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YOUNG ADULT FICTION IN KENYA: A GENRE STRUGGLING TO BE BORN

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A research thesis submitted to the Faulty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg, 2017

Abstract

Young Adult Literature (YAL) is a relatively new development in Kenya, having been neglected both in research and production of books that promote the genre. The Young Adult Fiction (YAF) genre has been overshadowed by adult literature and, often submerged in and or mistaken for children literature, thus denying its existence. This thesis examines a selection of YAL produced over the last eleven years from 2005 to 2015 in Kenya. The selection is based on the prize-winners of two awards instituted to reward the genre. The first chapter features the background of the study thereby examining the concepts of YA, teenage, youth and age in the African setting. In this chapter I deconstruct the concept of YAL arguing it constitutes a separate and independent literature category from that of children and adult. Chapter two examines various institutions that are active in promoting the genre and hence giving it shape and substance. The third chapter interrogates the material aspects of book production. Using Genette's notion of paratexts, I explore the role of the paratexts as an important zone in the formation of the YA genre in Kenya. In chapter four I do a close reading of eleven award winning texts from JKPL and Burt Award. I examine the various genres displayed in this oeuvre. I also trace the YAF genre trends and establish how it is shaping up and likely to develop in future. The fifth and final chapter features the summary of the findings, recommendations and suggestions for future researches that could advance the YAF genre. I provide an appendix of a bibliographic list of the primary texts studied in this research for reference by those interested in understanding the YAF genre as currently being presented in Kenya.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Sign



JANE WANGARI WAKARINDI

7th Day of March, 2018

Dedication

Dedicated to you my Mother, **Monicah Wakarindi**, to you who is my father too, your love for me, virtue and value for education is unrivalled

My Aunt, **Mary Nyambura**, who took me to a school where I learnt my first Kiswahili word

To you my Husband, **Patrick Wanguo,** for robustly taking the baton from the two and never wavered

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A list of Abbreviations

CODE	Canadian Organisation for Development through Education
JKPL	Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KNLS	Kenya National Library Services
KPA	Kenya Publishers Association
NBDCK	National Book Development Council of Kenya
YA	Young Adult
YAF	Young Adult Fiction
YAL	Young Adult Literature

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introductions and Background to the Study

1.1.0 Preamble

Young Adult Fiction (YAF) is a genre that has only recently started to gain traction and visibility in Kenya. The term itself first gained prominence in 2005 when YAF was introduced as a category in Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature (JKPL). This prize was later joined in 2011 by the Burt Award team, a prize to recognize excellence in literature for youth. The study springs from an assumption that YA literature is a marginalized genre in Kenya.

1.1.1 Questions and Objectives of the Research

Using the prize books from JKPL and the Burt Award as one of its forms of data, this thesis answers four questions. It interrogates what the generic features of the texts that have won prizes in both JKPL and the Burt Award from 2005 to 2015 are; what and how institutions and discourses that surround the texts have influenced the processes by which the young adult (YA) genre is evinced; how the paratext has contributed to the material presentation and definition of the YA genre, and lastly, what subgenres and trends manifest in the YA fiction that encompasses YA genre in Kenya.

Consequently, the research has four objectives. First, it sets out to explore the generic features of the JKPL and Burt Award texts that have won prizes from 2005 to 2013, investigating their place in debates about YA in the larger discourses about youth and age in Kenyan society. It then explores the institutions and discourses around the texts (both

those for and those against), attempting to understand the processes by which the genre takes shape. Thirdly it examines paratextual features and analyses their contribution to the material presentation and definition of the YA genre. Finally, it analyses the eleven texts under study, tracing their trends and identifying various subgenres that make up the YA fiction genre in Kenya.

1.1.2 Rationale

YA literature is a genre that has been neglected in Kenya. Most Kenyan writers concentrated on adult and children's writing and rarely wrote fiction for YA, until the JKPL and Burt awards came into being. YA literature in Kenya can be said to be just a struggling infant, having lived as a recognized genre in terms of quality fiction book production in twelve years only since its inception to 2016. Both awards have managed to place in the market a total of 36 fiction titles or about three texts per year; 18 from JKPL, awarded biennially and 18 from Burt Award which takes place every year. According to Edwina Oluwasanmi, Eva McLean and Hans Zell, publishing for children (a classification often taken to include YA) is "yet a relatively untouched area in African publishing and too often is the existing lacuna filled with books which are written for European or North American children" (4). Walter De Gruyter reports in "ABPR." *Notes and News* (2013), "the award [The Burt] addresses an ongoing shortage of relevant, quality books for young people while at the same time promoting love of reading and learning at the middle and secondary school levels" (157). Professor Henry Indangasi, an official in the manuscript selection team for the Burt Award observes: "We discovered a shortage of literary material about the youth. The typical writer in Kenya writes about adults and the problems of adults" (ibid).

My personal experience as a teacher in high school in Kenya forms part of my motivation for this research. Once a Head of English Department (HOD) in my school called fellow English teachers and I to a meeting and asked us to suggest titles to place in the school library. The six of us suggested novels but our list drew on the canonical set books we had studied as students in high school. None of us could recommend any current YAF titles that addressed our students' contemporary issues. My assumption is that had there been research such as I have conducted, with an annotated bibliography I provide in this research, it would have made it relatively easy for the HOD to refer to it and purchase relevant titles.

I argue that there is an urgent need for research on YA literature, and particularly study on YA fiction. I concur with S. Meyer that "in identifying with the characters the reader is confronted with the pertinent themes such as peer pressure, teenage insecurities and fears and problematic family relationships" (27). This may help the YA to develop ways of viewing and overcoming the complications they face in life. While discussing the South African scene regarding research on YA literature in a country that has "realized a spate of youth novels . . . [that celebrate] the beauty and wonder of the country" (2), Elwyn Jenkins (1993) decries lack of criticism of children's books published locally. The scenario he cites speaks directly to the Kenyan situation on YA fiction. Research and criticism that ignores YA genre is "poorer for its ignorance of the [this genre]" (4).

No research I am aware of so far has examined the award-winning titles from both JKPL and the Burt Award for the period 2005 to 2013, and shown how various institutions in Kenya have contributed to the YA fiction. Therefore, this study stands as a unique

contribution to fill this existing gap. Notably, although JKPL awards YA fiction in both English and Kiswahili, the Kiswahili young adult winners (which deserve and would comprise a separate research) are not part of this thesis due to limitation of scope and time. The current research focuses only on YA fiction that have been written in English and have won awards in JKPL and Burt award from 2005 to 2013.

The study sensitizes librarians and teachers to well-written fiction for YA that could motivate them to establish distinct YA category sections in libraries, a case not yet realised in most Kenyan learning institutions. The study establishes that the selected fiction comprises relevant topics and characters YA can relate to and identify with. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), (the former Kenya Institute of Education (KIE)) could consider these texts as high school study material in future. Finally the research joins in its own right other bodies of existing debates on YA literature as a contribution to scholarship and research in a specific scenario where the YA literature has been marginalized. I concur with Anna O. Soter and Sean P. Connors that "Young Adult novels do qualify as 'literature' and . . . are deserving of literary study precisely because they have literary merit" (2). A similar appeal is echoed in Peter Hunt's assertion that children's (I argue the same for YA) fiction "requires its own interpretive approach" (1992: 4).

1.2.0 YA, a Definition

YA is an age-set that is viewed differently by different people in different places. The Western perception of a YA might differ slightly from the African perception and

definition of a YA. According to Deborah Elizabeth Laurs, YA are "[youth] pining and sighing for pure love and daydreaming darkly of suicide pacts . . . the fashion- conscious teenager, living in a movie, pulp and a rock'- n- roll saturated world" (1). The definition reflects the varied experiences that the YA goes through around this period which include socio-psychophysiological human developmental changes that manifest with so many complexities and contradictions. Yet such constant negative definitions articulate how YA are often described by the adult commentators in their effort to categorize this group, not only in the West but also in Kenya.

Laurs maintains that YA are

> . . . neither children nor adults. They are nevertheless children who expect to be treated as adults – while children, they still depend on their parents for their livelihood. They are 'between agers', all the way from the playful and dependent thirteen, to the nineteen year old teenager, out of the world working, studying and making their own decisions. (8)

The YA period is seen to mark a transition stage that has blurred boundaries. The definition seems to include adolescents in school up to the working people. The discordant outlook here portrayed resembles a Kikuyu saying "Nduri ruuaini kana nyamaini," meaning "you are neither on the skin/hide nor on the meat" (referring normally to two hairy fingerlike muscles that hang on a goat's neck. Butchers say the two muscles are never traced to attach on either the skin or on the muscle of the animal).

One problem with the definition of YA is that the critics position YA as helpless people with little direction. Indeed many YA novels written and forwarded for competition for

awards are rejected on the basis that they reflect characters and themes that are not relevant to the YA. For instance in the JKPL award winning competition of 2009, the panel observed that many novels that had been forwarded for the competition in the YA category were disqualified since they handled adult themes and had adult characters. The same problem is echoed by the 2011 judges of the award: "There were entries which were submitted in the wrong category. This was especially the case with the youth and children's categories" (De Gruyter 157).

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines youth as "The time when a person is young, especially the time before a child becomes an adult." The definition seems to equate youth and children. There are no succinct boundaries between YA and the child since the description tends to imply that a child transits directly from 'child' to adult. The use of the terms "the time when a person is young", I argue, is also problematic in placing YA in their place since in some social quarters there are those who will state that "one is as young as s/he imagines", therefore negating the term "young" to define YA per se. Similarly, it can be argued that children are young and YA are young and there are adults who say they are young. For instance in Kenya there is a crop of politicians who call themselves the 'young turks', insinuating that they are not as old as their other opponents who have been in power and who they set out to de-throne. In any case, the-said 'young turks' are not really young people in the real sense of the word since a majority of them are above the age of forty and even some have been in politics for a long time.

On realizing the insufficiency of the existing definitions of YA, some scholars have tried to situate YA in terms of chronological age. For example Laurs's report on Nadia Wheatley's perception of YA as a group

> . . . stuck in between the two 'real' ages of childhood and adulthood but . . . a variety of adult . . . people whom we [i.e. adults] respect, and people whom we regard as responsible enough to run their lives. At the same time, their status is revealed in the prefix, young. (18)

According to Nadia the YA do exist but as a vague category in flux that fits neither in the child realm nor the adult's. The definition is even further confusing when it refers to YA as "a variety of adult" since it is not clear where the distinction is between the "we adult" and the "variety of adult." The definition further creates a sense of othering whereby the YA is seen as the "other adult" by the "we adult," always an outsider of the two "real" ages. It creates a world of normal age, denoted by "real" ages, and an abnormal one that is attributed to the YA. Interestingly, Laurs' definition bears equivalence to the manner in which a YA is viewed in Kenya.

1.2.1 YA in Kenya

"Njamba njithi ni kienyu kia Ngai", or a young warrior (male) is a chip from God. This Kikuyu maxim denotes the value of YA to the community. The strength of a young person is equated to a piece that is carved out of the great power of God. The notion underlines that young people are endowed with ability (divine, as alluded to by mention of God) to challenge, decide and shape their destiny. Different communities have different ways of defining YA. Some use the school years to define this group such that

anybody who has completed primary school level and is not married is regarded a YA. This definition seems to have a national face since it is also coupled with cultural practices on rites of passage.

In communities where circumcision is practiced, this is carried out normally in the months of November and December after primary school children have completed their primary school certificate examinations. With the intensified activism against female circumcision or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), as the practice is now referred to by the activists in Kenya, the church has started programs that address the girls 'rites of passage' within the same period that boys undergo circumcision. The girls are taken by their parents and guardians to church premises where they are given various life skill teachings and each is given a certificate at the end of the one or two weeks they are in seclusion. After these observations, the boys and girls are now said to be YA up until they get married and are admitted to adult category. The students in high school and colleges are generally referred to as YA.

The cultural definition above is problematic in that not all communities in Kenya observe such rites of passage, yet there are also YA in those communities. This definition leaves such groups out yet they are in the margin of the category. Again, when marriage is taken to be the marker that defines one just about to get married as a YA, then that cannot be sufficient. In that case, the definition does not tell us what happens to those who drop out of school due to teenage pregnancy and get married. It does not substantiate whether they become adults or are still children-young-adults, whether married or not. There are those also who choose never to get married even at the age of fifty, whether they may have

gone through the rites or not, the definition still does not indicate whether they remain children, YA or adults. There is also an accepted culture in Kenya that regards as a child anybody, male or female, in the presence of a male or female of the same or similar age with one's parents whether they are alive or dead. It is therefore a common practice to hear somebody describe a sixty-year-old man or woman as the child of so and so.

The Constitution of Kenya (2010) Article 260 defines children as people below 18 years of age and one only becomes an adult after acquiring a national identity card, which is granted after the 18th birthday. A youth on the other hand is defined as one from the age of 18 to 35 years of age. What becomes manifest is that there are two ages that are distinct, children and adult, "real" ages, and another unclear and indefinable age whose identity has to be given so many variables, sometimes capricious ones, to try to understand it.

These kaleidoscopic definitions of the YA in Kenya have sometimes raised tensions among communities or, social groups, and have led to school hooliganism and monolisation (choreographed bullying of the Form One students in high schools) and have sometimes caused school dropout, especially for boys. A case in mind is the contestation by high school boys about their being called "boys" by everybody. This was presented during the 2013 National Drama Festivals in a Kenyan indigenous (Kikuyu) language poem entitled "Atirириri Bururi," meaning, "Pillars of the Nation." The high school YA insisted in the satirical but humorous choral poem that they should be called "pillars of the nation" and had refuted to be called "ihii", a Kikuyu term bearing the connotations of uncircumcised boys. The word "kihii" means "a big uncircumcised boy"

and “ihii” plural for “many big uncircumcised boys,” a term which also possesses stereotypic concepts of an immature and foolish person.

In the poem the students lamented that nobody ever appreciated them differently. One part said that when they rioted they were referred to as “Ihii cia Watuka” (boys of Watuka), and even when they performed exemplarily in national examinations they were still referred to in the same manner as “Ihii cia Watuka.” They ended their piece on a humorous note that “even after leaving the podium now, we know you will be left saying, ‘Uniukwona uria ihii icio cia Watuka uria ciageria!’ meaning ‘Do you see how those boys of Watuka have tried!’ In other words, the poem attests to the fact that bad habits are hard to break, like being called “ihii”, but the performers had already made their point that the society does have to look for an alternative way of defining them. After all, as Jeffrey P. Dennis posits, YA deserve “their own name, their own vocabulary, their own hangouts, their own culture” (1) and we might add, their own literature.

I discuss in detail these practices and definitions because I argue that they have impacted greatly on marginalization of YA writing and poor production of relevant fiction in Kenya. More often than not some YA novels contain gross stereotypes based on the definitions appended to the YA in the country. So then, how is YA literature as a genre defined in Kenya? This concept can better be conceived after understanding the construction and portrayal of the concept of ‘child’ in an African setting.

1.2.2 Childhood, Youth, Teenage and Age in African Societies

There is no way that discussions on YA could be brought to an understandable level without shedding light on the way childhood, youth and age are constructed in the African setting. In an article "In Search of a Definition of Childhood" in *Invisible Stakeholders: Children and War in Africa*, Twum Danso says the definition of childhood "is filled with pitfalls and complexity" (10). From the Western standards, Danso states this shaky phase is marked by serious guidance to try shaping the YA to become responsible adults. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is every "human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."(11) This follows similar age limits by The African Charter on the Right of the Child adopted in July 1990 which specifies "that a child is every human being below the age of 18" (10). These documents show a convergence of meaning between the West and the African construction of childhood.

Another construction of childhood is the comment by Jack Zipe in an editorial preface in Maria Nikolajeva's *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Towards a New Aesthetic*, that "understood in the broadest sense of the term *children* . . . encompass the period of childhood up through adolescence" (xi), indication that YA and children are one and the same group.

The research on childhood by Robert Muponde cites certain perceptions of childhood in Zimbabwe which approximate the description ascribed to the concept of childhood in Kenya. He champions that childhood should be looked at not just as a "focalization and

characterization but as a tool for the construction of a wide range of culturally and historically specific sets of ideas and philosophies" (ii). He further adds that in Zimbabwe (as is the case in Kenya), a child is perceived as "the incompetent other, vulnerable and innocent, and needful of protection" (25), hereby portraying a shared myth of childhood perception in the two countries.

According to Elizabeth Swadener (et al.) in *Africa's Future, Africa's Challenge: Early Childhood Care and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* childhood is defined as "the most intensively governed sector of personal existence and that the child- as an idea and target- has become inextricably connected to the aspirations of authorities" (410). In their assessment they explain that shifting perspectives of childhood create margins for "today's discourses in new patterns and inscribe different assumptions about the child" (ibid). On the other hand Christopher Ouma states in his dissertation "Childhood in Contemporary Nigerian Fiction" that childhood is "a category of critical analysis [and not] just a historical vehicle for socio-cultural and political debate" (11). In other words, the concept of the child changes from being just an object to a subject that informs various disciplines.

In *Children: Rights and Childhood*, David Archard explains that as opposed to European portrayal of childhood "African children are viewed as capable [childhood is considered] . . . a process, a continued becoming, a never completed maturing" (36). In this case an African child remained a child and classification did not depend on age but on ability to perform certain social-cultural assigned roles. For instance a 'child' is expected to accord all kinds of support to the parents when they grow old. Strikingly, childhood in an

African setting refers more to a station in the social strata than to the chronological count of years. Twum Danso augments the concept when he says "marriage and the establishment of a new homestead (and other forms of rites of passage) are traditionally two prime indications of adult male status" (12). It is due to some of these contradictions of childhood that I argue have contributed to YA literature in Kenya being sidelined.

The other term that is equally problematic is youth. Twum Danso situates "definition of youth [as an] even more problematic task than defining childhood" (13). Nicholas Argenti describes the category of youth as "a moveable feast, a category used by different interest groups to define ever shifting groups [of] people" (13). Furthermore, the classification referred to as youth "ranges from those who are in their early teens (to those in their 30's who are not covered in the legislation of their own)" (ibid). The Western concept of the youth complicates the definition even further as the youth is seen as "those between the ages of 15 and 21 or 25" (ibid). The Kenyan description of youth generates more amorphous complexity whereby the "status of the 'youth' lasts until the age of 35, when one is eligible to be nominated for presidential elections" (ibid). Dennis' description makes the definition more obscure when he says they are "new and different breed, not children, not young adults, not even necessarily adolescents" (1).

To sum up the difficulty of the term 'youth' De Waal posits:

> Youths are not typically conceived of as productive and constructive social actors, nor, as they often are in reality as victims, but rather, as potential sources of political disruption, delinquency and criminology. (14)

Rarely are there books written for them, especially in Kenya, probably because they are deemed insignificant. They are frequently viewed with suspicion, are regularly left out, are misrepresented and are marginalized in part due to the nebulous descriptions assigned to the term.

1.2.3 YA Literature (YAL)

YA as a term used to describe a category in mainstream literature has a long history. It was first used by Sarah Trimmer in her *Periodical for Children's Literature* in 1802. In the periodical she introduced two terms: "young adulthood", which referred to 14 to 21 as the distinct age for this group, and "books for children" (3), for readers under 14 years. While it might be easy to determine who an adult is, we have observed it proves more complicated to show the definite point of childhood at which YA break from childhood and adulthood. Moreover, Crowe (2001: 147) intimation that YAL is a recent genre that has not been around long enough to be accorded classic status holds true, particularly in Kenya.

Michael Cart argues that the first time the YA were viewed as a distinctly different generation was in the 1920s, necessitating that the YA fiction similarly be given special literary focus. He does however concede that "multiple novels that fit into the YA category had been published long before [and that] in the nineteenth century there are several early examples that appealed to young readers" (43). Nevertheless it is not until the '60s that people aged 30 years and below attracted attention leading to the emergence of the YA researches. Cart suggests that this is the period when YAL could be said to

have become a distinct category. In the same vein, Crowe (1998, 2001) argues that YAL gained focus in 1967 when S.E Hinton published *The Outsider*, a book considered to have "clearly established the realistic novel for the teenage book market" (Crowe 1998: 121).

Due to the increased visibility of teenagers in the 1990s, "the field matured, blossomed and came into its own with the better written, more serious, and more varied young adult books published during the last two decades" (Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 5). The YAL books hold interest for YA because they deal with subjects of YA concerns. YAL limits itself to literature that is written, directed and marketed to YA. Qualifying the importance of YAL, Susan Santoli and Mary Wagner (2004) agree with Sarah K. Herz (1996) that YAL tackle s various universal subjects including themes of identity that YA grapple with every day. They add that YAL can compete with classics in the realm of serious themes such as "alienation from one's society or group, survival or meeting a challenge; social and / or political concerns about racial or ethnic discrimination; social concerns about AIDS, teenage pregnancy, divorce, and substance abuse; problems resulting from family conflicts; fear of death; and the issue of political injustice" (Santoli and Wagner 68).

Besides having engaging themes, YAL offer a platform through which YA can share their joys and fears without feeling humiliated and ridiculed. Santoli and Wagner (2004) agree with Leila Christenbury (2000) that YAL "often contain everyday vocabulary, compressed plots, and a limited number of characters, elements that make them more accessible and understandable for teenagers. In addition, they focus on a young

protagonist with issues and concerns that engage and resonate with adolescents" (71). Together with Herz's (1996), they advance that young adult novels encourage lifelong love of reading. Despite having continued to thrive in the West, YAL in Kenya is still struggling to be recognized as a genre independent from children's literature.

The African YA debate did not emerge as early as is the case with its Western counterparts. Many African countries still hold children's literature to encompass both YA and children's interest. Meena Khorana discusses the state of African children's and YAL where she posits that earlier instances of this literature "represent outsiders' perspective rather than visions from within the respective cultures." She calls attention to modern YA writers to emphasize particularly "the question of an authentic voice in postcolonial African children's literature." This call is yet to be realized in Kenya.

The Ali Mazrui Africa 100 Best Books of the 20th Century project held in Ghana in 2002 did not consider any category called youth, adolescent, young adult or any other name alluding to the YA classification. The list comprised adult and children's classifications. Ironically, the aim of the project was to select books that had "assessment of quality, ability to provide new information or insight, a continuing contribution to debate, the extent to which a book broke boundaries. The final list had to reflect a balance of regional representation, gender, historical spread and genres of writing", yet, the YA category was not factored in. YAL continues to be marginalized in many African countries and Kenya in particular. Nancy Schmidt's observation "Young adult literature is an uncharted universe" (22) remains relevant.

In an article in *The Nordic Journal of African Studies,* Ayo Kehinde records the words of Chidi Amuta: "The writer is not influenced by society, he influences it, art does not merely reproduces life but also shapes it, people may mould their lives upon the patterns of fictional heroes and heroines" (238). The Kenyan YAL is yet to have sufficient, relevant and varied materials from which YA could engage with "heroes and heroines" from whom they would then mould their lives. The void has been necessitated by the fact that YA genre in Kenya is still struggling to take root. The problem of differentiating YAL and children's literature has fueled the situation described by Vivian Yenika-Agbaw as the "hybrid nature of literature about African children and young adults" (xix).

Sometimes universities, which are considered the "fountain of knowl-edge, [emphasis on original quote retained] aren't even sure what YAL is" (Crowe 1998: 121). This argument rings true in Kenya where courses such as *Children Literature* and *Theory and Methods of Children Literature* are offered, but nothing like, *Young Adult Literature* or *Theory and Methods of YAL* in most Kenyan universities is available. I agree with Crowe's (2003: 97) assertion that YA books should not be downgraded to the lower shelf of literature, since YAL can stimulate a love of reading even in those who do not like to read.

Another important figure in debates on YAL in Africa is Osayimwense Osa, the founding editor of the *Journal of African Children's and Youth Literature* (JACYL). He documents the history and trends of the children and YAL in Africa through the 70's to 90's giving us a glimpse of the positioning of the YA genre in Africa. In his article *The Growth of African Children's Literature,* he cajoles experts in the field of children's literature to

"share their ideas, experiences, and research findings with dedicated writers of children's literature" (316). In the same article, Osa recognizes the need for integrating the genre in the mainstream African literature as a "worthwhile scholarly field" (316). Echoing Naomi Lewis, he explains that the YA mind should not be underrated. He insists that the youthful mind is "greatly adaptable, taking the lowest when it is there, but also capable of any feat if required" (13). The advocacy also fits in with T. A. Baron's interview with *The Alan Review* on YAF where he notes: "Young adults still have the open heartedness of childhood together with the awareness of adulthood. They are honest enough to ask life's toughest questions, and they still have courage to hope. To them anything is possible" (12).

In the introduction of his book, *African Children's and Youth Literature*, Osa cites Nigeria and Ghana as the earliest to recognize writing for children and YA in the early 80's. South Africa took its cue in 1987 in the first ever symposium in Children's literature whose success led to the establishment of the Children's Book Forum (CBF). However, Kenya did not start such recognition until 2005 and is yet to hold an international conference on YAL in the country. Osa posits that YAL genre is a "relatively new and distinctive stratum of modern Nigerian society" (318). While children's literature grew in bounds, he acknowledges that the YAL was "either neglected in Nigeria or generally left to children themselves and their teachers and parents, who were in most cases, more enthusiastic than competent, as writers and scholars of junior literature" (321). Needless to say, this observation can be said of Kenya currently, despite the efforts by JKPL and Burt awards to ensure writing for Kenyan YA

grows. As part of promoting YAL in Africa, Osa argues for the need for universities to offer YAL courses and organize workshops and conferences as ways of recognizing the importance of YAL scholarship. Osa quotes Francis Nyarko's now already realized optimism that YAL awakening in the 1970's would see Africa in the 80's with higher production and distribution of children's literature.

True to the above optimism Ngugi wa Thiong'o published a children's series titled ***Njamba Nene Series*** which target readers of ages "eight to twelve [years]" (Lovesey 94). In his article, "Initiation for the Nation": Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's Writing for Children" Oliver Lovesey discusses Njamba Nene Series' first wo publications, *Njamba Nene and The Flying Bus* and *Njamba Nene's Pistol* published in 1982 and 1986 respectively. Lovesey explores how Ngugi in this series, like in his early writings for adults, focusses mainly on the liberating struggle narratives with emphasis on the defiance against oppressive forces. He asserts that the children's series upholds "dreams of heroic revolutionary action but [which the protagonist, Njamba Nene] seems to lack resolve to accomplish" (198). Lovesey observes that the series feature how Kenyans were "united by a collective memory of colonialism and dispossession" (194). Though the narrative thread has shifted from colonial struggle to more current themes of national unity and tribal cohesion, I admit, as I argue later in Chapter 4 that historical themes as contained in the series are necessary for preserving a country's historical values. In addition, such stories empower the minds of children through what Lovesey views as "decolonising imaginations of his [Ngugi's] young readers (193). Moreover, the series fills the gap in which Lovesey argues the "child in African children's literature is at least doubly

marginalized" (193). The series have therefore created space in the "interstices of various theoretical and discursive empires [from which positions] the voiceless child is to be spoken for and instructed and even decolonized." (194). Ngugi's' children's writings, particularly the Njamba Nene Series add to the wealth of children's literature in Kenya and showcase Ngugi's relatively little researched area of his writing for children. However, the YAL is still being considered a relatively young genre, particularly in Kenya

1.2.4 Young Adult Literature and the Question of Genre

1.2.4.1 Introduction

Christine Ramsdell argues that for a text to qualify and fit within a given genre the "basic premises, the core tenets, and the underlying message" (5) have to predominate over other aspects of other genres even when a work of art is multigeneric. These facts are discussed and demonstrated in chapter four of this thesis.

1.2.4.2 Genre, Definitions and Concept

There are various definitions of genre that are often determined by the purpose and performance they are expected to achieve. Clare Beghtol says genre means "kind of" or "sort of" and comes from the same Latin root as the word 'genus" (19), while Daniel Chandler refers to genre as "class" (1). In this sense, genre implies a category comprising things that are derived from the same source and bear common characteristics. Brian Paltridge quotes Martin (1984) as having defined genre as a "staged, goal oriented,

purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of a community" (238). This definition gives genre a material sense of specificity, utility and context. It is viewed as tool directed at achieving a certain goal among members of a group of people. The idea of "speakers" infer to the world of rhetoric, which then becomes the essence of the community's engagement. Sharing similar reflections on genre are Biber (1988) and Swales (1990: 58). The latter defines genre as a "class of communicative events, the members of which share some set communicative purpose which are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community" (238). The foregoing definitions are skewed towards language learning techniques. The idea of community or a group that shares certain conventions and consensus on the genre use appears basic in genre descriptions. As a result, whichever way one may want to look at genre, the aspect of culture, language and structure seems to be shared across the different definitions.

Other centres interested in genre stratify it along sections. For instance, NCTE (2005)' article, "NCTE: Read, Write, Think" places genre into three broad categories: first as "Fiction and non-fiction". This definition poses some problems evidenced in this research whereby *Tales of Kasaya* for instance, is an autobiographical writing, but, it has been awarded a YAF prize. Categorising the text under YAF implies that even though we rarely recognize, in its interstices, much of fiction in autobiography, it invites the questions as to what degree of genreness in any text, determines its classification.

Secondly, genre is classified according to "layout and style [and includes] picture books which contain words and pictures, novellas, short novels, and short stories". The third category defines fiction genre as "content and theme [in which] adventure stories, science

fiction/fantasy, mystery, horror, romance, realistic fiction and historical fiction" form a part. In these three categories, we recognise emphasis on the literariness of the genre and the categories it is ascribed to, a notion that was originally used in reference to genre. But we also witness further contradictions whereby aspects negated in one definition are included in the next, thus making it difficult to discuss any text under any one definition. Adding to genre definition complexity, Nell Duke and Victoria Purcell–Gates view genre as "patterns in the way language is used, it refers to patterns in the situation in which a text is used and patterns in the features of that text- its language, format, structure, and content" (31). In other words, to understand any genre text, emphasis should be laid on language, format, structure and content, as fiction-genre defining features.

There are also theorists who define genre along linguistic performance of language, particularly as a tool for analysing and teaching writing. For instance, Simon Cornelius and Brent Cotsworth concede with Swales that genre is the "study of how language is used within a certain setting and focuses on issues such as rhetorical styles and discourse types" (15). Again, inferences to content, language in context (alluded to by setting), language and narrative come to play when defining genre. Sunny Hyon's description of genre in theory as "communicative events' that are characterized both by their 'communicative purposes' and by various patterns of 'structure, style, content and intended audience" (695) has found credence in subsequent genre theorists. Genre definitions are summarised by Swales (1990) as "a distinctive category of discourse of any type, spoken or written" (33). The reason for Swales concept of genre gaining support is due to its inclusivity of most elements cited by other genre proponents,

namely; narratives that purposefully (through structure, style and content) communicate specific messages to the intended audience or community.

1.2.4.3 The Problematic of Genre Characteristics

It is of course difficult to place texts into specific genre category since such a process "relies on human intuition and the claim that 'I know (a document of type x) when I see one" (Palmer and Friedrich 1). Genre types are not common knowledge for all who encounter them. The problem of classifying genre is further made complex by the fact that genres keep mutating, morphing, blending, multilacing and evolving as observed in various definitions above. This fluidity characteritic of genre results into subgenres cutting across ethnic, lifestyles and structures, thus merging and creating multigenre spheres that call for fresher theories and approaches in the field.

Theorists also argue for genre analysis and categorisation by focussing on their form and structure. However, this can be problematic in both fiction and non-fiction genres since they share prose as their basic style. When faced with the dilemma of placing the text, one may have to read the text so as to decode the differences on the basis of 'reality' (for non-fiction) and imagination (for the fiction). However, this classification still poses placement problems as cited above and as later outlined in chapter 4 with regard to *Tales of Kasaya*, an autobiography that has been classified and awarded as fiction. Conceding this problem, Beghtol argues that "even the most familiar ones [genres] are unstable, changeable and can divide, fuse and / or mutate to form different kinds of hybrid texts" (21). Most texts under study in this thesis attest to genre complexity and have been

classified in similar multigenre perspectives, with the most dominant genre assuming the initial position in the naming.

