an expression of desire to be at different places, with different people and may be a suggestion of undesirability of the current place. For more details see Chapter 3 of his PhD thesis entitled "Multiple Consciousness and Reconstruction of Home in the Novels of Yusuf Dawood and Moyez Vassanji" (University of the Witwatersrand, 2005).

from Nairobi, have no knowledge about the gardens. Therefore while such an approach by the writer may be exciting and informative to children, it may at the same time be limited to particular audiences, and may therefore become alienating. Nevertheless Amina's research becomes a source of information because it is out of what she has read previously that most of the information is passed to the readers.

Jeevanjee starts his earliest businesses in Mombasa after he arrives from Karachi, which apparently opens for him a doorway into contract with the British colonial government in the building of the Kenya-Uganda Railway. It is in these activities that the motif of the physical journeys becomes visible. We read: "It was in 1890 when Jeevanjee sailed into Mombasa" (24); "… Jeevanjee started working on the railway in January 1896" (37); "[The railway]… only reached Nairobi in 1899, four years after they had started" (41). The dates indicated in these quotations help in showing the transition in Jeevanjee's life, and they are also an important historical record.

In this text, Patel attempts to subvert the belief that Indians came to the East African coast in search of fortune when she positions Jeevanjee as "an adventurer" who "was already rich" and only "wanted to do something interesting and worthwhile…" (22). Nevertheless, Patel's argument is undermined when she writes in the same text that Jeevanjee started life at the Kenyan coast as a mere ship loader (27), a job he may certainly not have taken if he were rich. Despite such contradictions however, the text shows that Jeevanjee's activities in Kenya went a long way in shaping Kenya's history, one of his contributions being the work he does in railway construction. Amina explains to Kazungu:

> Well, the British are the ones who wanted the railway. And they paid for it. But they hired many others to manage and carry out the work. The British approached Jeevanjee because he already had a reputation from his success in the transportation business in Mombasa. So Jeevanjee entered into contract with the railway authorities to manage various parts of the whole job…. Jeevenjee arranged to bring hundreds of men over from India to build the railroad tracks across the miles and miles of wilderness…. [He] imported these railroad workers from India, and found artisans to organize the construction… (33-34).

Patel shows that it is Jeevanjee's aptitude in business that helps him to progress. His hard work allows him to enter into contract with the British which made him a rich merchant. Jeevanjee arrives in Nairobi when the railway line reaches there. He builds many houses and rents them out as government offices. He also builds Jeevanjee market. The remains of some of these buildings that Jeevanjee put up at the beginning of the twentieth century are identified by Amina and Kazungu through their walk in the city at the beginning of the narrative. In the preface of her other history textbook on Jeevanjee produced in the Makers of Kenya's History Series, Patel (2002a) argues that the recent installation of the sculpture of Jeevanjee in the gardens is a step towards the country's recognition of its heroes, in addition to telling these heroes' stories through books. Patel asserts that Jeevanjee gardens will "remain as a permanent memory of this great man" (2002b: ix) in Kenya. Such statements, one could argue, expose the author's inclination in guiding her readers into appreciating the character's deeds, and his significance to the country's past and present. The history of Kenya's *East African Standard*, a paper originally launched as a weekly newspaper named *African Standard* in 1901 is also associated with Jeevanjee, and at the time of its installation it "carried more business and government news" (2002b: 51). Patel mentions all these aspects of Jeevanjee's life to show his commitment to developing the Kenyan nation.

As mentioned in the introductory remarks, Patel reveals that Jeevanjee was not only devoted to business but he was also keen on supporting nationalist movements, which negates the stereotype that Asians are apolitical. This is demonstrated by the fact that although Jeevanjee worked with the British in building the railway, he did not cooperate with them when it came to racial discrimination that was a common feature in all British colonies in Africa. Amina tells Kazungu: "The colonial government introduced laws to force people to live in different areas of Nairobi according to their race. Another law denied the vote to non-whites…." (65-66). I have already discussed how some of these issues affected Africans in Kenya in Chapter Four. It is similar issues that make Jeevanjee to rebel against the empire, which he so admired.

Jeevanjee challenges the colonial regime in search of greater equity of opportunity, for Indians and eventually all Kenyans. Due to discrimination that emanated from the British colonial government in Kenya, Jeevanjee and other Indians formed the Indian National Congress in 1914 to fight for the rights of the segregated in East Africa, which in a way laid the foundations for an organised anti-colonial movement. Throughout the text, Patel shows how Jeevanjee starts his work in business and later moves to politics, sometimes joining hands with Africans to fight colonialism.

