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

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Chapter Four

Individual Stories as Narratives of Colonial Invasion and Decolonization

> The history of any society is simultaneously the story of that society, and that of the activities of the principal actors within that society in different epochs. As the society moulds the lives and destinies of individuals within it, some of the individuals, in their own way, contribute to the moulding of that society. Such then are the individuals who leave their footsteps in the sands of time (Eric Aseka, *Jomo Kenyatta* 2001: Blurb).

This chapter examines how individual stories are used in children's literature as useful modes of telling the history of Kenya's decolonization to the young. This history that these biographies narrate is characterised by colonial invasion and occupation of Kenya, the reaction, or modes of resistance to this invasion by Kenyan peoples, and the subsequent decolonization. Also, the texts discussed in this chapter partly touch on challenges of nationalism, the aspirations that sections of the population had about independence, and the dissatisfaction that came with failure to fulfil these hopes by the independent Kenyan government. The discussion centres on five texts: *Bildad Kaggia: Voice of the People* (2001), by Evan Mwangi, *Ronald Ngala: Teacher with a Mission* (2001), by Clara Momanyi, *Jomo Kenyatta: Father of Harambee* (2002), by Egara Kabaji, *Mwai Kibaki: Economist for Kenya* (2003) by Ng'ang'a Mbugua and *Jaramogi Oginga Odinga: People's Revolutionary* (2004) by Ezekiel Alembi. I examine the texts in terms of how the personalities contributed in building their own lives and issues that affected their lives. I read the problems that affected these characters' lives as representing what happened to the whole Kenyan society because although issues like repression and land alienation are represented through actions of the characters under discussion, such issues were not unique to these characters or to their families. Instead, these issues were common to all during colonialism. I view the texts under discussion as attempting to bring the horizons of the past close to children in

the present so as to recover meaning to lives lived and experienced by subjects remote in time.

Most of the characters discussed in this chapter are among the pioneer nationalists in Kenya and their stories are very much located within the nationalist politics of the fifties, and they are among the first group of people in the Post-World War II era that gave voice to African grievances over such issues as land expropriation, forced labour, and more generally, oppression and exploitation of the African by British colonialists. Using the stories of these characters however does not mean that they are the only persons whose stories can tell anti-colonial history to Kenyan children. I am aware that using leading historical figures such as Jomo Kenyatta has a possible weakness of collapsing the complex story of Kenya into the linear story of powerful political individuals. But as I argued in Chapter One, the story of the political elite is not the only one told by the *Sasa Sema* biographies. This series of biographies also acknowledges the contribution of other categories of people to Kenya's history; for instance, the Asians, or people like Elijah Masinde who was an advocate of anti-colonial faith movements, which I examine in Chapter Five. I therefore want to make it clear that the elite do not necessarily constitute the full substance of Kenyan history, but they are nevertheless an important window through which the broader nationalist history can be gleaned. The elite only give us an aspect of Kenya's history, and as such their narrative needs to be read critically to avoid collapsing it with the "totality" of Kenyan political experience.

In this chapter, I read individual personages as becoming tropes of history that embody the struggles and the strivings of their time. Through the texts under discussion, children get models of greatness, and thus portraits of heroism through characters that have left footsteps in the sands of time, to use Aseka's words.

I start firstly, by looking at colonial invasion, which saw the introduction of western religion, education and the ills that accompanied colonial intrusion like land alienation and racial discrimination. Secondly, I look at Africans' resistance to this invasion by British colonialism, and thirdly the subsequent attainment of independence. Towards the end of the chapter, I examine the way these texts interrogate the dissatisfaction that came with independence. To tackle the above mentioned issues, I examine how the authors utilise the motif of simple childhood to mould characters that are ordinary but who rise to become heroes in the society by the way they resist colonialism. I will argue that colonialism created heroes because it is through the encounter with colonial injustices that these personalities rise from their ordinariness to become heroes in the society. In addition, I examine the spaces that colonialism created and contend that such spaces not only help us in understanding anti-colonial history, but these spaces also contributed in shaping these personalities' heroism. The word space is here used in the sense of the colonial institutions like schools, churches and prisons which created awareness among Africans concerning colonial rule. Alongside the examination of the spaces within which heroism occurs, the chapter looks at the themes that surface in the texts, like land alienation, racial discrimination, cultural conflict etc, and the issues that caused rebellion against the colonial rule. The use of dialogue and descriptions, are other aspects of style that are useful in interrogating the history of decolonization in this chapter. These two not only make episodes clear to child readers, but they are also useful in perpetuating the themes in the texts. Deployment of dialogue between the character and those close to him lays bare the hardships the characters may have experienced and also helps the readers to understand the character traits of the persons under study.

Advent of Colonialism

The first space I examine is the settler farm where we encounter the first ills of colonialism. I will later look at how the school space moulded heroes, seen through excelling in education. It will be clear in this discussion that Africans understood the ills of colonialism through the spaces of the farm, the school, and the church, while the prison was meant to tame dissidents. It is within the prison space that the traits of the rebellious character and the themes of perseverance and industry emerge. Elzbieta Sklodowska (1997) argues that space is the most frequently subordinated aspect of the narrative technique, and underestimated in critical thought. She further posits that space can be used "to bring into focus – both at the level of argument and structure – such crucial aspects of human experience as representations of nation and nationality, gender distinctions and designs of power" (114). In this chapter, space is interrogated in terms of how it portrays designs of colonial power and how it is used by the writers of the texts under discussion to perpetuate the theme of heroism. More specifically my discussion is guided by Ezekiel Kalipeni and Paul Zeleza's understanding of space as a "physical place, historical process, social reconstruction, and an imaginative landscape" (1999: vii), because it is a definition that recognises space as a construct of history and also as a backdrop for imagination, which is very crucial to this discussion, especially with the understanding that the texts under discussion are centred on an historical process, where colonial power was enacted in specific places. As a physical thing, space becomes important to my discussion because it combines with historicity and helps explain the actions of the personalities under study, and these actions are what form Kenya's anti-colonial history.

The history of colonial invasion is not a new area of scholarship in Kenya because there has been extensive research done in this field, both in history and in literature. But the point I emphasize in this chapter is that the recuperation of this history through children's literature is novel in Kenyan

literary studies. The authors of the biographies under discussion in this chapter trace stories of their characters from childhood, through their active youthful life, to their old age, or even to their death. Through this span of life we come across their endeavours in fighting colonialism and their participation in Kenya's postcolonial politics.

In Jomo Kenyatta's biography, Egara Kabaji foregrounds the theme of courage very early in the novel by the way he presents young Kamau.[1] Kamau grows up as an ordinary village boy who encounters multiple problems because he loses both parents and has to take care of his younger brother. "He would sweep the house every morning, cook for Ngengi [his brother] and himself and fetch water and firewood" (2002: 18). This sense of responsibility and courage in the face of hardships in young Kamau shows up later in the fight for independence where he and other nationalists persevere extreme hardships meted by colonial authorities as this discussion will show later. Kenyatta's childhood experiences can therefore be read to have acted as a source of strength in life. Similarly, most of the other characters discussed here start their life like archetypal African children in the village looking after their father's livestock in the fields (for example, see Mwangi 2001: 3; Mbugua 2003: 2; Momanyi 2001: 2-3; Alembi 2004: 20). Despite this ordinariness, these characters rise up to be important personalities in the Kenyan nation. This motif of the ordinary village child who makes crucial and admirable accomplishments is important as it helps children to realize that heroes were once children and that they are ordinary people who may even come from very poor and humble homes (Desmond Tutu, 1997: iv). I briefly want to compare the motif utilised in these biographies with the structure of the heroic narrative in African folktales. As I showed in Chapter One, in most African oral narratives heroism is centred mostly around small animals like

[1] Jomo Kenyatta's childhood name was Kamau which he later changed to Kenyatta. His second name was attributed to a beaded belt that he used to wear called "Kinyatta", and people nicknamed him thus. He later adopted the name and it became his official name (19). These two names [Kenyatta and Kamau] will be used interchangeably in this chapter when/as it suits.

the hare, or in cases where we have human characters, heroic deeds are mostly executed by young characters. Such representations of the hero could be attributed to the fact that children learn by identification and since they are young and small, they need to be given hope of doing great things like these "small heroes". Such a motif of smallness however changes a little in the biographies under discussion because the deeds of characters are not limited to their childhood. This shows that although children are young they do not necessarily require to be given stories with exclusively young characters. One could then argue that the *Sasa Sema* biographies demand for children to be given a realistic view of life because life is not limited to childhood. Children also need to see models of grown up characters that they can learn from.