Chandler quotes Jane Feuer (1992:144) that genre is "ultimately an abstract conception rather than something that exists empirically in the world, [arguing that] one theorist's *genre* may be another's *sub-genre*, or even *super-genre* (and indeed) what is *technique*, *style*, *mode*, *formula* or *thematic grouping* to one may be treated as *genre* by another" (1). In addition, Swales (1990) argues genres are "fuzzy categories" (52), while Robert Hodge insists that genres only exist in so far as social groups declare and enforce the rules that constitute them (Chandler 3). Chandler further quotes Boris Tomashevsky's insistence that "no firm logical classification of genre is possible . . . [and demarcation] is correct only for a specific moment in history" (9). In this argument, Tomashevsky adds an extra sphere (historical aspect) to try to make sense out of genre complexity. He seems to advocate that genre occurs along a historical continuum whose study would necessitate inclusion of political, social cultural and economic phenomena of different historical periods under which a given genre exists. While these factors often manifest in texts in different genres, the direction does not ease the placement of all texts, literary or otherwise, into genres, a feature that clearly manifests itself in the texts under study.

1.2.4.4 Genre Study Trends

Recent developments in genre theory have mainly been concerned with "the application of genre analysis to develop pedagogical solutions for ESP [English for Specific Purposes] classrooms" (Cheng 289). Along the same perception, Swales' approach to

genre teaching is viewed more appropriately suited to "high level academic English students (ibid). Hyon advances Bhatia's pedagogical position when he acknowledges that Swale's research on genre (1990a, 1986, 1981), have been reputed as having offered seminal works that have shaped the genre theory particularly in ESP (695). The theory was then directed at offering a tool for analysis of academic and professional genres, mainly those on research, legal and business contexts (Bhatia 2012: 19). In his theory, Bhatia draws distinction between Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Genre Analysis (CGA). He views CDA as a theory that relies on power dynamics of race, class domination and oppression. He, on the other hand, argues that CGA is a means of "demystifying" professional practices … that professional writers tend to express in order to understand professional practices or actions of the members of corporations, institutions and professional organizations" (23). Bhatia is credited for tracing the development of genre theory from "predominantly lexico-grammatical analysis of genres towards a more interdiscursive and critical genre analysis and understanding of professional practice" (26). In this venture his theory offers procedures that enable the study of professional practices that previously could only be studied using "organizational, management and other institutional theories" (ibid).

According to Cornelius and Cotsworth, Hyland explores three major schools of genre: the New Rhetoric, also called North American New Rhetoric Studies by Hyon (1996: 693); The English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL), also known as Australian School Genre (16). The two argue that although the three

systems bear some differences, they are, nevertheless, bound by common threads of purpose, form and their situational social contexts. Cheng agrees with Hyon (1996); Hyland (2004); Johns (2002, 2003); and Paltridge (2001) that there are various approaches to genre, including "the ESP approach- the theoretical and pedagogical framework . . . using genre as a tool for teaching discipline-specific academic writing to L2, especially advanced L2 graduate students" (288). The genre-based methodology operates as a guide that helps cultivate in learners, skills for effective participation in analysing specific situations. Paltridge (2001), Hyland (2003) and Bhatia (2012) agree The Australian School of Genre is an alternative approach that is more holistically engendered for study of "text's purpose, organisation, features and linguistic Markers" (Cornelius and Cotsworth 19). As the genre trends indicate, and as long as genre keeps morphing to new independent and hybrid categories, genre studies will continue to expand the understanding of genre dynamic as a rich wetland for inquiry. This leads us to the inquiry of the YAF genre in Kenya, as the core study of this thesis.

1.3.0 A Marginalized and Peripherised Genre

Although there is little research on the YA genre in Kenya, there are related works that can shed light on the genre. In his study on the Kenya urban novel, John Roger Kurtz recommends "the need that juvenile or young adult fiction to be looked into", a category which his study does not cover. Other Kenyan scholars focus mainly on children's literature but rarely deal with YAL. A case at hand is Colomba Muriungi who focuses "on a project on biographies written for young readers" (1) produced by Sasa Sema publications, a project about famous historical and heroic figures mainly from Kenya. Of

significance to the current research is her lament regarding the kind of books that are written for children in the country. She observes that children's literature in "Kenya, [to which I add YAL too], and in East Africa in general, is mostly about childhood stories rather than historical figures." She further explains that the characters used are adult characters rather than younger fictional animal or human "characters that have characterized children's literature in the past" (ii).

Barbara Kimenye is a prolific writer of children's fiction and a journalist who wrote for the *Daily Nation* of Kenya (Schmidt, 1976: 75). Her books, mostly school life adventure in children's literature genre have influenced reading for children in Kenya. Schmidt describes Kimenye's works as fiction that "has been accorded an official status for school children" (75). Kimanthi Chabari advances the debate further in his MA thesis in which he explores the "various categories of masculine behaviour based on boy characters' power, control and popularity" (ii). He records that Kimenye's works, particularly the Moses Series which forms his primary references for his research "is popular both in Uganda and Kenya and is categorized as part of children's literature" (3). Children's literature is not a primary concern of the current research but, nevertheless, it informs the reading history of children in Kenya and part of which sometimes informs YA reading history.

Joan Akoleit's gives us more insights in her MA thesis entitled "Response and Criticism in Children's Literature in Kenya: The Case of Barbara Kimenye" but she does not indicate any particular interest in YAL. She posits:

> Western Children's Literature has received the attention and interest of critics whose works have guided and inspired the writing of quality literature . . . This kind of literary interest is lacking in Africa in general and in Kenya in particular where criticism has been haphazard and limited in offering clear guidelines to authors and other patrons of Children's Literature. (i)

It can be assumed that YAL is perceived and recognized as a section of literature in general and as children's literature in specific. However, Akoleit observes that YAL should be seen "not as an imitation of adult literature [or children's literature], but as a field of study deserving as much critical attention as adult and [children's literature]" (3). This perception is a positive contrast to what Kenneth Donelson and Allen Nilsen advocated in the 1980s that "we expect readers to continuously work their way onwards and upwards out of juvenile books" when they contested the lumping of YA books with children's books. The YA was considered a crossover category in which case "the YA section in a library is first and foremost a bridge taking people from childhood to adulthood" (365). Dennis seems to advance similar notions where he argues that YA are "separate from both the children on their younger border and the adults on their older" (3) and therefore merits a separate section in the library.

Akoleit's input advances the debate to a higher level. She notes that a major hindrance to writing and development in Kenya has been due to the fact that "Children's Literature is rarely published, unless a market is guaranteed through adaptation of titles as class readers by the Kenya School Equipment Scheme (K.S.E.S)" (i). In today's book market, writers struggle to have their titles slotted in the *Orange Book*, a catalogue of books approved by the Ministry of Education through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum

Development (KICD) as course books in Kenyan schools. (I will come back to this issue in chapter 2 when looking at publishing in Kenya). Lack of publishing has been a barrier to the growth of children's literature in Kenya (of course taking into account that YAL was considered part of this literature as well).

Yenika–Agbaw corroborates Daniel's argument that "if we, as scholars and as readers, don't bother to hold the YA work up to the light of crucial literary standards, then it is no wonder the works are not being taken seriously" (79). This is a genuine appeal to scholars and YAL stakeholders in particular to take charge of the genre and accord it the seriousness it deserves. Other critics have also observed a need for more books written for YA in Kenya. Different groups and organizations have risen to the occasion to correct the problem. For instance, the Burt Award team has set its prime objective to "recognize excellence in literature for youth" (Kenyanbooks). The statement continues that there exists "a large pool of talented writers in the country, yet [there is] a clear need for relevant and appropriate reading materials to be available for the youth to build and reinforce their literacy and foster a love of reading" (ibid). So, as can be deduced from the ongoing debates, it is obvious that YAL in Kenya is still facing major challenges but even more chronically in the research and criticism juncture.

Jana Varlejs' statement that "the fact that high school students cannot discern beyond the plot-character-theme kind of analysis should not preclude mature criticism" (36) shows just how negatively some critics see YA and their literature. The idea that YA are naive readers who are not endowed with critical skills to discern misconstructions that a novel may be promoting in its pages is a misconception. Varlejs however indicates the need to

show “how literature affects or reflects the adolescent experience” (2). This valuable call can only be realized if YA are first and foremost viewed in a positive and objective manner and the YA novels reflect their experience and are deemed relevant. Maria Nikolajeva identifies the above common fallacy that children’s books (as similarly perceived of YA books) are characterized by “a simpler narrative structure, poorer language, and inferior artistic resources” (6). However the texts in this study subvert the said misconception by their artistic presentations.

Most research addressing topics related to YAL appears in critical journals and academic books that are rarely accessible to YA, either in the public library or in the schools. Instead, schools place emphasis on set books aimed at passing national examinations. As one librarian confided in me at the national library in Nairobi Upper Hill branch, research on YAL is gathering dust at the university libraries’ shelves, most of them unpublished and therefore only accessible to the few who are permitted to visit the university library premises. I presume the Kenya national library has tried to model (at the expense of YAL) what Kenneth Donelson suggests when he strives to argue for the importance of YAL display in the library. He posits:

> When a library has no special section place for YA, then for psychological reasons, it is probably preferable to link the services more closely with the adult than with the children’s section of a library . . . the reasoning behind this is that, just like most people, young adults are looking to the future rather than the past. They would rather think of themselves as adults than as children. (364-365)

While this suggestion may be plausible in a world where YA are given amorphous identity, one wonders why YAL cannot have an explicit section in the library. Moreover, the suggestion seems to carry stereotypes where YA would rather be portrayed as adults rather than the YA they are. They had better be made to feel more adult than children but never as YA. However, what the librarians in Kenya may have failed to pay attention to is Donelson's warning on the consequences of neglecting YAL partition in the library. I share his fears that people "working in libraries where there is no specific young adult section may tend to forget about this segment of their population." And I concur with him when he suggests "They should pay more attention, rather than less, to this group" (365).

It should be noted that YAL in Kenya therefore faces an uphill task of establishment to a point when it can be said to command its territory, in terms of not only publishing but having books that are objectively reflective of the YA world.

1.4.0 Literary Institutions and Genre

In understanding questions of genre, one needs to look at factors both inside and outside the text. With regard to those factors outside the text, institutions are important. In her article "Literary Prizes, Writers' Organisations and Canon Formation in Africa" (Kiguru 202), Doseline Kiguru looks at the relationship between creative writing and the literary awards (The Caine Prize and The Commonwealth Short Story Prize). She convincingly argues that "local writers and literary prizes contribute to the canonization of African literature" (202). In yet another article "Prizing African Literature: Creating a Literary Taste", Kiguru further advances the argument to which I concede that "canonicity

through the award sector is influenced by several factors from the point of production to the presentation of the literary award" (abstract). The argument is plausible considering that (de)motivation of writers in the different levels of book production is bound to affect the quality of the final product, the book.

In this research, I examine a range of institutions that impinge on the making of the genre. These include Kenya Publishers Association (KPA), the National Book Development Council of Kenya (NBDCK), Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature (JKPL) and other literary prizes, the Library, and a range of gatekeepers in the named institutions.

Extra emphasis is laid on prize-awarding institutions that sponsor and back up recognition of YAF due to their contribution in exhibiting grandeur in YA genre in Kenya. Literary prizes have been defined differently by different scholars. Yulisa Amadu Maddy and Donnarae MacCann discuss prizes in terms of what the awards tend to achieve. The critics see book prizes as "ideals" that need to be pursued. Book prizing is viewed as a way of publicly celebrating literariness.

This research examines the prize-award judges' statements culled from interviews that I undertook with some of them. I also looked at newspaper reports on the awards, examined critical commentaries regarding the prizes, and interviewed the institutions' management (for instance KPA) and organisers of prize events. I also visited major public libraries in Nairobi and Nakuru to observe whether YAF shelves are factored in. I attended the 18th Book Fair, in 2015 in Nairobi where I observed the practical display of

YA books as well as interviewed the exhibitors to find out the challenges they face in regard to YA fiction display in Kenya.

1.4.1 Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature (JKPL)

Jomo Kenyatta Prize has played a key role in trying to display the importance of YAL in Kenya. It is the brainchild of the Kenya Publishers Association (KPA). The prize was inaugurated in 1974 to be awarded to Kenyan writers who have published in Kenya. It is awarded every two years. In its first three years, the award was only for adult fiction. It then remained dormant for fourteen years due to financial constraints. It was revived in 1990 with the sponsorship of the Text Book Centre, and the first prize in this phase was awarded to Margaret Ogola's *The River and the Source* in 1992. In 1997, the children category was added with Ezekiel Alembi's *Settling the Score* taking the award. However, the YA category was not introduced until 2005, with the award going to Bill Ruto's *Death Trap*. In 2007, the YA category was expanded to three prizes for YAF. It is only in the last twelve years that YAF has been accorded special attention and recognition compared to the adult and children's categories. In his article ("Must it be Called Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature?"), Mbugua Ngunjiri posits that currently, the first prize winner caries home 300,000 Kenya shillings up from 150,000 Kenya shillings in the previous years. The second and third prize winners receive 150,000 and 75,000 Kenya shillings respectively. It should also be noted that the Jomo Kenyatta prize is the earliest award to recognize YAF and show interest in quality book production for YA in Kenya. It is this kind of effort that I argue will propel the genre's progression.

1.4.2 The Burt Award

According to De Gruyter, the Burt Award gives preference to "excellence in young adult fiction from Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana and Kenya" (155). The Award is sponsored by the Canadian Organisation for Development and Education through William Burt and the Literary Prize Foundation. One of the Burt Award's objectives is to provide "young readers with engaging, age-appropriate books" (157). The award was launched in Kenya in January 2011, six years after the JKPL, by the National Book Development Council of Kenya (NBDCK).

Six years after the Jomo Kenyatta Prize had started monitoring production of quality fiction for young adults, YA fiction production is still scant. De Gruyter states that other than focusing on production of quality fiction for YA in Kenya, the prize was "at the same time promoting a love of reading and learning at the middle and the secondary school levels" (157). The award mainly focuses on YAF for the 12 to 18 years age group because, as they indicate in their manifesto: "These young people have their own literature and their own issues which are quite distinct from older generation writers who, for example, were more preoccupied with topics on exile and other similar themes" (qtd. in Gruyter).

Another important point that can be deduced from the statement is that YA literature is a distinct body of fiction, a recognition that the YA genre in Kenya is still struggling to be accorded. Henry Indangasi, a long serving chairperson of the panel of the awards judges, enumerates the criteria for selection of manuscripts for the winning titles. He says "for

these awards we are looking for a good story that is well told . . . we received several submissions but rejected some on the grounds that they were stories about young people, yes, but were told through older characters . . .” (157). The observation points to a need to train writers on how to write for YA in order to encourage the form as well as acknowledging YA as a distinct and explicit category.

As per the Burt award website (<http://www.codecan.org/kenya-0>), the first prize winner gets monetary award CAD$9,000, CAD$7,000 and CAD$5,000 for the second and third winners respectfully. Besides publishers’ guaranteed purchase of 3,000 copies of each winning title by CODE, they are also allowed to print an additional 2,000 copies to market and sell commercially (<http://www.codecan.org/kenya-0>).

1.4.3 Wahome Mutahi Literary Prize

The Wahome Mutahi literary prize was started in honour of the late Kenyan satirist Wahome Mutahi. At its inception, it awarded only one category, adult fiction. It was not until 2014 that the group introduced and awarded the first children’s fiction prize alongside the adult category. The prize is now meant for the two categories; children’s fiction and adult fiction. This shows a positive trend towards diversifying the literary canon in the country. I assume that soon the award will also consider including YAL category in its list, thus improving the YA canon as well. In looking at these awards, I track trends in the prizes, analyse reports and use interview material from the judges. Through examining this material, I establish how definitions of the YA genre are constructed and contested.

1.4.4 Kenya Publishers Association (KPA) and Publishing Industry in Kenya

The KPA was registered in January 1971. According to Henry Chakava, the Association was initially mainly "controlled by expatriate publishers working for the local branches of multinational publishers" (128). This status did not last as in 1982 KPA split "with the local indigenous publishers breaking away to form the society of Kenya Publishers" (ibid). The organization also faced many obstacles from the Kenya government as well as lack of cohesive ties with other neighbouring countries "in the establishment of a common East African market" (129). Nevertheless, of great relevance to this research is that currently, KPA is a major contributor to the smooth operation of all the three award groups discussed above. The association is the sole convener of Wahome Mutahi Literary Award as well as the Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature.

In an article "You Can Win a Cool One Million Shillings if You Write" Kimani Ngunjiri reports between "3,000 to 5,000 copies of their [writers' prize winning YA] books [are] automatically purchased by the NBDCK" (163). The purchase of the winning titles means additional monetary gain for the winning authors. The NBDCK does this in order to motivate the winners even more and attract others to continue writing for the YA and develop the genre further.

Important to note is that publishing outside the textbook sector in Kenya has always been a nightmare. The scenario is caused by two major factors clearly outlined by Chakava. The first is that up until 1996, "the government has never had a publishing policy or a book policy or even a broad information policy" (50). The second is that the government

monopolizes primary and secondary school text book production. Daniel Chebutuk Rotich confirms that most text-books are "developed and written by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) - the curriculum Centre" (61). They are then published by Jomo Kenyatta Foundation (JKF) established by the government in 1965, thus pushing small publishers out of business. The few commercial publishers "who have been able to publish in the areas of fiction, adult literacy, children's books and general and academic books have done this from money made from textbook publishing" (17). So, as is evidenced by this state of book publishing, it becomes difficult for would-be willing publishers to release fiction titles, since they are viewed as unprofitable. And for this reason, as Chakava further observes, "currently [1996] there's not much publishing in fiction" (21) especially in the YA category partly due to reasons cited above. Chakava records that production of children's books (YA was and still generally is part of the concept of child and childhood), is "probably the most underdeveloped in Kenyan publishing in spite of its potential" (22). He adds that each publisher has to "refashion their own concept of a children's book to adjust to the financial realities of the Kenyan market" (23) since they are very slow to sell. This points to the problem of production and buying of books that has continued to inhibit the YA genre's growth.

The commonly known challenges facing the publishing industry in Kenya include:

> Piracy . . . a poor reading culture . . . [that] approximately 85% of all local publishers are text book publishers resulting in very stiff competition . . . prevailing economic state in the country resulting in low sales. . . slow embracing of digital publishing and digitization of works and the recently proposed

> introduction of laptops in primary schools . . . [that] might grossly affect sales of text books in future. (Wata 3-4)

Lack of support for the awards has also at times left gaps where awards could not be given, as the case of JKPL in 1999, due to financial constraints as well as poorly written manuscripts.

1.4.5 The National Book Development Council of Kenya (NBDCK)

The many literary conferences on African literature often suggested each nation establishes a Book Council. The mandate of the body is to encourage formation of writers' associations, booksellers, and printers towards the improvement of literary field in their countries. According to Chakava, the NBDCK was established in 1982 but was toothless as "it exists in name only to this day [1996] in spite of promises from the Ministry of Education" (128). He feared, as has been the practice in Kenya, that once "such an organ, when, created will be headed by a bureaucratic civil servant with little or no knowledge or empathy with the publishing industry" (ibid). Today the organization's face has changed and the NBDCK, as Wata posits, "in particular seeks to encourage the development of a strong book industry and an entrenched reading culture in Kenya" (3). I investigated, through interviews and reading reports posted on the Organization's website (https:/code.ngo/national-book-development-council-of-kenya) the ways the organization is engaged in helping the YA genre to thrive besides the YA prize promotion. These themes are discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

1.4.6 Kenya National Library Services (KNLS)

I consider the library as another major institution contributing to dissemination of literature in any country. Its neglect of a YA culture literature material display in its premises has also led to the marginalization of the genre in Kenya. The librarian, as a professional who is trained to make informed discriminative choices for different genres,

is expected to know this better than anybody else. I presume librarians are, therefore, key players in the prizing of books in any genre but more so in the YA category where they operate as a positive selector. Kidd argues that librarians' role should be "protective and regulatory, especially when it comes to the young [adult]" (4) in order to celebrate their (YA and books) value. By virtue of their knowledge and training, librarians are expected to argue for the establishment of book displays in book centres such as the library - a case not effectively observed in Kenya.

Beatrice Wangari Macharia observes that the library services are poor owing to "lack of policies, inadequate services and resources and lack of marketing of services provided" (2). Nine years after this observation, Caroline Wanjiru Ngacaku's research postulated that the Kenya libraries are manned by "inadequate and untrained staff to provide the education and above all, lack of clear policies on library user education and lack of evaluation" (2). The same is also observed by Japhet Otike in his research *The Development of Libraries in Kenya,* where he posits that there is a notable "absence of a school library policy in the country" (5). A similar outcry has been registered by the Storymoja, an Organisation whose core aim is to "improve the literacy and numeracy levels of our children by publishing high quality and age appropriate content" (http://storymojaafrica.wordpress.com/about). The organisers have identified the ongoing lack of libraries in primary schools which they note has contributed to the young children's lack of literacy and numeracy skills. This problem affects not only the young adult literature but the children's too. In an intervention bid to counter the problem Storymoja has initiated a campaign branded "start a library" in which they appeal to

different well- wishers and county leaders to start a library in their regions as part of their community service projects. However before this call is heeded the library lacuna remains in the Kenyan reading scene.

I visited the Kenya National public libraries in Nairobi and Nakuru to observe whether the YA category shelves existed and establish the state in which they were. In addition I had face-to-face interviews with librarians on shelving policies as well as their views on the YA genre. I also examined whether there are YA sections and as well investigated where the YA titles are classified. Moreover, I explored whether the YA award-winning titles are stocked in these libraries. This information is necessary since the collected data helps us to ascertain the status that libraries bestow to the YAL genre in Kenya, which in turn marginalizes or empowers the genre.

1.4.7 The Gate-Keepers/Censors

I label the groups discussed in this section gate-keepers because their input impacts on the YAL genre in Kenya. In my view, they propose and influence the way the Kenyan writers for YAF approach their writing. In the Kenyan scene, the most active in this venture include: the church, lobby groups, marketers, bookshops, and the ministry of education (representing the government of Kenya) among other personalities.

These groups exercise different orders and types of influences on the production of YAF texts. The book marketers and the bookshops presumably try to promote particular texts so that they remain in business. They also influence what YA are exposed to by virtue of what they display and market as a result of which they function as informal censors. On

the other hand, the church, lobby groups and the ministry of education are particularly vocal about what subjects and books are produced in the country and therefore their censorship bid is more public.

A point not often acknowledged by many is that these groups act as censors. To censor a book, says Kidd, "is to devaluate it" (2). It might therefore be in order to argue that the intent of the gate-keepers challenging a given book sets into play perceptions of questioning the author's ideas and also stages a critique on all involved in the production of a book. Ironically, they both censor and popularize ("prize") books even though their basic intention is to suppress them. The idea is that the controversies around a given title have a dual impact on the book; with some arguing for its authenticity and others against it, and secondly raising curiosity amongst many readers who thus desire to read it. Consequently, the act that was initially meant to obliterate a title acts in the reverse, that of promoting its readership instead.

The government, for instance, still commands the greatest percentage of text-book publishing in Kenya, even under the new liberalized publishing laws. School books produced by any publisher other than the government's parastatals is vetted (a euphemism of censorship) by KICD. But to avoid the practice, Rotich suggests that the government could provide a blue-print to the publishers to ensure the quality of educational books (63). In addition, ministers of education over time have wagged their fingers at certain novels offered for study in Kenyan high schools. A case in point is a 2013 article, "Kenya Minister Seeks School Book Ban over Gay Link". The minister of education is recorded saying "I don't care how intelligent the writer is, I will get it

removed since Kenya is not ready for such a curriculum, at least not under my watch" (Africa Review wed, April 1, 2015). The book in question is Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider*. The trend can be said to be tantamount to stifling, muzzling and censorship.

The scenario above is not new in Kenya. In a similar case in 2009, a lobby group and the Catholic Church in Kenya wanted three African novels withdrawn from the school's syllabus. The three were Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, and, S. A. Mohammed's *Kitumbua Kimeingia Mchanga* and *"Kiu"*. The accusation was that the books contained pornographic material. This instance, like others before it, invited a lot of hullabaloo between the state and the publishers, high-school teachers, university lecturers and literary critics in regard to what the YA in Kenya should or should not read. This is an indication that these groups have considerable impact on the text material made available for YA in the country.

I argue that bringing a genre into being as the KPA is doing in conjunction with other players is a complex venture. I agree with Maddy and McCann's suggestion that "a less than obvious mixture of commercial, political and educational interests. . . [are normally] actively in play" (30) when establishing a canon. I consider that these groups impinge on the genre for different ends.

1.5.0 Book History

In making sense of the institutions discussed in this research, I drew on book history scholarship which provided guidance on how to analyse literary institutions, especially those concerned with book production.

Robert Darnton sees the study of the history of books as an enterprise that aims to "understand how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behavior of mankind during the last five hundred years" (65). The method offers directions of looking at a book as a material object. According to Darnton, book history:

> . . . is concerned with uncovering the general patterns of book production and consumption over [a] long stretch of time; tracing ideological currents through neglected genres; looking at comparative literatures; analysing the history of the libraries; publishing; type of paper and reading. (66)

The scholar, is therefore, exposed to all aspects of a book. In other words, the method offers a general model for analyzing the influence of institutions in the creation of books and their broader bearing on the YAF genre. The method guided me in discussing the issue of marginalization of the YA genre in Kenya. A second important theme of book history is to examine the book as a material object. In light of this, I have adopted a paratextual approach as championed by Gerard Genette's "Introduction to Paratext", where he argues that a book makes itself public in various ways.

1.5.1 Paratext as Text and a Tool

The paratext:

> . . . surround [the text] and prolong it, precisely in order to *present* it . . . to *make it present* to assure its presence in the world, its 'reception' and its consumption, in the form, nowadays at least, of a book. It is a threshold or 'vestibule' [entrance

> or entry] . . . It is the fringe of the printed text which . . . controls the whole reading . . . [It therefore in essence operates as] the privileged site of pragmatics and of transactions and of a strategy, of action on the public in the service . . . of a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading. (261-2)

In other words, the paratext orients the reader towards the text and shapes the way the actual text [the narrative] should be best approached. They act as tools that enable one to interpret various aspects of the YA books, not only as texts but as objects whose material features provide analytical sites beyond the purely textual.

The two major components of paratext are the epitext and the peritext. In chapter three, I examine the epitext, which involves "all the messages which are situated, at least originally, outside the book: generally with the backing of the media (interviews, conversations), or under cover of private communication (correspondences, private journals and the like)" (Genette 264). Details such as interviews with the author, reviews, reports on the text in the newspapers, form part of the epitext. These elements originally occupy the outside of a book but nevertheless inform the understanding of the book. Due to limitation of scope of the study, I do not examine the peritext (a paratextual element positioned around the printed text itself and its interstices) which include: titles of chapters, illustrations, caption and other notes in the text.

1.5.2 The YAF texts

This section traces the patterns across 11 award-winning texts. In addition to the above examination of the primary texts, I also interrogate whether there are recurrent plots and

setting, recurrence of styles, themes and characters across the selected texts. These motifs aid in drawing conclusions and establishing writing trends in YAL in Kenya.

Some of the significant YA fiction that I have read and done a general survey on in Kenya include Khamadi Were's *The Boy in Between* and its sequel *The High School Gent,* both of which have a school setting and trace the challenges that YA face in school. Through the main character, Namunyu, the author portrays YA's introduction to school life, their orientation, transition, adjustment, sexuality and peer pressure. Using the third person narrator, the writer presents an array of characters that include teachers, prefects, peers and the school administrators and how they relate to and with the YA. Other texts with similar patterns but with added themes such as drug abuse in school, violence and school hooliganism include Corney Gichuki's, *Hollow Bridges, Shadows in the Mist* and *Courting Trouble* and Stephen Mugambi's *Wait for Me Angela* tackling teenage love, romance and friendship.

A number of YA fiction also have college and university settings as is the case with Georgina Mbithe's *Arise and Shine* and *Campus Days* by Wandera Oganda. These books feature themes such as gender, sexuality, love, betrayal, education, disillusionment, diseases such as HIV/AIDS, marriage and women emancipation. The characters in these books are mainly students, friends, lecturers and other family members. Most of the narratives are told from the third person narrative voice. However, we also have some told from first person narrator as is the case with *Arise and Shine* by Mbithe which also employs a complex plot that includes flashbacks.

Another cluster of books are those that have shifting settings. The narratives begin mostly at school and shift to home and back to school and home again. Various themes stand out in this category: school hooliganism, rebelliousness, school dropout, poverty, diseases, contraceptives, culture and traditional beliefs, education, change, negligence, family problems, death, marriage and disillusionment. The characters involved are peers at school and at home, siblings, relatives and parents. Many of the texts are didactic but also critical at times. Examples in this category include Asenath Odaga's *The Villager's Son,* Mwangi Ruheni's *The Minister's Daughter, The Missing Links* by Tobias Otieno and Ngumi Kibera's *Beyond Darkness*.

Moralistic ideas in some of the titles are reinforced by the binary themes of good and bad, right and wrong, true and false. Wirimu Kibugi's *Painful Tears* and David Maillu's *For Mbatha and Rebeka* fall under this category. The former features nineteen-year-old Lilian who gets married to a University of Nairobi graduate immediately after she completes her high school. The relationship becomes intolerable after she discovers that her husband has been cheating on her with another woman. The latter novel features peers who are involved in love and marriage relationships which allow the author to belabour the themes of deceit, betrayal, friendship, alienation, gullibility, hypocrisy and mistrust among YA.

There is stereotyping of characters in some of the novels. In certain cases, they are featured as helpless and in need of adult intervention even when they may have been in a position to extricate themselves from the mire they may have been in. Some characters take up complex multifarious roles. They act as insiders who are actually outsiders - acting as regular peers yet they have been planted in particular problematic groups to act defiantly to gain acceptance in the group. Meanwhile they spy on their peers without the latter suspecting them. These kinds of plot structures are found mostly in texts with a school setting. Gichuki's novels, particularly *Courting Trouble,* take this pattern. Such books have also tended to employ detective-like story lines. On the basis of the texts I have surveyed, there is recurrence of similar, and appearance of new forms. The trends are discussed along the patterns of themes, characters, styles, plots and settings as identified above. Various motifs are observed in the different settings that gives rise to themes on drug abuse and violence, school dropout, gender roles, love and friendship, and family problems. Patterns of relatively simple plots and stereotyped protagonists foreground the texts' aesthetics. Chapter four, in which I examine all the 11 award-winning titles ascertains and contrasts some perceptible patterns in the texts.

1.6.0 Methodology

The study used a number of methods in data collection and analysis. I did a close reading of the primary texts in order to analyse their plot, thematic, and stylistic characteristics and also examine any outstanding features and trends. The in-depth reading also guided me to compare certain aspects that stand out by the different authors. As regards the material features of the text, I interrogated aspects of the book history guided by

Darntonian methods of analysis to establish how the YA book has come to be and how it has performed. In this respect, I focus on the materialness of the YA book and its paratextual positioning as championed by Genette. Physical surveys and visits to bookshops and publishing centers as well as attending the 2015 book fair in Nairobi helped me to observe how the publishers and traders showcased the YA genre in Kenya. I also undertook informal interviews. The research made references to reviews on books, newspaper reports and gathered information on institutions under study in order to get a grasp of the debates and views of others on books under study.

1.7.0 Outline of Chapters

This research is configured in five chapters in line with the core areas of the study.

1.7.1 Chapter One: Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss different definitions assigned to the genre as well as establishing the current research's operational definition. I portray different concepts of YA as "child" and enumerate relevant debates on childhood constructions in Kenya as well as other parts of Africa. I highlight debates surrounding the YA genre globally as well as in the region that have or have not led to the genre's growth in Kenya.

1.7.2 Chapter Two: Foundations and Institutions Impacting on the YA Genre

The following institutions are examined: Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature (JKPL); the Burt Award Kenya (BAK); Kenya Publishers Association (KPA); Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) and National Book Development Council of Kenya (NBDCK).

Various methods of data collection included looking at commentaries, newspaper reports, institutional manuals, observation and interviews. Analysis is based on how each institution impacts on the YA genre in Kenya.

1.7.3 Chapter Three: The Book: Paratext and the Making of YAF Genre

In this chapter, I assess the texts in terms of their physical presentation, whereby, I focus on the materialness of the book and paratextual elements of the primary books studied.

1.7.4 Chapter Four: Textual Criticism

This chapter focuses on the textual analysis of the primary YA texts. I look at the patterns across the texts in terms of plot structures, themes, characterization, style and authorial vision. Drawing from the analysis I identify different subgenres that make up the YA genre after which I try to establish the writing trend on YA fiction in Kenya.

1.7.5 Chapter Five: Final Summaries, Conclusion and Recommendations

Here, I test my original proposal's assumptions against the background of the findings from which I define my position regarding the YA genre in Kenya. I also draw up recommendations and suggest areas for further reading and research, all in a bid to positively position the YA genre in Kenya.