In an article entitled "Mau Mau and Nationhood: The Untold Story", Bethwell Ogot (2003) shows that many Indians played major roles in agitation for independence in Kenya. He however laments that such people's actions have been overshadowed by the stories of the elite. For instance, he argues that although Pio Gama Pinto was working as an executive officer of the East African Indian congress, which later became Kenya Indian congress, "he was instrumental in obtaining most of the secret information for KAU, drafting press statements … organizing fundraising for the Kapenguria trials, and

revitalizing KAU after the arrest of its leaders". (24-26). Ogot laments: "This selfless and dedicated patriot [Pio Gama Pinto] was assassinated at the age of 37 on 24 February 1965, in Nairobi, a few days after Kenyatta had sought legal counsel about ways to deal with 'this bloody Goan'" (25), and his death seemingly ended his significance to Kenya's history. I therefore submit that being of Asian origin, Jeevanjee's story serves as a representative of such groups of people whose deeds have almost vanished into oblivion.

Jeevanjee's story helps readers to partly understand the history of Indians in Kenya as migrants and the part they played in shaping Kenya's history. Writing Jeevanjee's biography in the Lion series acts as a technique of resurrecting his narrative [and the Indian narrative in general]. Jeevanjee's biography certainly suggests that it is crucial for Kenya to sing its unsung heroes regardless of their origin and colour, rather than viewing them as characters belonging to a minority group which has nothing to be shown as their share in building the nation. Next, I examine the biography of Mohamed Amin, which demonstrates how the *Sasa Sema* project is committed to acknowledging the achievement of photojournalists.

Mohamed Amin the Photojournalist

Like Jeevanjee, Mohamed Amin's father came from India to take a job on the East African Railway. This saw Amin's birth in Nairobi in 1943, and thus he became a Kenyan born Indian. As a railway builder Amin's father moved from Kenya and settled in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where he [Amin] started schooling, before becoming a renowned photojournalist. Like Jeevanjee's biography discussed above, Mohamed Amin's biography partly helps children to understand the history and the origin of Indian settlement in Kenya.[10] Mohamed Amin belongs to two categories that I argue are

[10] It is important to note that not all Indians came to Kenya as a result of the railway line because there were already some Indian settlements at the Kenyan coast even before the building of the railway commenced.

marginalized in Kenya: he is of Asian origin, and a photojournalist. But as I said in the introductory remarks, I only focus my discussion on Amin's life as a photojournalist.

I read Mohamed Amin as belonging to a group of people who are marginalized in the field of Kenyan news production and also in the public circle, because although the life of photojournalists is characterised by risk-taking expeditions and a lot of hard work, little credit goes to them in circles of news production. Speaking of Mohamed Amin's work and that of photojournalists in general, journalist Charles Onyango-Obbo (1996) contrasts the life of photojournalists with other categories in the media workforce:

> Photo-journalists are the real flag bearers of our calling. They can only tell a story which they see, and see at close enough range to make a photo of it. Yet it's not them, but us who write tall tales after collecting information from the safety of telephone distance hundreds of kilometres away, who get invited to speak at conferences about some African conflict we didn't witness.
>
> And after years of writing about things the information about which we got from telephone conversations and other people's written reports, we become columnists and much sought-after commentators. It is a life not available to Mo[11] and his type… Mo deserved to leave us in an extraordinary way. And he did. That he died aboard an Ethiopian Airlines plane, returning from a country that could well have perished if it hadn't been for his camera, has left us with an irony that this generation will never forget.[12]

[11] Mohamed Amin was commonly called "Mo" by his friends and colleagues. The short form Mo will occasionally be used in this discussion to refer to Mohamed Amin.
[12] http://www.africanews.com/article32.html

Onyango-Obbo bears witness to the fact that photojournalists are marginalized in the media because their work is not given the recognition it deserves. In the above quotation, Onyango-Obbo hints at the Ethiopian famine that Mo covered, and how the photographs he took on the famine scene moved the whole world into action in an attempt to help the famine victims. I will return to Mo's coverage of the Ethiopian famine later in the chapter.

Mo worked in some of the most dangerous war situations in the world such as Ethiopia, where he loses his arm from an explosion, in order to provide pictures for news gatherers. It is the kind of stories he covered, and his tragic death in a hijacked plane that keeps him in people's memory after his death. Mo's biography reveals that photojournalists are a crucial category of people in any nation because of their work. The images recorded by photojournalists are also a documentation of history in the making, and thus they are a vital data for understanding the past. Coverage of news is therefore seen in this discussion as a source of knowledge. I further assert that Edwin Nyutho shows that the struggle to excel in one's own area of specialization like Mohamed Amin does in his photojournalist work imparts the desire to excel into the minds of the young, as they witness Amin's bravery and determination.