As earlier mentioned, the first contact with foreign rule in Kenya in the texts under discussion is shown to have come in the form of settler farming and religion. Although with some degree of difference, the invasion of colonialism in all the texts is represented through the eyes of young characters, a representation that is likely to help children to identify with what is taking place because they can readily relate to a young character like them. For instance, through young Kaggia in the following extract, Mwangi introduces some of the activities that took place in the settler farm where his [Kaggia's] family lived:

> Kariuki[2] watched the labourers at Santamor Coffee Estate as they went about their work. He admired their strength. They lifted huge sacks of coffee and carried them into the railway carriage as if the sacks were weightless. They sang beautiful songs, their voices rising and falling in

[2] Kaggia was an inquisitive character in his childhood; a characteristic that earns him the name Kaggia, otherwise his real name was Kariuki. We learn about this in the text when one elder tells Kariuki: "A person who disturbs people with endless questions is nothing but a Kagia" (7). Whenever the elders saw Kariuki, we are told, they greeted him as Kagia because they thought he asked too many questions. Children also started calling him Kagia (8). After sometime Kariuki begins to like the name and changes the spelling to "Kaggia". He used this name at school and it has survived up to today. One of the reasons why Kaggia asks questions is due to his failure to understand why colonialists mistreated Africans in their own country.

> rhythm with their movement. Mostly they would carry a sack jointly…. "They are like ants carrying home a big worm for dinner," the boy observed quietly (1-2).

From the quotation, one notices the existence of a railway line which hints at the presence of the British foreigners in the area who structured its construction. Also, the mention of coffee estates at this point in the text introduces the theme of land alienation, which became a major cause of conflict between Africans and colonialists. In Jomo Kenyatta's biography we read: "The British government had taken the land from Kenyans and given to British farmers… [and] announced that all the land in Kenya was to belong only to Britain" (Kabaji 2002: 38). Many people, especially in the Kenya highlands and the Rift Valley regions were forced to give out their land to settlers, and were in turn forced to work as squatters in these farms. Being a squatter meant that one's life revolved around the settler farms. Such a situation introduces the settler farm as a real physical space of oppression for the Africans. In fact, Kaggia's father lived and worked at Santamor estate as a watchman and a messenger (2) where he (Kaggia) starts schooling. Zeleza and Kalipeni (1997: 7) argue that literary texts are inextricably tied to contexts, which are themselves marked by spatial imperatives. Meaning that the narrative structure in literary texts is inscribed with the context of space. In the texts under discussion spaces that were created by colonialists help us to understand the drama of life for the Africans in colonial Kenya. Somehow Africans had to work in the settler estates, first, because they had hardly any land left for their use, and second, because the government had imposed taxes on them and as a result they had had to work to get money to pay these taxes. In her text *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau,* Tabitha Kanogo (1987) posits that colonial government in Kenya adopted a combination of financial and political measures to create the required labour supply for the settlers. She argues that attempts "to coerce Africans into seeking wage employment included imposing taxes, creating reserves, disrupting local economies and

denying Africans the right to grow major commercial crops" (1). These conditions were the starting point of discrimination that was enforced by the colonialists, which extended to living quotas in major towns like Nairobi. Concerning taxation in *Jaramogi Oginga Odinga*, Alembi shows that some people "pulled down [some of] their huts" (2004: 22) in order to evade hut tax which was charged depending on the number of huts one had constructed in his compound. Fewer huts therefore meant less tax. Thus it is evident in these texts that the inception of colonial apparatus caused disruption of people's way of life from its very beginning.

As I said in the introductory remarks of this chapter, the use of dialogue/conversation between characters is very important in the texts because it directs the reader into understanding the hardships and mistreatments that people experienced in the context of the spaces created by colonialism. For instance, through the conversation in the following quotation we learn that the settlers not only forced Africans to work in their farms, but they also visited terror on anybody who failed to turn up for work:

> The elders were talking about a man who had been slapped by a European because he had not gone to work.
> "Do you know he hit him right in front of his wife and children!" exclaimed one of the elders.
> "That is terrible," said another elder.
> "People should not be forced to work on foreigners' farms," commented another.
> "Tell me…," Kariuki began, and paused to make sure that his question was being listened to. The elders looked down at the boy. "Tell me, what are you doing about the *muthungu*, the white man, who goes around beating people who don't want to work on his farm?" ….
> "Well, my son," replied one elder with an amused expression on his face, "what would you do to the *muthungu*?"

> "I would organize every one to chase white people out of this country," Kariuki said resolutely. "We should fight them. This is not their country" (4-5).

The conversational tone in the above quotation is a strategic style that Mwangi employs to make events vivid for the readers. In this quotation Kariuki's inquisitive nature which earned him the name Kaggia is fore grounded. Here we see Kaggia's dream of sending the white man away which he maintains throughout his life. Even when he goes to school he dreams of becoming a warrior – not to raid cattle and goats but a warrior who would "send the white people back to where they came from" (13-14). Mwangi therefore uses childhood not as a period of sheer innocence but a moment that for the likes of Kaggia is a real active subject of history, therefore showing that issues of freedom and history are also children's issues.

Having seen that the settler farm was a space characterised by exploitation and mistreatment of the native, I now turn to the school. It is within the school space that the theme of industry becomes clear, beginning with the protagonists' childhood. In this institution, heroism is seen as the ability by individuals to master western education, which as I will argue later, became a weapon for the Africans in the process of fighting for freedom. For instance, although as a young man Kibaki is shown to be a seemingly naïve boy, whose purpose in attending school was to "learn to write with his finger in the dust and be able to speak English" (2), he later turns out to be very brilliant and was admired by many.

> … [H]e was very gifted. He seemed to be ready with all answers, and came at the top of his class at the end of every term. The Italian priests and nuns liked him because he was very polite and hardworking (8)…. He was greatly admired by his classmates (11).

Fame and admiration here is seen to come about due to one's success. Kibaki's brilliance saw his entry into Mangu High School, before proceeding to Makerere University in Uganda, subsequently becoming a role model and a hero in his village:

> The news of Kibaki's admission to Makerere spread like bush fire across all the neighbouring ranges. Even those who had not previously heard about Kibaki or Makerere were excited. Many Gatuya-ini [Kibaki's village] parents began to tell their children to study "up to Makerere like Mwai the son of Kibaki." Drunken fathers, particularly, never failed to sing about the Makerere potential of their sons. "That's where my boy is headed. You'll see," they would claim as they staggered home in the star-lit night (24-25).