1.7.6 Appendix: Annotated Bibliography

I append an annotated bibliography of the YA prize winners studied in this research. In addition, I include a bibliography of other YA texts that have addressed YA world experience. I consider these titles worthwhile guides for YA and other general readers. In addition, writers could refer to this section to assess what has been produced for the YA and might identify a gap that may not have been addressed and write on it. This list references the choices available in print for readers. This venture, I argue, will also act as a reference point for other future YAF researchers to address the works from different research approaches that will help the genre to thrive in the country. Finally, the list will act as a spring-board from which other YAF works can be built on so that one day in future we may have a comprehensive Bibliography of YAL from Kenya for posterity and research.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 Institutions Impacting on YA Genre Traction in Kenya

2.1.0 Introduction

"Kanya gatune ni mwamukaniro"- a good turn deserves another

The above Kikuyu proverb, "kanya gatune" (a red gourd) may refer to an unusual situation, most likely a disaster. When such occurs, the solution is sought by the community standing together to confront it. They cooperate to solve the problem. The proverb is used to call people to unite for a common goal. The proverb's wisdom similarly speaks to this section's objective which is to address the findings of the different institutions that have, united or singly contributed to shape the YAF genre in Kenya.

Genre formation presupposes not only the textual elements but the contribution of external forces that collaborate to ensure the genre takes shape. In the language of genre studies, we could argue the institutions form members of a community that come together within their institutions and in collaboration with other institutions (multinstitutionality) pull with a common goal and performance to evince the YA genre in Kenya.

Bhatia (2008) laments the genre research emphasis on linguistic resources and reliance on formal properties of language with "very little emphasis on text-external considerations, that is, interdiscursivity and other socio-pragmatic factors" (319). This research recognizes that within their limits and bounds, the different institutions operate as

motivation builders by providing extratextual material logistics and efforts directed to enhance the YAF genre in Kenya (financing writing, awarding writers, marketing and purchasing of some of the texts). In examining the institutions' participation in promoting the genre, we understand in depth the material aspects of genre formation by interrogating the politics of the extratextual material features as objects of power and as abstract ideas influencing the shaping of genre. These textual-physically absent measures and features are cardinal to genre realisation without whose participation, at least in the Kenyan scene, the YA genre would not have been realized.

I call the institutional zone "paratextuation", a term that would be in line with the assertion by Bhatia (2008) that the external resources (including institutions) play an "important role in socio-pragmatics [and socio-economic logistics of the genre]" (17). By the logistics of the genre I draw reference as to how the institutions contribute to the production, marketing, sellability and / or consumability of the genre either singly and or in unity with the other institutions and bodies interested in the project (genre formation). The institutions may participate inversely by not/supporting the venture either through awarding (prizing) or censoring, performances that influence the direction of the genre at any given time. In the Critical Genre Analysis theory, Bhatia (2012) argues for the necessity to investigate "actions of the members of corporations, institutions and professional organisations" (23). The findings from the different institutions: the Library, NBDCK, the publishers, and their operations to display the genre reveal just how crucial the YAF genre, particularly in Kenya, is dependent on the institutions for its survival, at least currently. Bhatia (2008) further advocates for "paratextuation" examination arguing

that understanding of the genre "must be centred not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it [institution] is used [geared] to accomplish" (696).

2.2.0 Literary Prize-Awarding Institutions and the Formation of the YAF Genre

Literary prizes in Kenya are not very old and the YA category awards is an even more recent practice. Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature (JKPL) which was introduced in 1974 is the earliest but due to lack of sponsorship went fallow until 1992 when the Text Book Centre (TBC) joined hands with Kenya Publishers Association (KPA) to resuscitate the prize. Egara Kabaji, professor of Literature and Director of Public Communication and Publishing at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology and the then chair of the panel of judges, defended the decision for declining to give prizes to any writer in 1999. He reported submitted manuscripts had "structural and grammatical weaknesses of the entry were, to say the least, embarrassing to the publishers" (20-21). This implies that writing in Kenya has been a challenging task for other categories as well, let alone writing books for YA. The YA category prize was introduced in 2005 in JKPL and 2012 in the Burt award, the latter being the second award that recognizes the YA category in Kenya. Since then, there has been a concerted effort to work towards improvement of the YA genre by a number of institutions. This chapter is intended to interpret and present the findings of research carried out on such institutions that are endeavouring to promote the genre of YA in Kenya. The institutions interrogated are those that are committed to creating a body of fiction that deliberately addresses YA concerns through subject matter, characters and styles that speak to the YA world. To achieve this aim, the institutions have set up literary prizes that are awarded to Kenyan writers who write fiction that is

within the set matrix in the YA category. The prizes are given as incentives to encourage the writing of quality books that YA can relate with.

The institutions I have singled out as gatekeepers working to uplift the YA genre in the country include Kenya Publishers Association (KPA); Kenya National Library Services (KNLS); National Book Development Council of Kenya (NBDCK) and the Book Fair. The KPA and NBDCK were interrogated mainly because of their individual participation in the prizes of the YA category during the JKPL which is awarded biennially and the Burt award, which takes place every year. KNLS was also investigated because in my view, it also plays a role in ensuring that the YA books published reach and are accessible to the YA readers which in turn would help promote the genre in the country. I considered the Book Fair for this research as an institution that offers a forum in which a conglomeration of book stakeholders in general and YA works in particular are bound to meet and from which space I would be able to gauge and fill certain gaps in my thinking, through observation, conversations and interviews on how books for YA are advertised and displayed.

The participants were selected on the basis of their working in the relevant targeted sections, their availability and willingness to take part in the research. I conducted ten interviews, recorded seven speeches, three during the Book Fair opening ceremony and four during the JKPL award ceremony. I also received questionnaire feedback from eleven respondents in the different institutions mentioned above, besides other information I gathered through observation and conversations with different informants I met in the process of my field research. The key informants were interrogated by virtue

of their being stakeholders in publishing, marketing and / or judges of books. The judges were interviewed on the selection criteria, how they rate the winning manuscripts, how they ensure the winning titles reach the targeted YA readers and the challenges they face during selection. The institutions were also asked about the challenges they face while trying to ensure the YA genre takes shape in an environment where it has not been prioritized. Among those who I interviewed are two award judges, both lecturers at the department of Literature University of Nairobi, being the former and the current chairpersons of both JKPL and Burt awards. The first judge was Prof Henry Indangasi whom I interviewed three times; once during the Book Fair, a second time in his office at the University and a third time via phone call. The second judge was Dr. Tom Odhiambo, the current chair of the panel of judges. In addition, I held an interview with Kaituma Bonaya, senior librarian at Buru Buru National library, the KNLS National Administrative Headquarters.

The information gathered augments the argument that for the YA genre to take shape, the institutions studied are important. They are at the cradle of production, advertising, displaying and ensuring that relevant texts that would encourage reading among the YA are made available. This chapter argues that in supporting the writing of YAF, the named institutions not only make it possible to have relevant novels for YA but in addition help in shaping the current understanding of the YA genre in Kenya. In some cases, the informants sought anonymity and in these cases, I use pseudonyms, to protect the informants' identity. With regards to ethics, the project was cleared by the University of the Witwatersrand's Ethics Committee.

2.2.1 The Nairobi International Book Fair

The Book Fair is an event that is held at Sarit Center towards the end of every year in Kenya. I attended the fair with the intention of finding out how YA books are displayed by different book players as well as what these stakeholders knew about YA fiction that had won awards in both JKPL and Burt awards. I spoke with different exhibitors and observed various aspects in relation to fiction that had won awards in the YA category as I discuss below.

Notably, where I had expected a more vibrant display and pointers to the YAF texts that had won prizes at different publishers' stands, this was not the case. Literature books were often overshadowed by the more pronounced display of school books and materials ranging from preschool reading charts to the syllabus compliant books. My anticipation was that the book fair, an event expected to attract readers and writers of all cadres, would have featured at least some YAF, especially those that had won prizes.

Some personnel manning the stands lacked information and were not knowledgeable about the workings of the publishing houses they represented. A case in point is where I approached an exhibitor on whether they publish YAF but he was oblivious of any detail about the publishing house that had assigned him duties on the stand. On noticing my surprise at his total ignorance he quickly said "I am just an intern in the company and I know nothing about books". I lightheartedly told him that he should learn as much as possible about books before leaving the publishing house. I also listened to the stand competition awarding judges whereby they commented that people placed in charge of a stand and lacking adequate information impacted badly on the publishing house they

represented. The judges also argued that the impression created would not leave a positive lasting appeal on visitors to the book fair and that such visitors would be wary of depositing their manuscripts with such houses.

What also became obvious was that the book fair in Kenya mainly targets students and their teachers, or as KPA chairperson Waweru's noted, schools are a "very significant stakeholder in the book fair" (Waweru, recorded speech). It is during the season that most publishers expect to strike deals with learning institutions for orders to supply books (mainly school texts). However, a teachers' strike that had halted all programs in schools affected Book Fair in 2015. As a result the turn up of student (YA) population at the fair was therefore minimal. Observably, many of those attending the fair were mainly elderly people, most of whom were either professionals or were looking for subsidized price rates on school materials for their children.

I asked one of the exhibitors who had been displaying early childhood material over the last three years, whether YA attended in the past. He reported that in the past book fairs it was possible to notice several YA in uniforms and in the company of their school teachers. I deduced that the personal and individualized pull to books and reading was evidently low.

2.3.0 Awards

2.3.1 The YAF Awards

The two awards that are normally given in Kenya for the YA category are the JKPL which is awarded biennially and the Burt Award that is awarded every year during the

Nairobi International Book Fair. The objective of the awards is to encourage and reward the best authors of the finest YA book in Kenya and to promote excellence in publishing. The criteria for writing for the young adult category is normally indicated in the calls for manuscript submissions (https://burtaward.org/kenya-0). Both awards insist that the writers have to be a Kenyan citizens, present work in prose fiction written in chapter form; stories to be original and thought provoking as well as use of language that is appropriate for ages 21 to 18 years. While Burt award requires that the manuscripts be in flawless English, JKPL recognizes both English and Kiswahili young adult entries in all its three categories – children, young adult and adult. The manuscripts' length range from 80 to 120 pages with a word count of 30,000 to 40,000. Authors are also expected to forward double-spaced typewritten work on A4 paper that is set in Times Roman font 12.

The actual awards' giving time is considered a period of reflection for different stakeholders in the book industry to ponder on relevant questions that bedevil the sector. Mary Muthoni Maina, the chairperson of the Book Fair raised some of these during the book Fair opening ceremony:

> Who will replace Ngugi wa Thiong'o and others? Why are we not producing quality products? Why are we not encouraging writing? Why are we not receiving quality manuscripts from people who are interested in writing? What is the impact of internet and especially the social networking sites such as Facebook, and what is the effect in reading, in marketing and distribution of our quality published books? (Maina, recorded speech)

According to Tom Odhiambo, the then chairperson of the panel of judges in both Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature (JKPL) and Burt award, the trend of submission for the YA category had improved. He noted that although currently there are no prizes for poetry, drama and other forms of fiction like biographies and autobiographies, some writers had submitted them all the same. He posited, "why this prize has never considered poetry and plays is a shame. Possibly even biographies and autobiographies in the past one year have written fifteen or twenty biographies or autobiographies." He also reported that the panel was surprised to see books that were written by children and noted that the practice was a commendable trend. However, there was no submission of works written by YA writers, yet there exists the YA category, an indicator that the genre is still on the margins of popularity (Odhiambo and Waweru, recorded speeches). The scenario resonates with James Murua's comment in an article "Kenya Burt Award 2014 nominees announced" that "there is no teenager in the panel which is sad if you consider that this [these] books are targeted at their age group" (2).

2.3.2 Judging the YA Category Awards

Just as there are manuscript submission criteria, so too is there one for judging the awards. (https://burtaward.org/kenya-0) The judges are expected to consider works with literary merit, flowing plot and plausible characters of whom the protagonist is a young adult. The work has to have good command of English or Kiswahili in terms of grammar, cohesion, structure and vocabulary, depending on the language and category the manuscript and the award it is being forwarded for. The shortlisted work is expected to also demonstrate effective use of imagery, vivid descriptions and lively dialogue. The

manuscript has to have engaging and entertaining cues that build curiosity and interest in the young adult readers. Finally, the judges are expected to ensure that shortlisted works tackle issues facing young adult readers in the country.

A speech by the chairperson of both JKPL and Burt Award panel of judges, Odhiambo, reported that unlike in the past the manuscripts submitted were of a better quality (Odhiambo, recorded speech). For instance, in 2013 the then chairperson of the panel of the awards, Henry Indagasi decried the poor quality of manuscripts submitted for the YA category. He said that most of those submissions then "lacked serious creativity; the story lines were either above or below the expectations of the YA criteria. The characters were either adults or young children," (Indangasi, interview). From the two comments, 2015 therefore marks notable improvement and thus the trend is encouraging for the production of relevant fiction for the YA. However, Odhiambo indicated dissatisfaction with the YA texts compared to the children's category. He reported that the panels for both JKPL and Burt awards noted:

> The children's entries are generally better quality books than adult texts. The people who write children's texts in this country actually put in a lot of effort . . . at the Burt Award and the feeling was the same, that the writing for the youth is encouraging. The writing for the adult often veers off the course (Odhiambo, recorded speech).

Odhiambo further observed that the low quality of the YAF manuscripts is due in part to poor packaging: in some cases the "font size and print diminish the value of the book."

The tendency for the writers to overemphasize the "subject matter or the theme of the writing at the expense of craft" also contributes to the manuscript being rejected (Odhiambo, recorded speech). In the event, authors find themselves in a dilemma in the Kenyan market where they have to struggle to capture the eye of the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Developers (KICD) if their book is to survive. Once the book is placed among the titles in the Orange Book, the authors are guaranteed good sales. Schools are expected to recommend to their students to purchase books listed in the Orange Book (a catalogue in which all approved books for school use in Kenya are listed). As a result, authors try to force their books to fit in, in the race for survival. This compliance-like demand on the part of KICD in my view has contributed to the poor writing of YAF since, writers will tend to write to impress KICD and veer off the YA issues. The view is supported by the awards panel of judges' chairperson, Odhiambo, who posits that "the power of KICD often is too strong for our writers to really spend a lot of time on the craft. They are much more interested on the themes" (Odhiambo, reported speech). A book can have a good theme and subject matter but its beauty and what makes it memorable in the minds of YA readers is the manner in which the story is told. The lament from the judges is that most manuscripts submitted for the YA category lack this edge to their narratives, a scenario, which if not checked could, in my view impact adversely the YA genre.

According to Odhiambo, authors should be left to explore their creative competences. He argues they should enrich the world of YA with books that resonate with their world

"rather than writing stories about a beautiful girl-child that is exploited by a man with a potbelly and is often biased because KICD will actually pick the book" (Odhiambo, reported speech). In the struggle to win the favour of KICD, in my view, writers of YA fiction are forced to sacrifice stylistic innovation.

2.3.3 Book Prizing in Kenya: YAF Value

Jomo Kenyatta Prize for Literature (JKPL) is a body that is supported by a range of publishing houses in Kenya to award prizes to the best Kenyan writer in different categories, among them, the YA. It is also sponsored by Text Book Centre (TBC), the largest book suppliers in the country. The KPA chairman, David Waweru noted during the 18th Nairobi International Book Fair that TBC is "one of the rocks of Kenya and East African publishing." The second award-giving body is the Burt award that is sponsored by William Burt, a Canadian Philanthropist in conjunction with the KPA and NBDCK.

The basic objective for the JKPL prize was enumerated by the TBC managing director Rajiv Chaudrey:

> To encourage and reward finest writing in Kenya; promote publishing in the country, encourage Kenyans of all walks of life to get interested to write quality books; offer highly discounted prices for books, sponsor writers' seminars and book launches and support the digital competition sponsored by e-kitabu. The seminars are one way of trying to establish why many Kenyans are not writing books as avidly as required as well as equipping them with skills to improve and change their attitude towards writing (Chaudrey, recorded speech).

The motivation, says the managing director is prompted by the urge to try and get a writer who could fill the writing gap seemingly left by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a feat many believe has not yet been achieved in Kenya. He adds that there is also need "to find out why there are not many quality manuscripts being submitted for competitions. The Company also endeavours to promote marketing and distribution of published materials to all parts of the country" (Chaudrey, recorded speech). This it does through its outlet bookshops in different parts of the country.

The three categories are the children's, YA and adult. Even for each winner in each category, it is notable that the amount awarded was different. The winner in the children's category got KSH.100, 000. The winner in the YA category received KSH.150, 000, half the token awarded to the adult category winner who took home KSH.300, 000. These differential awards demonstrate, in my view, the relative respect and value attached to each category.

2.3.4 Gatekeeping: Falling Between the Cracks

Regarding the JKPL and Burt awards, the general feeling of the judges is that when it comes to the rating of the book, the text usually nominated first is not necessarily the best of the three on the YA category. What the judges look at is mainly whether the text stands out in terms of "characterization, style and language on the discussion of a specific subject in comparison with the others," said Odhiambo. The panelists cite the difficulty they are faced with in trying to judge the YA manuscripts for the prizes. Odhiambo equates the selection to a buffet whereby the texts come in different shades. An

assortment of subjects in the manuscripts is placed before the panel so that when "reading these books there is a buffet of subjects because KICD is looking for a book on youth empowerment, the killing of the gangster . . ." (Odhiambo, recorded speech).

However, there have been instances when a manuscript has missed winning in a given year but where the author listens to the advice of the judges it wins in subsequent years. A case in point was Mary Kabui's manuscript rejected in 2013 for YA category Burt award. But, after reworking the book in reference to the judge's notes, the book was rated position 3 in 2015. The judges encourage a book that is rejected in one region or for one award to be submitted to another award, for as Odhiambo reinforced in his speech during the JKPL award, " a book that is rejected in Nairobi could actually be that that is the book the people in Mandera loves" (Odhiambo, recorded speech). In other words, an author should try submitting s/his manuscripts at different places as there is a possibility that the content of the manuscript is what might be required at that time. Indangasi stressed a similar point during the interview when he reiterated that a book may be rejected when "themes and characters portrayed are not within the required YA category range" (Indangasi, interview). It means therefore that writers who forward their books for competition should not give up easily when their book is rejected for a given prize. It would be better if the authors were to "look into the eyes of the reader and tell the reader 'this is my story' without sidetracking" (Odhiambo, recorded speech). Intent to encourage quality fiction for the YA in Kenyan, the judges urged the writers not to lose heart but keep on the track in a bid to ensure the YA genre grow.

The awarding period seem to be a moment of reflection, coming together of authors and publishers to encourage each other. There was an insistence by KPA chairperson, Waweru, that both the authors and publishers had not yet played their roles to their full potential (Waweru, recorded speech). For instance, he reiterated Odhiambo's call to authors to be more active participants of the publishing process than they have been. To improve their proceeds from their pen, the authors are advised to be much more engaged in marketing their books post the prizing moment. It is reported that in the past as soon as their manuscripts are accepted "shoooooo! Job done! And it's up to the publishers to invest every single shilling they might have to publish the text," (ibid). He added that many successful writers in the world are normally very active participants in the promotion of their books. He insisted that no matter "how much the publishers have put into your work, no one can be a better ambassador of your work and your thoughts than yourself, no one can do that better than you" (ibid). He reiterated the need for authors to create certain operational platforms through which to develop their talent as authors. He urged writers to engage in basic research, internet connectivity, interactive websites with their readers, and integrating social media as they engage in writing. With the explosion of the digital age and the measures that KPA is taking, there is a positive trend that with time will influence the marketability of YA fiction as well as creating an enabling platform through which writers in the genre could sell their thoughts to the YA in Kenya as well as influence the rest of the world. Perhaps the works produced might with time erase the current trend as observed by Waweru that in literature, "we still seem not to

have broken the big ring of writers globally [and that] these awards will be a moment of walking away with greater determination" (Waweru, recorded speech).

2.3.5 Beyond the Prize, a Word of Caution for Writers

A submitted manuscript that does not meet the set criteria may be rejected due to one or a combination of factors. A manuscript may be rejected for not meeting the minimum threshold: presenting cogent plot, creative use of language and style, well drawn characters, setting and relevant thematic concerns that cut across all human experience, and the overall lasting impression on young adult readership.

The fate of a rejected manuscripts, Indangasi specified, is that its future rests with the publisher. It is the obligation of the publisher and the editors to return the rejected manuscripts to the author with a comprehensive summary detailing reasons for its rejection. In addition, the publisher gives corrections and recommendations sometimes that could lead to the manuscript being published if it is updated accordingly. I argue that writing for YA is a long term commitment that should not be pegged just on winning prizes. An award should be seen as a bonus but not the only reason for writing.

Another major observation made was that some authors for YAF also give up a bit too easily before the book has made its rounds. Other young writers sell their rights hastily after realizing their book is not giving returns as quickly as they would have thought. Lying behind this lament is the fact that writers for YAF need to exercise patience. It was also made clear that once budding writers establish a name for themselves, they are given preference by the pubblishers, a process that inevitably works against newer authors.

A notable development is that while in the past writers forwarded their manuscripts to the award selecting panel, they are now forwarding them directly to the publishers. It is the work of the publishers to go through the manuscript, edit, correct, and in other words "removes the chaff - do the sieving," argued Said, an officer from Phoenix publishers (interview). The advantage of this arrangement is that the judges presently receive refined documents thus making their vetting work 'easier'. It is hoped, therefore, that the quality of YA texts produced henceforth will be of higher quality than before. Odhiambo affirmed that writing "for youth is overwhelmingly good" (Odhiambo, recorded speech), as an optimistic note towards upgrading of the YA genre in the country.

2.3.6 YA Input in the Manuscript Selection for the Awards in the YA Category.

An interview with Indangasi revealed some shortcomings on the award selection dynamics. To the question whether the YA are ever engaged when selecting the winning manuscripts and texts, the professor's rejoinder was that it has been a challenging aspect for the sponsor and the panelists. He reported that they had severally recommended the YA involvement but it been problematic since "most YA are often in school, and drawing them from school to the rigors of manuscript selection would be prohibitive" (Indangasi, interview). Indangasi added that even though the panelists have been selecting books for the YA, the latter could question the choices since they are never represented. The chasm that still exists is whether adult writers reflect the mind of YA. Not giving the YA a chance to decisions on what they would like to read in my view is an indicator of how the YA are regarded and how their reading interests are viewed in Kenya. The practice is bound to be prejudiced even by the noblest meaning adult mainly because of the

generation gap as well as the fast changing world of technological innovation overwhelms the older generation.

According to Indangasi, to which idea I concede, a way should be devised to involve the YA in the selection of the texts. The process could in the long run act as a motivating academy to train YA to write, this time by doing, a kind of apprenticeship under already informed veteran prizers. After all, only the YA could actually appreciate candidly their experiences than having to rely exclusively on the observations of people outside their circles.

2.3.7 Support by Kenyan Citizens for the YA Category Awards

On the reason why we do not have Kenyan philanthropists like William Burt, who use money to the tune of several millions to fund the Burt prize through several deliberate activities supporting Kenyan writers, Indangasi observed that Kenya is a young nation with the greatest bulk of population being YA. He laments failure by particular people including the president after whose father's name one of the prizes is known and who has not had any input to the said prize. He argues that if there was goodwill and that Kenyans took writing as seriously as they did politics, then it would be possible to promote more writers for the YA category than is happening currently. Mary Mbuthia raised similar sentiments during the Book Fair opening ceremony when she asked "why are we not encouraging writing?" Odhiambo too added his voice when he reported that in the previous year, "we asked [a senior government official] to go to the government and tell the government that Wahome Mutahi prize named after one of the best satirist this

country ever produced needs to be revived . . . and that was it" (Odhiambo, recorded speech). In other words, there lies a major challenge for the sustainability and survival of these awards.

I accede to Indangasi's observation that YAL "is one area that has been ignored simply because many people do not understand it, and yet, it's a very important area. YA is an important demographic." In addition the "future of the country depends on how well the government embraces the reading needs of this very important population." The underscored point, I agree, is that if the YA are not handled through books they can relate to, "we might just lose them [to a literary desert], yes, we might. If we do not show the YA the way through books, we might lose a whole nation" (Indangasi, interview).

2.3.8 The Award Gala: Award Winning Presentation Impact on the Reading and Writing YAF in Kenya

The JKPL award of YAF took place at Pride Inn, Westlands on Saturday 26th September 2015. Invited guests included dignitaries ranging from politicians, representatives of ambassadors of different nationalities and friends of the publishers and writers. During the ceremony different speakers pledged their commitment, loyalty and willingness to supporting authorship (Award speech recordings).

As matters turned out, this was the only prize I managed to attend as the Burt Award was closed to the public. The scenario ran contrary to what I had read on a newspaper article by Peter Oduor about 2013 book fair, "it's time to meet your favourite author: Book enthusiasts have a chance to mingle with writers and publishers at the Sarit Centre" (5).

While most literary prize-givings tend to be closed events, it would be worthwhile considering making these events open to a wider constituency especially to the YA. In a newspaper article on writing and prizes, author and the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation Managing Director, Waithaka Waihenya posits that every writer "wants everyone to know that you have written a book that you have graduated from composition and news stories" (22). YA in particular need be given an opportunity to witness such a moment.

2.4.0 The National Book Council of Kenya (NBDCK)

2.4.1 Organisation

NBCK is not a government organization and is currently being funded by the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE). I visited the NBDCK at a time of great challenge as the personnel were struggling to move offices. I was informed they do not have permanent offices and the organisation operates at the mercy of landlords who may have no idea of the sensitivity of handling books. They moved to another place but again they had to vacate the rooms because they were too small and unconducive for book storage. In the period of this research, the council offices had been relocated to the third apartment, in a span of one month, where they have rented a one-storey three-bedroom apartment in residential quarters. This they have converted to an office where the YA books that have won prizes in Burt awards remain in cartons awaiting distribution. An NBDCK officer informed me that the corporation had made requests a number of times to the government to consider giving them a government place where they could operate from but that request has not yet been honoured. The

information received indicates that the council had suggested they be allocated some space in the national library so they could also work closely with the Kenya Library but again this plea is yet to be heeded.

2.4.2 Challenges NBDCK Faces

Staff in the NBDCK expressed their disappointment in the fact that the government does not support the council. For their operations, the book council has always depended on foreign aid and therefore their obligation and loyalty is to the donors. A newspaper article, "Kenyan writers and readers are guilty of idolizing the West" on *Sunday Nation*, John Mwazemba observes that due to lack of writer's support by the government, "all the major prizes [in Kenya] are donor funded [decrying lack of government's involvement]. (We should therefore not be surprised if they wish to advance a certain agenda)" (14). The council may not pay much attention to government policies since they view the government as having betrayed them. Nonetheless, the council expresses optimism for the YA genre especially if the government begins to participate. They are positive that the genre has a bright future if the right support is granted.

It is unfortunate that NBDCK should be facing such hurdles as they try to enrich the reading habits of the YA in the country. As a result, the YA genre continues to be peripherised in Kenya. Observably, it has taken the initiative of foreigners to identify the gap; there is a need for quality fiction for the Kenyan YA, yet as Indangasi observes, wealthy Kenyans have not been forthcoming with support. The lack of concern for the reading interests of the YA is worrying since the country is not supporting the idea of

imparting the right values to the YA, yet substantive values are normally encapsulated in books.

By “right values”, which I perceive to be ethical nodes in writing, I argue that YA texts that win prizes are contain vital lifelong skills for young adults. Captured in the texts are narratives, characters and settings that empower young adult to be self-driven in solving their problems, promote young adult characters capable of making informed decisions particularly when faced with the ever evolving technological advancement, reinforce proactive rather than emotive reactions (a stereotype young adults are often accused of), and advance national sociocultural goals that support harmonious coexistence among diverse human beings.

2.5.0 Kenya National Library (KNLS)

2.5.1 Background

Libraries play a crucial in shaping people’s perceptions and understandings of books. One critical way in which this happens is through how libraries organize and display books. There are two main sections in the Kenyan library: national library where material and books in this section cannot be borrowed but can only be read within the library premises; and the public library, where the public can borrow in reference to terms and conditions set for them. It is in the second section that books are placed in two main sections; Junior and Adult. The Junior section has books for 0-15 age range while other books rated above this age are shelved on the adult section. A visit to the national public library headquarters in Upper Hill revealed that currently there is no YA section in the

main public library. The implication is that if a reader wanted to read books written for YA they would either have to wade through the many titles in the adult section or search in the Junior section considering YA has been seen in some quarters to include those from the age of 12-18 (for the Burt Award category) all the way to 25 and 35. The argument behind the lumping of YA titles amorphously in both junior and adult section is said to emanate from lack of space. However, a glimmer of hope was signaled when the librarians reported that a new larger building is being built and that they would move to the new premises early in 2016. According to Kaituma Bonaya, "a newer library has been built where operations will shift to. With a large space particularly for the junior library, YA section shall be created like we have in our sister library at Nakuru. Materials for YA shall be identified, processed and put to the disposal of YA. Efforts shall be made through marketing to reach the YA category users" (Bonaya, interview). In this particular question of making the YA books accessible to the public, KNLS was the most positive, amongst the institutions I studied.

A visit to the Nakuru library confirmed that they have a YA section. The books available are series that have been donated by the Book Aid International and the American Embassy according to a librarian at the centre (Nakuru interview). However, the librarian cited several challenges they face in trying to satisfy the YA reading demand. She reported that available titles do not meet the "diverse needs of the teens, teens are very selective and some are very fast readers, as a result they exhaust the existing series (which are sometimes not complete) hence the readers get disappointed" (Nakuru interview). Another senior librarian in Nakuru revealed that the library's YA section

would require a larger space if the various YA reading needs are to be met. She notes that the sizes of the titles posed a challenge when placing them on the shelves because "some are too small with very few pages. This makes it difficult to fix the magnetic tapes. Others are bigger in size thus forcing us to have parallel arrangements" (Nakuru senior librarian).

The report from the Nakuru library, like in all other libraries I visited, neither Burt Award nor JKPL winning YA titles existed and the librarians said they too did not know about the awards. However, they expressed the need to be involved in the YA book venture since as one of them said it is "important as we deal with the teens [but] important first to be enlightened on the awards" (Nakuru interview).

The determination to put measures in place to ensure that YA received YAF texts was overwhelming. For the librarians the will and readiness were discernible from their responses. But, how efficient the accessibility of the YAF winners is going to be mainly rests with the KPA and the NBDCK. As can be seen the library has even started setting up YA sections as is evidenced in Nakuru library and as I observed in Buru Buru library in Nairobi. As reflected in the words of the respondent in the latter library, there should be "encouragement on creating section for this type of the customer. Some branches has [have] active sections" (Bonaya, interview). There is a focused promise that there are plans to create these sections also in the libraries where they do not exist. But how well this is going to serve the interests of the YA depends on whether writers and publishers are willing to respect the National Depository section of the library where each published text is supposed to be registered after having received an ISBN number. In turn, the

librarians would know what has been published for the YA and then be able to make orders for the same in the library. At the moment, even where the YA section exists (at Buru Buru and Nakuru) YAF award winning texts were lacking on the shelves. It would be worthwhile for the NBDCK in particular to honour one of its objectives on the Burt Award, "to increase the stock of English readers in established school libraries and other libraries" (CODE Kenya). I presume KNLS fits not only within the "other libraries" but that KNLS being a more open, public and central reading space should be given prime locus for stocking the YAF texts. The focus would ensure that the YAF texts reach a wider YA readers than happens when they are directed to designated schools where only a small target group benefits.

I established from the interview with Bonaya that there are readers who frequent the library and ask for particular titles on YA but that most of the time the titles are not available. Bonaya rightly observed, "Young adults are the forgotten lot of user community. Mostly, the library reaches out to young ones, that is, junior readers" (Bonaya, interview). It was therefore not a surprise that I did not find a single YAF text that had won a prize in the JKPL and Burt awards in the YA section of the library. The other reason is that publishers and writers are lax in depositing books in the library. This then puts off readers who may have benefited from the subsidized access charges for books in the library compared with the purchasing the title in bookshops. The library services are 'free' but the users have to pay some little charges that are in turn used to buy more books for the library as the library management does not just rely on the rarely deposited texts.

2.5.2 Researches Documents in KNLS

If YA as a genre is to grow, it is important that research in this area is carried out. However, if such research is done, it is difficult to access. Bonaya indicated "I have never seen those ones [research on YA fiction]. The ones around are those done by librarians and even those are very few. People leave them in the institutions where they study". This poses a challenge to the librarians since they have no avenue to reach documents produced in different study institutions in the country in order to understand the trend of research outcomes on YAF or any other category. The other notable problem is that the research depository section in the library does not exist, "there is no such section in the library" reported the same librarian. Lack of this kind of section in the library does not augur well if research material continues to be locked up in the university archives and libraries where they are only accessible to a limited clientele as opposed to the public library. This means the recommendations made by researchers are never implemented and any research in YAF has little wider publicity.