In the text *Mohamed Amin: The Eyes of Africa* (2000), Edwin Nyutho uses an omniscient narrator who guides the reader in understanding Mohamed Amin's character and accomplishments. In the preface we read:

> Mo, as Mohamed Amin was fondly called, was a special type of man in more ways than one. There was always more in him of diligence, of perseverance, of vision, of honour, of adventure, of persistence -- name

> it. Perhaps that is why he was Mo. Because he was more. To have known him was to have known the best there was in his time, especially in the domain of photojournalism…. The Mo the world came to adore decided to be what he became when he was only eleven (2000: vii).

The traits outlined in this quotation, surface in Mo's character as his narrative unfolds. These traits are the ones that make him heroic because he stands out as a person who does everything to succeed in his work regardless of whatever obstacles he finds on his way. Nyutho employs the motifs of exploration, journeying, endurance, suffering and hardship, and pioneering in the field of photojournalism, which augments Mo's daring character and his determination. His heroism is portrayed by the way he travels to perilous areas of the world to collect news and to take photographs, which makes him a risk taker. In this process he becomes like the "Eyes of Africa", [and supposedly of the whole world] as the title of his biography suggests.

Mo's spirit of industry seems to have emanated from his father who "insisted that hard work brings its own reward. He taught his sons to be independent, to always speak their minds and be proud of what they are" (4). Apparently Mo adopts such a spirit and in the end he becomes an adventurer who endeavours to do anything possible to succeed. We read:

> It is his vision as a young child that made the man the world came to admire. By the time he died, he was the most decorated journalist in the world. The world will have to wait for a long time to find such another (viii).

Already the author sets the readers' mind on what to expect of Mo, by the use of phrases like "most decorated journalist". Mo's narrative is woven through

a series of subtitles which represent key issues that define his expeditions. For instance, the subtitles "Zanzibar" and "The Other Amin" foreground Mo's adventure in Zanzibar where he covers stories that put him into trouble with the Zanzibari government, and how he collected exclusive stories on Idi Amin during the Ugandan Coup, [13] respectively. In Zanzibar, Mo covers a story, which makes the world aware that Russia was using Zanzibar as a military base for training soldiers. "He [Mo] was shocked. There were soldiers from Russia there with guns and tanks! They were training Zanzibari soldiers how to use modern weapons… it was a major story" (32). The pictures Mo took were especially important to the United States and Europe who were enemies with Russia at that time.[14] Mo's strength, one could argue, does not come from what happens to him but what he has purposed to do. This spirit of having to push on with one's work regardless of the obstacles on his way is an important aspect in a hero's life.

One notices that Mo's biography becomes like a series of lessons to the readers because of the information it provides on occurrences and scenes in world history through the stories he covers. Another story that Mo covers that can be said to be important part of world history, which also represent photojournalism as a source of knowledge, is the story about the Apartheid system in South Africa.

> One day he [Mo] got a tip-off on a good story. Two South Africans had just escaped from their harsh racist government and were trying to find safety in Tanzania. Mo decided this was the time to try filming for television. He had never operated a cine camera before. He reckoned that it would work and so he borrowed one from a friend and figured

[13] This point will be examined further, later in this discussion.
[14] This story incensed the Russian and Tanzanian authorities who accused Mo of being a spy of the west. As a result he was arrested and repatriated to Kenya.

> out how to use it right there on the job, filming the two South Africans (27).

Although the author's aim in the above quotation is certainly to demonstrate Mo's discovery of the filming technique, the news on South Africa and its apartheid regime is an important historical phenomenon for the readers. In such instances readers get additional information in the process of understanding the character's adventures. Mo's quick action, which is prompted by the arrival of the two South Africans in Tanzania, becomes like his graduation from taking still photographs to filming. Subsequently "[w]hen he went to shoot stories, Mo carried so many different kinds of cameras at the same time that he was quite a spectacle! He came to be known as "Six Camera Mo"" (27-28).

The journey motif is the most important aspect in Edwin Nyutho's narration as it not only helps him to structure the narrative, but it also allows the reader to travel with Mo all the time, witnessing his accomplishments. For example, Mo's achievements are as a direct result of the many [physical] journeys he undertakes to Zanzibar, Uganda, Jeddah, and to the war and famine stricken areas of Ethiopia. Daya Thusu (2003) argues that television news requires visual impact and a dramatic story, and that wars and natural disasters score more highly than peaceful events. As if following Thusu's contention, Nyutho's choice of episodes that define Mo's life as a photojournalists demonstrate a concentration on war and famine scenes, which I will examine in this discussion.

Mo's journeys are clearly influenced by the wish to get his stories appreciated by the audience. Such realities, one could argue, motivate him to undertake some dangerous expeditions for the purpose of collecting stories that meet the market realities since both news producers and consumers are selective. And

as Daya Thusu (2003) argues, audience's interest in news is highest at the time of conflict, and that news is largely about conflict, and conflict is always news (117). It therefore becomes imperative for Mo to look for newsworthy coverage. His daring character becomes a licence that allows him to get through to the infamous General Idi Amin of Uganda, who allows him [Mo] entry into the country to cover stories on his [Idi's] takeover of Uganda during the 1971 coup.