Heroism here is seen to come about because of what people admire in others. Although we will see later in this discussion that heroism by some of the protagonists discussed in this chapter shapes up into "present-day view of heroism as persistence" (Segal 2000: 9), in this instance heroism takes the traditional view of success and industry. The theme of industry cuts across the five texts shown by the protagonists' love for work at school and the way they came top in class, which became a source of admiration for other students. Like Kibaki, Ronald Ngala was also admired for his hard work. He always used to be the first to reach school in the morning, and in the evening he remained at school to do his homework, while the other pupils went home (Momanyi 2001:8). The theme of hard work at school is more explicit in *Bildad Kaggia*, where Mwangi informs us that Kaggia "worked so hard and became the best pupil. He was given the name *Prince of Wales* which was a great honour in those days" (13). Other pupils thought he was a genius (15). The classroom space therefore challenged the characters to work hard and this helped develop their ambitions when they were still young.

However, although those students who did well at school like Kaggia earned respect, it is also true that education was used as a tool for glorification of western culture. Those pupils who performed poorly [especially in English], or failed to grasp the western way of life, and more importantly show an admiration of these western ways were thought to be primitive and silly. In Kaggia's school the slower students were given names like warthog and other ugly names of foolish and cowardly animals (13).[3] This experience of colonial education by Kaggia has some intertextuality with Ngugi's children's books. In *Njamba Nene na Mbathi iri Mathagu* [*Njamba Nene and the Flying Bus*] (1986a), set in colonial Kenya, Ngugi shows that certain tactics were used in schools which influenced African children into hating African ways and their language in preference to the coloniser's. This is evident in the way the character Njamba Nene perpetually wears the plate "I AM AN ASS" for speaking in his language at school. While wearing a plate would be seen as a means of helping children to learn English, a tactic that was inherited by some schools in Kenya even after independence, Ngugi shows there was a kind of adoration for western ways by some characters, who in turn despised the African ways of life and more specifically African languages. In Njamba Nene's school for example, such mentality is exemplified by Njamba Nene's classmate John Bull, and by teacher Kigorogoru. Kigorogoru ridicules Njamba Nene:

> You can't even speak English. You are always speaking Gikuyu or Kiswahili, or some other primitive language. When will you learn to speak civilised languages like English, French or German? (2)

In contrast, Njamba Nene [which can be read as Ngugi's own claim] says, "Language is language,… no language is better than another" (2). This

[3] See also Kaggia's *Roots of Freedom* (1975: 11) for a reference on ugly names used at school. Kaggia says these names were reflected in songs sung to parents on Sundays.

assertion by the character Njamba Nene reflects the agency Ngugi has persistently emphasized should be given to African languages in an environment where they are at a risk of getting overshadowed by prominence of foreign languages. In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) Ngugi views writing in Kikuyu language as "part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples" (28). It is important to note that all Ngugi's children's books were first written in the Kikuyu language. Emphasizing the importance of writing for children in their [children's] native language, Ngugi declares: "I do not want to see Kenyan children growing up in that imperialist-imposed tradition of contempt for the tools of communication developed by their communities and their history" (Ibid). The fact however is that the school space in colonial Kenya seems to have been a demoralizing place for the African who was still battling to understand the imperialist's foreign language and education. Gcina Mhlophe speaks of a similar experience in South Africa when she argues, "our teachers made it clear to us that Afrikaans and English books were more important than books in Xhosa or grandmother's stories, that they were the key to our future" (2003:7). Such a situation presents the constant alienation that was prompted by foreigners in colonial Africa so that the native would hate his ways of life.

However, although the authors in the Lion series present the admiration that went along with mastery of Western education, none of them mentions the fact that some characters were completely mesmerised and enslaved by the white man's values like the characters of teacher Kigorogoru and John Bull in Ngugi's text. While I agree that the protagonist's story is at the centre of the biographical narrative, it is also important to acknowledge other issues that characterised education during this period. I read omission of such realities as a shortcoming on the part of the authors, because in their quest to demonstrate the ability of their protagonists, these authors tend to present a linear narrative of characters that were admired only for their success, without interrogating the complex narrative behind this education. Even

when some of the authors interrogate the theme of cultural/religious conflict that I discuss below, they only do so to the effect that the characters question and resist the foreign culture.

The school space worked hand in hand with the church because the history of Western education in Kenya, and Africa in general, is tied to the history of missionary activities in the continent. Colonial policies, which defined the conditions under which the missionaries carried on their religious activities, shaped the operation and organisation of African education. The coming of colonialists in Kenya therefore saw the incoming of missionaries and the subsequent establishment of churches and mission schools in many parts of the country. These schools were mostly established in settlers' farms or close to mission stations. Besides learning how to read and write at these schools, boys, who were mainly the first beneficiaries of mission schools[4] were expected to get converted to Christianity and also acquire new names. Alembi portrays the emergence of Odinga's rebellious character due to the imposition of new names on Africans. The narrator in *Jaramogi Oginga Odinga* (2004) identifies this imposition by the assertion that Oginga Odinga was shocked "when the white administrator of the school demanded that he call himself by his Christian name, Mr. Adonijah, instead of Mr. Odinga. They objected to his African name!" (36). But the rebellious Oginga opposes these demands and even drops his Christian names because he saw this kind of insistence "as an insult to Africans" (Ibid). In her autobiography *Mau Mau's Daughter* (1998), Wambui Otieno also hints at how she got offended by the way colonialists disregarded African names, although she had been brought up as Christian. She writes:

[4] Educating males was given more priority in colonial Kenya because girls were either too busy with household chores, or cultural interests forbade them to attend school. There was also a "commonly held prejudice that educated women restricted men's desires to have plural marriages" (Cora Presley 1992:100-101), because African traditions advocated plural marriages while Christianity forbade them.

> I loved and still love my name Wambui and consider it a beautiful name. But such was not the case with Miss Brownly [the class mistress]. To her our African names did not exist…. At roll call…she would call out "Virginia Tirus" and I would get choked with anger. Consequently I was often punished for being rude and not answering to my name (29).

Christianity also posed religious/cultural conflict because of the differences between the African traditional way of worship and the new religion. In *Jomo Kenyatta*, this conflict is shown by the way students in Kamau's school constantly questioned whether the new God was similar to their own African God, commonly known as Ngai among the Kikuyu community. Every time they prayed at school, young Kamau wondered what this God had done for them so that they should keep thanking him all the time (See Page 32-33). This failure to comprehend the new Christian doctrine amongst Africans is also amplified by Mwangi through young Kaggia as seen in the following quotation:

> "Sir," he [Kaggia] began, "I have a question".
>
> The class was all ears. They knew something good was coming…
>
> "Well Sir," Kaggia continued, "In the book of Genesis it says that Adam and Eve were the first people on earth and that they had only two sons, Cain and Abel"
>
> "Are you doubting that child?" the teacher asked defensively.
>
> "No Sir. But the Bible says after Cain killed his brother, Abel, he was chased out of the Garden of Eden and went to live in the land of Nod where he married a wife and had children".
>
> "Yes" replied the teacher. "God evicted Cain from Eden because he had killed his brother. It is all written there in Genesis. What is the problem?"

> "Well Sir…. What I have been wondering is, where did Cain's wife come from? At the time of Cain's eviction from Eden, there must have been only Adam and Eve and their two sons on the whole earth. How then could Cain get a wife in the land of Nod? Either there were other people besides Adam and Eve, or it is not true that Cain married a wife when he went to live in Nod!"
>
> The classroom was so silent that the fall of a pencil would have sounded like a thunderclap. The faces of the other pupils expressed silent admiration for Kaggia. (17-19).