2.5.3 Marketing the Library

These activities are organized by the regional libraries within their area. The country boasts of sixty such regional libraries. Besides, the activities are also supported by the NBDCK through finances, which provides books and facilitate transport and movement of personnel. However there is no special focus on YA titles that had won prizes. Most librarians are not even aware that YA titles exist, leave alone taking them to the regional centres, as I established during the research. The observation was further reinforced by the fact that I could not find a single winner title in the YA section in any of the libraries I

visited. On asking Bonaya whether they stocked YAF that had won prizes; she interjected with some humour in her tone, "What are those? I also don't know. Kwani? Sent us some books . . . I don't know now which had won what!" (Bonaya, interview) The general trend is that the books being traded are school books and general fiction mainly the imported or donated books from other parts of the world. The locally published YAF is not given preference.

2.5.4 Financing the KNLS

I gathered that donors are the major contributors and financers of the KNLS and that the government is not really involved in supporting books supplied to the library. The librarians write funding proposals to parastatals, local institutions and foreign embassies for support. For instance the Safaricom Kenya, one of the largest mobile phone companies in the country has supported the library in supplying books to Garissa County. The other body that supports the KNLS is the Book Aid International which in conjunction with the NBDCK donates books to schools. Asked whether the library advises the donor on the books to supply, the response was that most books donated especially by Book Aid are for tertiary level but:

> When it comes to this section, the teenage section, I think this section is neglected, the teenage section. It is unlike those two other sections of the library: the Junior section, we have very good books, so many locals, so many Kenyan writers . . . But here . . . Apart from those I have not seen any good local book [for the YA] . . . they may not be very relevant too. Maybe that is why they don't borrow any other than those ones that there are (Bonaya, interview).

The quote reinforces how deeply marginalized the YA genre is in Kenya. It opens a window through which we can view the serious challenges the stakeholders have to address before the YA genre can claim command on the Kenyan literary space. In order to supplement the donated texts KNLS purchase some books mainly on recommendations pegged on demand of a book by the library users. But then the information I gathered is that the librarians rarely buy books for the YA section because they are much more expensive compared to children's titles that are reportedly "very very cheap. They are very small and some are really tiny and can go for a hundred. You can buy several. What we normally get over the years is always the same, it goes down. It does not increase . . . but when the book fund is given, there is always a cut. Book fund goes schwew!" said Bonaya (ibid).

So, there lies the predicament the librarians find themselves in when they try to balance the funds they get with the actual need on the ground. Although they are trained, the librarians are often not able to deliver their services efficiently due to the fact that the government limits the library resources or has no budgetary provision for the national library. And titles in the YA category that have won prizes continue to be left out because what becomes manifest is that concentration is mainly on general fiction books and school reading materials.

2.5.5 Reading for Leisure

Even though Kenyans are reputed to be poor readers, the report I gathered is that there are those who frequent the libraries for leisure reading. It was reported that often adults

go to the library to read the local daily newspaper, an option cheaper than if they had to buy a paper which costs Ksh 60. The library requires they just pay Ksh 20 to read all local papers, magazines and Christian materials for motivation. College students do their research, especially on medicine and law in the library. Students from the capital city high schools use the library over the weekends and during the holidays since they get a conducive environment for study. The KNLS can be seen as a rescue centre as was witnessed during the 2015 national teachers strike that lasted one month. "Students flooded the library corridors especially the candidates [those about to sit national examinations] as they tried to do their private studies," said the officer. Asked whether the high school students, a majority that fall under the YA category, ever inquire about YA texts, the librarian reported that this had not been the case. The problem could be that not many YA know the category exists. The other reason could be that prize-winning titles for YA, as I observed above are not even stocked in the libraries. And yet if the library were to have the YA winning titles stocked in the library YA section, YA may access and read them more readily.

2.6.0 A New Direction to Boost the YAF Genre

During the research I discovered that the publishing industry is bracing for the new challenge of the internet and the digital book. There has been set up in the country the ministry of ICT to expedite the digital platform for both writers and publishers in a bid to revolutionalise the book and to make available necessary content for the nation. According to the ICT ministry Managing Director, Engineer Peter Kyalo, (while launching the digital book), during the Book fair opening ceremony at Sarit Center, the

ministry is mandated to partner with (KPA) and come up with a business model. In this the ICT ministry's role is that of "regulation, quality assurance and control" of the smooth running of the model. He reiterates that this venture will ensure "we have a smart society, where people can exploit their talents and identify opportunities and be able to run away with those opportunities." In other words, the ministry creates a forum that could be exploited to the YA advantage. The idea that runs behind this thread is the proclamation "we need to build total capacity in our youth." The idea is noble since if the prize winning texts are also to be availed in digital book form, the YA are able to read whatever fiction they like from the comfort of wherever they may be. In the same vein, Anyang Nyong'o observes that we must "sustain writing, publishing and libraries." The progress underlines one very crucial indicator for the writers and publishers, that the "written word is just too strong" to be erased. The difference is that it will now appear in an even more accessible form to YA in their smart phones and laptops (Nyong'o, recorded speech).

Conrad Onyango in a *People Daily* newspaper article "Printing costs drive book publishers to e-publishing" supports Mwazemba that "disruption is normal for any industry, but after some time, opportunities become more than threats." (25) The digital platform might after all, offer an alternative way of writing and adopting already existing YAF winners to soft copies for ease of accessibility by the YA as well as cut printing costs that are now threatening to cripple the publishing industry in Kenya. However, with the current situation of poor connectivity in many parts of the country, the physical book

will still be an indispensable requirement that cannot be disregarded as yet. Again before the YA digital book manages to command the market, the physical book will still be useful. The strength of this vision goes beyond the current moment, though. For that matter, authors, publishers, critics and scholars of YAF must embrace the twin challenges in order to change the wanting face of the genre of YA literature in the country. Such an approach would improve a trait Kabaji observes of contemporary scholars who "tend to be oblivious of existence of contemporary Kenyan writers [who] suffer at the hands of critics who are trapped in the past" (5).

2.7.0 Conclusion

This chapter sets out to interrogate how KPA, NBDCK and the library as institutions, support production processes of YAF, right from manuscript selection, texts publishing, marketing and placement of books for YA accessibility.

One thing that emerges is a dread by speakers from the different book institutions that there currently exists no Kenyan writer who measures to the level of the renowned Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o. I view this as a recognition for the urgent need to nurture writers to produce quality books for YA in Kenya. Production of poor quality manuscripts lamented by the judges reinforces this need. However, marking a positive direction is the seemingly general consensus among the previous and the current judges, that once a manuscript is rejected for one award, greater possibility exists for the writer to win a prize by resubmitting a corrected version of the manuscript in the subsequent years.

While the awarding institutions should be hailed for positively promoting the YAF genre, the different monetary value of the different awards need to be appraised. That the YA winners receive half the prize the adult winners', might have, or, could demotivate the would-be-writers, considering that writing for YA requires as refined skill as does writing for adults. The question also arises concerning the challenge of the YA genre survival and sustainability due to lack of more volunteers to support the awards. The professors involved in promoting the YAF genre rightly support the idea that the future of a country is dependent on its YA and that books YA can relate to empower them. It is therefore important to stress that unless YA are guided through books, the nation might just lose them.

Evidence shows that as yet, YA are neither involved in the writing of manuscripts for awards competition, nor are they engaged in the manuscript selection and reviews, a gap the previous and current judges have delineated. Lack of their representation in the process leaves the decision on what is written for them in the hands of others, mostly adults, who often assume they "know" the realities of the YA world even when a generation gap separates them and YA. Besides, there is need for KPA and NBDCK to include YA in writing and selection of manuscripts for awards in order to boost the YA interest in these books that target them. Integrating YA would also not only function as a mentoring process, but would motivate and boost a sense of proprietorship of the genre by YA.

Not having definite channels of communication between the library and the publishers lead to librarians' failure to keep abreast of information on the variety of YAF books

published in Kenya. There are more foreign classics that have been donated to the libraries than there are local titles in the Kenyan public library fiction shelves. The scenario is further complicated by limited funds from the government to purchase YA books. As a result, the library stocks what is readily available regardless of its relevance to the YA concerns. But, while I agree that the library has been left out so far in managing YA books, I also argue that the library, as an institution with trained personnel has a duty to guide reading habits of the public, by providing what is new and relevant for the YA at all times. This can be improved further by creating YA sections in every library to ensure that YA access their books with ease. The library emerges as an integral institution whose participation must be encouraged and supported for a successful campaign to launching YA genre in the country.

We have also noted the significance of the Book Fair that is organized by KPA each year as a forum in which books are publicized and marketed. However, evidence points that YAF winners are not prominently and conspicuously displayed on the stands. This denies those who visit the stands opportunity to interact closely with the texts. If the publishing houses whose books have won prizes in the YA category were to unite, generate a separate stand, and mark it for YA winners' exhibition only, the genre would not have to compete with other items, thus enabling it to shout its importance.

That YAF texts are being promoted only by the prize awarding institutions so far, leads to the conclusion that YA genre still resides on the margins of literature. Introduction of prizes in other literary genres such as poetry and drama, a plea emphasized by Odhiambo during the JKPL award ceremony, could widen the scope of the YA genre. However, at

the same time, YAL is making some headway. Nevertheless, calls for more support cannot be overemphasized as is made evidence in the next chapter in which I analyse the material aspects of some of the published young adult titles.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Paratext and the Making of YAF Genre

In this chapter, I pay close attention to elements and strategies that the young adult fiction genre in Kenya utilises to announce and enhance its visibility in the market. The material products include: covers, iconography, blurbs, commentator texts and typography, all items that complement each other to publicise the young adult fiction texts.

3.1.0 Before the TEXT Arrives: Paratext's Genre-Defining Characteristics

The book as a business venture has attracted different approaches by publishers, writers, printers, illustrators, binders, and commentators each advancing different agendas but all aimed at producing a cohesive item called 'book'. As Robert Darnton says, all these players "relate to all elements that worked together as a circuit for transmitting texts" (75). One crucial factor in any book is the paratext, the texts that surround and introduce the substance of the book. According to Genette, paratextual materials "surround [the text] and prolong it, precisely in order to *present* it, . . . to make it *present*; to assure its presence in the world, its 'reception' and its consumption, in the form, nowadays at least, of a book" (261). In other words, it is the exterior zone of a text, the seam, like a garment's bias binding that may run along the seams and hems to hold the garment together. The bias binding cannot be said to be a garment, yet it strengthens the garment as well as beautifies it. While not all garments will have a bias binding as their 'finishing' strategy, similarly not all books will possess paratexts.

These paratextual elements manifest paradoxically as that part of the book that is in and outside the text, offering the reader the "possibility either of entering or turning back" (ibid). In other words, by just interacting with paratexts a reader and / or buyer is able to arrive at a decision of reading and / or buying the book without necessarily having read the core text that the paratexts advertise. Philippe Lejeune calls the paratext "the fringe of the printed text which, in reality controls the whole reading" (45). The paratextual materials act as a window through which a reader is aided to a better understanding of the book, at a glance even before delving into the core text. They enable us, argues Shlomo Berger, to "better grasp the process of the book production and to examine its various subdivisions. They allow us to locate the text within a process context and evaluate its position within a culture that cherished the book and the written word" (57).

The paratext performs multiple functions, often realized through two paratextual elements, the epitext and the paratext. These terms are drawn from Genette who indicates that "paratext", is a compound comprising two distinct but connected elements; "peritext + epitext" (264). While the peritext encompasses the "extra" materials found between the covers and the interstices of the text, the epitext includes all those materials that are found on the covers as well as other material texts that exists outside and beyond the confines of the book such as interviews, newspaper advertisement, and even the word of mouth, all of which tells us about the text. As a business tool for the book, the paratext transacts with the eyes of whomever rest on it. It employs various techniques to achieve optimal attention that eventually lures the "looker" not only to look at it, but pick "it". The customer may opt to read the book if it is in a reading area, borrow it if it is

"borrowable", or buy it for personal reading or to pass it on to a friend, a relative or for public use in schools, workplace or library. Rarely is this process of approaching the book accorded the principal attention it demands. Isabel Hofmeyr and Sarah Nuttall as well as Andrew Van der Vlies usefully champion, "a more material engagement with the text", as opposed to the conventional practice of analyzing texts, in the "abstract notion of text" (Van der Vlies, 13). Their argument informs the argument in this chapter.

In the ensuing sections, I focus on eleven YAF books, examining their paratextual appeal, zone function and contribution to evincing the YA genre in Kenya. I will specifically examine the epitext zone in the selected books. Although I acknowledge the significance of peritexts as an important element of paratext, the zone will not be part of this research due to constraints of space. Similarly the materials existing beyond the confines of the text will not be part of this research since this study addresses only the epitextual material that are bound in the same volume with the YA books under study.

3.1.1 Covers as Epitextual Hall of Fame for the YAF

The histories and trajectories of the book cover have been extensively studied. While the material and technology used has changed over time, the modern idea of the cover has striven to set "new graphic design standards for the external appearance of books" (Tanselle, 81-82). The paperback and its cover have "revolutionized book publishing and merchandising" (American Bar Association, 1199) as well as advertising other aspects and agents of the publishing industry. Colburn postulates that the "jackets or paper covers in which new books appear are usually more attractive than the bindings, and they

frequently 'sell' the book, [and that they] are designed more for the latter purpose than for protection" (539). In the same vein, Sen argues that the paperback:

> once a less prestigious edition, has come into its own. It has become a major mass media in the West and its relationship with the reading public is very complex. It anticipates the demands of the mass . . . which in turn influences its development. No hardback publisher, author, or reader can ignore it (565).

The same argument holds for Kenya's YA publishing scene where YA books are published in paperback as discussed below.

3.1.2 Book Covers and YA Genre

As discussed above, the cover is the first paratextual feature that meets the buyer, customer and / or reader of the YA book. The cover, therefore, evokes the "meaning, tone and character . . . for the reader before he opened it" (Thompson 23).

As a marketing tool, the book's cover is elaborately set to attract customers, increase sales and sell the text. The cover design is meant to compel the reader to purchase and read the genre alluded to by the cover. According to Iqani, genres are "embedded in material infrastructure" (4). Covers are one such infrastructure that the YA text genre in Kenya has utilized. What do these covers tell us about genre? One way to answer this question is to examine the covers via the categories of setting and composition. As regards the former, one important category pertains to stories with school setting. Two texts, *To Grasp at a Star* and *The Delegate,* portray female characters while the other two *Never Say Never* and *A Name for Himself* represent male characters. However, *To Grasp*

at a Star notably seems to advance stereotyping of the female character as day dreamers. The cover image features a beautiful girl, seemingly in class studying. Her mind has wondered beyond the classroom walls to a daydream in which she visualizes herself carrying flowers and a trophy as Miss Kenya (emblazoned on the trophy she is seemingly holding). *The Delegate* features a smiling female character in an office where she is being served with a letter by another elderly smiley female character. On the other hand, *Never Say Never* and *A Name for Himself,* both of which portray male images on their covers feature them with masculine backgrounds and surroundings. The serious-looking boy on *A Name for Himself* is portrayed wheeling a bicycle to school and right ahead of him is a car driving through the school gate. On the cover of *Never Say Never* we see the image of a boy in school uniform, boarding a vehicle.

These texts portray school as a setting where YA characters attain different goals. To some, like in *To Grasp at A Star*, the school may be presumed as a place where YA could dream big, or a place where imaginations of greatness can be actualized. *The Delegate* gives the impression of school as a place where achievement is possible for girls and that a girl can rise above, let's say, the day dreaming to becoming, as might be implied by the letter the girl in uniform is grasping in her hands written "Appointment letter to the UN". Similarly, the covers featuring school boys indicate seriousness of school and determination conveyed by the male characters' postures.

Another common setting is one which implies an adventure or action genre featuring helicopters and cars. Three texts, *The Devil's Hill, A Taste of Fame* and *Death Trap* have the helicopter while A *Name for Himself* and *Never Say Never* have cars as features on

their covers. Among these five texts only one, *Death Trap* features a female character. The helicopter is displayed as a rescue image for the girl who is presumably in trouble as could be observed by the precarious manner in which she is suspended between the helicopter above her and the sharply slopping rocky descent below her. Rather than being a hero, the woman in this image is more in line with a victim, a pattern that speaks to the masculinist orientation of this genre. Moreover, among the eleven YA texts under study, only four novels have the images of female / girl's characters and seven comprise male images mapped on the covers. Three out of the four illustrate the girl as either daydreaming (*To Grasp at a Star*); being rescued, (*Death Trap*); or pained and struggling (*Tale of Kasaya*). These images transcribe for the viewer the positioning of female YA in Kenya. *The Delegate* is the only text that places a girl's image centrally. In a country polarized by tribal animosity, YA texts should not be adding further forms of division. In a broader sense, the genre is still struggling to gain footing from the margins of exclusion from the Kenyan mainstream literature and embracing exclusivity may lead to a shaky future. YA book need to have balanced character portrayal on covers of YAF titles.

Yet another type of setting is one which implies a romantic story. This is captured in *Wait for me Angela* whose images are relevant and within the YA perspectives. The iconography portrays eye-catching silhouettes of a couple holding hands walking towards the reader conjuring an intimate relationship. These abstract images whose forms are only realized through their outlines could be interpreted to imply the universality of love and romance. It is also not possible to judge the age of the couple as their faces are shielded by the black colour that outlines their image, presumably to suggest also the timelessness

of love, an expression that would be enlightening to the YA readers as well as stating the way in which love and romance are being defined in the YA genre.

Never Say Never may be viewed falling in yet another category of covers which pose a riddle or question - where the meaning of the story is not clear at the point of reading the cover. The text's cover shows the image of a school boy - defined by his uniform; a dark-green pair of shorts and light-green shirt uniform. He is climbing into the back of a Land Rover. The surrounding setting does not denote a school environment, yet the boy who is presumably the protagonist is a student. The reader is invited to imagine the events that might unfold in the narrative. Why is the boy not in full school uniform? Where could he

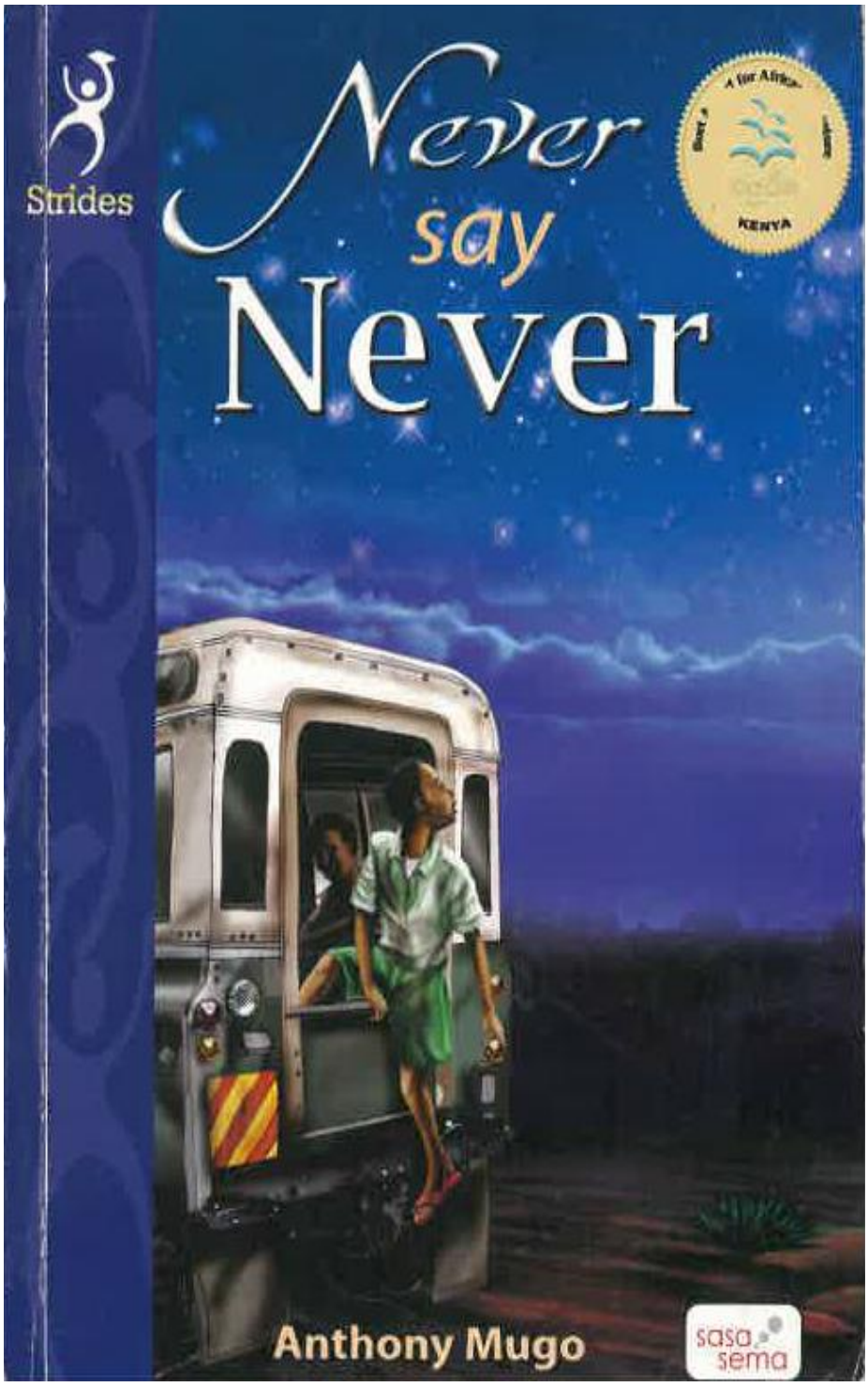


Figure 1: *Repoussoir*: Front Cover

be travelling to? Who could be driving the vehicle only the rear of which is visible? What might the boy's expectant gaze to the sky imply? All these questions make the text mysterious enough to raise suspense and curiosity in the potential reader cum buyer.

There is also the slave trading cover in *We Come in Peace*. The text displays three images of forlornly desolate half-naked people. They are in a file and have disfigured faces. Leading the file is an elderly man with skull-like sunken eyes, following in the middle is female-like figure with a downcast face and tightly closed lips. At the rear is a young figure that could be a male or female youth whose eyes are wide open, popping out as if in painful surprise. Walking besides them is a fat-cheeked, stern looking male wielding a '*rungu'* that is held on the ready as if to strike the three figures in the file. The title "We Come in Peace" contrasts with the suffering of the cover scene. The paradox then could act as an incentive for one to buy the text to unravel the contrasts.

In several instances, the covers imply a range of genres like a hospital drama mixed with a celebrity saga which could raise curiosity. A case in point is *A Taste of Fame* on which two male figures, the older one with a teary face is holding a trophy in one hand and a microphone in the other, in a speaking pose. The other, a youthful smiley male looks up at the trophy admiringly. Contrasting these glamorous and joyous gestures, are two hospital beds in the foreground. These conflicting moods present a conundrum that could pique a readers' curiosity.

Another genre referenced by some covers is drawn from the magazine zone particularly on the subject of celebrities: the world of glamour, stardom and the famous, a domain for

which YA often yearn. The covers of *A Taste of Fame*, and *To Grasp at a Star'* celebrate the innuendoes of glamour. The target consumer is transported to an expectation of a culture of fame. However, whereas magazines rely on real people's images, the YA books utilise drawing of the imagined people. The visual language of iconography commands a privileged role in defining and identifying the YA genre. The presence of a YA face on the cover acts as the genre's advertising point since YA will associate with their likes and may be put off if the visual is adultist. After all, posits Lee, the "strongest visual necessity in a cover design is identification" (407).

3.2.0 *Repoussoir* as Iconographic and Text Mediating Technique

In terms of composition, many of the covers rely on the technique of *Repoussoir*, a feature that Rhonda L. Reymond defines as a "figure that brackets or pushes back objects within an image [and is meant to] guide the viewer's eye into the image and mediate between her and the internal narrative" (216). As a stylistic image presentation device, *repoussoir* directs the reader's mind to share the experiences of the character through imagination. Reymond convincingly argues that *repoussoir* can be realized in different ways, which I observe, resonates with Suzette Youngs and Frank Serafini's techniques of character presentation. For instance, the *repoussoir* of a character or image that gazes "out at viewers, making direct eye contact," Youngs and Frank Serafini call "demand", and when characters look at other characters or objects within the image, instead of out at the reader, viewer / or buyer, it is called an "offer" (120). All the YA texts under study utilise the *repoussoir* and its two elements: demand and offer, at the epitextual zone.

Repoussoir can be created through placing a large figure or object in the "immediate foreground, generally bracketing one or both of the edges, to help create spatial contrasts suggesting depth" (Reymond, 226). In *A Taste of Fame*, *To Grasp at a Star*, and *Meet the Omtitas* images are in *repoussoir* with the images gazing boldly directly at the viewer, suggesting Demand. *We Come in Peace* invites the reader and or viewer to share in their experience of the inside story. On the other hand, Reymond argues that gazes that are reverted away from the viewer creates the impression that both the viewer and the image are outsiders, and observers of the unfolding experience and can only wait to see as events unfolds in the narrative. In other words, the image tells the reader, "come, and reconnoiter with me. Let us see what happens!", thus creating curiosity and interest for the reader. The latter *repoussoir*, as is visible in *Death Trap, Never Say Never, A Name for Himself*, and *Tale of Kasaya*, often point away from them, leading the viewer in the direction of fantasy, mystery, expedition, and or adventure that might lie ahead; an invitation to the heart of the text.

Walk with me Angela (Figure 2) utilizes a variety of cover illustration techniques; Framing, Demand and Offer. According to Youngs and Frank Serafini, Framing, refers to the white space around images "setting the image or illustration off from the rest of the page" (120). The two human images on *Walk with me Angela*, both of which are set in pitch black are placed at the immediate front-foreground. Their definition is made more outstanding by the white Framing outlining each figure from behind and guiding the eye to perceive their sketches more prominently. The silhouettes seem to advance towards the

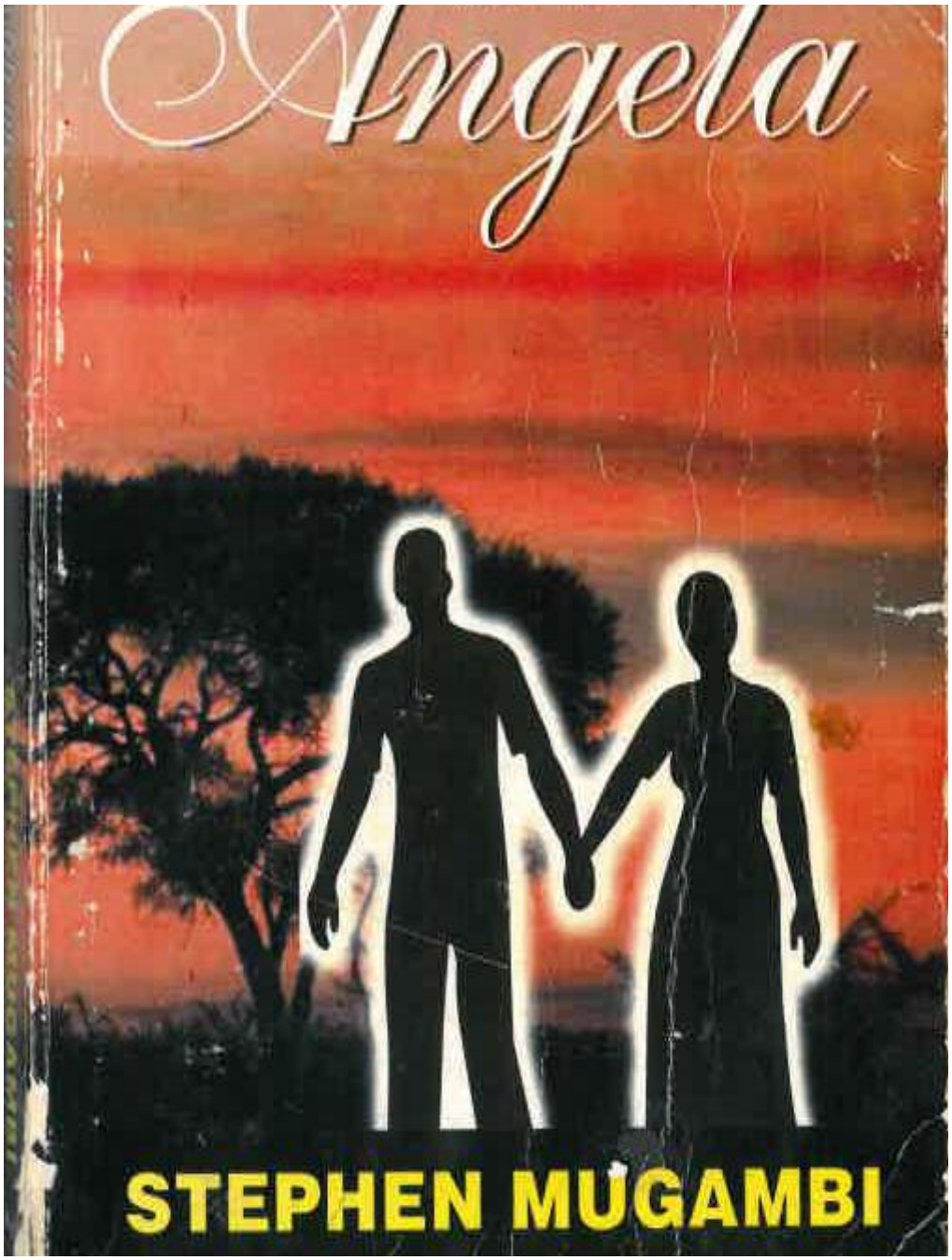


Figure 2: The Front Cover of Stephen Mugambi's *Walk with Me Angel*

viewer. Their hands (left male and right female) are clasped into each other in a respectable intimate way. There is some distance between them and both wear short sleeved attire. The girl's long flowing dress narrowing at the waistline accentuates her well-formed figure. Her right breast slightly visible (the only feature that guides the viewer to the direction the figures are facing), and her head is slightly cocked towards the male figure. The muscular broad-chested male figure is tall, athletically built and appears to walk straight with his head held high, thus exuding confidence. The two images seem to walk out of the page right into the world of the viewer (the lower part of their legs merges with the cover's lower margin), creating an intersecting feel between the viewer and them. In employing "full-bleed" as a technique that Youngs and Frank Serafini argue is meant to summon the "viewer in the world of the story, [this breaking of the cover frame], serves as a bridge between the story world, and the world of the reader, bringing them into a more intimate relationship" (120). To the right foreground is a big tree sprouting from some visibly thriving undergrowth, spreading its branches and leaves behind the couple and breaking the margin towards the book's spine and back cover. This scenery denotes a natural friendly environment behind the couple. Far in the background different shades of orange, gray and light-red colours create contrast exuding a sunrise hue and distance.

This Framing, as an aspect of composition that is normally fashioned to give the image on a page a three-dimensional outlook, invites the viewers "into an image or distance them from what is being presented" (ibid). This particular Framing bridges the gap between the viewer and the iconography in a feature that suggests camaraderie,

presuming that they are looking direct into the viewer's eye (Demand), exhibiting a willingness to meet and embrace each other in a kind of sharing friendship with the reader and / or buyer. As it were, the Framing in *Walk with Me Angela* establishes a direct contact with the viewer. The fact that the couple's faces are indiscernible due to the pitch black colour used to define them suggests that they give a more objective interpretation and utilise the technique of both demand and offer. They give the viewers an open slate from which to make a choice; either to connect directly with the character (Demand) as well as being at liberty to decide to stand at bay, objectively and observe the events as they unfold (Offer), while at the same time establishing their readiness to meet and fellowship with the viewer. The other possible implication of face blurring could be that the idea of love, friendship, intimacy and romance are faceless abstract attributes that only those who engage in them give face and appearance to, thus alluding to the universality of the genre the text tackles. This may be a very strong message particularly for the YA who are often guided by fantasies of different shades of beauty for their romantic moves. It could also mean that issues of love, friendship and comradeship are never to be pegged on appearances, but that any YA could fit in the faces depicted and still become as close and cultivate respect for each other (as symbolized by the social distance between the couple image), as they journey in life. Considering the basic function of cover illustrations is to sell the text, the "faceless" couple then forms an invitation plane that promises a home for all kinds of viewers, after all, love and friendship are universal human essentials, thus the universal "face".