> Surprisingly, Idi liked Mo and was happy to have a journalist making him known to the world. He talked to Mo often, and allowed him free access to the country. Even so, Mo had to be very careful. Although he usually liked to get credit for his work, he didn't want any by-lines on histories about Uganda because he didn't want to upset Idi. He wanted Idi to keep allowing him into the country to cover events (47).

Here again the author foregrounds Mo's tactfulness and his endeavour to keep on the track of his job because he knew covering stories on Uganda at that time was what the world wanted to hear/watch most. Mo's daring character is evident in the way he maintains his "friendship" with Idi Amin who was adversely feared for his inhuman characteristics.

> He [Idi Amin] did strange things like keeping human body parts in his refrigerator. Mo knew this man could be his friend at one moment, and kill him the next day. However Mo wanted to get those stories and keep flying in and out of Uganda (48).

Here we see Mo as a risk taker, a character trait that is driven by his wish to collect quality and newsworthy stories. Mo's spirit of inquiry pushes him to take yet another journey to Saudi Arabia where he mysteriously tracks Idi

down, "and manages to follow his trail all the way to Jeddah…" (49). After Idi Amin's takeover of Uganda and the mass genocide that he facilitated by throwing Ugandan citizens into Lake Victoria, he [Idi Amin] went into exile in Saudi Arabia. The author captures it thus:

> Mo filmed and Idi talked,…this was the first news about Idi Amin since his disappearance from Uganda more than a year earlier…. It was a great story. It made headlines all over the world. And it was exclusive because Mo and his colleagues were the only ones who ever managed to interview Idi Amin in Saudi Arabia (50-51).

It is apparent that some strange friendship existed between Mo and Idi Amin. But it is Mo's ambition and his journeys that take him to Idi Amin's hiding in Jeddah. These journeys are however not the sole source of Mo's success in collecting such exclusive stories. His success also lay in his ability to act quickly. For example, after filming Idi Amin,

> Mo turned to his colleagues. "We should get on the next plane," he said, "no matter where it's going!" Mo took the film and put it in his suitcase. He gave all his equipment to one of his colleagues. "Take these things and catch another flight, wherever it is going" (51).

Two things are implied in the above quotation: either Mo is in a hurry to get his films to the press, or he fears for his security and that of his prized film. Whatever the reason, however, Mo's adventure and actions help readers to understand the kind of world photojournalists live through. Such a presentation stipulates that the society should not take photojournalists' work for granted; while in reality they [photojournalists] risk their lives in an attempt to record stories. What the Lion books are arguing for therefore is that as we sing the song of Kenya's heroes and their accomplishments in the

nation, we should remember that photojournalists have a stanza in this heroes' song.

In the foregoing discussion, we have seen that Nyutho foregrounds three aspects that allow us to understand Mo's character: determination, his speed of action, and his courage. In the following paragraphs, I examine how Nyutho presents Mo's ability to cover scenes to detail. This is seen through his coverage of riveting famine scenes in Ethiopia, which not only made Mo to be recognised all over the world, but in addition, the story earned respect for the whole group of photojournalists.

> In the history of television news reporting, no other journalist had ever done this through the images of a single story. Thanks to Mo, ever after this story, photographers were respected and credited for their work (53).

Emphasis on one's skill here is seen as what makes the character admirable in the eyes of the reader. Through descriptions that are loaded with images, Nyutho takes the reader through scenes that Mo photographed – the various phases of the famine, starting with lack of rain, followed by death of livestock due to lack of pastures, and the subsequent deaths of human beings, again, allowing readers to come face to face with world's natural calamities through an individual's story. Nyutho shows great skill in presentation of events by foregrounding Mo's daring character where he filmed in an environment engulfed by the terrible horror and fear of death. "Mo was silent and just kept filming. He was thinking it was his duty to bring this terrible disaster to the eyes of the world" (58).

> In all directions, almost as far as they could see, people were sitting on the ground, or lying down, old people, young people, men and women and children. And yet it was deathly quiet. Occasionally there were a

> few muted whimpers from a hungry child. …Human beings were languishing in the last stages of life. Every few minutes the body of a person who had just died was carried away (55). … [Mo] filmed the images of the hungry as night fell and woke up to film their corpses with the first light of dawn (59)…. Mo's films and still pictures started a landslide of compassion, which swept across the world. Most people who watched the images cried – in shame, in anger, in disbelief (60).