I have quoted Mwangi at length here to demonstrate a number of points. First, the dialogue between the teacher and Kariuki makes the scene in the classroom accessible to the readers. Second, phrases like "[t]he classroom was so silent that the fall of a pencil would have sounded like a thunderclap" portray the tension that reigned between the teacher and pupil as the other members of the class waited for the answer. This choice of words keep the readers alert and also aids their comprehension of issues because the readers live through the lively accounts, in this way avoiding what Mabel Segum calls "a boring recital of meaningless facts"(1992: 33). Third, this scene shows the conflicting perception of the new religion among Africans. Important here is the way Mwangi persistently shows Kaggia's wish to understand issues that he finds questionable. Simon Williams argues that "[w]e admire heroes because they embody all that we consider most admirable in ourselves" (2004: 1). In the scene quoted above, Kaggia becomes a hero in the eyes of other pupils because he voices what they probably wanted clarified about the new religion but could not bring themselves to express. This quest for Kaggia to comprehend new things sets him on the road to heroism because subsequently he does not hesitate to take the course he thought to be right. In his autobiography Kaggia laments that the Christian religion had taught Africans in Kenya that everything European, customs, clothing and food was godly, while everything African was devilish, consequently converting them

[Africans] into Europeans instead of Christians (1975: 56). Thus the primary objective of Christianity was to convert Africans and infuse them with European culture. I hasten to add here again that Mwangi does not show any sections of the class who admire, or rather do not question the western religion and I insist such a representation is limiting. I do not doubt that characters like Kaggia, and others may have behaved in such a manner, but as I argued earlier, it is important to give a balanced view of perception of the western religion, since it is evident that some sections of people accepted these ways without questioning.

Like cultural conflict, the theme of racial discrimination is also explored within the space of the school and the church. For instance, in *Ronald Ngala* discrimination in the church is seen through Ngala's own experiences.

> In 1956 there was a big church meeting that helped Ngala make up his mind. This meeting was held in Southern Rhodesia, what is today Zimbabwe. Ngala was shocked to see another side of his church he did not expect…. He was supposed to stop overnight at the house of a white priest. This priest did not let Ngala sleep in his house. He told him he had to sleep in a dirty store among wooden planks and old rusty beds…. Ngala never thought that a white priest would treat him as anything other than a brother, a fellow Christian (2001: 44).

And in the schools, discrimination occurs by the way colonial schoolmasters preferred Africans to attain only elementary education. For example, Alembi shows that when Jaramogi Oginga wanted to go to Alliance High School, Mr. Carey Francis, the headmaster of Maseno School, discouraged him from acquiring higher education. He instead advised him to go and teach at a primary school, a piece of advice that Oginga refused to follow (see page 28).

This situation demonstrates that colonialist were prepared to offer Africans education up to a certain level, and this was met with resistance especially by those who had discovered that education would allow them to understand the white man. In *Jaramogi Oginga Odinga*, Alembi uses the narrative voice to prompt the reader into appreciating Oginga's persistence when the narrator says:

> But wuod [son of] Odinga was determined to get higher education. Opposing Carey Francis' wishes, he joined Alliance in 1935. Does this tell you anything about our hero? It tells me that once his mind was made up nothing would stop him from achieving his aim…. And you can see that Oginga had already started on his long journey of opposing any form of oppression…. So, you see, our hero from an early age would not let anyone push him around (28).

The interweaving of one's story with common occurrences in the country like discrimination complicates the story into a double narrative; that is, as one of the individual, and at the same time as a story of whole groups of people in the country because this discrimination was not unique to Ngala or Oginga. Although there is no doubt that the characters under discussion are heroes of the Kenyan nation, I am impelled here to question the narrative voice in Alembi's *Jaramogi Oginga Odinga,* that constantly prompts the readers to see the character through his eyes. I think Alembi's narrative is hampered by his wish to demonstrate Oginga's heroism by constantly reminding the reader that "we are talking about heroism – our hero did this and that" seen in phrases like "you can see our Jaramogi was a national hero; …. What a true description of a hero" (46), or "The British government finally gave in, thanks to the effort of our hero and others" (53), just to mention a few instances. Such a technique that guides the reader towards a certain direction is rather limiting because instead of the reader discovering the heroic nature of the character, s/he is led/forced into reading the narrative in a certain manner –

from the author's point of view. I do not refute the fact that Oginga performed deeds that are heroic, but a prompting narrative voice portrays a lot of assumptions [on the part of the author] concerning the potential of the readers to make a critical judgement.

Discrimination within the school and in education is also seen in Kenyatta's school where we learn that education for Africans was limited to basic literacy and vocational skills. One of the schoolmasters tells the students:

> You have learned enough about reading, and now you will start *learning how to do something useful*. You will now learn the art of carpentry, so that you can make tables and chairs…. Yes, … Carpentry is a very useful activity. People will always need furniture and cabinets. And, you never know you might be lucky and make a chair that will be used by Her Majesty the Queen! [Emphasis added] (34-35).

To the school master, something useful for Africans refers not to attaining higher education, but to concentrating on hand work. Although we are told Kenyatta earned a living from his vocational education by making cabinets and furniture (2000: 36), the British restricted Africans to this kind of training so that they could not acquire better jobs like higher posts in the government offices. Tabitha Kanogo (1987) posits that Africans were educated with the view to producing a certain kind of manpower, such as junior clerks, clerical personnel, artisans and technicians, to service the colonial administration. Settlers only needed semi-illiterate or semi-skilled Africans as clerks, farm overseers, masons, carpenters and fitters and thus many Africans took subordinate jobs after school. Asians were ranked below Europeans but above Africans (79). This state of affairs created unnecessary artificial barriers based on colour.

Despite the discrimination however, schooling certainly helped young Kenyans in making plans to tumble colonialists down from the dais they occupied in the colony, evident in Kenyatta's assertion that "[l]et us endure this inhumanity for the moment,… so that we can learn their ways, and be prepared to defeat them in future" (Kabaji 2002: 36). Wunyabari Maloba (1993: 45) posits that no factor was as important to Africans in the development of African nationalism in Kenya as the attainment of literacy. He says:

> The organization of African protests to colonial policies shifted from the warriors to literate Africans. They understood the ways of white people; they spoke their language, and they were expected by other Africans to know how to protest colonial policies without arousing brutal physical response. In effect, literate Africans became the new "warriors". The missionaries' original aims in providing education were mainly to produce literate evangelists and minor functionaries for colonial state and the settlers – not to train nationalists. Yet one remarkable and unintended outcome of missionary education was the production of African nationalists.

In this way the school became a space for understanding the colonialist. It "opened" the eyes of black Africans, to see beyond their homes, where like goats in sheds, the colonialists had confined them after taking their land. Africans' knowledge of the ways of the colonialists and their subsequent resistance forces us to reflect on certain aspects of life in African societies. For example, before one community attacked or raided another in many African cultures, a spy was usually sent to live with the target/enemy tribe to learn their habits and tracks of their movement. Having learnt this, the community would subsequently go into war or carry out the raid. Education certainly worked in a similar manner in colonial Kenya, and elsewhere in Africa, because it is after learning the colonialists' ways and their discriminative

policies that educated Africans devised ways of fighting the colonialists to get back their land and freedom. I now look at the ways through which Africans fought for freedom.

Response to Colonial Rule and the Fight for Independence

In *Ronald Ngala: Teacher with a Mission*, Clara Momanyi (2001) writes:

> In those days, Kenya was being ruled by foreigners, white men from Britain. *They did not treat Kenyans well* and the people had started rebelling against the British government. The government *began to arrest people and throw them into prison* [emphasis added] (2001: 38).

In this section I look at how children are exposed to Kenya's fight against colonialists, the hardships encountered and other technicalities that surrounded this struggle, some of which Momanyi mentions in the quotation above.