The Delegate (Figure 3) displays a hybrid *repoussoir* whereby a girl dressed in a pink (same colour as the book's title) blouse and a light blue skirt has her back turned to the viewer. Her side-gaze focuses on a sheaf of sky-blue paper she holds in her hands, and which she seems to be reading, leading the viewer's eyes to the phrase "Appointment letter to the UN", written in black letters. The letter's detail is possibly a portrayal of the YA as achievers in the education arena. By thus defining the YA genre as an achievement space, the cover points to the text as an empowering nexus that promises those who engage in its reading, by association and / or design, to become achievers as well. The lady, who could be a teacher or principal of a school, sits on a comfortable well-padded grey office-chair, has her hair neatly set and parted backward from the left, has painted both her eye-brows and fingernails. She resembles a modern Kenyan lady working in an office. Her pose configures amused gentle seriousness, probably as befits her office. Her right hand is placed gently on her left which lies firmly on a light blue blank paper resembling the one in the girl's hands. A pen and a landline telephone resting on the golden-yellow table, a pen holder with assorted pens and pencils; and the desktop computer to her right complete a simple but well-kept office. The lady's gentle smiley gaze is focused across but beyond the girl, to the viewer, in Demand, which in turn guides the viewer's eyes to turn and look at the girl and the letter she is holding. The lady's look seems to invite the viewer to witness the girl's appointment as a UN delegate. In this last *repoussoir,* I read the artist's skill to guide the impression that both the letter and the girl are the key subjects of the text. However, the girl's gaze, other than just inviting the viewer to the letter's meaning, is also setting pace for a mystery. She is both

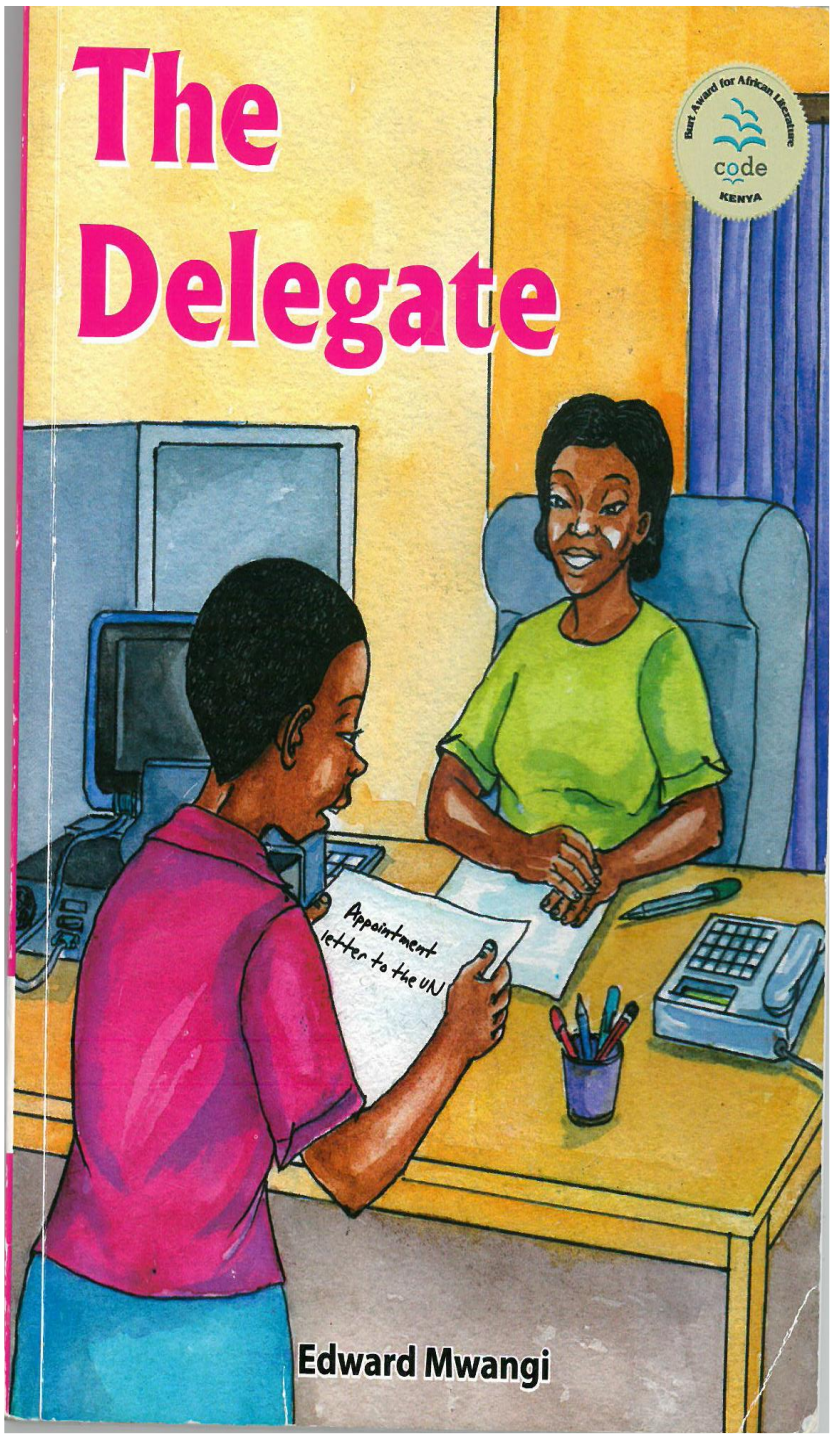


Figure 3: Edward Mwangi, *The Delegate*, Front Cover

an outsider and an insider who will experience the letter's outcome, probably a promise of glamour, (as it is in her hands, an achievement). The side-smile that is halfway visible and glowing on the side of her face could be an indication of surprise or doubt for an opening to a new involvement as a delegate to United Nations (UN), but at the same reassuring enough to suggest she is curiously willing (as could be judged from the intent way she looks and clutches the letter), to undertake whatever challenge and / invitation to personal growth that might lie ahead. The scene creates an atmosphere that many school girls would relate to, envisioning themselves in the office with a principal. Some would even be attracted to the book to find out what a girl could do to make a principal smile with a student in her office, a place often stereotypically associated with wrong doing and punishment. A hybridised glamorous and school's genre narrative, and most importantly, that of a Kenyan female YA is being explored. And so, the viewer is invited to travel with the girl to explore and discover possibilities that are open for her and by extension for all girls.

The Delegate's iconographic presentation on the cover aptly defines the climatic point in the second last chapter of the text, when ecstatic Chebet (the girl in the image) is acknowledged for her "performance at State House. The Canadian High Commissioner was impressed by your determination and intellect" (Mwangi, 164), after a life of heartrending struggles, sufferings and social humiliations. She is invited to the caretakers' office (Nanny) in the orphanage where she and her two brothers live and study. The lady's gaze on the cover, in my view, is levelled at the reader and / or viewer with sympathetic all-knowing eyes, because she is privy to a secret about Chebet that the

reader / or viewer may not know of at first. The image intimates that the book presents a happy and successful story.

However, the reader and / or viewer will not know of the joy displayed on the cover, up until the concluding chapters of the text. Chebet, on the other hand, may be inviting the viewer to engage in the reading the text so as to experience the book's surprise contrasts unfolding. The table, the grey cabinet to the middle upper-left, and the purple door behind the lady and the girl, all spread and flow to the edges of the page in a meaningful full bleed (flowing out of the page). The conclusion that could be drawn from the cover's iconography is that this story is for "all of us" and that everybody viewing it is welcome to commune in it. It should be borne in mind that in part, as the text unfolds, and having been written a few years after the 2007 / 2008 tribal animosity (mainly between the Kalenjin and Kikuyu tribes) in Kenya, a period that saw the death of many young and old people, the latter leaving their families orphaned, *The Delegate*, therefore, subverts the myths of tribalism, of difference. This is evidenced when Chebet (a Kalenjin) is taken in as a house girl in Rosemary's house in Nairobi city where she meets Rosalita (a Kikuyu) who rescue and takes her and her two brothers to a children's home where Chebet excels and gets recognition. The story therefore ceases to just recount the tribulations of a young girl, but a nation's cohesion story, a public's property, which therefore, to all viewers, the cover *repoussoir* seems to address and belong.

Like in *The Delegate*, the cover of *A Taste of Fame* (Figure 4) has a complex r*epoussoir*. It features symmetrically arranged images. On the left, stands a male figure smartly dressed in a high-waist white-buttoned purple-brown blazer with pink-white upturned

curves. He is wearing a purplish scarf (a matching hue that blends with the blazer) shaped like a thick tie-knot round his neck and tucked in the double-button blazer. His hair is held back in a pigtail with a red ribbon. He sports an ear-stud in his left ear. He holds a microphone to his chin in his right hand while his upturned right hand holds a dazzling trophy in his spread fingers. His gaze looks right through and beyond the viewer and his eyes are glassy with two drops of tears falling down his cheeks. He wears a moustache, clean shaven sideburns and a small vertical goatee thinning towards his lower lip. Only his upper torso is visible as his lower body fades into two distant empty hospital beds on the foreground. His physique in Demand, conjures up the idea of being a star before an invisible crowd, who he seems to be addressing over the microphone as they watch him receiving a trophy. Flanking him to the right and balancing the cover is a shorter teenage boy smartly dressed in a long-sleeved red shirt with upturned cuffs over which he wears a shapely white blazer with beauty-instiched girdles in-line with the blazer's waistline. He is in a pair of grey trousers fastened to his waist by a slightly visible black belt with a golden buckle. His eyes, exhibiting total admiration are slightly upturned to the trophy that is held almost to his height with the trophy's dazzling head slightly above him. At a distance, above his head is a helicopter parked on a green field. The viewers are given an Offer to engage, to encounter the realities of what fame is. It could perhaps also be a commentary that fame is not actually what it seems, a fact that will be emphasised in the text.

However, a number of contradictions pervade the iconography of *A Taste of Fame*. For instance, the viewer may wonder why the star (alluded to by the title and image), is

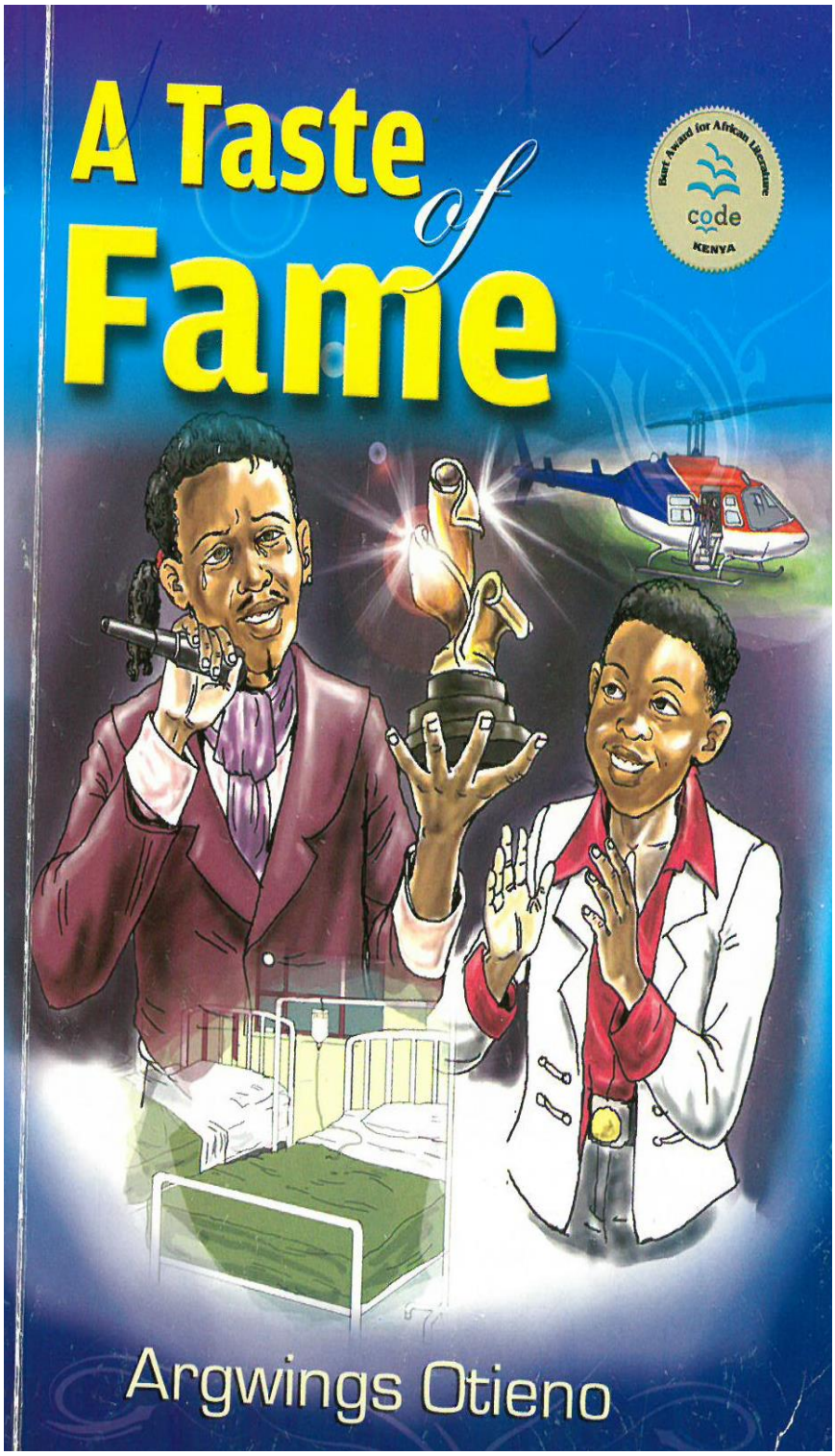


Figure 4: Argwings Otieno, *A Taste of Fame*- Front Cover

shedding tears; why in that stunning episode of receiving an award, hospital beds that seem to swallow the star from his very base, should be featured. These dilemmas create suspense and invite the reader to read the text and fill in the gaps in the design. Might the star be shedding tears of joy after winning the trophy he holds? Why is the boy's smile not completely open to display cheerfulness as would conventionally be expected in such circumstances particularly when one considers that the win is as a result of his input too as a collaborating singer? It is only after reading the text that the reader / or viewer will understand that stardom and glamour are not always what they seem to be on the face value. Unknown to spectators who mistake the tears on Dee Zasta's (the Star) face for tears of joy, is that they are tears of shame, guilt, regret and pain. Just before Dee Zasta steps forward on stage to receive the trophy, he and the young boy (Rando) have just received news of Dee Zasta's mother's death, which has shaken the very core of his conscience and reawakened his humanity. Unknown to the spectators too, is that Dee Zasta's mother's death arose out of the star's negligence, selfishness and greed for glamorous power. He had earlier sent Rando to retrieve from the hospital in which she was bound to receive treatment, the medical fee he had previously paid for her treatment. He uses this refund to hire a helicopter so that he could land at the competition venue in style to impress his fans. Consequently, Rando's ailing mother could not be accorded medical service-care without payment, as a result of which she dies.

Colour is the other major feature that is found on the epitextual zone of the YA books under study. It creates a mutual chemistry between the two important parts of the YA book as a material object for the YA consumption. The cover garnishes the text,

promising its potentiality to relish the consumer's experience thus sharing in the materiality of consumer culture which Iqani describes as having the characteristics of "tangibility, concreteness . . . possessed, purchased and coveted" (21).

Youngs and Serafini argue that meaning on the cover image is enhanced "through vigorous contrast of colour or tone which is most often the pairing of dark edges with clearer colours or light tone in the centre of the composition" (226). *Death Trap, A Taste of Fame* and *The Devil's Hill* utilize the colour illumination technique. *A Taste of Fame* and *Death Trap* employ white colour tone to draw the viewer's eye to the core narrative. While the former concentrates its focus on the lower centre of the cover, the latter's bright lighting occupies and flows out from half the left foreground. It then curves its way up to three-quarter space of the middle ground before finally bleeding out of the cover to the left with contrast established at the top using dark-brown colour. On the other hand, *Devil's Hill* uses light purple colour in the middle ground creating distance and drawing the viewer's eye toward the fleeing boys and the helicopter in hot pursuit at the rear.

The hue gives a heightened suspense, particularly in both *Death Trap* and *The Devil's Hill*. Posey Krakowsky argues that the more lighted image directs the eye as the focal point to the most significant carrier of information (253). Notably, the covers of *Death Trap, A Taste of Fame* and *The Devil's Hill* share the common feature of the purple hued helicopter embellishment.

3.3.0 Typographic Trajectories in the YA Genre

Typography has a major function on the YA genre primarily for its communicative efficiency. According to Giles Clark and Angus Phillips, "typography conveys functionality and aesthetics, and it differentiates the character of one book from another" (199). In addition, Van der Vlies concurs with Darnton and Roger Chartier that typography can "determine the ways in which texts convey meanings" (6). The typographic repetition normally on the cover's front, back and spine of the texts reinforce its material cardinal function. Richard Hendel correctly indicates a number of considerations which include "the size and shape, choice of typeface for the page, the typographic details for all parts of the book [need to be put in place]" (Foreword). Typography, at the epitextual zone normally communicates aesthetic attributes and value that ascribe status to the text. Cheryl Dipede postulates that the "form of the letter . . . is an object of aesthetic satisfaction, and the weaving of a page of type, an exercise in artistic skill" (136).

Royal Van Horn, in his article on typefaces defines a font as a "particular version of a typeface (a particular design of type) such as Helvetica bold or Helvetica italic . . . all Helvetica fonts as a group are considered a font family" (728). Different fonts are used at different zones of a book. Van Horn argues that the "extra-bold fonts are used for printing such things as signs and book covers [because they show well] as bold characters" (ibid). Moreover, different fonts appeal to different audiences. Van Horn posits that "children, teenagers, adults, senior teachers and professors are all quite different audiences" (728). For this reason he proposes the "edgy, if not punky post [which he says] some people call

– ‘grunge type” (ibid) to be the best suitable for the YA books. To enhance attraction and interest in the person viewing a text, a fusion of both colour and typographic design give a complementary appeal. Towards this goal, Elizabeth Keyes suggests that it is possible to maximize typography and colour functions by viewing them together as “complementary, interactive elements within a visual field and as elements which visually signal the structure and organization of information” (639).

However, whatever the colour, whatever the font and calligraphic presentation, they are all main information markers about the text. Genette also argues for the cardinal value of these markers when he asserts that “reduced to its text alone and without the help of any instructions for use, how would we read Joyce’s *Ulysses* if it were not called *Ulysses*?” (262). Colin Symes qualifies the notion further when he talks of the special status of titles at the onset of a book by asserting that the title is an “overture, raising the curtain on a work and providing signposts to its possible direction and thematic orientation, [through] prominence and symbolic force” (20). It assumes a sentry’s role, inviting customers, viewers / or readers to start internalising and engaging in the reading of the main text right the moment they see the title.

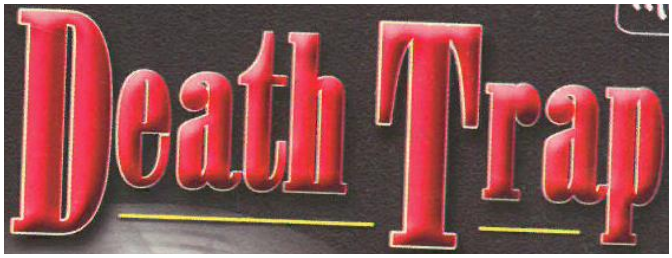


Figure 5: The Blood-Red coloured Title to Bill Rutto's Novel, *Death Trap*

The title is the first typographical thing a reader or viewer sees on the book cover. Symes views a title as an important "rhetorical device, which is instrumental in confirming the material existence of artefact and evoking some initial exegetical parameters" (17). The title, therefore, operates as a narrative zone that exposes ideas of an enclosed treasure - the text to which it directs the lookers. It offers cues as well as highlights, albeit subtly, sometimes, the authorial view, and helps frame the view in the reader's mind on the text's reception. The application of different fonts, typefaces and type styles in presenting the titles on the covers of each book under study, for instance, is geared not only to

inform the reader about the themes that s/he would expect to find in the text, but also alludes to the book's genre. The judicious selection of the typefaces and colours that complement each other are utilised to enhance readability and create a sense of importance of the text. Magnified titles such as is the case of, *The Delegate* read together with the iconography of the smiling girl with a letter bearing the heading "Appointment letter to the UN", announce its mission and promise as an empowering tool. The letter's title, written in slightly pronounced long ascender / descender serifs, is in *repoussoir*, possibly to invite the viewer to its contents, its materialness. In my view, the letter functions as an object of value whose grasp and possession by the girl changes her whole social status, and bestows her with new identity, importance and agency; she is now a Delegate - a direct allusion to the title.

We Come in Peace, which falls under the historical genre employs multiple fonts and overlapping serif shades (*We . . . in Peace*) in bold italics typefaces while "*Come"* is made slightly bolder with a slab-like appearance that gives it prominence and stability. According to Keyes, colour "focuses attention to speedy search, reveals organization and pattern [and therefore,] enables readers to handle more information and process it more efficiently" (646). The utilisation of the mixed colour tones on the typefaces on the YA book in question is probably meant to indicate overlap of events as they normally would appear in a historic setting and genre. The contrasting fonts seen together function as an organizational technique directed to enhancing the attractive qualities of the title and to give a visually satisfying appeal to the book as a whole.

Typography is normally divided into two major letter types: the serif and sans serif and both have been utilized on the YA texts under study. Basil Van Rooyen defines a serif as "a short decorative line at the start or finish of a stroke in a letter" (340). According to Van Rooyen, the serif "helps our eye to follow the letters and move more quickly" (ibid). Therefore, it is good for the main text while the sans serif is best suited for titles because they "always look simpler and cleaner [and that] using them on the text can be tiring to the eye" (ibid). Baverstock argues YA "can be persuaded that a book is not for them by a quick glance at the cover, [and the elements displayed on it]" (276). Somewhat unusually, most of the YA books use a serif typeface in their titles.

According to Marshall Lee, there are four types of "type", namely the Roman, the Abstract, the Cursive and the Decorative types (11). The books under study follow some of these characteristics in writing the titles for various texts: Kibera's title, *The Devil's Hill*, is printed in Roman type that consists of white-serif bold lettering of varying fonts on different shades of purple, each word occupying its own line on a descending vertical order and the font of each word varying in size, and the word "Hill" in bold square serif towering like a block over the other two words. The formation of combined font sizes on a combination of white colour lying in deep contrast with the highly saturated purple adds to the title's visibility which is not strenuous on the eye. Van Horn emphasises that for a font to have maximum eye-catching effect the typographer could "obviously need a bold [typeface]" (728), an aspect that *The Devil's Hill* has maximally exploited. Other titles that utilize the Roman type include *A Name for Himself* by Ngonda; *To Grasp at a Star* by Kamencu; and A *Taste of Fame* by Otieno. This third title employs sans serif bold

letters of varying sizes whereby the word "Fame" gives a slab appearance denoting stability and strength while the preposition "of" is given a free style serif resembling a free-handwriting glyph that gives the title an interesting contrast that creates a flashy blown-up mood. Read together, the title, and the illustration signal a genre of fame, glamour and adventure as would be popularly viewed in the world of the YA.

Notably, all the titles except *Tale of Kasaya* are printed in lower case. According to Stanley Blaine, a "text set in lower case is more legible than text set in upper case (all caps)" (21). Although *Tale of Kasaya* also uses the Roman type, it has some definite difference in that the letters are composed of narrow lines, a Futura Book Oblique font that gives the title a more delicate appearance than the normal descenders and ascenders found on lower case typefaces used in titles. The use of this particular typeface may be linked to the subject the book tackles - real life writing. *Meet the Omtitas* by Mochama is the only book under study that makes use of the Abstract typeface in its coloured form. The style is normally noted for using letters with "more or less straight edges and lines of uniform thickness, having no serif or serifs of the same weight as the letter (block serif)" (Lee, 114).

Walk with me Angela by Mugambi and Mugo's *Never Say Never* exploit the Cursive types that are based on "slanted writing with more or less continuous line, including script and italics forms of Roman" (ibid). The exaggerated stylised strokes give the titles a kind of free-style appearance. Both books use italicized fonts of different strength, fonts that Cunningham argues are the most obvious attraction getters as they shout to the reader, "hey, wake up! This stuff's important, underline me. Mark me yellow!" (26). The

latter book uses curved serifs in accordance with the romantic theme of the text. The swash glyphs could be targeting female consumption.

There are also texts that employ the Decorative type that according to Lee appear to "include all faces that have exaggerated characteristics of the other three classes, or distinctive features that place them outside the other classes" (114). Texts that fall under this category are Mulwa's, *We Come in Peace*; *The Delegate* by Mwangi; and Rutto's, *Death Trap*. The covers utilise the full gamut of typographical possibilities, perhaps with a view to appealing to as wide range of readers as possible. The amalgamation of the different typefaces and the meanings attached to the words of the title, which are both legible and readable, create an instant intertextuality interface for the customer. Or as Symes argues that titling (and its typography) is "one of the conventions of cultural production, part of the process giving identity and recognition of an artefact" (19).

3.4.0 Names and Portrait of Authors as Epiformation Markers

The name of the author is repeated on the spine, front and back covers of each book, and on the front cover it is generally placed at the bottom of the page. Symes asserts that knowing the author's name affords the reader "considerable source of hermeneutic clues and interpretive judgment" (21). The author's name creates intimacy with the title especially when it is adjacent or right below the title. But I also recognize the strength of placing the author's name at the bottom of the first page because that is where the eye finally rests while scanning the front cover.

In Kenya, names of people often identify their gender and sociocultural background. Genette asks "does one ever read a 'woman's novel' exactly as one reads a novel as such, that is to say, a man's novel?" (265). All except three of the books under study, namely, Kamencu *To Grasp at a Star*, *The Delegate* by Mwangi and Mulwa's *We Come in Peace* contain the author's portrait on the back cover. From them we see that most writers of YA fiction in Kenya are male. Tanselle argues that "photographic portraits of authors, sometimes not to be found elsewhere [especially in fiction], are often striking supplements to other biographical details" (74). Besides, the portrait could also function as an advertising object so that a reader who, having seen the portrait on a book they loved, would instantly recognise their chosen author on another text by the same author; or, even where the face appears on the media advertising his wares. From the photograph, we observe that there are only two female writers among the books under study: Eva Kasaya, writer of *Tale of Kasaya,* and Kamencu. What stands out visibly is that among these books, no Kenyan woman writer has been considered for the Burt prize; despite the fact that the Burt books group's agenda is to promote a progressive YAF genre in Kenya.

This being an excursion into the YA genre, question of age of the author may not be ruled out as a crucial factor in the discussion of YA genre formation. Are there YA who have written YA books? The author's age is rarely included in these books (as observed in the texts under study), but when the author's portrait is incorporated on a text, this could be revealing. In my view, YA would be attracted to a book written by a YA like them. Yet, no writer of the YA books is a YA. All the books except Kamencu, *To Grasp at a Star*, contain information about the author. Mention of details such as "he is married with

children" as in *The Delegate* by Mwangi gives a suggestion of age and implies a man with all the social privileges and respect accorded to marriage and parenting, especially in the Kenyan space. We learn this even when the author's profile picture is missing. As regards the author of *The Devil's Hill* we learn that he "is married with three children"; and Anthony Mugo in *Never Say Never*, "lives in Nairobi with his wife and two children." Besides suggesting possible interpretations as to whether the author is YA or not, the detail, "with children", also releases more information that could lure the customer and / or reader to trust the book. The words could be viewed as addressing the targeted group saying, "I am a parent" to entice them to imagine that a parent has the best interest at heart for YA, who are often regarded as children. According to David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery quoting Foucault's words, the role of the author's name is "always to be present, marking off the edges of the text, revealing, or at least characterizing, its mode of being" as an entity arising from within "various technological and social conditions" (Finkelstein and McCleery, 83).

3.5.0 The Commentator Text

Commentator texts, or blurbs as they are often known, are the endorsements generally carried on the back of the cover of the text. Tanselle quoting Pico Lyer vividly describes the commentator text as a "wonderfully coded subset of literature, rich with as many subtexts . . . [giving] an unrivaled glimpse into the literary [text]" (56). Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery describe the commentator as a person who "writes both material composed by others and his own" (69). Commentator texts are part of the YA book and therefore operate as material part of the book. Douglas argues that the commentator text

"attest to the book's being somehow special; a 'must read' worthy of purchase" (88). Kate Douglas sketches different types of commentator texts: the "solicited blurbs [which refer to] those reviews on book covers by famous authors, or critics from well-respected periodicals'; 'review extract blurbs' [that refers to] extracts from longer reviews published in journals" (808). The third type is the "publishers blurb", defined as "descriptive paragraph telling readers what the book is about" (ibid). While all the eleven YA books contain the publisher's commentator text, four texts, *We Come in Peace*, *Tale of Kasaya*, *Meet the Omtitas*, and *A Name for Himself* derive their commentator's text from the story. In three cases catchy excerpts quoted from the story, are followed by a brief review that summarises the main ideas of the book, as is the case with *A Name for Himself*. *We Come in Peace* praises both the text and the author: "Mulwa subverts the slave trade story as we know it . . . he weaves a riveting plot that moves back and forth in time – from ancient times to the present – with amazing ease" (blurb), the stories described as "highly gripping" (ibid). This commentator text promotes and advertises the work. *Meet the Omtitas* has two commentator texts which I presume are from the publisher since they are unsigned. The first one, enclosed in a pink bordered rectangle is an excerpt (on a light brown background), derived from a philosophical poem in the text that reads, ". . . and one day you'll find bags under your eyes . . . / You will recall high school's dreamy hours; / How slowly they passed by / and dozing during those long schoolroom afternoon . . ." (blurb). The excerpt which any YA in high school would clearly relate to functions to subtly classify the target readers (teens), as well as define the book as high school genre. The publisher's commentator text follows, "these words

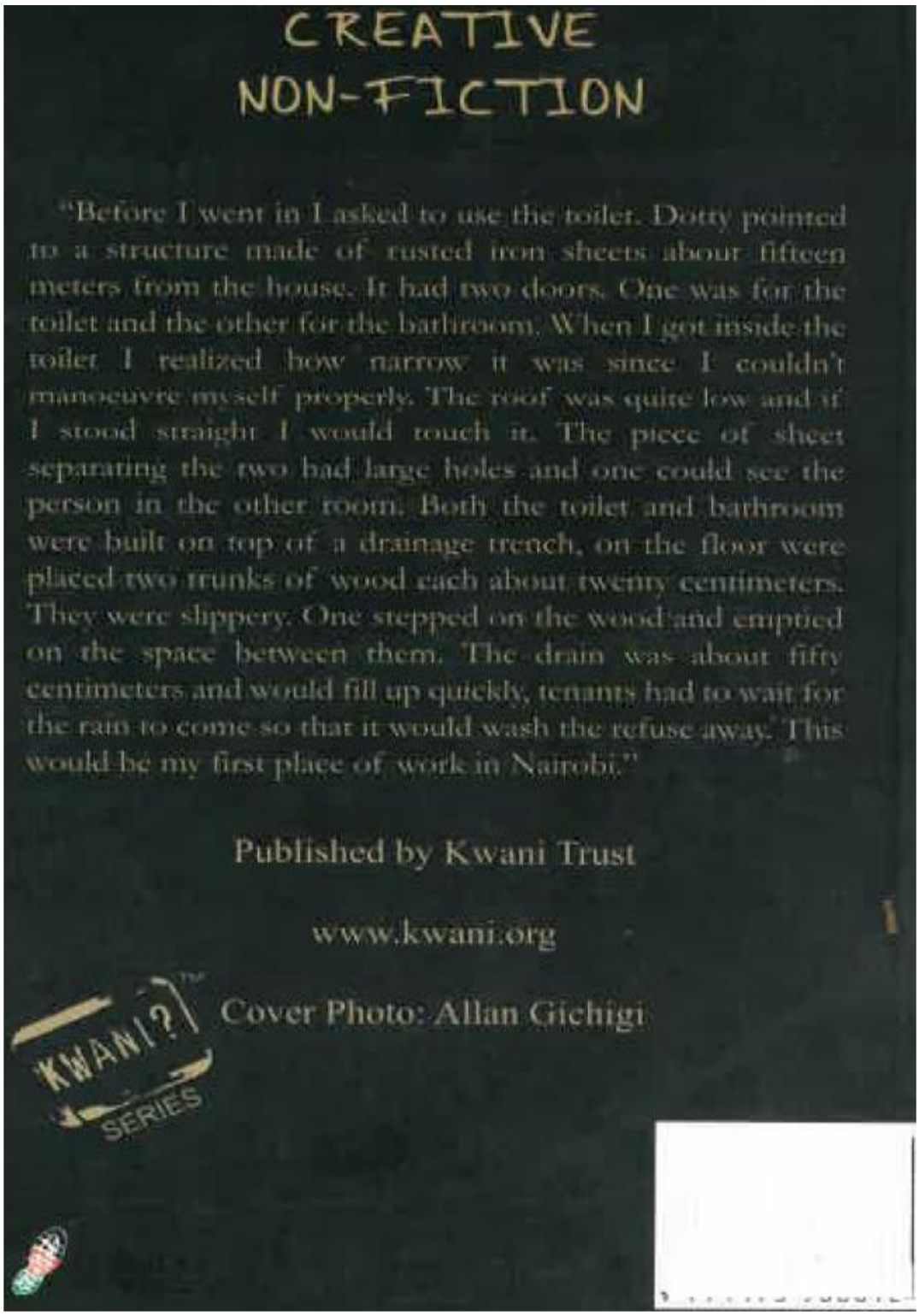


Figure 6: Back Cover - Eva Kasaya, *Tale of Kasaya*,

capture the nostalgia of days gone by and the craze of the teen years in high school" (ibid). The mention of the "teen years in high school" speaks to the target group and genre as well. The second is a commentator text that summarises the book, as happens in all the other books except in *Tale of Kasaya* (Fig. 6).