The choice of a narrative technique is very important in children's books because it determines the extent to which the story is accessible to the young minds. By concentrating on the famine scene and giving detailed description of the scene, Nyutho certainly makes the story clearer to children. In addition, a series of startling illustrations, which accompany these descriptions help readers to visualize the famine spectacle. The scene quoted above presents Mo as a photographer who dared the "face of death" for the purpose of getting news to reach the world, which certainly makes him different from other news collectors. The narrative voice further leads the reader into appreciating Mo's work:

> For once, the world acted together. Over one million lives were saved. Those who watched the film were touched by the camera techniques that Mo employed. For the first time, the television companies appreciated the cameraman as never before. Without Mo, this story would not have got the world response that it did. The food would not have been delivered and those three million people would have starved to death (61-62).
>
> …
>
> After his story about the Ethiopian famine in 1984, Mo started to gain the recognition and the credits he deserved. He received many awards from governments, universities, media houses, even the pope and the Queen of England. No other journalist had ever been so decorated (76).

The story of the Ethiopian famine endeared Mo to many people in the world. Even after his death in a hijacked Ethiopian plane that crashed off the Comoro Islands, news all over the world broadcast his death, some making references to the Ethiopian famine. For instance, on 23rd November 1996, an article in the BBC news online read:

> The dead included Mohamed Amin, a photo journalist from Kenya who had a reputation as one of Africa's leading photographers. His film reports of the famine in Ethiopia helped draw attention to the crisis. He was also known as a top motorsport photographer.[15]

Mo's recognition lies in his ability to pick out scenes of events because it is the stories he collects that makes him famous. His stories earned respect not only for himself but also for the whole network of cameramen. Visiting scenes like the famine scene examined above shows us some of the circumstances that photojournalists have to face if their work is ever to progress; a career that requires special commitments from those involved.

Heroism has been conceived by both readers and spectators as taking the form of public, idealized masculinity. "It calls to mind socially and morally elevated men embarking on active adventures: courageously confronting danger; fearlessly rescuing the helpless; exploring and claiming unconquered terrain".[16] Such is the motif Nyutho adopts in presenting Mo's adventurous life to the readers, thus projecting him as a character that is certainly admired for his bravery. But although we have read Mo's story as that of courage and

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[15] "1996: Hijacked Jet Crashes into Sea." BBC News Online

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/november/23/newsid_2547000/2547715.stm

[16] http://www.bibliovault.org/BV.book.epl?BookId=1338&Title=Gender%20and%20heroism%20in%20early%20modern%20English%20literature%20

success, it is also characterized by a series of misfortunes. As I have argued elsewhere in this thesis, heroes are not always successful or perfect beings. First, Mo gets a car crash and secondly loses his left arm while covering war scenes in Addis Ababa. But despite losing his arm, Mo continues covering stories operating his camera with an artificial arm until he finally meets his death. While such obstacles that Mo meets are read as demonstrating certain falls that heroes can encounter, this can also show the hero's ability to push boundaries of life and jump across the abyss and overcome snags of life. Mo's story, we could assert, gives children insights into the lives of photojournalists, which is sometimes characterised by taking risks as this discussion has shown.

Apart from taking photographs for news purposes, Mo is shown to have been a character that was keen on preserving African history and culture. He goes on long expeditions where he films wildlife and landscapes of Africa, and visits many communities and documents their traditional way of life, which he keeps as historical records. Also, the Mohamed Amin Foundation, a school that offers courses in photojournalism, television and radio broadcasting, which was established in Nairobi after his death was his brainchild. This school, which is run by his son, brings in the idea of family legacies as indicators of belonging. Like Jeevanjee Gardens that is a constant reminder of Jeevanjee's life in Kenya, this school preserves Mo's memory. It also acts as a source of inspiration especially to the new generation of scholars in journalism.

Generally, Mo's story is that of hard work, determination and will power to succeed in his career. He is a character who works without turning back and one who dares to venture into scenes where death stares at him in the face, for the sake of filming stories. This spirit of determination to succeed, as we have seen, is what makes him eminent all over the world. Mo is a prototype of a modern hero, who through his endeavours, serves the society, and also strives

to define himself. Through his story, we realize that to be heroic is to be admired. His story, which covers various aspects ranging from war, superpower conflicts, terrorism and famine scenes, demonstrates how children's literature is keen on responding to, and presenting to children the rapidly changing modern world (Beckett 1997). In this case children's literature is seen to be changing with the times. In the next section I discuss Elijah Masinde whose faith movement was important in agitation for justice in both colonial and post colonial Kenya.