The trope of the rebellious nationalist is utilised in the texts under scrutiny to show how Africans responded to racial discrimination. For example, this rebellious nature is shown through Kaggia, when he gets arrested for trespassing[5] in Nairobi which was divided into sections according to race (Mwangi 2001: 75). Mwangi describes Kaggia's boldness in a manner that makes him an unfaltering hero in the eyes of the reader. During the prosecution Kaggia courageously declares: "I do not recognize the law…. It is unjust" (76-77). He also declares he had trespassed willingly. In fact, he refuses to pay a fine that is imposed on him and declares "I cannot pay a fine for a law I do not accept…" (77). Consequently Kaggia is released without payment of any fine, and later the disputed law is repealed; a small victory "achieved through peaceful disobedience" as Mwangi puts it.

[5] In colonial Kenya, Africans were not allowed to visit European residences and were only allowed to go to Asian locations during the day to work for them.

From the foregoing we discover that it is things like land alienation and racial discrimination, among others, which were visible within the spaces of the settler farm, the school and the church that made Africans to rebel. One can consequently argue that the discourse of nationalism is squarely planted into children's books, because as Emmanuel Ngara has argued

> Nationalism…has the effect of raising the consciousness of subject peoples; it gradually opens the spiritual eyes of the oppressed so that they begin to see it is not right for a foreign power to subjugate them, and as they awaken to this new reality they also begin to reject the ideology of the ruling colonialists and to appreciate their own cultural values (1985:26).

The authors under study show that people started voicing dissatisfaction with colonial rule in Kenya through various ways which helped them fight colonialism. These ways included: formation of political parties and trade unions, expressing complaints through established African newspapers, and violent fighting through the Mau Mau.

Some political parties were community based[6] while others were nationwide. Nationwide political parties like Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) and Kenya African National Union (KANU) were prominent especially towards the attainment of independence, pressing for justice and equality, and for Africans to have a hand in the government, in addition to getting their land back from colonialists (Kabaji 2002: 42). We are shown that many of the characters under discussion took part in the formation of these major parties towards independence. For instance, Kibaki and Odinga pioneered the formation of KANU (see Mbugua 2003: 42-44 and Alembi 2004: 46), while

[6] For example the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) was formed mainly by the Kikuyu community.

Ngala, and other characters outside this discussion formed KADU in June 1960, and "Ngala was chosen to be the party's leader because of his high sense of unity and forgiveness" (Momanyi 2001: 65). In Ngala's biography Momanyi constantly foregrounds the character's leadership qualities to demonstrate the reasons why he came to the forefront in agitation for freedom. However, what Momanyi does not mention is that the formation of KADU was engineered by the British colonial government and the settlers, whose aim was to influence "other "small" tribes to gang up against the supposed big tribes of the Kikuyu and the Luo" (Munene 2000: 11) who were mostly KANU memebers. These differences in party politics and leaning of Ngala and others towards regionalism [and in opposition to KANU], which came to be called *Majimboism* brings in the conflicting part and nature of nationalism.

Concerning trade unions, the narrator in Jaramogi Oginga's text informs us that Oginga encouraged people to join trade unions so that they could be self-reliant. Jaramogi's emergence in the political scene can therefore be traced to the 1940s when he formed the Luo Thrift and Trading Company in an effort to boost the economic base of his Luo community (Alembi 2004: 41). Some of these unions comprised many ethnic communities, which ensured cooperation that was beyond tribal barriers. In *Bildad Kaggia*, Mwangi writes of an Asian named Makhan Singh, and Fred Kubai, who was half Kikuyu and half Giriama, as having "started organising all trade unions to weaken the power of the British government" (72). The trope of the courageous and persistent individuals is again seen in the activities of the trade unionists who never gave up even when there were threats of arrests by the British government. For example, when the British jailed Singh in 1950, Kaggia and Kubai carried on with the activities of the trade unions. The spirit of hard work and unfailing determination that Mwangi uses in these characters allows us to read the unfailing commitment to the fight against discrimination that was adopted by freedom fighters.

Publishing newspapers was equally an important tool for fighting colonialism. Mwangi shows that Kaggia "started editing two newspapers, one in Kikuyu, *Inooro ria Gikuyu*, Kikuyu Knife Sharpener, and the other one in Swahili, *Afrika Mpya*, New Africa (74),[7] which denounced the British actions. These papers were a tactful way of promoting the freedom struggle because through them people knew about the fight. And in cases where colonialists reacted in an extreme manner, publishing the incident would embarrass them (Mwangi 2001: 75). Fighting colonialism through paper and pen is linked to the fact that these people went to school and gained access to education, which according to Maloba (1993), produced a group of nationalists – the new warriors.

The Mau Mau movement is presented to have played a major role in resisting colonial rule, with intense fighting emanating from bases hidden in the forests. "They planned surprise attacks by popping out of the forest all of sudden …" (Kabaji 2002: 54). The Mau Mau, we are told, waged their attacks not only on police stations and farms owned by British settlers, but they also attacked any Africans who supported the British because they were considered their enemies. There are various methods through which the Mau Mau movement was organised but the oath was regarded as the most important as it ensured top secrecy of their activities.

> The movement established its strength through administration of oaths. By 1952, thousands of people had taken an oath swearing unity, devotion to cause, and secrecy. People swore that they would be ready, when required, to do anything to liberate Kenya, even if it meant sacrificing their lives. … There was a solidarity which came out of the

[7] Kenyatta also launched a monthly Gikuyu-language Newspaper called *Mwigwithania* (reconciler); a paper that was perceived as the voice of the community, which at the same time aimed at gaining support from all sections of the community and to promote self-improvement (Aseka 2001: 7).

> oaths, as people began to have more confidence in themselves and each other (Mwangi 2001:79-80).

This extract from *Bildad Kaggia* emphasizes the importance of the oath to those that believed in Mau Mau, as it united people in the fight. The Mau Mau movements caused a lot of alarm on the part of the British, who declared a state of emergency, which resulted in arrests of many nationalists. Such arrests lead us to the prison space which I examine below, but first the presentation of the state of emergency in the texts:

> At midnight of October 20, 1952 a state of emergency was declared. This gave the government unlimited powers to imprison anyone, and to apply any kind of law they deemed appropriate (Mwangi 2001: 82).

> On 20th October 1952 the British governor of Kenya declared a state of emergency. This gave the government enormous power to imprison people (Kabaji 2002: 55-56).

> On 20th October, 1952, the government declared a state of emergency. Many political leaders and activists, including Jomo Kenyatta, were arrested (Mbugua 2003: 33).

> In 1952, Kenyatta, Achieng' Oneko, Bildad Kaggia and several other freedom fighters were arrested and detained for many years. (Alembi 2004:51).

Repetition of episodes like these in the texts strengthens the argument that the texts address issues that cut across Kenya's history. These texts are therefore a useful way of having history compressed into children's books, which ensures easier access to this history by children. Many events cited in all the texts have their dates specified, thus portraying the authors' intention to be precise while

at the same time projecting the texts as fictionalised history. In fact, it is through its fictionalization process that history resonates and acquires meaning and relevance to the reader. The fact that the recuperation of Kenya's [hi]story of liberation is done through literature points to literature as competing with other discourses, and sometimes supplementing these other discourses and forms of knowledge to "write" Kenya's historiography. Rewriting of Kenya's history as literature is also important because it allows history to entangle with other discourses. I want to note here that absence of the declaration of the state of emergency in Ngala's biography can on the one hand be read as the author's choice of events that she wishes to foreground. But on the other hand such an omission may demonstrate that there are some communities [not necessarily Ngala's only], in which the effect of the declaration of emergency was not felt, a situation that is historical in itself.