The concluding comment on this second commentator text is also telling; it reads: "original and compelling, the story highlights the impatient atmosphere of the adolescence with its quest for endless holiday and, for school holiday and, for Tommy, a pretty damsel" (ibid). The emphasis on the way to approach the reading of the book and its genre classification are quite prevalent from the commentator text. In addition, an extra catchy statement adds to the appeal of the text for the YA as target readers and / buyers; "for Tommy, a pretty damsel", which hints at romance and also crosses genre (mixes school and romance). *Tale of Kasaya* (Figure, 6) is the only text that has an excerpt only, without the benefit of a publisher's or solicited commentator text.

However, Mugambi's *Walk with Me Angela,* (Figure 7) first published in 2007 is the only text under study that has both the publisher's and solicited commentator texts. The back cover of *Walk with Me Angela* notes "the Book is simply impressive", imprint by Eve Magazine; "This is a lovely piece of work; a very well written story that pulls the reader in from the start and progresses beautifully. It was a pleasure to read and was over too quickly", commentary by Catherine Johnson, tutor with Lancaster University / British Council's Crossing Borders, a program that promotes creative writing in Africa." The third commentator is Kwamboka Oyaro, award winning journalist from the *Daily Nation* who asserts, "This is a must read for anyone who has been in high school" (Back Cover).

The three commentators praise the book, a strategy that in essence promotes and gives agency to the writer as the constructor, manipulator and director of the book as an object. Douglas argues that when a commentator praises the product, the intention is to appeal to the readers to identify with an established writer and expect similar treatment in the new book as they have experienced in a writer's past work(s). This could be true of Mugambi, who has written an earlier YA title, *Wait for Me Angela* to which *Walk with Me Angela* is its sequel. When YA see *Eve*, a popular women's magazine, girls may feel bound to read the text, hoping to get equal pleasure in the book as they do in *Eve Magazine*. The invocation of the magazine's name also carries genre connotations.

The statement "This is a must read for anyone who has been in high school" is a catchy advisory clue as to who the target group is; and adds a second clue that guides in the genre location of the text. While the front cover is spiced with romantic aroma, the commentator text hints that we can expect to find romantic themes in high school setting, thus establishing the text's cross-genre orientation.

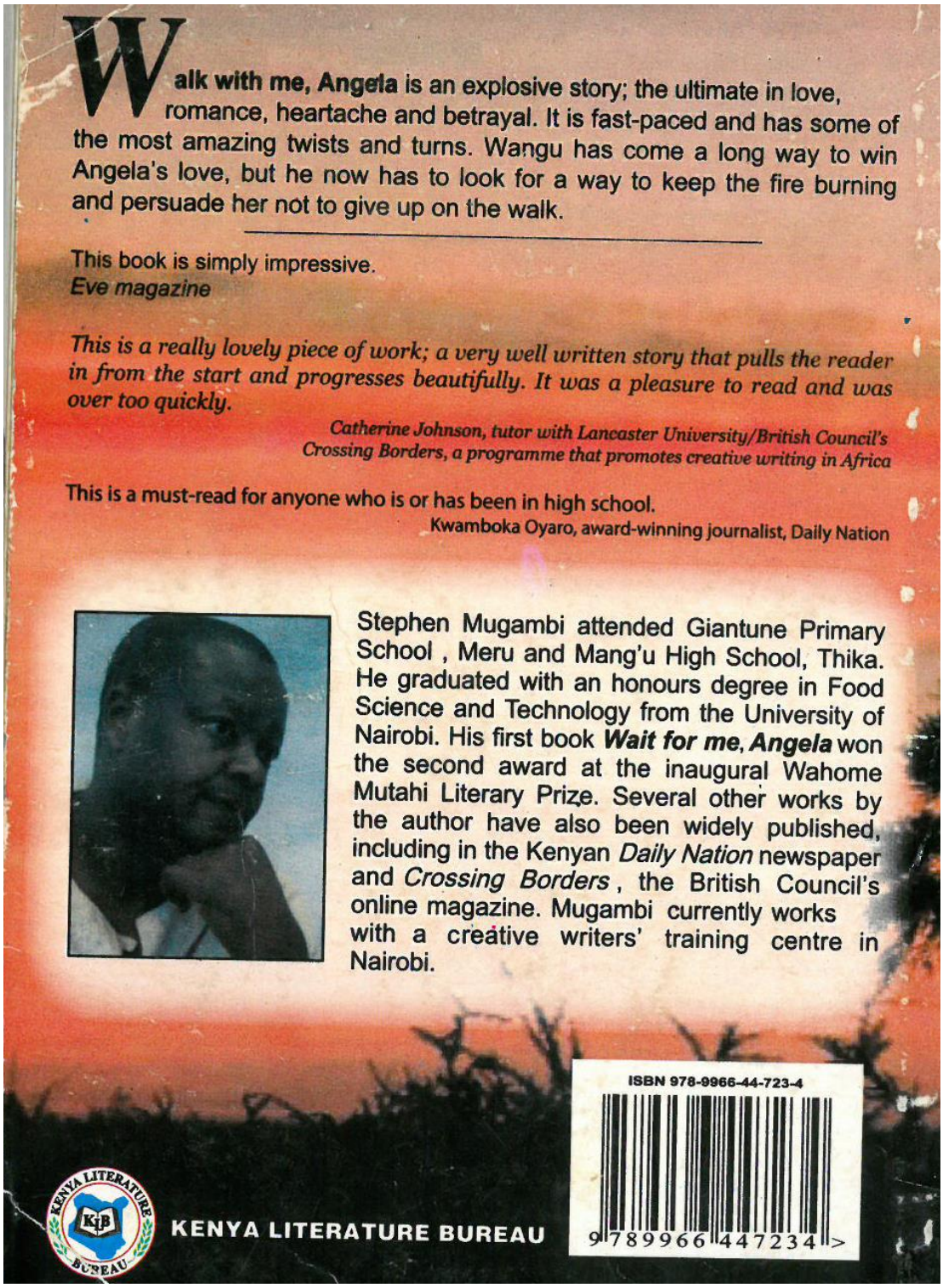


Figure 7: Back Cover- Stephen Mugambi, *Walk with Me Angela*

Walk with Me Angela sets a new trend that writers for the YA genre are embracing. Barry Trott and Vicki Novak observe that an "increasing number of authors are [is] crossing genres from book to book and publishing titles that encompass multiple genres in a single work" (33). Other books under study that have genre hybridization are *To Grasp at a Star* (school and glamour); *Death Trap* and *The Devil's Hill*, both of which blend four genres, (school, adventure, crime and mystery), within their pages. In these amalgams, YA are treated to a bounty of experiences in a single book, and which add value to the product's purchase. In addition, the blurb gives information about the book's appeal.

I concur with Iqani that the iconoclastic characteristic of the YA books, like that of the magazine is directed to "persuade people that the media text they are thinking of consuming will be worth the investment of time, energy, and money they must make in order to experience it" (9). The cover's polyphonic aspects illuminate the various codes embossed on it, making it a world of business transactive arena with various materials vying for attention from the consumer. The consistency of the YA titles needs to be enhanced since production, demand and consumption must be retained if the YA genre is to take firm hold in the Kenyan literary arena.

Diverse opinions, however, pervade the debate whether a relationship exists between the cover and the text it encloses. The debate ranges from some who think that "no clear relation is needed, to those who prefer an abstract evocation of the book's feeling, to those who envision the cover as a diagrammatic representation or summary of the book" (Kratz 187). I argue the relationship between the cover and the text is symbiotic, whereby the cover assumes a "life of its own" (ibid), a commodified form that is subordinate to the

text; publicising it to attract customers, and sell the text. The latter in its turn, has given rise to the cover, not as its diagrammatic imitation but as an essential zone without which the text would be difficult to understand.

3.6.0 Conclusion: Paratexts as Cardinal Players in Defining YAF Genre in Kenya

Paratext as a strategy and means of "presenting" YA book pronounces itself as an important zone that is informational, functional and aids in identification. I have argued that the cover is the most cardinal paratextual parameter at the epitextual zone. Embedded on the cover I identified elements such as typography, colour and illustrations as elements that have extensively been exploited for the promotion of the YA genre. We have also observed missing or stereotypic representations of female characters and overemphasizing male images on the YA fiction covers, aspects that could negatively affect the genre's growth.

I asserted that due to the paratext's ability to be promiscuous, it can pass on different messages to the reader. Thus, the book as a material object, invites symbiotic relationship between itself and all its players. In addition, I indicate that certain elements appearing at both epitextual and peritextual positions, such as the book's title, author's name, publisher and the books promoter's logo are the major recurring insignias that accord status to the YA genre in Kenya.

Finally, I have outlined the cardinal function of the paratext as a road-map for the text's sellability, readability and understandability; surveyed the interdependability of the different material sections of the YA book; and illustrated the relationship between the

paratext and the text - for can the text achieve its optimal value, without the paratext? Can the text be actualized independent of the paratext? And although the discourses embedded in the different spaces are dichotomous, yet they are conjoined to produce the book. We have observed how this is accomplished through functionality of each discrete element working analogously with each other, to ensure that the YA book is visually attractive, convincingly luring, appealing and sellable as an object that YA can trust to spend their money and time on. And, Berger argues quoting Rabbi Meir Crescas, a "book without preface is like a body without a soul" (1). I reiterate that a book without paratext is like body without a soul. In the next chapter, I proceed to examine the "soul" (text), that the paratext has endeavoured to protect and advertise in so many ways.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 GENRE MANIFESTATIONS IN THE YOUNG ADULT (YA) TEXTS

I have examined in chapter one, the peripherisation of YAL in the broader margins of literature in Kenya and argued for writing challenging young adult fiction. In chapter two I have established how different institutions and stakeholders participate in evincing YAF in Kenya. In the previous chapter, I analysed the YA genre books' technical and material aspects. We have established how the YA book-covers as well as other paratextual elements inform the way in which readers interact and engage with the YA text. Through reading and analysis of the core texts, contextualisation of events, analysis of characters, themes, language and style, this chapter samples the variety of genres evident in the texts under study to facilitate conclusions on how the YA fiction manage to evince the YAF genre in Kenya.

4.1.0 Introduction: Muugi ni Mutaare (An informed person has been advised)

In recognition of the critical necessity of YA genre placement, writers of YAF in Kenya have set out to create books that are responsive to the needs and desire of contemporary YA. They have endeavoured to challenge conventions and stereotypes levelled against YA in a bid to dialogue and change conformist mind-sets and characters in society in line with Lisa Beckelhimer who states that writers "choose genres that best fulfil their purposes of writing" (50). Arguing for genre analysis Heather Bastian posits that this can

be done by "describing its textual patterns and analysing what those patterns reveal about the context in which the genre is used" (31). Reinforcing the importance of genre and how it should be presented, Candida Gillis advocates that if YA characters encompass among other themes, "finding one's way-sorting through cacophony for a sense of meaning, an identity, a truth- perhaps its reality is best represented in multivoice or multigenre styles [since] fiction with many voices conveys a strong sense of realism." (52) Maria Nikolajeva also acknowledges that in modern children's literature [as in YAL] a "tendency towards more complex, multidimensional texts . . . display[ing] an increasing artistic sophistication, a conscious striving to exploit the richness of language, a variety of literary devices and expressive means, patterns from different genres one common denominator in many such books is a convergence of genres" (7). The texts under study fulfil these domains by employing multigenre styles. Genres in the oeuvre include: School Adventure; Historical Fiction; Romance; Glamour; Autobiography; and Family Melodrama. The boundaries between these genres are of course not hard and fast, and several genres can be instantiated in one text.

4.2.0 The School Adventure Genre in Kenyan YA Genre

John Rich describes school as a space that marks institutionalised learning and is characterised by "elements of compulsion . . . various legal and programmatic forms of compulsory curriculum" (120). The school comprises administrators, teachers and learners and may "under some circumstances assume such secondary functions as nurturance and affection which are more central to the family" (125). Rich asserts that the institutionalized "miserable state of human relations in most schools and school systems

is well known . . . force and coercion are everywhere" (121). Yet, ideally, a school should create progressive insights into the future and it is from such perspectives that the YA genre gains its traction. As a result, the genre belabours themes that question existing order with the intention of constructing alternative views for both the present and the future YA. For a school to be said to be progressive (and I argue the same for YA genre), YA should live the present and be enchanted by the future rather than to be subjected to the "prescriptive lives of teachers [agents of authority] who perhaps were children long long ago." (Martin 125). In a similar vein Fredrick Heiss argues that a school aims to prepare "students to be productive members of social order, aware of their societal responsibilities and respectful of institutional strictures . . . (434). Clark and Mathur posit, "secondary school is increasingly viewed as a desirable life-goal for young men and women in urban [as well as rural] Kenya [whereby] 95 percent of young people aged 15-19 have achieved at least some primary school education" (161). During this period, YA develop "agency towards institutions that hold them, alternately accepting and rejecting authority" (Fine 1). The YA genre by virtue of its address to YA as an institution and community is expected to address these issues. In the same vein, Stephen Thompson concedes Trite's argument that power "allows for [YA] agency but which is influenced by both internal and external forces" (5-6). The argument give YA power to decide what they want to do with their lives by "daring" the forces that inhibit their agency.

Davis Madison asserts that it is "hard to think of works of literature that don't have some kind of crimes in their foundation" (9). Some of the plot lines demonstrated in the texts under study range from simple school crimes to themes such as; breaking school rules,

bullying, fitting in, peer pressure, absenteeism, sneaking, truancy, drugs, kidnapping; to large crimes that involve breaking of the laws by school agents of authority such as teachers, administrators; misappropriation of school funds, involvement in secret unlawful missions, abuse of power, betrayal and murder. For instance, *Death Trap*, a narrative that revolves around Edgar (son of the Kenya's Commissioner of Police) from Rangeland High features themes of high school adventure. He heads a gang which he often blackmails to carry out his dirty tricks. For instance, he forces Andrew his classmate to "steal the chalices and other paraphernalia belonging to the altar" (37), or else Edgar will "expose him to the school authority [for earlier mischiefs, like when in the company of the gang he had vandalized school property]" (53). However, the plan aborts (to fearful Andrew's joy but to Edgar's chagrin) when the school management announces a sudden early midterm break after a strong storm blows off roofs and collapses the ceilings of classrooms (41). Andrew is particularly vulnerable to Edgar's ploys because the former is a spoilt boy from a well-to-do family and is always moneyed while Andrew hails from a poor background and he "hardly had any money of his own . . . Edgar's money had attracted [him] like a magnet" (3). As a result the two are "united in comradeship when they became part of a thin band of student rebels . . . they bullied others . . . smoked bhang and drank alcohol, smuggled into school through the quiet avenues that had been developed by their predecessors" (ibid).

On a school's trip to L. Baringo Hippo Tent Camp in the Rift Valley, Edgar and Monica (his mindful classmate), get lost in the forest. Monica slips and sprains her ankle and Edgar has to carry her on his shoulders as they try to trace their way back to the camp. In

the process, they are accosted and kidnapped but to their surprise, the cave people do not hurt them. Instead, a young warrior among the captors guides them silently to a point in the forest before he disappears from them and the two protagonists are again stranded in the dense forest. Although Monica knew that Edgar was "mischievous and fearless" (36), little did she know he was also hooked on drugs. Eventually, he smokes more bhang and in a delirium, to Monica's astonishment, he veers off a cliff where he is attacked by a hyena that tears off his leg. Monica is portrayed as a brave girl who desperately waves her blouse at the initially unseeing pilots whose helicopter malfunctions and almost crashes. The two characters' dangerous adventure ends after Monica's waning efforts pay off when finally another police rescue helicopter locates them and airlifts her and Edgar to hospital where the remaining section of Edgar's hyena -mauled leg is amputated.

The narrative reveals that Edgar resorted to drugs due to lack of parental guidance. His father was always overworked and we learn through the author's intrusion that Kazungu, Edgar's father accepts responsibility on parenting failure. He displays admirable maturity for not blaming his faults on the absence of his wife who had died in "the Mtongwe ferry disaster, the worst accident then in Kenya's history" (160). By acknowledging that "had he been a better father, his son would not have got into trouble . . . but warned students that they too had to conduct themselves in a responsible manner despite any shortcomings on their parents' part if they wanted to have a bright future" (181), statements that carry part of the ethical orientations of the text. Although he is portrayed as a very ambitious man set to transform the police unit and "rid the force of undesirable elements and make the Kenya police the best in Africa, the way the force once was"

(170), he does not attribute his parental negligence to his work either. In addition, the fact that he does not transfer his son to another school after he is discharged from hospital marks a turning point not only for Edgar but also for the other gang members. The gang is "ordered to shake Edgar's hand in turn and declare loudly that they had reformed and that Edgar should likewise follow suit if he had not already done so" (187). The gesture also reinforces another ethical point that to transfer a problematic at risk student to a different school would lead to proliferation of the problem to another school thus risking contaminating more YA. Hammering the didactic formula that most of the texts under study seems to adopt, Kazungu sums up the text with a Chinese saying that, "the roots of education are bitter, but its fruits are sweet" (ibid). The maxim's moral is to encourage students to persevere through the school hardships with a hope of a better future.

Other school themes are seen in *A Name for Himself* where the protagonist, Mollusks, has to endure bullying from a school gang and stigmatization because of his name. His peer's intervention through the Indaba saves him, the indaba is a "sort of council made up of all the class prefects and councilors . . . [and] are allowed to sort out our [students'] problems a lot of the time; it is only taken up by the disciplinary master when a problem is too difficult for the Indaba to solve" (Ngonda 77). The staff suggests interventions for YA at risk, one of which is guidance and counselling. *Never Say Never* suggests rehabilitation through approved schools, (institutions that are directed at reforming YAs who are considered delinquents). Muthini's successful navigation in the approved school settings, where the Children's Officer, Mr. Wanderi, had taken him on so he could attain an education that his poor mother could not afford for him, constructs the gains of such

institutions. In one of the approved schools he meets Karanchu who, towards the end of the book is murdered by a mob in the streets of Nairobi soon after his release from the approved school. Karanchu's death dramatically symbolises the potential consequences on YA due to poorly managed homes, harsh school rules, and a condemning society. These story lines parallel *The Devil's Hill* in which Steve ends up in approved school as a result of similar failures by family and school institutions to nurture him empathetically. Some of the themes portrayed contrast with what Potter advocates in a school genre where he argues that the "schoolmaster is [should be] the first friend of the children [YA], they seek his counsel. He seldom imposes views or his powers upon their consciously self-organized society" (Potter 600). Evidently, YA characters in colleges and high school give rise to themes of YA personality, identity, romance and friendship that shape their behaviour. We observe YA characters struggling to locate their notch of acceptance of self and others as the plot develops. Towards the end of the texts the protagonists, for instance, Muthini in *Never Say Never*, Edgar in *Death Trap* and Mollusks *A Name for Himself* have changed to acceptable maturity not only physically but in their perception of the world. They become more tolerant, accommodating, resilient, appreciative of family in areas they had initially judged harshly; become more open-minded in readiness to confront more emphatically than before, challenges between them and the agents of authorities and, their attitude towards different school institutions also change.

Use of various styles aids in widening the characters 'growth and scope. The featuring of different voices in the texts creates greater opportunity for the writer to explore more

themes that in turn enable readers to vouch their loyalty to more than one character. For instance, in *A Name for Himself*, we see the Indaba scene, where the protagonist's case of being bullied is sorted out by the peer character leaders. The scene dramatizes the characters' agency and use simulative technique in the court-like structure in which the YA characters (peer leaders) preside and decide cases after listening to the accused, perpetrators and victims as well as collecting evidence from witnesses. In my view, these role-play episodes stage and prepare YA characters to become more able to listen to one another, develop leadership roles and respect for each other. This feature thus underlines the didactic nature of the fiction under study that tends to forecast a positive future for YA characters. Use of the omniscient narrators in most of the texts helps feature various characters' perceptions, fears and responses to varied situations that accost them. As a result, the texts generate space that attract and create interest in the YA category readers. The episodic presentations create certain atmosphere and mood ranging from comic, near tragic, melodramatic, and optimistic. These are regulated by the different characters in action at different points of the narratives, particularly in *Death Trap* and *The Devil's Hill*. In the latter text, the narrative is told through the omniscient narrator and rotates around three YA characters; Dani, Zack, and Stevee, students at Ujuzi High school. Stevee drops out of school early in the narrative due to oppressive and tyrannical school's agents of authority as well as an unfriendly home environment. He joins Zabanga and Spike's hard gang, and through him, Zack and Dani find themselves entangled in a dangerous adventure that almost costs them their lives. Through their united effort, Dani

and Zack manage to rescue and deliver themselves home to the jubilant waiting villagers; while Stevee ends up in an approved school.

The texts in the school adventure genre exhibit both linear simple plots; as well as complex texts whose introduction develops into conflicts as backgrounds for narrative action. For example, the presentation of fame and glamour in *A Taste of Fame* is seen through disclosure of silences embodied in Dee Zasta's character. YA characters in school as epitomized in Rando often identify with such stars and sometimes assume their names and mannerisms. The stereotypes the public harbours about famous people's fullness of life are subverted when the reader discovers the stormy and whirly lives that some glamorous people have to endure, thus jolting the readers' complacency. The protagonist, Rando has opened the window to Dee Zasta's life; displaying that he is heavy in debt, and that before performance he had to take some drugs so as to maintain a false cool on stage. This dramatic irony is heightened between the protagonist and the spectators who cheer Dee Zasta on, at a point when they should be sympathising and consoling him. Fine argues that school is a place where "ideologies and images of age appropriateness are tried and evaluated, discarded, and embraced" (16). The genre demonstrates themes that exhibit interactive settings for different character personalities from different sociocultural backgrounds and mindsets. The school adventure genre for instance, constructs how schools can contribute to the manner in which YA characters exhibit their identity and agency. Harsh treatment and cold reactions by parents and school stakeholders have been satirised and structured as unconventional measures to deal with social and institutional maladies that YA characters face in school. Converse to

perceived stereotypes that YA are hard to deal with and that harshness is their remedy, the texts suggest differently. Understanding, empathy and support for the YA plight are portrayed to yield better results particularly when YA are made to feel they matter. This has been evidenced by Chebet who rejects school, family and cultural oppression to eventually succeed. The YA characters permitted freedom of choice in decision making in some of their issues at peer level, as happens in *A Name for Himself*, have shown their ability to develop various skills which include but are not limited to leadership, ingenuity, become better listeners to their peers and uphold respect for self and each other. By dealing with various school types including approved schools, and constructing characters who succeed in these institutions regardless of the YA background, has deconstructed the stereotypes that only those who attend ordinary or conventional schools prosper. Muthini in *Never Say Never* fulfils this authorial view by beating all odds to acquire a pass mark that earns him admission to the university even though he is a single mother's son and studies in an approved school. These empowering ideas reinforce hard work, attitude change and try to erase the excuse traded by YA who attribute their woes to the types of schools they attend.

4.3.0 Historical Adventure

Historical fiction refers to imaginatively written works that are approached from different historical perspectives. The genre mainly focusses on the analysis of the past, blended with the present and the future. Through its amalgamation of the three aspect, past, present and future, historical fiction creates for the reader an avenue that "defines our relationship with the past" (Juliet Gardiner 56). In addition, historical fiction mediates

and models experiences of the past, not as one would in a mirror, but, as rightly argues Suzette Youngs quoting Keifer (2006), "encourages readers to think about the past as well as to feel and empathize with characters; helps readers understand human challenges and relationships; offers a way for readers to compare issues from the past with the present" (380). As a result historical fiction is seen as a genre that enhances reading interest in YA since it adds, through its structures and characteristics, to a range of other YAL genres that YA are exposed to.

In Youngs and Frank Serafini (2011:118) "Comprehension Strategies for Reading Historical Fiction Picture Books", four types of historical fiction genre are identified. These are: fiction memoirs; fictionalized family fiction; time travel; and, fiction based on research. The first mentioned category is the type in which due to passage of time, a text that was written by an author who lived during a particular period becomes historical fiction. The second historical type, "Fictionalized Family", is described as fiction based on family history that has been passed down through generations; while "Time Travel Fiction" is one in which characters in contemporary era travel back in time to experience historical events. The fourth classification is fiction in which a writer bases the story on extensive research and writes an imaginative story based on selected facts. This last category fuses historical facts, imagination and creativity; in which matrix the historical YAF text, *We Come in Peace,* studied in this thesis fits. The combinations of different characteristics describe the historical fiction genre. Genre theories ascribe to institutions and genre conventions that communicate knowledge within the institutions and communities (YA), precepts of the genre.

Presenting a historical adventure which falls under the fiction based on research as defined by Youngs and Serafini, Mulwa's *We Come in Peace* revolves around Kaveni wa Mulat'evya. She is a YA fictional character from whose perspective we are presented with the fictionalized slave narrative a theme that resonates with history studies in lower high school level in Kenya. Mulwa's text supplements historical themes with a fictional approach that also invigorates the subject that does not seem so popular in Kenya. Mulwa employs vivid description of scenery, exhibits attention to characters, linguistic detail. These stylistic elements, woven with the local dialect render the novel interesting to read and comprehend without having to memorise events as would pure historical descriptions. For example, he takes the reader through the slaves' journey from the interior "Kyulu Hills to the west when we shuffled into Mutito wa Ndei" (58). He endeavours to authenticate the narrative by lacing his narration with explanation and meaning of places, a virtue often common in the African culture that behind every name, there is some history attached to it. We are told that Mtito wa Ndei which means "the forest of the vultures", emanates from a historical practice of the local people in the ancient times to throw the weak and dying people into the forest. In the wild, Mulwa humorously posits that the "vultures did *Shaytaaan's* [the devil's] bad work" (58). He takes time to explain the meaning of other different stopovers on the slave route.

On reaching Mariakani the next stop after Mtito wa Ndei, Mulwa satirises Mbunu wa Kiunga, the local slave driver and traitor. He airily announces to the slaves "this place is called *Mathyakani*" to which Kaveni thinks sarcastically, "as if we were some merry-making Akamba porters, helping our masters to discover the land5" (60). This time the

author assigns the villain, Mbunu wa Kiunga the task to narrate the historical significance of the place which he says means "*The Place of the Quavers*! [a place decreed by] the Great ones by the sea that no trader may pass this point with arrows or any quavers" (ibid). In other words, the inland traders were disarmed at this point, implying they were made defenceless and at the mercy of the Arab traders at the coast. On entry, they were ordered to shout out greetings to the slave drivers "we come in peace", a subverted statement that Mulwa uses throughout the text to ironically announce some impending danger, and from which the text's title is derived.

In addition to the above techniques, Mulwa introduces local jargon, Sheng, (a YA lingua that is a blend of English, local vernaculars and Kiswahili) diction that is concordant with the contemporary YA in Kenya. Examples include "*shaytaan's* (devil's evil work) (Mulwa 64); *waache. Hawatatuwahi* (let them be! They will not manage!)" (95) The narrative is also interlaced with some Kamba words from the onset of the narration such as, "Asi! Nikaveny'a (hey! It has blinked)" (1); *Mulungu* (God) (47). These sprinkled words give the story a local aura making it realistic and would appeal to the Kenyan readers.

Using realistic character portrayal and plausible events too, the author creates a narrative that is both adventurous and thrilling without romanticizing or permitting sentimentality to control it. It resonates with Peter Bramwell's assertion that historical fiction setting in the past "can make it possible for child [YA] character to move and behave freely [more so at a time when] children's [YA] movements are closely monitored out of fear for a variety of potential dangers (. . . drug dealers)" (108). Through employment of dramatic

events, Mulwa sweeps the reader along with apt diction and well balanced characters, realistic roles up to the close of the novel. The strategy enables the reader to engage comprehensively with the issues of great historical complexity in regard to the early visitors to the Kenyan coast and their contact with the interior people through the long distance trade. The mention of the Akamba people (60) as well as all the naming of the chief characters with local Kamba names gives the narrative some verisimilitudinal aura.

Frederick Cooper argues that slaves from the inland were "more important as domestic servants, political retainers and concubines" (33). Mulwa alludes to and infers such historical themes by featuring the protagonist as a domestic worker besides Mama Amina (a black elderly female servant) in Memsahib's house at the coast. The concubine theme is tackled by highlighting the jealousy that the Memsahib directs towards the protagonist, accusing her of trying to snatch her husband. Jane Bryce argues that often it was "the female slave who was held responsible for being a potential and direct threat to the conjugal sanctity of the white mistress" (349). This trope is captured in Mulwa's portrayal of Memsahib's potent hatred and conflict between her and her slave servant, Kaveni. We are told that every time Memsahib saw Kaveni, she would "lift her nose high in the air, like an angry she-buffalo, as if I suddenly stank" (86). On observing the growing animosity between her and Memsahib, Kaveni rationalises, foregrounding the eventuality "the jealous never warn before they strike" (87). However, the worst happened before she could actualise her silent plans. Driven by jealousy, Memsahib attacks Kaveni with a "long whip of hippopotamus hide [which drew] fresh and blood every time it fell" (91). She flogs Kaveni, "tell me . . . slave that would be mistress, what

business does a slave has with smiles . . . eh? . . . You will never smile again, slave-girl" (ibid). Out of pain of long years of suffered vengeful anger, Kaveni struck and as she reports "all I saw was a body before me, a body that was the image of all that is vile and unjust in the universe; a thing that had to be destroyed, I struck its head" (92), killing her instantly.

Michael Cart argues that it is not possible to "equip them [YA] with the exigencies of adulthood if we continue to pretend that this is the best of all possible worlds and that life is a hunky-dory stroll in the park" (45). Mulwa depicts significant detail of the characters' relationships that link them to events therein described. Analogous to what I observed in the second chapter of this thesis, Cart posits that there exist more children's fiction than YAF and adds that there is a "livelier historical fiction market for middle school than for the older YA" (ibid). The plotlines show how life changes from the atrocities of slave trade to the restoration of the free generations mapping the contemporary time of agency. Lois Stover posits that historical fiction genre writer "bring to life of other times and places and often, in the process, prove that historical events should be examined from more than one perspective" (60). Mulwa achieves this appeal by spicing the Kenyan YA genre with a historical fiction text.

4.4.0 The Romance Genre

According to David Lipset, "romance is timeless, for now and forever" (205). Quoting Singer (1966), he adds that romance is "creative and imaginative, it is equal and free [and] . . . propels self and other into a temporary state of total and boundless devotion"

(ibid). Jane Bryce argues that popular romance entails "misunderstanding, obstacles which are eventually overcome and a happy ending" (348). Pat Pinsent argues that there are two kinds of romance- the oldest, dating "back to the thirteenth century . . . usually concerned with the world of the court and involving quests, heroic deeds, the separation and reuniting of lovers (including parents and children), and often with elements of the supernatural" (195). The second kind is the "romance fiction . . . written for teenage readers [and are] preoccupied with the trials and thrills arising from romantic relationships rather than heroic deeds . . . retain many of the elements from earlier romances" (1bid). While the second romance kind in Pinsent's categorization is prevalent in the books under study, the latter also borrow a number of romance elements from the older category. Key among them is the elements of lovers' separation and heroic deeds before the characters are eventually united as happens in *We Come in Peace*. We also observe a different form of separation that is situation based. YA in school are forced to separate particularly during school holidays, or because they attend different institutions, or due to socioeconomic factors like transfers of parents to other parts of the country. As a result of these dynamics, we witness a slightly different kind of romance which integrates contexts that influence the way YA in school negotiate and project their romance.