Elijah Masinde: A Religio-cultural Hero and a Nationalist

Elijah Masinde was the leader of *Dini ya Musambwa*, a religious protest movement that was based in rural civil society. This movement strove to fight the inequalities that people faced in both colonial and postcolonial Kenya. Masinde doubled as a religious leader and a political activist, and he rallied his people in active resistance to colonial powers and also voiced his displeasure with injustice in postcolonial Kenya. The *Dini ya Musambwa* movement, like the Maji Maji rebellion of Tanzania, can be placed within the confines of what historians have called primary resistance to colonialism that was based on religious faiths. Such faith movements, as James Ogude argues, became "instruments for truth-claiming and vehicles for constituting knowledge and empowerment among the marginalized" (2005: 17). But faith movements like *Dini ya Musambwa* have not been fully studied in Kenyan literature, and thus I contend that the *Sasa Sema* project is making an important step in this area by giving voice to such movements through children's literature.

This part of the chapter examines how children's literature is used as a channel to argue for the recognition of religious figures and their role in the making of the Kenyan-nation. In *Elijah Masinde: Rebel with a Cause*, (2000) I examine how Ezekiel Alembi figures Elijah Masinde as a cultural hero and a religious activist for a children's audience.

Alembi writes Masinde's story with a certain kind of imaginative freedom, sometimes appropriating elements of epic traditions and in the process elevating Masinde into a legendary figure, while at the same time trying to keep the story within the framework of Kenya's history. Alembi's passion in telling Masinde's story is evident in the way he repeatedly employs the fantastic to project Masinde's character; a style that almost blurs the boundary between the imagined and the real. The fantastic is employed in this text, not only to stress Masinde's work in his religious movement, but it is also used to demonstrate his ability in other activities he undertook. The marriage between images of fantasy and reality in this text helps to accentuate Masinde's bravery/heroism. For example, to stress Masinde's skill in playing soccer, grandmother (the narrator) tells the children that Masinde was so good at football that one day he kicked the ball upwards and it never came back.[17] And when the colonial government deports Masinde to Lamu prison for allegedly holding an illegal meeting of *Dini ya Musambwa*, he became the star of the Lamu Prison Football Team, which became one way of spreading his fame (44). It is not only soccer that Masinde was good at but he also played the traditional guitar. He used to sit in the river where water was swiftest and play his *Litungu*, the harp, as he sang (27). This fantastic representation appears on the cover of the book where there is a picture of a man (assumed to be Masinde) seated in the middle of the river with a stringed instrument. These episodes are put in a way that makes the audience identify with the character's accomplishments because we are told, "everything was possible with Masinde" (22). The narration by grandmother is supplemented by illustrations in the text, which make episodes clearer for the young readers.

[17] Writing the story of Elijah Masinde in the Makers of Kenya's History Series, Vincent Simiyu (2001) says that this ball that was allegedly kicked by Masinde was later discovered hidden in a banana cooking pot having been deflated. The myth of Masinde's kick has continued to date. Alembi does not however speak about the deflated ball that Simiyu mentions which makes Masinde mysterious in the eyes of the readers.

Another style that is utilized, which helps to hold the attention of audience in the course of narration is suspense. At the end of every storytelling session grandmother leaves her listeners (and readers) in suspense so that they would want to know more of the story the following evening, when the story continues, or on the part of the readers, they would want to continue reading the story in order to find out more about the character. This is shown by the way grandmother ends the story, sometimes abruptly, with words like "I'll tell you more about him tomorrow" (48). Another kind of suspense is shown when the audience insists that they want more of the story like in the following extract:

> "What's *Dini ya Musambwa*?" asked Nanjero.
> Well, that's what I will tell you about tomorrow."
> "No please, Grand, go on!"
> "It's late and you must go home. But first you can help me eat the cassava." (23)

Alembi integrates Masinde's story within the daily activities of the children which makes it easier for them to identify with the story and thus learn easily. Although grandmother's audience (the children) participate in the next evening activity (eating), afterwards they go to their respective homes, but with a desire to learn more which compels them to go to her [grandmother's] house the following day.

Although Masinde's biography emphasizes his deeds, through it children learn other aspects of history in Kenya like the invasion by colonialists, which I examine presently. In the following extract, grandmother explains who Masinde was, and also introduces the topic of colonialism into the narrative.

> Grandmother replied, "No, Elijah Masinde was a human being. He was born and grew up here in Bungoma…. he was a great religious leader not only in Bungoma, but also in Kenya and all of Africa."
> "In Africa…" murmured Nasimiyu.
> "Yes, in Africa. He insisted that Africans must go back to their traditional religions and they must be allowed to govern themselves".
> "Were Africans not governing themselves then?" asked Nasimiyu.
> "No. They were ruled by colonialists".
>
> "What are colonialists?" asked Nekesa.
> "Colonialists are people who take over another country and rule the people there. Colonialism is a kind of stealing".
> "They steal the whole country?"
> "Yes. These colonialists in Kenya were people who came from England" (7).