I now look at the prison space where again the trope of the hardened and rebellious character is demonstrated through Jomo Kenyatta and Kaggia who are jailed after the state of emergency is declared. This rebellious character is only visible by looking at the hardships and torture these characters endure, and their refusal to cooperate with the demands of the Whiteman. The following descriptions show the kind of hardships I am referring to:

> When he arrived in Lokitaung, Kenyatta was beaten and forced to wade through a poisonous cattle dip, submerged entirely until it stung his eyes…. There were many harsh rules. When a prisoner broke any of these rules, he was put into a hole in the ground that was covered with steel. With no trees or shade, this hole became a hot oven in the day, and the prisoner would bake in there with no water or fresh air. Kenyatta was once kept in the hole for five days, and when he was brought out, he could not walk. He had almost died from heat and thirst (Kabaji 2002: 62-64).
>
> …

> Kaggia and four of his fellow freedom fighters were held in Lokitaung, … The nights were long. There was no furniture in their room. They slept on mats on the floor. Sometimes they had no water…. In the sultry heat of the desert sun, they were forced to dig trenches over ten metres deep (Mwangi 2001: 83).

Important in these episodes is the descriptions the authors utilize to allow the reader to visualize the level of the torture that the characters went through, and at the same time showing that they did not succumb to the demands of the authority. Even when it is rumoured that the trenches the prisoners dug were meant to be their graves Kaggia demonstrates his determination to fight to the end when he says: "Even if we die, we shall not regret what we have done for our country…. The struggle for Kenyan independence is the sweetest thing that has ever happened here" (84). Mwangi further indicates that the colonial government tried to hoodwink Kaggia into accepting "to work for the existing government" (86) with the promise of getting released from detention, but Kaggia defiantly declares: "I cannot do that … I haven't asked you to release me" (87). Simon Williams (2004) argues that heroes "display greater courage than regular people do, they know what they want and are fearless in achieving it" (1). This is the kind of motif that Mwangi utilises in Kaggia's biography whereby his [Kaggia's] words and resolutions are always focused on freedom; he knows what he wants to achieve and he is fearless in doing whatever it takes to realize it. In this context, heroism is viewed as being tied to courage, perseverance and persistence. I therefore reiterate that the prison became an important space for creating heroes. By presenting the British government's brutality against the perseverance of the Africans, the authors guide readers into identifying with the torture that those who fought for freedom went through.

The characters that were jailed were not the only ones who agitated for Kenya's freedom from colonialism. Alembi and Kabaji show that those

nationalists like Odinga that were not jailed continued to fight outside prison, and also championed the release of the others, especially Kenyatta who was perceived as the indisputable leader of Kenya in both colonial and postcolonial situation. Kabaji writes:

> One of the most vocal supporters of Kenyatta's release was another activist, Oginga Odinga. He coined the slogan *Uhuru na Kenyatta*! which was echoed all over the country: independence with Kenyatta…. *Baba wa taifa*! Father of the nation! (2002: 66-67).[8]

Those who had gone to prison in the course of liberation struggle therefore turned out to be adored. Kenyatta especially became the hero in everyone's mouth. Songs were composed about him – denoting his heroic struggle in detention and asking for his release, as Kabaji puts it below.

> All this time the people of Kenya could not forget Kenyatta and kept him close to their hearts. They clamoured for his release everyday:
>
> *Tuvute kamba twende Lodwar!*
> *Aye tuvute kamba twende Lodwar!*
>
> Let's pull together and go to Lodwar!
> Let's free our leader from prison!
> (Kabaji 2002: 65).

James Ogude argues that "local musicians sang of Mzee Kenyatta's tribulations and sacrifices in detention; his suffering was valorised and emphasized over and again…" (2003: 276). Songs like the one I quote below by John Mwale were popular at independence, and they specifically

[8] See also Alembi (2004: 51) for similar information. But while in colonial Kenya Oginga stands by Kenyatta's side to agitate for his release, things change after independence as we will see later.

emphasised Kenyatta's suffering and the sacrifices he made [especially by being detained] to bring independence:

Kenyatta aliteswa sana

Baba taifa Jomo Kenyatta	The father of the nation Jomo Kenyatta
Aliteswa siku nyinyi	Was tortured for years
Kenyatta aliteswa sana,	Kenyatta was tortured so much,
Kwetu hapa Kenya wandugu	For us Kenyan people
Kumbe mateso yake,	So his suffering,
Yataleta Uhuru Kenya!	Brought Independence to Kenya!

(John Mwale, 1963)[9]

Although in essence songs that referred mostly to the person of Kenyatta leave out other characters that were agitating for freedom, this does not stop us from noticing that those who went to detention were seen as heroes of nationalism. Such detention heroes fit into Atieno Odhiambo's Thesis One which asserts that according to the Kenya African National Union (KANU) manifesto of 1963 and KANU leadership of the period 1960-63, those who fought for *Uhuru* were constitutionalists who had formed the successive parties of Kenya African Union (KAU) and Kenya African National Union (KANU), although "… one was a better fighter and a greater nationalist if one had been detained under the emergency laws of 1952-60 period exclusively… the truest fighters were the 'Kapenguria Six'…(2003: 38). Odhiambo's thesis certainly tallies with this chapter's argument that the context of colonialism facilitated the emergence of heroes.

But the fight against colonialism was not easy because nationalists were faced with so many drawbacks. Sometimes things did not go as planned. Arrests of leaders of trade unions and other movements delayed the activities of these organizations. Another drawback was differences between those who

[9] As quoted in Ogude (2003: 276)

collaborated with the British and other Africans who sought freedom. For example, we learn that in the trial of Kenyatta and his colleagues, some Africans who testified against them had been bribed by the colonial government to give false testimony (See *Jomo Kenyatta*, page 60-61). Also, African home guards who worked for British colonialists acted as spies and reported any "illegal" plans in the village to the British (Kabaji 2002: 55). Nevertheless, the transition to independence in the texts is presented as a time of great celebration. The scene at independence is made clear through vivid descriptions:

> Kenya's independence was to be on 12 December 1963. People around the country were dancing and singing freedom songs. There was excitement all over the country at dawn of independence (Momanyi 2001: 72)

> … [O]n 12 December 1963, Kenya became independent. Jomo Kenyatta became the first president. At long last their struggles had succeeded. Kenya was a free nation now (Mwangi 2001: 93).

> …exactly at midnight, the lights went out and there was total darkness. For a few breathless moments, thousands of people waited in the pitch dark stadium. Then, all of a sudden, the lights came on and there was the official flag of the Republic of Kenya flying in the wind! …. Everyone cheered and roared with happiness! "Uhuru!" Uhuru!" they cried.
> Brightly coloured fireworks exploded into the sky. Pow! Pam! …. There was whistling, stamping of feet and screams of joy soaring into the sky above! (Kabaji 2002: 74).

> At midnight of December 12, 1963, the colonial flag was lowered and independent Kenya's new flag went up …. As fireworks and shouts of

> jubilation rent the air to mark the first Uhuru Day, Kibaki was beside himself with joy. (Mbugua 2003: 50).
>
> And, finally, Kenya became independent at midnight, on the 12th of December 1963. Aaaah!…there was singing and dancing across the country that night and the following day (Alembi 2004: 54).

Because of the use of descriptive language and idiophones which conjures up an atmosphere of dance and celebration, the scenes quoted above aid the readers in visualizing the panorama at independence, and to comprehend the pleasure that followed the suffering experienced during the colonial period. In the next section, I look at how the postcolonial history is presented in the texts under discussion.

The Post- independence Disillusionment

While in colonial times Africans had to contend with humiliation and the hurt that was caused by the colonial government, in the postcolonial era, we encounter the problematic of unfulfilled dreams. We are shown that there were multiple problems that were experienced after independence, which brought continued disillusionment. These problems expose young readers to the complications of postcolonial governance and thus to various facets of Kenya's history. I examine these problems below in conjunction with events that take place on the eve of independence, some of them that link to the post independence misunderstanding between the nationalists.