Some of the earlier Kenyan popular romance writers in the 70s and 80s (often targeting adult readers but popular among YA) include John Kiriamiti, *My Life in Crime*; David Maillu, *For Batha and Rebeka*, Mwangi Ruheni, *The Minister's Daughter,* Mwangi Gicheru, *Across the Bridge.* Their works portray more mature characters often out of

school mostly in urban social settings. Moreover, these Kenyan romances include overt sex and violence, a practice described by Chris Wanjala as "pornoaesthetics" . . . [with plots that depict female characters as] sensual, over-sexual and perverted victims of the bosses" (qtd. Bryce 119). The current YA texts under study deviate from these trends because they target YA in schools and colleges. They therefore exploit school settings, euphemistic language and allusions when depicting love and sex scenes. It is also possible that the writers for YA fiction in Kenya do not want to be labelled with what Asenath Bole Odaga (1990: 133-34) describes as "dangerous and harmful . . . depicting only the perverted, the seamy side of human life" (qtd. Bryce 119). Four books in the oeuvre under study, *To Grasp at a Star, Meet the Omtitas, Walk with Me Angela* (three of which employ school setting); and *We Come in Peace* (historical setting) employ romantic themes that steer away from stereotyping the YA female characters as male's victims.

The romance themes in *To Grasp at a Star* are expounded in the section entitled "Muddled Transition" through the character of seventeen-year-old Muthoni, a high school girl and a more senior mentor friend, Michael Gitau (a young man from the church) who studies economics at the university. The two meet when Muthoni's parents commission Michael to coach Muthoni in mathematics, a subject in which she is performing badly at school. She receives him coldly since she is not enthusiastic about the idea of the coaching arrangement as it is bound to limit her leisure time "for TV, movies or hanging out with Malaika [her best peer and schoolmate]" (Kamencu 73). In the meantime, Muthoni lies to her parents in order to attend a birthday party of a

minister's son with her friend Malaika, where she meets the twenty-three-year-old Jerry who feeds her with alcohol and hard drugs before attempting to rape her. Michael Gitau appears suddenly and saves her not only from Jerry, but also from her drowning when she accidentally falls into the swimming pool. Michael appears at all the instances Muthoni is in a kind of muddle. He is portrayed as her guardian angel (probably as symbolized by his name that alludes to the Biblical Archangel Michael, often featured as a defender of God's people). Michael is portrayed as more mature in age and intellectuality than Muthoni whom he coaches in mathematics, a scenario that construes a form of romance that Hinnat describes as built on the "Just Friend model" [often assuming a] "mentor – pupil relationship to the other" ((297). The mentoring relationship initially masks the feelings each has for each other. These contrasts display Muthoni as an inferior beneficiary of Michael's benevolence, and therefore, subordinate and subjugated to his proposal and advances. The narrative is didactic and moralistic but nevertheless informing in terms of the way life sometimes serves one blow and another to YA characters as they negotiate their love identities and other ideals they desire to attain. The love theme ends with Muthoni passing her exams and looking forward to joining university where she will "be seeing him [Michael] over there more often" (114).

In *Walk with me Angela*, a narrative revolving around two protagonists, Wangu and Angela, the author weaves aspects of everyday school and social life of YA with intriguing peer and personal conflicts. The narrative, a sequel to an earlier novel *Wait for Me Angela* by the same author, follows two YA characters, Ben Wangu and Angela, now in form three at Kilimambogo High School. The name "Wangu" rhymes with a Kiswahili

word meaning “mine” (whose association YA in Kenya would easily identify). It denotes an intimate relationship by whoever calls out the name, while the name Angela carries connotations of an “angel”, implying the way the young man views the girl, as his angel, while Angela, by virtually calling the Wangu’s name, claims him as hers (Wangu).

The Angela/Wangu romance is marked in three phases. The exploration phase is characterized by friendship, admiration, love where they spend school weekends and outings together exchanging presents and photographs, sending letters to each other during the school holidays so as to bridge their distance and retain connections, and entertain peer conflicts due to jealousy. The second phase, which I call the conflict phase, is ushered in by Wangu’s cheating incident on Angela with Tess, a University of Nairobi student. This phase is marked by themes of modern communication particularly Facebook, an avenue portrayed both positively (ease and speed of messaging between Wangu and Tess) and negatively (cause and avenue for cheating), heartaches, pain of betrayal. Yet the medium helps reawaken the two characters so that they begin redefining their love relationship. The third phase I christen the resolution phase in which the hero and the heroine engage in dialogue trying to mend their stormy love affair. The phase is marked with dialogue, peer intervention, remorse, forgiveness, tolerance and demonstration of high level of awareness on the two lovers. The three phases culminate in Wangu’s earnest expression of love for Angela saying “Thank you so much for understanding. I love you and will always do as long as I live” (Mugambi 174). In this text, Mugambi tries to create a realistic love story that YA can engage in within the

confines of school without compromising each other's ideals to a successful future, socially, educationally, and romantically.

In Mulwa's historical fiction, *We Come in Peace*, the romance theme is portrayed through Kaveni Wa Mulat'evya and Musyoka wa Mang'oka. Their admiration for each other develops initially as guardian-cum-protected relationship where Musyoka had been chosen by the village elders as a "young man of good and proven character to escort all the village girls to the dance at a clearing in a valley just beyond the village" (Mulwa 38). He ensured he escorted Kaveni last and they would hesitate outside her home before she went in necessitating her mother to one day tease her "Are you going to sleep or will you follow him? . . . I have not seen anyone from his clan come to say their son has lost a goat" (Mulwa 39). They part company when one day the slave drivers manhandle them and sell them to different slave merchants at the coast only to reunite miraculously towards the end of the text and get married. Probably by virtue of its genre, the text tends to embrace traditional modes of romance whereby the parents and kinship are greatly involved to bless a romantic relationship. The exploration of this kind of romance in the historical fiction, also fits in the "lost and rediscovered love" (Hinnat 297) in which friends fell apart due to distance but fate brings them back. The characters then realise they have endured, persevered through longing and absence but as well realise too that they can rekindle "the passion that once bound them together in their youth" (ibid). This plot arrangement conforms to some "of the requirements of the romantic formula (most obviously obstacle) in the way of love being surmounted against all odds" (Bryce, 122).

Notably, the text blends romance elements of both "oldest form [and the] contemporary genre" (Pinsent, 195), to thrash out its particularities.

In *Meet the Omtitas,* the love narrative rests between Angel and Tommy living in Nairobi Eastlands Estate thus configuring an urban setting. The two characters are featured as the urban carefree modern YA whose traditional ties, love and sex taboos have lost hold. They are portrayed kissing in public, visiting each other in their respective homes, walking and holding hands in the city as well as in the estate. Their parents sanction their friendship as is demonstrated by Tommy's mother who gives him money to facilitate his day out to go watch a movie at Nairobi Cinema with his girlfriend. This category of lovers symbolizes a relatively progressive, educated working/middle class families living in the city. For instance, Tommy's mother works in a bank while his damsel's mother is a single mother who is also a career woman. The YA romantic relationship epitomizes city highlife of buying ice-cream and chocolate for the beloved, and treating her to outings. YA readers living within conservative families would idealise and envy Tommy and his damsel and, would get an opportunity to dream and visualise themselves as fulfilling their own wishes by observing the characters. The YA characters use public romance as a weapon for resistance against older outdated traditional modes of behaviour. Mochama's characters subvert the conventional silences by displaying their romance openly to their parents, friends and neighbours, deviating from what Lee Erwin quoting Iesue calls "cultural and sexual conditioning typical of the traditional patriarchal organization of many African societies" (83). Their love constructs a more modern romantic relationship within the YA contemporary life. The trend points to agency on personal choice of

romantic friends. The formula thus corresponding to Elizabeth Costa's description of this category of lovers as a new generation "who live in the new city [and] share the experiences of being part of an extended network of social relations online and offline-that is significantly different from those of their mothers and older sisters" (115).

It is also observable that Angel/Tommy's romance subverts traditional themes (as would qualify in Mulwa's *We Come in Peace*). Costa records a forty-year-old interviewee saying "when I was young I didn't touch the hand of my husband until the night after our wedding. And for years I desired and dreamt about it. Love is dreaming about it. Now young people walk hand in hand a few days after meeting each other, and they will never understand what love is!" (105). While this could pass as the feeling of many parents of YA today in Kenya too, there are also the new crop of parents (symbolised by parent characters in *Meet the Omtitas*). As shown in the novel, the public romantic love is an urban elitist setting, and is seen among the YA as an identifying ideal of a modernist trend as opposed to the traditional "backwardness" of secret love and romance. It carries the innuendoes of one who is educated, informed, progressive, being in-charge of the relationship, freedom and agency.

As observed from the analysis, the romance formulations respond to different settings. The texts that adopt the school-life settings demonstrate that YA must wade through schooling before experiencing the climactic closure of romance. Since the protagonists are high school YA, marriage is not yet a priority, and therefore is not tackled but only alluded to, (except in the historical text that nuances the past). Heroes and heroines' feelings are overtly portrayed, breaking away from sex and intimacies as hidden practices

or denying their existence among the YA, a conventional perception that many may still be harbouring today. The male character is often portrayed as the cause for pain for the faithful female lover (as observed in *Walk with me Angela*). However, the plot displays the same male having to humble himself, firstly by accepting his errors and apologizing to the wounded heroine. The trend therefore, underlining his subservience, as a result overturning the traditional romance order where the male character often stands supreme. This characteristic agency resonates with the contemporary Kenyan romances where the girls are often portrayed as being more assertive, and as exercising greater independence in romantic relationships than happened in the past.

A notable trend in the romance books is the stylistic naming of the starring female characters. In three of the texts there is an allusion to the mystic name "angel". In *Walk with me Angela*, we have "Angela", in *To Grasp at a Star* the main character's best friend who lands her in problems is called "Malaika", a Kiswahili name for "angel", and in *Meet the Omtitas*, Tommy's girlfriend is called "Angel". I presume the writers for YA probably try to present the YA female as innocent, good, admirable, meek, harmless, loving, and that possibly the love challenges they face are as a result of either influences by bad environment. Probably, the writers could also be invoking the idea that in a world where there are angels, there must also be "devils". Since these characters are involved with boys as their friends, might the boys be the presumed devils? However, the female "angels" are not all that angelic either. At the theatre Angel demands that Tommy buys her ice-cream, Muthoni receives a present from Michael and Angela also receives a necklace and perfume from Wangu. As much as gifts are presumed an important

characteristic of romantic relationships in these texts, it is also clear that the female characters are featured as receivers and not givers. They are presented as people who are tuned, lured and humoured by tokens by their male counterparts. The narrative takes the traditional form of dating and romance where the male is the giver and the woman the receiver of glorification. I view this as a writers' attempt to breathe life into the dying patriarchal level of control as we observe the YA male characters largely controlling the relationships during such moments. The YA female characters are also presented as malevolent and exploiters of their desired beauty by their YA male lovers. What is lacking, in my view, is empowering the YA female character to contribute, not just as adorable flowers to be painted and decorated with jewelry and gifts, but to also to be seen actively participating and contributing to the welfare of relationships. They could be portrayed as rewarding their boyfriends with tokens of appreciation. I argue for a romance of reciprocity that places all the participants at a level of equal sharing and appreciation. After all, both the male and female characters are portrayed as operating from similar educational and social settings.

The combination of these constructions of romance in the four texts demonstrates that the YA genre in Kenya is being defined as more progressively modern and westernized. Like the observation that romance fiction "can become a vehicle for a covert form of rebellion which, through fantasy, rewrites the script of women's desire and middle class expectation" (Bryce 364), the texts under study display similar story lines whereby the girl seems to overturn almost all contrivances by the male lovers. By so doing the authors of the romance fiction in Kenya resonates with Bryce quoting Diana Elam's postulation

that “every text which signals itself as romance by, adherence to recognizable conventions, also exceeds and transforms those conventions . . . which [at times] necessitates a rethinking of the genre itself” (365). Overt emphasis on educational advancement for both male and female characters is a plain concern in the YA romance construction, where both genders are pragmatically placed with healthy collaborative agency regarding their romantic relationships. In no text do we have a girl falling out of school due to pregnancy as used to be reported in early Kenyan romantic fiction in the past. Sex is presented as a coveted element that must be postponed to some future unnamed time (but the idea is always present as evidenced by Wangu carrying a condom in his pocket when going to meet Angela). This is suggestive of allowing the YA to complete school and mature in readiness to face serious responsibilities that accompany fulfilled romance.

The current concerns affecting both genders are poor parenting and poverty which continue to be highlighted in most of the texts. Even when the characters drop out of school, there is a way in which they are eventually rescued by being endowed with a promise of surviving such ordeals. In so doing, the YA romance fiction under study fulfills Bryces’s claim that “African romantic fiction, like most African popular writing, has an underlying didactic purpose” (122). Love and romance trend in the YA genre and is therefore being depicted as an avenue for joy, leisure, and healthy companionship.

The portrayal of romance modes engages with "locally significant issues" (Erwin 96) that are not only peculiar to the Kenyan situation but generally observable changing trends of African romance setting. By presenting different forms of romance, the YA genre embraces its recognition of love and all its lessons in YA lives. Some romantic nodes represented include: love where the female relies on the benevolence of the hero as the case of Muthoni and Michael in "The Muddled Transition"; or love in which conflicts arise, betrayal ensues, lovers break up, peers intervene, and reconciliation takes place as seen in *Walk with me Angela* between Wangu and Angela. There is also the fiery and independent love relationships that gain the respect, support and approval of parents as happens with Tommy and Angel in *Meet the Omtitas;* and finally, the circumstantially orchestrated and frustrated love, whereby lovers separate involuntarily but later unite in almost mystic ways, as experienced by Kaveni wa Mula'tevya and Musyoka in *We Come in Peace*. These love experiences illustrate how the romantic genre is being defined in Kenya. The paraded shades of love, each with its attractions and pains involve YA protagonists from whom YA readers can relate and learn. No hero or heroine in the texts under study is hurt beyond repair and where disagreements and betrayal occur, the authors offer an alternative way of surviving the hurt through dialogue, peer arbitration, forgiveness and reconciliation. All the said romantic narratives advance realistic romance exposure of romantic moods and feelings, thus accentuating that love need not be negated among YA, but should be treated as a healthy and mutual experience.

4.5.0 The Genre of Glamour

The genre of glamour falls under the category of popular fiction that highlights celebrity culture. Joe Moran quoting Daniel Boorstin posits that a celebrity is a "person who is well known for his well-knowingness" (356). Fame and glamour are traits that many YA aspire to possess due to the celebrated power its aspects seem to bestow upon those who enjoy it. Moran argues that often, icons are celebrated for their embodiment of particular lifestyles that are accredited for their "achievements". They become "figures to identify with rather than distant heroes, encouraging both a less differential attitude towards them and a belief that their private life is a public concern" (357). From the texts under study we are exposed to instances when YA characters desire to interact with celebrities, and aspire to working upwards to become celebrities themselves. For instance, *A Taste of Fame* and *To Grasp at a Star* portray YA characters who crave to associate, with, relate to, and become like their idols; to conquer as sportswomen and men; as entertainers, particularly dancers, and other popular people who would appeal in the field of leisure.

In *A Taste of Fame*, Rando, the fourteen-year-old protagonist aims to become a celebrity like his idol, Dee Zasta (a name that mimics "disaster"). He wins the idol's heart when he performed one of Dee Zasta's songs during a talent competition for "the Voice of Peace Award" (Otieno 3) in his school where Dee Zasta had been invited. His efforts earn him song collaboration with his idol and it is then through episodic disclosures he is introduced to the silences and intricacies of fame and glamour that leaves him astonished. During the collaboration performance, the crowd "out there" cheers and jubilate, like the outsiders they are; while Rando, the new initiate into "the famous club", stands as an

insider witnessing nightmarish events unfold before him, but all ironically concealed from the public. The culmination of the drama manifests in the fact that Rando is privy to the idol's secret of having sent him to reclaim money meant for Dee Zasta's mother's medical treatment. Traumatized in disbelief he muses, "I could not understand how Dee could ask for money he had already paid to the hospital to be refunded; all because he wanted to arrive at the stadium in a chopper!" (Otieno 99) This irony underlines the fact that the public, and YA in particular, knows very little about celebrities. To them, Dee Zasta is a publicly acclaimed star; famous, rich, popular and kingly. Towards the book's close he rhetorically but knowingly asks, "so this was what it meant to be famous? So this was the taste of fame?" (Otieno 170) He only finds restitution by submitting to Teacher Odonse saying "Teacher, I would like you to help me . . . Teach me how to be myself. Teacher, teach me how to be original and unique, just like you." (ibid) He discovers, without adult intervention, glaring realities of life. The encounters in turn enlivens his questioning spirit, his desire to discover and whets his appetite to re-interrogate his earlier fantasies and perception of fame.

The demystification of the hero shows the contradiction between public and private lives. Dee Zasta's character subverts the popular notions of fame and contrasts effectively with that of Rando: the ambitious YA character who symbolises the voice of reason by questioning the vanity of gaining fame and popularity at the expense humanity. The novel's melodrama questions the myopic public perceptions of glamour juxtaposed against its harsh realities. That fame corrupts and enslaves even the best intentions is made manifest in Dee Zasta who towards the end of the text is featured as the most

miserable character of the narrative. The comic irony is heightened and achieved when Rando, back at school shies away from the very popularity he would have given up his life for at the beginning of the text before his idol of fame had been unmasked. The protagonist is portrayed as a highly observant rational character with an eye to the minute realities of celebrity culture and its intricacies. Themes of deception, and uncalled for fanfare predominate. The story reminds me of a Kikuyu maxim "micii ni ndogo" that is, "homes are smoke", to say that unless one is let into people's secrets, they will always imagine that those inside are "warm".

To Grasp at a Star is told through flashbacks by an omniscient narrator and opens with the conclusion. The narrative revolves around Makena, the protagonist, through whose recollections and memories we are introduced to glamour and fame from a girl's perspective. The text opens with Makena and her friends, freshly admitted to University of Nairobi. As she watches her friends' frenzied clamour for the Nairobi Star search in the city, she nostalgically recalls how six years earlier she had craved to become a famous model. She remembers how she had landed in great danger in the hands of Conrad Mchenzi, a conniving and deceptive character. She had unwittingly accepted his offer to flee home to Mombasa oblivious of Conrad's evil motives to sell her as a "slave in a far-off country" (Kamencu 46). She survives her ordeal when the Criminal Investigating Department (CID) rescues her from a posh hotel where she had been 'hidden'.

The text constructs themes of vanity of seeking fame and glamour blindly. Like Rando, Makena too is dazed with the desire to become a star model. The theme of the media is

introduced as hype for structuring and making celebrities. The omniscient narrator says of Makena, "everywhere she went, the advertisement followed her as if it was hounding her. It was all over the newspapers, television and radio" (Kamencu 3). The media tantalizes the characters' imaginations with the false notion that all they need is "beauty, brains, self-confidence and poise" (Kamencu 4). In their minds, the YA characters are engaged in a kind of contract, viewing celebrities as authenticators of glamourous values that can be relied upon. The character's naivety and gullibility through the influences of their peer's pressure is embodied in Makena and Sylvia, both of whom endanger their lives and land in problems with their parents. While Rando in *A Taste of Fame* lands in the hands of a genuine talent builder, Dee Zasta, Makena finds herself in the grip of the manipulative Conrad.

The texts envision themes of choice and consequences; the need to be guided by value judgment and interest; seeking help from those who are better informed instead of shunning them. For instance Rando says, "teacher, I would like you to help me'. . . 'What would you like me to do to help you?' The teacher asked. 'I hesitated, then looked him straight in the eye and said, teach me how to be myself. Teacher, show me how to be original and unique, just like you" (Otieno 170). Makena too, in an introspective stance muses that she "had had a personal and in-depth experience of how hard it was to grasp at a star" (Kamenchu 50). The genre excites such questions as to what YA would want to be, and what kind of society they would want to live in, and at the same time giving them an opportunity to make informed choices of becoming, particularly when exposed to the world as it is. These narratives of glamour symbolise didactic scenarios that clarify the

context the characters are exposed to so they can change or improve on the state of things in their world.

4.6.0 The Autobiographical Genre: Silences and Ambivalences of Female YA Hustlers

An autobiography is a story written by a person about their own life. According to Philipe Lejeune, an autobiography is a "retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his individual life, in particular the story of his personality" (4). The author of an autobiography shares the same name with the protagonist and uses the first person narrative voice. Kate Douglas reiterates that the texts' "public reception as autobiography is also important; as is the author's public persona as an authentic autobiographer, which is commonly confirmed by the author's public appearances and constructed public image" (810). Advancing a similar notion, Elena Cuasante postulates that a text is only considered "to be part of specific literary genre when it has been recognised as such by the addressee" (118). As the scholars indicate, genre exists in certain conventions of a community of speakers/writers.

Tale of Kasaya is an autobiography about a Kenyan girl, Eva Kasaya, who is both the author and protagonist of the text. She is born in a poor family in Thika town. She recounts her harrowing experience as a house girl at the hands of various un-empathetic adult employers in Nairobi. She highlights her final triumph when she retires to the village with a sewing machine to start a tailoring business that she depends on to support her family. In her narrative, Kasaya reflects the struggle of marginalised house girls and

shows through her personal experience how maids can be assisted to become independent. As a result the text reflects themes that impact on the lives of ordinary girls (the maids) that are metaphorically unified and represented in the tale. The text may seem to fall in the category of autobiography of an "unknown average people whose lives had impact only on those around them, rather than on a world-wide stage" (Pearrman 101), but it nevertheless is not a singular tale but, is a multifaceted story that speaks to a large group whose plight has been characterised by silences within the society that deliberately ignores them. Even although Eva Kasaya as a person is not known nationwide, the book is significant as a metaphor of young maids, or *mboch(es)* – which is a sheng for 'housemaid', as they are locally known, a recognised and lived experience of many young girls from poor families in Kenya.

Contrasted city landscapes and rural spaces in the text, wealthy neighbourhoods and slums, serve to create a juxtaposition of the realities as lived every day by Kenyans. The tacit parallelisms invoke images of Nairobi as a city of lies (contested and coveted space), juxtaposed against a "real" city (unfriendly and alienating). The author captures the city of Nairobi as it existed in the imaginaries of the YA and as constructed by the girls who had gone to work in Nairobi as maids and who become the village girl's envy. Captured in Kasaya's words, when her peers returned from Nairobi, they looked "so pretty- brown and healthy with plaited hair and good clothes [desired objects configuring the city] . . . that was the kind of life I wanted . . . you watched T.V and saw Kanda Bongoman sing Inde…Inde Moni . . . I always wished I could leave everything and go to Nairobi" (Kasaya 75). Kasaya's disillusionment is portrayed in the disturbing themes and

narratives she witnesses during her stay in Nairobi. She cites incidences of sexually abused *mboches,* under-aged workers, child labour "slavery" (overworked and exploited) under the very noses of government machinery. She decries underpayment, insecurity, joblessness, betrayal, poverty, dilapidated slum settlements, moral decadence and crime, injustices, distrust, unbearable physical violence, as the hall marks of the real city.

The text explores, bemoans and at the same time reveals silences behind the seemingly bright and glamorous poses the maids put up for the naive admirers when they return home from the city. Kasaya posits that no one (including her) mentioned these truths about the "hardships they had gone through to anybody, not even to my parents" (Kasaya 139). To the outsider or stranger, the city is a space of alienation, disillusionment, deceit. Consequently, to the protagonist, the city presents a place to be loathed (yet, its pull cannot be negated). These contrasting structures of the city are important defining narratives of the YA genre, because these thoughts, wishes and experiences, are engraved in their minds as they negotiate their identity.

Importantly, Kasaya argues for compassionate treatment of maids by employers. She reveals how through the intervention of the last family she works for as a maid, Wanjiru, in Olympya section in Kibera, and her husband David, an artist and graduate from Kenyatta University treat her humanely and how they assist her to rise above mbochship. To their friends, Wanjiru's family always introduced Kasaya as a member of the family and this restores her dignity. Wanjiru and David give Kasaya time off to train for a tailoring course (her dream course), help her open a bank account, increase her salary until she is able to buy a sewing machine. She begins appraising her self-worth since she

is able to acquire basic things which she had always lacked. She says, "I did my hair every month, trying out styles I fancied. I bought shoes and, in addition to visiting my cousins and treating them by [paying fare for] trips to Uhuru Park once in a while" (Kasaya 177). She relinquishes the comfort in Wanjiru and Davids's home and acquires a new lifestyle, becomes her own employer, and manages her own life. Through her lived experience, she concludes "Nairobi, I had come to discover was a do-or-die city not full of well-mannered decent and rich people as I had previously thought. Yes, there were opportunities, but they seemed to favour those who were educated or who had figured it out" (Kasaya 183). Her statement alludes to the importance of education for a girl to succeed in the city. Kasaya's story underscores the moral significance that house girls and other people relegated to similar demeaning treatments, can face and overcome, make decisions, and change from dependency to independence encapsulated in her closing remarks. She realistically reasons:

> in my dreams I would use the cash I saved from tailoring to buy a bigger *shamba* for my parents, but I was alive to the fact this this was quite a long shot. I had been through a lot but felt like I was now beginning my life. That my story hadn't started, that all that I had gone through I was about to start my life, tell my story. And so I started (Kasaya, 183).

Kasaya's tale demonstrates how she negotiates her identity and exposes the place of female YA in the socioeconomic ladder. The narrative offers disclosures that construct ethical issues governing casual labourers who until recently (2007), had not been recognised by the constitution or labour laws protecting workers in Kenya.

4.7.0 Family Melodrama

Melodrama is a form that relies on exaggeration, typically has an emotional plot and relies on stereotypical rather than realistic characters. Melodrama is integrated in novels to achieve satirical, comical, tragic and / or, create theatrical moments often highlighting the gullibility, helplessness of man besides nature; besides attempting to resolve and contain "the social problems . . . the use of family restoration . . . and the transformation of a central character" (Holder 67). I am going to discuss melodrama as it occurs in the different texts under study and across genres.

Family is a major institution in the YA fiction. Traditionally conceived as an abode of peace, cohesion, homeliness and security, family can take a variety of configurations. Some of those appearing in the texts include broken families, intact but shaky family relationships, single parenting, YA-headed homes, and orphaned YA who fend for themselves. We see features of melodrama in *The Devil's Hill.* In this text in environments marked by shifting settings and plots, Dani's father is a present absent father who fits in Jaber Gubrium and James Holistein's argument that family is not a distinct object but exists as "people literally practice family, description and construct family meaning" (490); while Stevee's father is regarded as an outrageously violent man. Stevee does not mention his father throughout the book and once he rebukes Dani for asking him whether he had been to see his mother: "She's none of your business, wimp, [and Dani] winced at the insult" (Kibera 56). One day Dani and Zack sneak into Stevee's compound after the latter has run away from home. They find Stevee's father drunk and "beating her [Stevee's mother]…You will tell me where the boy is, woman," he shouted

at her (Kibera 43). Mistaking dumbfounded Dani for Stevee when he storms out of the house, he roars, "I'll get - *hic* - you, Stevee! Break every bone in your body - which looks- hic as if you've been - you've been – *hic* - starving!"(44)

The Delegate, a story similarly told by a third person narrator, revolves around a young girl protagonist, Chebet, who, like the trio above, drops out of school due to a harsh environment. After the death of her mother, she flees home to Nairobi to look for means to fend for her two younger siblings. After undergoing harrowing experiences in the unwelcoming city, she and her siblings are eventually rescued by the motherly Roselita, a friendly Kikuyu woman, who in conjunction with a priest, Father Joachim send the orphans to Mother of Hope Children's Home. Chebet's story for instance, deconstructs the view of family as an object united by blood, marriage or such social associations, and configures a more universal view of family that extends beyond tribal ties and affiliations. Roselita, a Kikuyu (a community she had been socialized to perceive as enemy) exhibits more humane traits than does her extended family back in Marigat. Roselita constructs for her a new view and vision asserting that family is not tribe, family is not blood bond; but a conglomeration of individuals that exhibit humane traits. We are told that Chebet's "ethnicity mindset that her mother had imbued in her changed" (Mwangi, 129). The author endeavours to chart through the character of YA that ethnic divisions are meaningless and that it is possible for YA to use their own discoveries to reinvent a more integrative and tolerant Kenyan national family. This affirms Smith's assertion that "as an object of descriptive practice, family is neither just a thing or objective set of bonds, nor merely an idea about the quality of social relations. It is rather

an object that is interpretively assembled out of experience" (qtd. in Gubrium and Holstein 1990: 262). In addition Chebet models a triumphant image by excelling in spite of the adult apathy. Through her, YA readers get a window through which to view how to cope with parental loss, memory, regrets, reawaken lost dreams, set future prospects and aspirations, as well as resiliently transcending current circumstances even without parental or relatives' support.

In *The Delegate* Rosemary and her husband ("an engineer with a Chinese firm" (Mwangi 86)), are too busy in their work to spare time for each other, let alone for their children. The omniscient narrator says that it "had been months since she had the time together with her husband to talk. She had also not managed to spare time for her three children" (ibid). The two symbolise contemporary parents who mistake material providence for parental love. They provide everything for their three children; money, good school, and servants at home; but they lack a major portion of what every parent should have - time for their growing children. Their son Jeff is portrayed as struggling on his own and is assisted with his homework by Chebet (working as a house-girl). Though Chebet is from a lowly background, she however is portrayed as outdoing the parents in their parenting duties and blends well with her employer's children. Jeff's eventual death due to trauma he suffers after he and his siblings are kidnapped, the family guard killed and the kidnappers demand for a ransom the parents could not raise immediately, leaves a grievous hollow in Chebet's heart. (Mwangi 155) The paradoxical narrative that emerges compares a needy family (Chebet's) and one that has everything; and yet, the children in both sets of families have their peculiar challenges. Chebet gains more insight and

appreciates the efforts her parents had put in place, sympathises with her bosses' son whose problems diminish the pain she had encountered. Through her, YA are made to appreciate their family's conditions as they are, and endeavour to create solutions for their problems without necessarily envying others who they might think are better placed, yet in reality, may be worse off. The protagonist stands out, exhibits parenting skills all through the narrative, and challenges actual parent characters that relegate their roles to YA, to reinvent their commitment to parenting. In Chebet, the author sets forth progressive YA characters as well as their relationships in uniting not only their families in challenge, but also the world at large. The significance of her message to the children in the orphanage on her nomination to "represent Africa's children [in] Geneva, Switzerland" (165) just before she leaves for the United Nation Children's Conference, strategically advances the meaning of the text. Its positioning at the end of the text endows it with the task to summarize and endorse the text's dominant authorial view about YA. She says "We may be victims of fate but we can choose how to live our lives. Whether we lack in very essential human needs, always remember we can model our lives and live a very successful life" (169). Her character connotes what Kimberly Reynolds elucidates of family as "a special, insider relationship with members of a group, whatever their biological relationships" (25). Chebet subverts melodramatically what would be perceived as the limits of a YA. From a local character, she is transformed into a transnational sensation, connecting the world family, as a delegate of humanity. She displays what YA are capable of, if and when they embrace a positive attitude even under daunting circumstances.

While some parent characters are portrayed as having failed to exhibit redeeming traits for the YA, there are also others who are endowed with lasting visions that create positive memories that are recalled by the YA characters. For instance, in *A Name for Himself,* the protagonist, Mollusks, is admitted to Greenpines, the prestigious school of his dream, after the intervention of the new school's founder and director who buys him new school uniform and pays his fees. In the new school he experiences stigmatization from the school bullies who pick on his name and stereotype it paralleling it to a class of the snails. Just when he is enjoying his victory over the bullies and is settling down, his benefactor is arrested on account of peddling drugs and the school closes down. Towards the end of the book he muses pessimistically, it "is finally over. My life is over" (Ngonda 159). However, subverting this pessimism, the protagonist recalls his father's wisdom that no matter what happens he should never give up for, "however grim things were, something had always worked out . . . dawn would break" (Ngonda 160), thus inviting an optimistic outlook onto the future.