This explanation appears at the beginning of the storytelling sessions that culminate in many subsequent nights of narration. Kenya's narrative is here placed within Masinde's story because we learn about the ills and confrontation between Africans and colonialists from this story. In the above quotation we also notice the use of exaggeration in reference to Masinde's religion. One could certainly doubt grandmother's assertion that Masinde's religion was known in the whole of Africa. This exaggeration of certain episodes in the novel, to some extent, appeals to children's imagination concerning Elijah Masinde. Masinde's religion, which was his source of motivation, supremacy and ability, allows the author to emphasize his exceptional qualities. While I read Masinde as a cultural hero, I acknowledge that his is a story of Kenya, because through him we learn many aspects of Kenya's history, more specifically the part faith movements played in

agitation for freedom from colonialists.[18] Alembi strives to show Elijah Masinde's commitment to his religion, *Dini ya Musambwa*, which was apparently a political movement that resisted colonialism. Grandmother says:

> A follower of this religion worships God through his or her *bisambwa*, ancestors. Masinde was raised as a Christian, but as he grew up he felt that this was the colonialists' church and that Africans should follow their own religions (33).

This message concerning the return to the religion of ancestors, we are told, was communicated to Masinde in a vision where his relations (ancestors) asked him to bring back the Bukusu way of worship (32). Henceforth Masinde became the leader of this religion. It was claimed that through the *bisambwa*, Masinde got power to resist bullets, [rather turn bullets into water] (41). He could go out of prison cells while doors were still closed (28). This analogy with Biblical opening of prison doors after Paul and Silas prayed to God (Acts, 16: 25-26) again places Masinde in a position beyond ordinary human beings and it also presents another use of the fantastic by the author. Masinde's followers therefore viewed him as a figure that possessed supernatural power, and a source of inspiration for action.

Masinde's resolve on returning to the African way of worship forces us to acknowledge that discourses of cultural nationalism are being perpetuated through children's literature in Kenya. Janice Murray (1977) says that people may fall back on cultural nationalism in order to offset influences that they may think are not in line with society value system. For example, Murray argues, in the 1970s some Britons felt the urge to "develop within their country strong cultural nationalism to offset the influence of the great American films, books, music, theatre, and so on" (46). Masinde's insistence

[18] Since faith movements were not confined to Kenya, one could assert that Masinde's story helps in elevating such movements that were common anti-colonial struggle strategies like the Chimurenga and the Maji Maji wars of Zimbabwe and Tanzania respectively.

on the Bukusu's return to their religion was undoubtedly for a similar purpose that Murray identifies because he perceived Europeans' political, religious and cultural influence in Kenya as having a harmful effect on Africans.[19] In this case we see cultural nationalism as a rejection of any foreign cultures that infiltrate into a community/country and which has a potential to influence a change in people's behaviour in that society.

This kind of cultural nationalism that Masinde advocates also becomes like a sanctuary for people exasperated with those in power. This is because Masinde did not use *Dini ya Musambwa* only for the purposes of preserving his society's culture. In addition, he urged members of this movement, mainly the Bukusu people, to take arms and confront the colonialists. This therefore saw a cultural religion turning into a movement that sought independence. Masinde "stoically championed the cause of the oppressed, the religiously adulterated and nationalistically frustrated by foreign forces" (Vincent Simiyu 2001).[20] He "opposed the conscription of Africans to fight in the Second World War, arguing that this was a European war which had nothing to do with African interests" (Bethwell Ogot 2003: 14). Vincent Simiyu argues that the colonial government described Elijah Masinde's movement as a greater threat to law and order than the Mau Mau movement. The British viewed *Dini ya Musambwa* as a threat to their power and certainly barbaric, and as a result they saw a need to tame Masinde and his movement, which was effected by arresting him. Like his political counterparts who are at the centre of Kenya's history of decolonization, Masinde fought against racial discrimination and loss of land, among other ills that were perpetuated by British colonialists in Kenya (Alembi 2000; Ogot 2003: 14-15). And like we saw with Kaggia and Oginga mentioned in the previous chapter, Masinde is also jailed by the postcolonial Kenyan government when he criticises its leadership. One could

[19] Masinde also viewed the new dress code that African women in Kenya were adopting from the British to be of bad influence to these women because he saw it as corrupting their morals (Alembi, 2000: 52-53).

[20] See the Introduction to *Elijah Masinde* (200I), [published in the Makers of Kenya's History Series].

argue that Alembi strives to present Kenyan children with the injustices meted to citizens by those in leadership positions. What is problematic however is the way movements like *Dini ya Musambwa* are ignored in Kenya's literature on liberation struggle. The project under study therefore attempts to address such silences through children's literature by archiving deeds like Masinde's for children, which as this chapter argues is a way of recognising the role played by such figures in shaping the country's history.