In Jomo Kenyatta's biography, Kabaji demonstrates that president Kenyatta's stand of allowing white settlers to remain in Kenya after independence was one of the major sources of controversy. Since this text derives part of its material from historical events, the author's point of view sometimes becomes more important precisely because it highlights the character's experiences and actions within the specific historical events taking place in the novel, and

subsequently guides the reader in interpreting these events within the wider society that provides the novel's setting. In addition, Kabaji utilises direct speech emanating from the character's mouth and takes the reader through the events that take place on the eve of independence, which makes it clear that white settlers in Kenya would eventually retain the land they had acquired by force from Africans. In his election speech Kenyatta declares: "Every community will retain land. Everyone, the Abaluyia, the Maasai, the Kalenjin, the Mijikenda, everyone. It will be theirs to manage" (Kabaji 2002: 70), which conditioned Kenyans to expect their lost land back. But Kabaji also employs contrast in presenting Kenyatta's stand/actions because the promises that he [Kenyatta] makes become a source of controversy as I will show shortly. Anxiety was also evident among the white population who not only feared losing land, but also had to contend with the idea of choosing between accepting leadership from a Blackman, or going back to their mother countries. This anxiety was more, specifically over the dispossession of the space they had colonised [land], and it [anxiety] even heightened when it became clear that Kenya would gain independence. This is visible in the following reported conversation:

> One tall man who had a farm near Nanyuki muttered to his friend, "Will this Kenyatta throw us off our farms?"
> "Eh, if that happens I can't stay here. What would I do without my farm?" Said his companion.
> "But Kenya is our home! How can we leave just like that?" the other answered (70-71).

Although Kabaji mostly adopts a third person narrative point of view in Jomo Kenyatta's biography, the use of direct speech and dialogue in certain instances like the one quoted above helps to make issues accessible to the young readers. In this text, we discover that contrary to the settlers' fears noted in the above quotation – and in a dramatic turn of events for the

African communities – Kenyatta goes against his promise that Africans would retain their land. In another context where Kenyatta addresses the white settlers he says:

> Kenya will soon be an independent country, and you are all part of it…. You may think I hate Europeans. I do not. I only hate what colonialism did to Kenya. … We want you to *stay here and farm the land*. Our country needs your experience. Continue to *farm your land* and you will find the government will support you in your effort [emphasis added] (Kabaji 2002: 71).

And down went the hopes of African communities of getting back their land with Kenyatta's wobbly standpoint. Kenyatta's speech bequeathed settlers land that had belonged to Africans. As a result those settlers who wished to leave got a ticket to sell out land to the rich Africans. The gong of independence therefore saw the birth of a stratified society with the rich Africans acquiring land and the poor remaining poor, an aspect that haunts Kenya up to today. Mostly the people who had fought in the forests were sidelined since they were poor, having spent much of their life in the forests, while those who collaborated with the colonialists and thus aided in the process of colonising their fellow Africans, emerged as the rich class at independence. Such people could therefore buy land to add onto other goodies they had acquired for being "good boys/girls" to the colonialists. Bethwell Ogot (2003) argues that "[t]hose who emerged to rule [Kenya] in 1963 were, in many cases, those who had betrayed the freedom fighters, a group of nascent grabbers and looters" (9). Such figures that Ogot mentions feature in Ngugi`s *Devil on the Cross*, represented by characters like Nditika wa Nguunji who publicly dismisses the efforts that people made in the fight for independence when he says: "Let's forget the past, all the business of fighting for freedom was just a bad dream, a meaningless nightmare" (1987: 177).

The turn of events at Kenya's independence as shown in Kenyatta`s biography represents a betrayal of nationalism. In Franz Fanon's words, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1991: 152), the national bourgeoisie stepped into the shoes of the former European colonialist, and became the new exploiters. The end of colonialism therefore signalled the emergence into the world's stage what Nkrumah calls "the African personality" (Neil Lazarus 1990: 2) which was in many ways exploitative.

Kenyatta's position on land is strongly opposed by socialist leaning Oginga because, as Alembi shows, Oginga constantly fought for what was right, not just for himself, but for all Kenyans (21). The narrator [grandfather] in Oginga's biography says: "Oginga opposed the idea [of selling land to Kenyans] and argued that this land should instead be distributed free to Kenyans who did not have land. After all, this land had been taken from them in the first place" (56). Land as a space in postcolonial Kenya becomes a source of controversy that breeds hatred between the political elite. The differences between Odinga and Kenyatta are amplified further when Oginga forms his own party, Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) which is joined by Achieng' Oneko (Alembi 2004: 59). But in the turmoil of postcolonial control and differences emanating from land issues and party politics, Oginga, Kaggia and others, are jailed by Kenyatta's government. The prison space that made freedom fighters heroes in colonial time therefore becomes an implement of control in postcolonial situation. Like the colonialists' leadership before it, postcolonial leadership utilises the prison space to tame dissidents like Odinga. Struggle heroes in colonial era become victims of the leadership machinery in postcolonial situation. And as Gikandi (1992) puts it when discussing Ngugi's *Matigari*, "[i]n the post-colonial situation … the divinity of the nation has collapsed; the nation is not the manifestation of a common interest but a repressor of desires..." (380).

Evan Mwangi also addresses the land issue and places nepotism and ethnic politics bluntly at Kenyatta's door. Mwangi shows that Kaggia unequivocally denounces the unfair land distribution facilitated by the president after independence. He refuses to cooperate with land grabbing that was evidently present at independence because while his peers were busy amassing land and other kinds of wealth fraudulently, he, like Odinga stood up against it. The fight for equal distribution of land is again the point at which we find the nationalists story meeting with that of the masses shown by the way militant nationalists like Odinga and Kaggia identify with the rights of the masses. Their action fits within what Odhiambo has dubbed Thesis Six of his Seven Thesis on Nationalism. Odhiambo argues that certain sections of Kenya's population view the true nationalists, and thus the true claimants of *Matunda ya Uhuru* as those who could serve the interests of the *Wanainchi* (citizens) rather than their own capitalist and neo-colonial interests (2003: 41). Characters like Odinga and Kaggia are metaphors for the postcolonial nightmare and its future. They saw the revolution as having been betrayed by Kenyatta; the very man who had allegedly led it to victory. Independence was therefore, in the words of Neil Lazarus a fraud. "It signified refinement of colonial system and not its abolition" (1990: 21-22). Mwangi shows that the majority of Africans that got land comprised of Kikuyu people who were mainly Kenyatta's close friends and relatives. Thus while Kenyatta was admired for being imprisoned during his endeavours in fighting colonialism and later he becomes the hero of independence as a president, some sections of the population, represented by Kaggia and Oginga in this discussion, criticised his leadership when he turned against the wishes of the masses. This means that although national figures like Kenyatta remain heroes because they fought for independence, they do so not only in the face of their flaws but also in defiance to these flaws (Segal 2000: 9).

Speaking of Kenya's situation after independence Samuel Raditlhalo (1997) argues that the decade that followed Kenya's independence saw the

entrenchment of a largely Kikuyu elite led by Kenyatta, and the emergence of a national bourgeoisie (34). Raditlhalo's argument suggests that it is not only the land that was appropriated by Kenyatta's close relatives but other resources that brought prosperity to such people in postcolonial Kenya. This situation is echoed by Kimani wa Njogu (1995) who contends that at independence "the ruling class … grabbed virtually anything that would lead to economic and political power, the masses of the people were betrayed and sidelined; the cause for which so many people lost their lives was forgotten" (137). Kimani reiterates that there was no initiative by postcolonial Kenyan government to create space for the Kenyan child to know who really contributed to the creation of an independent Kenya. He however points out that Ngugi wa Thiong'o has attempted to recuperate the story for the liberation struggle for children through his Njamba Nene series. I hasten to add here that the *Sasa Sema*'s Lion series is also way ahead in recuperating this narrative because the series is not limited to the Mau Mau narrative like Ngugi's series, but it accommodates various strands of the liberation narrative, which is useful for Kenya's children.

It is important to mention that the authors discussed in this chapter have to some extent engaged in a selective presentation of information. For instance, although Mwangi mentions Kaggia's fallout with Kenyatta, he does not go beyond attributing this fallout to land distribution problems, while Kaggia's problems with Kenyatta started in the early 1950s in the organisation of KAU. According to Wunyabari Maloba, Kaggia was among the young radicals of the 1950 who were very critical of the educated Africans who were in KAU, like Kenyatta. Kaggia "clearly saw the [educated Africans] as the stumbling block on the road to freedom because of their caution and gradualism" (Maloba 1993: 59). Maloba posits that Kaggia's aim and that of fellow young radicals was to eliminate the educated Africans from KAU leadership. Kenyatta did not support radicalism. Again, further probed Kaggia's differences with Kenyatta in postcolonial Kenya can be attributed to his

[Kaggia's] leaning towards communist tendencies of Oginga Odinga. Kenyatta disparaged Kaggia's tendencies and associated his poverty with his behaviour at independence when he refuses to amass property [unfairly] for himself. Kenyatta is quoted (in Bayart 1993: 242) to have told Kaggia: "Look at Kungu Karumba. He has invested in buses and has earned money but what have you done for yourself since independence?" Kaggia recently died a pauper, while those nationalists alongside whom he fought and their children live in affluence. Mr Kaggia's life speaks of the neglect suffered by some of the people who sacrificed everything in the fight for independence but achieved nothing. This low status that Kaggia was accorded by the state despite his sacrifices in the freedom struggle emanates from his stand alongside the masses, who according to Fanon, have no practical links with the ruling class (1991: 148). Independence certainly became like a source of disappointment for the likes of Kaggia; a frustration caused by his failure to take part in what Bayart (1993) has called "the politics of the belly" – the right of capture and distribution of property. It is true that Kaggia did not succeed in his fight against exploitation by postcolonial Kenyan government. Nevertheless his attitude is important because to embody the spirit of struggle and resistance against exploitation, as he does, speaks for the voiceless. Kaggia's actions represent the motif of the hero who sacrifices his own desires in favour of the good of the community.

Mwangi also fails to mention that those who revealed the Mau Mau oath and thus betrayed the secrets of movement were surreptitiously judged and punished by execution, despite having used Kaggia's autobiography as a research material (see Kaggia's *Roots of Freedom* page 110). However, Mwangi's omission of such details concerning the Mau Mau, one could argue, can be attributed to the kind of audience the text is targeted at, because children can easily get traumatized by the exposure of the alleged Mau Mau atrocities.

Omission of some strands of information in the narrative illustrates how authors use history selectively in the writing process. However, although on the one hand, this omission of information might be viewed as a shortcoming on the author's part; on the other hand, we could assume it is out of the demands of shaping a narrative because as Hayden White argues, "events are made into a history by suppression or subordination of certain of them …" (1978b: 84). Again, memory sometimes involves deliberate forgetting, and is therefore incomplete. The past can therefore not be unravelled and understood in its completeness because, as Godwin Siundu argues, the relation between memory and amnesia is sometimes one between inclusion and exclusion, which in this case impinges on what one decides to remind or not to remind others (2005: 164). Thus, forgetting, just like remembering, is something deliberate.

It is also important to note that when writing about lives, writers find that despite attempts to present a person's life as coherently as possible, there comes, in the course of writing, knowledges that jostle for space within the story of an individual. Therefore the writer is sometimes caught by the dilemma of choosing what to write. In such a situation, as James Kerr (1989: 2) argues, the writer's account depends on emphasis and repression of certain aspects. Suppression of information by writers may be influenced by variety of factors. In the case of the current discussion we might assume that the author may opt to avoid certain details in an attempt to shorten the text so that he/she does not overburden the readers. For example, explicit details on political tugs of war may be deemed unnecessary for young readers and therefore these details are probably left out intentionally to avoid putting a strain on the readers' understanding of the texts. Occasionally a biographer is also influenced by what s/he admires about a subject, or sometimes by how the author wishes to represent the character to his audience/readers, which leads to a selective representation of information. Again, as Judith Campbell (1996) has argued when she writes about heroes in Soviet Union children's

literature, sometimes children's literature has been seen as having to adhere to certain norms and ideologies, otherwise it will not be distributed. Therefore writers of children's fiction who wish to represent heroes do so by promoting certain characteristics of the heroes and heroines in the story as virtues, which will reap a suitable reward (1996: 32-33). In this sense then, writers cannot help to selectively choose their recollections in order to smoothen the jagged edges (Elsie Cloete 2002: 38). Furthermore, in writing history authors have to choose what is relevant to fit the need at the moment and the reason of writing, for as Daniel Aaron (1993) has argued, the storyteller, whom in this case we take as the novelist, requires just enough to quicken their imagination without suffocating under an avalanche of facts (69). Alembi confesses having resorted to selective writing in order to avoid this suffocating avalanche of facts that Aaron talks about when in the preface of *Oginga Odinga: People's Revolutionary* he writes:

> The late Oginga Odinga,… was a lager-than-life person. In fact he was an institution. This means our legendary hero had many facets in his life – a brilliant student, committed educator, a shrewd politician, philanthropist, talented businessman, committed husband and a loving father – all rolled in one.... I must admit it was a difficult task selecting what to write about his life. …I concluded that the most interesting line would be to look at the story of Oginga Odinga from the point of view of his being a champion of the poor (vii).

However, although some aspects may have been left out in the texts discussed in this chapter, one would be wrong to declare that the writers have completely surrendered to amnesia. The omission of certain details can in no way be taken for a complete failure because any writing in the mode of narration involves a kind of selective remembering. Again, as Joan Glazer (1997: 443) argues, biographies are not required to relate every known fact

about a subject from birth to death. A biography may instead focus on a few years of the subject's life or concentrate on particular aspects.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine how some of the Lion books studied in this thesis double up as individual stories and as avenues for recuperating Kenya's history of decolonization for young readers. The lives of the characters discussed in this chapter have been used to trace Kenya's history from the onset of colonial invasion, to the loss of land and the cruelty of colonial rule; from the struggle for independence, to the partly failed struggle to right the inequalities of the past in a postcolonial environment. I have examined the texts discussed in this chapter in terms of the institutions that colonialism created. These includes: the settler farm, the school, the church and the prison that helped in creating an awareness about the ills of colonialism. This awareness not only triggered rebellion from the Africans, but it also helped in nurturing the heroes which these texts represent. In addition, themes like land alienation, racial discrimination and cultural conflict, surface in the context of colonial invasion, while industry and perseverance, have been examined when looking at the school space and resistance to colonial rule respectively. The chapter has also shown that the period after Kenya's independence was characterised by disillusionment because of unfair distribution of resources and other factors. I conclude that a reading of these texts forces us to acknowledge that the politics of colonial and post independence governments in Africa is inscribed in children's books. In addition, through the characters discussed in this chapter, the authors explore dreams and also analyse the struggle and fundamentals of decolonization. This makes a statement that literature written for children can go beyond basic moralising to speak to issues relating to history and politics. The supposition here is that while remaining deeply concerned with issues of moral behaviour, these texts do not do this through abstract ethical concepts

but through identifiable personalities who have left marks on the sands of time (Aseka, 2001).