It is however important to note that having come across other narratives on Elijah Masinde, there is a visible disparity between Alembi's text and these other narratives. A case in point is the allegation that the government declared Masinde was mentally unsound and several times he was admitted to Mathare Mental Hospital (See Vincent Simiyu, 2001; Audrey Wipper 1977: 169). However, nowhere in the Lion biography does Alembi mention this. Here we recognize Alembi's selection of the information he wishes to include and/or exclude from the narrative, which reflects Maria Nikolajeva's (2001) argument concerning heroes – that sometimes children's fiction excludes certain episodes in a character's life to "spare the young readers the horrors of emphatic identification" with the character's situation. At another level, it is possible that the issue of "madness" might have been a creation of the British during colonialism which the postcolonial Kenyan government might have used deliberately to exclude and undermine Masinde as a critic from the public arena, and to delete him from the lists of Kenya's nationalists.

It is also instructive to acknowledge that although there is no doubt that Masinde argued for, and/or represented a certain kind of nationalism by insisting on returning to the source (traditional religion); his approach to this nationalism was exclusive because not all communities in Kenya got to know his movement. It is possible that there were limited strategies available to Masinde to spread his movement to other parts of the country – probably the

more reason it might have been treated by the government as a mere religious sect that sought to disrupt the smooth running of the country's affairs. Nonetheless this does not mean that Masinde's attempt to fight injustice was a complete failure because it was basically felt by both the colonial and postcolonial governments. Historian Bethwell Ogot (2003), whom I quoted earlier, has paid tribute to Masinde and his religion to a certain extent. Ogot argues that *Dini ya Musambwa* was a response to the exploitation under the colonial system that the Bakusu experienced (14). Ogot adds that the Babukusu believed that Trans Nzoia district was their ancestral land which was stolen from them by the white settlers. The *Dini ya Musambwa* movement therefore sought the expulsion of Europeans from Kenya and the rejection of European civilization. Despite this recognition that the *Dini ya Musambwa* movement has received from historians however, religious movements can still be viewed as having been sidelined in comparison to the attention that has been given to political agitation. One could therefore argue that Masinde's story portrays children's literature as an avenue for resurrecting such subjugated knowledges in Kenya's history.

Conclusion

The three characters discussed in this chapter have been read as part of the subjugated knowledges resurrected through the Lion books. The biography of Mulla Jeevanjee helps us to rethink the politics of exclusion of the Indian character in Kenya's history of nation formation. He has been read as a metaphor for the Indians' contribution to Kenya's history in general. Jeevanjee's biography has been read against the stereotypes associated with the presence of Indians in Kenya especially the claim to their association solely with business and as being apolitical. Zarina Patel demonstrates that Indians did much more in Kenya than just operating businesses, showing that limiting our gaze only to the businesses that Indians operated is to ignore other complex aspects of their life in East Africa and Kenya in particular. But

while I agree with Patel that Indians sided with Africans in the fight for freedom, and therefore contributed in resisting colonial rule, it is important to point out that she tends to sanitize some issues like the way British placed Indians above Africans. It is not enough to make a generalized observation about the pre-independent situation concerning the hierarchy of Indians and Africans in Kenya as Patel does (13). This is because the two groups were not exactly on the same standing and some Indians nursed superiority feelings over East Africans (Simatei 2001) – meaning that as we acknowledge the contribution of Indians in Kenya, their history should not be turned into that of persecution and discrimination, but instead be looked at fairly. Perhaps Indians' marginal position as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter is partly visible because they occupied a buffer zone in Kenya's power hierarchy during colonial times. As such even after independence they could not possibly be trusted by the Africans. Nevertheless this chapter has argued that Jeevanjee's biography demonstrates that beyond the stereotypical gaze towards the Indians, there is some good that can be sieved.

Mohammed Amin's accomplishments in the field of news coverage help in the recognition of photojournalism as an important career. Thus his biography presents children's literature as an avenue that argues for the recognition of news collectors as part of national heroes and as contributors to the country's history. In Elijah Masinde's biography Alembi elevates the place of religious movements as important narratives of liberation, again presenting children's literature as giving voice to such movements that have not found enough space in Kenya's literary discourse.

Children's literature can therefore be said to be a viable tool that may contribute to peace, harmony and solo coexistence of all groups and stability of any diverse nation (Osa, 2001: 166), due to the fact that the texts discussed

in this chapter acknowledge diversity of contribution in imagining the nation. Such a trajectory salvages the marginalization of minority groups, and constructs a nationalist history that includes different groups of people in Kenya, and consequently disavows the history of anti-colonial resistance as a minority history represented by the elite and the Mau Mau (Simatei 2001: 55).