In *Never Say Never* we meet the protagonist, Daniel Muthini, son to a poor single mother. He is arrested and taken to an approved school where his life's journey is traced from class four, through to high school where he passes his exams and anticipates joining the university. He undergoes harrowing experiences in various approved schools in which he finds himself, but his determination to unravel the mystery of his arrest gives the text a series of plotlines that captivate the reader. A melodramatic turn of events reveals Muthini's mother as the culprit. His unjustly villainised uncle, who he had all along suspected to be the reason for his miseries, is in fact above suspicion. At this climactic

pinnacle, the children's officer supplies information on how Muthini's mother had persistently asked his office to assist her in educating her son, gives an ironic logic that the "betrayal" happened due to her effort to get her son educated. Reinforcing this sentiment, he recalls his mother's words during her last visit at Kericho Approved School. She had said to him, "this is not how I would have wanted it, but it seems the only way" (Mugo 160). The information further carries the paradoxical moral that features betrayal and pain as a cleansing ingredient in the life of the protagonist now that he has achieved the best education, a feat he could not have achieved had his mother not influenced, albeit indirectly, his arrest. There is no one to crucify since the mother is already dead, and therefore the narrative has neither loser, nor direct winner, no condemnation or annihilation, but instead it offers a disclosure that in life nothing is ever as it should be, and when it appears to be, the practical (Mr. Wanderi, the children's officer) overrides emotional (Muthini's expectations). The melodrama is further enriched when the hunter (Muthini) is humbled by his mother's sacrifice (masked as betrayal throughout the text) for him to succeed. The price underlines the theme of family and human relationship complexities as well as enhancing the overriding theme that love is not always sufficient for nurture. It reinforces the moral that sometimes people within family, particularly caring parents, have to give up "everything" for their children's welfare. Through the various antics by the YA characters, moralistic intervention by teachers, career parents and other agents of authority, the author makes a covert appeal to both YA and agents of authority (mainly parents and teachers) to reinvent and reorder their priorities for a healthy YA future.

In the historical genre, melodrama is revealed through juxtaposition of the superior positions of slave drivers as masters against that of the helplessness of the slaves as represented in *We Come in Peace*. The protagonist, Kaveni wa Mulat'evia, her mother and other villagers are captured by her fathers' traitors who sell them as slaves. The narrative features the laborious trudge over truncated spurs in the wild; down to the big interior stopover marketplace at Kibwezi; through marshy routes to the coast slave market. On the way, Kaveni witnesses the traumatized horrors of the grizzly death of her best friend, Kamende wa Mueke (Mulwa 51), and other loved ones. She watches their bodies being flung onto the rocks for hyenas and vultures to devour. She bears the malicious taunts by Mbunu wa Kiunga; endures her objectification by the masters; and digests the irrational and jealousy-ridden hate by Memsahib. We observe Kaveni's short-lived succour in the hands of Mama (Amina), the senior slave servant in Memsahib's house; the fatal blow she deals on Memsahib which catalyses her daring heroic escape through the treacherous crocodile-ridden River Kelele (Mulwa 92). Her escape causes her benefactor and mentor, Mama to be accused of being an accomplice. As a result she is tied "to the flogging pole and flogged her till she was all rags in cloth and flesh" (Mulwa 100). We are led to her dramatic rescue by the team of "The Man-of-War"; and, restoration in a miraculous reunion with her now one-armed childhood man of her dreams, Musyoka wa Mang'oka, with whom she lives happily ever after in a home away from home, rendering the historical genre to almost read like fantasy.

The local slave merchants are caricatured as symbolised by the character of Bunu wa Kiunga and his two slave driver friends from the South. The trio is turned into slaves by

the Arabs who had contracted them and are marched away by a guard in the very presence of those they had mistreated on the way. Their wild protests are subdued when "a whip cracked across their shoulders. They marched as meekly as the sheep walks towards the tree for hanging and slaughter" (Mulwa 76). This ironical turn of events exposes the dramatic complexities of slave business. The gullibility of the local traitors in the employ of the Arab merchants to betray their own people due to greed is satirized playing into the melodramatic characteristics as defined by Brantlinger where "virtue [is] rewarded and vice apparently punished at the end" (5). The antiheroic end of Mbunu wa Kiunga destabilizes the slave narrative while the veneration of Kaveni wa Mulat'evya suggests a psychological distance from vices of slavery that must be destroyed and enhances restoration of that which is virtuous and innocent, as epitomized in the protagonists, Kaveni and Musyoka. The historical distance of separation is bridged by the union of the two heroic characters. At the end of the text is a unity of the past harmonized in the present of the YA, who must live differently; hopeful and optimistic. The YA characters are busy rebuilding, regenerating the past, not in forgetfulness but in respect of what restores them, springing from the past, and facing contemporary challenges.

The satirical naming of characters such as Mtapatabora Kinyanya ("you-will-get-good-things") in its rhyming musicality contrasts with what the slave business promised and destabilizes the expectations of the interior local merchants. Through the YA characters, the text exposes how atrocities of slavery denied them their childhood. The deep descriptions of familial, social relationships guide us to visualize the historical indulgences of slavery and how it destroyed trust, cohesion, family and threatened YA

future. However, the text charts new identities that YA characters have to assume for survival.

Single parenting is also an influencing factor on YA characters within the family melodrama as evidenced in *To Grasp at a Star*. Told from the third person narrative voice and seen through the eyes of Makena, the narrative traces textual events in a flashback, through high school years to the present, as a first year student at "Nairobi City University" (1). Melodramatic themes are brought to the fore in the relationship between Makena and her father Mr. Ooro. Makena, represents the determined YA who consider their parents as bottlenecks to success. She is contrasted with the character of her father who in turn accentuates the challenges facing single-parents (be they fathers or mothers). However, the narrative stresses single-parenting as a more critical experience for fathers bringing up female YA than it is for mothers. Mr. Ooro's helplessness is portrayed in his misconceived notion that the mandate to bring up girls rests in the hands of mothers. His approach to parenting, attempts to advance a traditional stereotype role in which girls grew in the hands of mothers and boys in the chaperone of the fathers. This fails when Makena subverts her father's delusion by refusing to obey his order that she goes to live with her aunt in Meru. She instead tries fleeing home to seek after her dream to become a fashion model but she too lands in more trouble in the hands of a glamourous conman character, Conrad.

In the same text runs a second narrative entitled "Muddled Transition" which has melodramatic plotlines. The story features Muthoni, the protagonist, navigating her way

with lies to her over-trusting parents so that she and her best friend Malaika attends the Minister of Finance's son, Paul Makokha's, twenty-third birthday party. Muthoni has mastered her father's gullibility as she confesses saying, "Dad was so easy to deceive" (Kamencu 64). She exhibits fake innocence, obedience and honesty to exploit and dupe her parents in their blind trustfulness. The hide-and-seek kind of relationship creates comic melodrama when the protagonist's parents visit her in hospital where she has been admitted traumatized and delirious from drugs, after her night escapades. The narrative didactically sensitizes parents to be cautious when YA make requests; while alerting YA that lies are short-lived and they must be prepared to face the consequences of their actions, however embarrassing as epitomized in the protagonist.

From these melodramatic narratives, authors make commentary on parenting joys, challenges and conflicts in family successes and failures as seen through the dual relationships between the YA characters and their parent characters. The family themes offered, therefore, present parents and YA an opportunity to laugh at themselves as well as seeing themselves as if in a mirror of their being members of family. In addition, the texts portray a variety of families in which nurture no longer rests solely on the mothers. Trending in the texts are YA headed families, widowed father headed, single mothers parenting, families being managed through the help of house helps particularly where both parents belong to professional and / or business class.

Melodramatic presentations of the family has also had its share of contribution to the YA genre's production. Portrayal of different familial scenes, with overriding themes of relationships between YA and their parents sometimes lead to either cohesion or apathy. YA resilience under various family circumstances is modelled through different YA characters such as Chebet and Muthini, two of who triumph over dangerously daunting circumstances, thus circumscribing a vision of trust in YA ability to change the future of family institution. Texts with familial themes establish that although YA may begin from humble backgrounds, the same need not correlate with what they become in future. In the family melodrama, education is given prominence as the saving tool for YA from various backgrounds. Resilience is honoured and rewarded and therefore, carries the authorial vision in these fiction texts. While there is condemnation for parents who have failed in their parental duties, there are those parents, such as Edgar's father, in *Death Trap*, who are extoled. Such are epitomes of parental models who carry the morals that YA are meant to emulate. The binding glue running through the texts is dialogue, cooperation and unity among members of the family, which is a necessary trait that is often questioned in YA, especially considering the myriad conflicts that exist between YA and their parents.

4.8.0 Conclusions

In this chapter I have analysed the trend patterns in themes, plot structures, styles and authorial vision across the eleven YA texts under study. In addition, I have identified and placed the texts within the genre(s). In addition, I have established the genre trends and their contribution in evincing the YA genre in Kenya. On a large level, the analysis of the

texts lead us to agree with Thomas Pavel (2003: 210) that genres are fluid and keep changing, such that to achieve a given aim, the initial genre divides and mutates into other sub-genres. Styles, language and character presentations and themes crisscross the subgenres, demonstrating universal appeal for the YA reading tastes.

In ten of the eleven texts under study, writers have generally used protagonists, both girls and boys in early adolescence, in upper primary school levels all the way to the late teenage in high school, and only Makena in *To Grasp at a Star* is in the university. This feature qualifies the texts as within the YA genre category of writing. The oeuvre we have studied, echo Bastian quoting Charles Bazerman that genres are "forms of life, ways of being. They are frames for social action. They are environments for learning. They are locations within which meaning is constructed" (30). The language, character, themes and settings construct for YA readers a credible world that is emotionally accessible. Though sometimes patronizing, the texts portray issues that are plausible enough to engage the YA intellect that can well supplement other knowledge imparted to YA in institutions of learning.

The fiction texts ultimately reinforce the necessity to recognise that YA deserve access to knowledge and experiences expounded in the different genres that manifest, for individual reading and enjoyment. The authors have dealt with gender issues in a peculiar way, particularly by switching common expectations and upholding others that steer away from traditional experiences, thus constructing a world that is plausible to contemporary YA. For instance, *Death Trap* and *The Devil's Hill*, enhance traditional gender issues whereby the male YA characters are featured as the more affected by

negativity and fall out with society than do the YA female characters, particularly in issues of criminality and drug indulgence. The only time a female character is found wanting is the case of Muthoni in "Muddled Transition" in *To Grasp at a Star*. She is portrayed as a victim of male manouvres. The embarrassment she suffers configures traditional belief that she had asked for it first for leaving home for the party without her parents' permission. The exposure of her error to the public, is a ridicule that diminishes the female characters' dignity to agency of individual change without their having to be patronized. This shows that the female YA moral bar is raised higher than that of her male counterparts. Treatment in a more balanced manner, both male and female characters' agency to solve their muddles with dignity, even when they have to suffer the consequences of their actions, looks more appealing. Such would reinforce the reality that drug abuse is a shared problem in both male and female YA in Kenya.

It is also notable that the female YA characters are not given many starring roles. Seven out of eleven texts have male protagonists compared to four out of the eleven with females as the leading characters. The trend demonstrates that most writers' focus on the male child in the country. I argue, the female YA need be given equal emphasis, so that the YA genre avoids falling into the conventionalized trend that has always marginalized the YA female.

Some themes in the YA titles include YA governed homesteads, surviving trauma of parental loss, living and leaving fame, glamour and its masked truths, dysfunctional

families in which settings YA characters are considered rebellious and are rarely redeemed until it is sometimes too late. The protagonist of *The Delegate,* Chebet, overcomes all the challenges that face her as an orphan. She takes charge of her life and that of her younger siblings. Her rebellion against the retrogressive culture that tries to lead her to early marriage earns admiration. Her eventual appointment to attend a United Nation Children's Conference in Switzerland as a delegate of the African children is an indication of the limitless possibility for resilient YA. Using such enabled characters, the YA genre helps instill and position YA as conquerors, achievers and people capable of challenging oppressive outdated practices they triumph over. The YA are therefore portrayed as solution seekers, not conformists, but as people endowed with ability to change the society for the better.

The presence of a historical fiction genre text and an autobiography reinforce the YAF genre's capability to accommodate other genres. For instance, the historical text, *We Come in Peace,* invokes familiar places, factual events simulating and facilitating YA' travel to the past while at the same time appreciating the present. The local realism, jargon and evocation of traditions, resonate with what is peculiarly Kenyan as well as throwing melancholic rays that allude to the country's past contact with slave trade.

The autobiographical text, *Tale of Kasaya*, on the other hand, enriches the YA genre through the candid way in which child labour is narrated through the lenses of theme of house-help. Navigating the trajectory of poverty and lure of the young to the city, Kasaya's story emphasises YA conscientiousness and awareness of self and familial

challenges and the YA often unappreciated contribution to national building. The story lays bare the exploitation, abuse and exactions on female YA workers forced by socioeconomic concerns to mature before their time. The writer reveals the city's silences, exposing its ugly underbelly of individualism, unfriendliness, and indifference, thus demystifying its luster for YA. From the text the author underscores that YA can survive any ordeal, but that adult intervention may be required particularly to give just treatment and fair pay to the house-helps they engage. Kasaya advocates for an empathetic society, as epitomized in the character of Wanjiru and her husband David, who appreciate and support Kasaya to achieve her independence and worth. The text persuades the reader to develop an understanding and appreciation for house-helps after seeing the challenges they sometimes have to endure at the hands of unmindful employers and points to a more empathetic house-help-employer society. It is unfortunate that to-date house-helps continue to be maligned, mostly because they do not know their rights.

Melodramatic presentations of the family has also had its share of contribution to the YA genre's production. Portrayal of different familial scenes, with overriding themes of relationships between YA and their parents sometimes lead to either cohesion or apathy. YA resilience under various family circumstances is modelled through different YA characters such as Chebet and Muthini, two of who triumph over dangerously daunting circumstances, thus circumscribing a vision of trust in YA ability to change the future of family institution. Texts with familial themes establish that although YA may begin from humble backgrounds, the same need not correlate with what they become in future. In the

family melodrama, education is given prominence as the saving tool for YA from various backgrounds. Resilience is honoured and rewarded and therefore, carries the authorial vision in these fiction texts. While there is condemnation for parents who have failed in their parental duties, there are those parents, such as Edgar's father, in *Death Trap*, who are extoled. Such are epitomes of parental models who carry the morals that YA are meant to emulate. The binding glue running through the texts is dialogue, cooperation and unity among members of the family, which is a necessary trait that is often questioned in YA, especially considering the myriad conflicts that exist between YA and their parents.

By often contrasting the characters of YA and adult characters, and in most cases ensuring the YA character wins the contest in conflicts between YA and adult, sometimes through trickery and faked innocence as does Stevee and his gang at the cinema hall makes the texts humorous and interesting. By duping the seemingly strong and often oppressive adult characters, the YA are given a kind of breather that accord them some catharsis that they lack in real life. This gives them moments of tension release that exist between them and adults. As a result, the texts structure reordered priorities among the teams, so that each understands that unless they respect each other's space, none is the wiser.

Through different styles, particularly the use of the omniscient narrative voice allows dialogue among characters thus interlacing events and settings. The YA genre therefore explore, as "a proxy for the author" (Dawson 146) multi-perspective dimensional views that construct and constitute the YA world. Notably, seven out of the eleven texts under

study utilise the omniscient narrative voice; while the other four, namely; *A Taste of Fame, Tale of Kasaya, We Come in Peace* and *Never Say Never*; rely on the "I" narrator. The popularity of the omniscient narrator in the YA genre in Kenya, emblazons on it, qualities of rationality in addressing the "general audience on a range of public issues from a base of specific disciplinary expertise" (Dawson 150). As a result, the technique has enabled writers of the texts studied to balance effectively, presentations of both the YA character and agents of authority characters, and allowed the characters opportunity to expound personal views and perceptions of each other as well as entrenching arbitrative voice and vision for society.

The juxtaposition of ineffective school institution settings (as in *Devil's Hill*), against the mindful well organized school systems (as portrayed in *A Name for Himself*) help confront themes such as hypocrisy, expose social immorality, drug trafficking, students' welfare; and subtly envision a call on YA vigilance and to not take things on their face value. Other styles observable in the novels include letters, snippets of poetry that create musicality and break the narrative monotony as seen in *Meet the Omtitas* thus making the work more accessible. Use of vivid descriptions create verisimilitudinal scenes in most of the texts. For example, in *The Devil's Hill* the description of Stevee challenging the headmaster is so vividly realistic in the Kenyan school scenario. While reading it, I recalled many similar instances I observed as I grew up in the Kenyan primary and high schools in the 80's. The depictions of such storylines in contemporary YAF, caricaturing the headmaster, are indicative that bad habits die hard and that their abhorrent nature

remains sterile and evasive in creating healthy YA minds. The feature satirizes conventionalized injustices against YA that often pass unnoticed.

The texts end in various ways but often with a promise of improvement of the current YA situations. Those with happy endings of fulfilment and achievement include *The Delegate* and *Never Say Never*; *A Name for Himself* ends in uncertain relatively melancholic but nevertheless out-looking into the hazy future that envelops some distant hope. And still, others end in an atmosphere of dilemma laced with some uncertain promise of YA either reworking or struggling to change the contending situations, as witnessed in *Death Trap*, *The Devil's Hill* and *Walk with me Angela.* Five out of the eleven texts end with a beginning, that is, a kind of new start which gives the impression that the general interest of the YA fiction genre in Kenya is to map novel optimism for YA in the country. Most of the texts portray positive endings through restoration of YA characters' hopes. I argue that the textual portrayals are particularly important in depicting progressive trends and references that YA can depend on. Newell asserts that these can act as "appetizers for students and researchers of [YAL]" (qtd. in Owomoyela 229).

Multigeneric, the school genre cuts across and blend freely with all the other genres in all the texts under study except in, *We Come in Peace*, and *Tale of Kasaya.* In the latter text, the school theme is featured only fleetingly to indicate how the protagonist drops out school due to poverty. In the former text in which the historical genre is realized, absence of formal school reinforces a setting in the distant past in tandem with themes of slavery.

The family genre also permeates all the other genres with differing degrees probably underpinning the centrality of family in the lives of the young adult characters. Evidence shows that before engaging in other activities, the protagonists from the different texts commence their journeys from home. Romance too stands out as a genre-defining theme in YAF. We have seen how different types of romance manifests in the different genres. It is evident that the YAF genre in Kenya is multigenre in nature.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summaries

This thesis commenced with the assumption that YA literature is a marginalized genre in Kenya. Using YAF award winning texts from JKPL and Burt awards I had set out to find out how the two groups that recognize excellence in YAF for YA endeavour to change the current neglect of YAL in the country. I interrogated other book production stakeholders and institutions including KPA, the library, NBDCK and the National Book Fair and how each has, or has not contributed to the YA genre formation in Kenya. I examined how the paratext has contributed to the material presentation and definition of the YA genre. Finally, I analysed eleven YA award-winning texts from which I identified subgenres and traced patterns and trends that make up the YAF genre in Kenya.

Chapter one gives us the background to the study, where I have outlined the research questions, objectives, research assumptions and the study's rationale. I have given a detailed review of literature that relates to the current research including definition of YA, YA in Kenya, debates surrounding complexities and ambivalences of childhood, youth and age in the African societies. I have discussed the history, trends of YAL and its relationship to the question of genre and genre theories. I thrashed out debates that surround institutions and stakeholders' contributions to the formation of the YA genre in Kenya. I concluded the chapter by reviewing debates on the history and the materialness

of the book as well as justifying the applicability of the strand as my chosen method of study in this research.

In chapter two, I interrogated the institutions that are involved in the YA genre placement in the country. While JKPL and Burt are positively supporting writing for YA, efforts by the government and other groups and / or individuals are wanting. As a result, the survival and sustainability of the awards hang in the balance.

It is also evident that YA themselves are left out in writing and selecting manuscripts for awards, a situation that leaves decision on what is written for them in the hands of adults who may at times not really penetrate the needs and interests of the YA.

Also wanting are efforts of bringing the award-winning YA titles to light. These texts, for instance, are not displayed prominently in stands during the book fairs. Of concern also is the notable lack of stock of YAF winners in the Kenyan libraries, even in the few libraries where the YA sections exist, where only foreign classics are acquired regardless of relevance to YA interests. These cases reduce the chances for book lovers knowing of the books' existence, thus making the likelihood of the target audience interacting with the texts slim.

Chapter three addressed the material aspects of the YA book showing that the paratext contributes to the material presentations and definition of the YA genre, thus pointing to the utility of studying the material aspects of the book. Portrayal of more male than female characters on most covers leads to the conclusion that the YA genre in Kenya is being defined along male lines, as a result of which they advance the marginalization of

young women. Such material features as typography, colour, and iconography stood out as cardinal points that YAF text producers have exploited. Of interest is the use of covers that are attractive, eye-catching and colourful, with illustrations that pervade the epitextual zone of all the YA texts under study adding to the genre's appeal. The material aspects of the YA book cannot be underplayed, since evidence has shown that presentations of a text without the paratext would render the text not only naked but also make it vulnerable to tear, soiling and actions of weather. In addition, without paratext, the text would lack cues and clues that guide potential readers to make choices on whether or not to purchase or read a given text, since, as we have demonstrated in various parts of the thesis, it is the paratext that gives the text propagation and life.

In the fourth chapter, I analysed YAF texts and their genre manifestations. The findings reveal that different trends in relation to themes, characters, style and setting are apparent in the YAF genre. The texts reveal discourses that cut across and crisscross among genres, using multifarious voices and strategies, all of which underline the hybrid richness of YA genre in Kenya. For instance, the school adventure and the family melodrama genres share themes and character portrayals of hard working, resilient, and decisive YA whose willingness to take responsibility of the consequences of their actions at school and at home are applauded.

The romance genre texts have shown that YA are capable of sharing enduring, healthy, mutual friendship and love relationships without fear of compromising their education pursuits. Various shades of love with which different YA can identify include: the circumstantially frustrated love that is eventually salvaged; love riddled with youthful

conflicts of betrayal, peer jealousy, breakups, forgiveness and reunion; harmonious and fiery independent love that attracts parental support; and love that is dependent on female reliance on male benevolence.

The historical genre offers the rare opportunity for readers to engage in issues of early Kenya's contact with foreign slavers and traders at the Kenyan coast. This genre provides YA with a complex view of Kenya's past and promotes a sense of understanding for people from varied backgrounds.

YA aspirations to become celebrities characterize the genre of glamour. It envisions the moral dilemma involved when YA blindly seek fame and demonstrates the consequences of such earnings.

Finally, the autobiography provides a first-hand account of the experience of domestic workers. It appeals for appreciation of house-girls' input, both at home and at their places of work. The genre demonstrates ethical issues involved in child-labour that confront YA from needy socioeconomic backgrounds. It also proposes ways in which young girls employed as maids can be helped to become self-reliant and independent.

Conclusion

The findings of this study affirm the assumption that guided it- that the YA genre is still marginal to the main-stream literature in Kenya. However, on the brighter side, the study has revealed that the texts that have won awards have features that could invigorate the YA genre in the country.

In particular, the study has revealed that various institutions and persons contributions are cardinal, if the YA genre is to take shape in Kenya. These include the KPA, the NBDCK, the library, Ministry of Education through KICD, donors and individual supporters of the YAF book prizes such as CODE through Bill Burt, and the Text Book Centre management in addition to other reading-promotion well-wishers. These teams have started the journey to give the YA genre foundation from which YAL in Kenya will grow.

In reference to discourses surrounding the text, the paratext has demonstrated significant contribution to the material presentation and definition of the YA genre. The epitext, in particular, has stood out as a material zone whose various elements contribute to the formation of the text, protecting it, advertising it, masking and or cueing its meaning.

Finally the findings reveal that the YA genre in Kenya has several subgenres and trends. The study identified genres and subgenres whose boundaries are fluid thus containing a multifarious appeal in which several genres are instantiated in one text. These include: the school adventure, historical fiction, the romance, the genre of glamour, autobiography and family melodrama. Further, surmising from the analysis carried out, the YAF genre in Kenya currently lacks some fiction genres that are reputed to capture YA's interests, both locally and beyond the borders. Such include science fiction, sports and fantasy. Other major genres of literature that are missing are poetry and drama. The resultant overall scenario is that the YAL genre in Kenya has kicked off on a progressive trend but, there are still some major hurdles to cover before it can command and claim its terrain.

Implications

The results of this study can be useful to teachers, YA policy makers and librarians. It serves as evidence of fiction that is available for consumption by YA in the country and creates further awareness of what is and / or is not available for YA reading. As a result, the stakeholders are able to make informed decisions on the way forward in alleviating the current situation. This can be done through diversification which includes, improving, increasing and addressing lacunas observed in order to strengthen the YA genre. In addition, the notable emphasis on most of the texts on tribal themes (alluded to by mention of characters' tribes, as in *The Delegate*) can be exploited further to sensitise YA on the need for tribal cohesion and integration in order to build a united Kenya. I am persuaded by Koss and Teale quoting Klikler (1999: 269) that the media themes in the texts could be beneficial reference points for the YA to "question the interpretation of the world the media tries to sell them; and the need to be critics and creators of meaning for themselves" (570) especially in their desire for stardom. Additionally, the oeuvre could also be useful to education policy makers in their endeavor to explore, improve and follow up on YA literacy in the country and to fulfil the core objective of YA award-giving bodies.

Recommendations: Which Way Kenya for the YA?

In the iconographic sphere, more requires to be done so as to positively position balanced presentations of both male and female genders in order to create an all-gender inclusive YAF genre.

Fundamentally, YA book should be recognized as a product, like all other material products, for public consumption. For this matter, the publishers should think of investing more in advertising to give the genre a higher profile.

I suggest that attention for further research should include the paratextual influence on the YA genre through interviews with authors, reviews of books on newspapers and other mass media channels. Endorsements of books, often through word of mouth and sometimes recommendations as study texts in institutions of learning by teachers, university professors and students should also be investigated as part of YAF book production and circulation. Moreover, study of the different types of paratexts' appearance on a given text and in relation to different editions, as well as authors' biographies and reviews affixed on the physical books should be studied. These recommendations foreground my support for theories of genre, which suggest that we need to look at both the inside and outside the text. The book history and materiality of the text are useful analytical sites as has been displayed at various points, particularly in chapter three of this thesis. Finally, despite the history of the book and the materiality of the text being a relatively new approach in studies of Kenyan literature, its richness can expose the essentials of genres right from their inception, processes of production, stakeholders' involvement, marketing, readability, appeal and target readers.

While the award-giving institutions in conjunction with the KPA have been persistent in producing relevant YAF texts for the Kenyan YA readers, the YA in the country are yet to see and appreciate this positive effort. While the institutions have succeeded to show the need to continue publishing for the said category, there is need for the YAL genre

stakeholders to step up the effort to also invest in advertising, as well as placing the texts in public and school libraries. Mentoring YA to write and involving them in selecting manuscripts for awards would make them ambassadors of their own books. In particular, the Ministry of Education through the KICD, should identify some of the award-winning titles which, analysis has shown, have challenging themes, styles, and outlook, and place them in the school curriculum. By placing the YA winners in the Orange Book just as they do with other academic texts to serve as reference and supplementary materials, KICD would help jumpstart YA genre utilization in the country's secondary schools. In addition to the fact that most of the YA awards winning titles are books that YA can relate to, the gesture would also ascertain the genre's sustainability. These inputs, in my view, will not only help uphold the reading interests in the YA, but will also enable the YAL genre to gain popularity and claim its long overdue place in Kenyan literature.

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APPENDIX I

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Wakarindi

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H15/10/32**
PROJECT TITLE	Young adult fiction in Kenya: A genre struggling to be born
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Ms J Wakarindi
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Literature, Language and Media Studies/
DATE CONSIDERED	23 October 2015
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	21 February 2019

DATE 22 February 2016 **CHAIRPERSON** J. Knight
(Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor I Hofmeyr

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

22 / 02 / 2016
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX II

Annotated Bibliography

I present an annotated bibliography in an attempt to increase interest and exposure of the YAF texts that have won awards in both JKPL and Burt Awards from 2005-2013. These are the texts that have been created deliberately for YA. I hope that this list will inspire stakeholders, researchers, and target group to write books that will help improve the YA genre, focusing on issues that are currently of great concern to YA. In addition, future researchers may want to use this bibliographical sample to compare it with other books that appealed to YA in the past (even when such productions might not have deliberately targeted YA), before the current projects of awarding teams came in focus, and establish how writing has influenced readership and consumption of YAF over time.

Other ways in which the annotated bibliographical oeuvre could be beneficial is that it can be used to interrogate reception, accessibility and utilisation of the YA books in Kenya. It can be utilized to examine Kenya's YA genre's aesthetics, and authenticity as texts that dis/honour the YAF writing dynamics. It functions to preserve, at a glance, works that were produced to evince YA genre history in Kenya. It may also act as a guide for those who want to purchase and / or acquire YA texts for individual consumption, as presents to YA, friends and relatives, or for stocking in the libraries for ease of access by YA. The list may also act as a bedrock on which future readers and writers can use to trace Kenya's YA writing trajectories and trends in order to project the futures of writing for YA in Kenya. These would include but are not limited to research on writers for YA'

censorship (self or otherwise), discussions revolving around commissions and omissions that may have been necessitated by such censorship. When doing biographical research, the list would aid researchers in identifying names of writers and genealogy of writing of those who have engaged in writing and promoting YA genre in Kenya. The findings of such research may also assist in reaching the writers for interviews particularly to find out what it means to write for YA, the procedures, how to motivate budding YA writers, in order for them to be integrated into the writing venture.

Fundamentally, note that this list is not exhaustive since it covers only the span and oeuvre of the current study, and I am also aware that more books have been produced and awarded prizes while this research was continuing, which other researchers may add to the archive of knowledge.

Anthony Mugo, *Never Say Never*

The text revolves around Muthini, the protagonist who is a son of a divorced woman. He faces the most arduous challenges and survives all the approved schools in Kenya after he is whisked away from home by the police leaving his mother wailing after him. His mother dies when he is still in school and Muthini can only count on an old grandmother and an uncle whom he suspected orchestrated his arrest and eventual tumultuous life in approved schools. Despite having to interact with juveniles, some of whom had committed dangerous crimes including murder, Muthini exhibits resilience and acquires university entrance qualifications, as a result demystifying stereotypes that approved schools produce hard-core criminals.

Argwings Otieno, A *Taste of Fame*

The text features a young male protagonist, Rando who has an aching desire to become famous, and to stand out in society. The boy comes into the limelight when during a school's competition, he catches the eye of his idol Dee Zasta who is in the audience and whom Rando imitates. The two join in a collaboration and through this intercourse the protagonist comes face to face with the inside story of glamorous people. He witnesses the death of the star's mother as a result of the latter's negligence by retrieving medical money meant for his mother's treatment. This and other experiences change Rando's perception of fame and glamour. Through an episodic almost cinematic style, YA are made privy to secrets, truths, silences that behoove stardom and glamour that are often hidden from the public gaze. The author demystifies this YA craving for stardom and the popular perceptions and attitudes often associated with what it means being famous.

Bill Rutto, *Death Trap*

The narrative features two characters, Edgar and Monica, students at Rangeland High School. Edgar (son of a Commissioner of Police) heads a secret gang that terrorizes others in the school, plays secret mischief by secretly destroying school property, smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol. As the gang leader, Edgar is able to blackmail the other gang members so that they remain faithful to him. While on a school tour to L. Baringo, Edgar is left behind as he sneaks to smoke his bhang. Monica goes back for him but as they trace their way back to the camp, they get lost in the dense forest. Monica sprains her ankle and Edgar has to carry her on his shoulders. Bad luck was on their side

as they are captured by the cave people who take them deeper in the forest. However, the cave is attacked by cattle raiders and Edgar and Monica are on their own again trying to find their way out of the forest. Edgar smokes more bhang and in a delirium he trips on loose rocks landing down the valley where he is attacked by a hyena that devours part of his leg. When finally the two are rescued by the police helicopter, and taken to hospital, Edgar's leg is amputated while Monica is treated for shock and the sprain. The book closes with Edgar being reinstated to the same school where he and his gangs swear before the whole school that they would never take drugs again. In the meantime the school chief security officer is discovered to have been trafficking drugs in the school. He is sacked and put behind bars.

David Mulwa, *We Come in Peace*

This historical fiction is told from the perspective of a female YA character, Kaveni wa mulat'evya and narrates her experiences in the hands of both local traitorous slave drivers. The slave drivers do however do get their desserts when they end up in the hands of the greedy Arab traders at the Coast of Mombasa. The protagonist's father's business partner, Bunu wa Kiunga betrays the whole village. Both young and old are huddled together and marched from the interior terrains of Kyulu Mountains in UKambani, through Mtito wa Ndei, to Mariakani where those who survive the journey are sold to the Arabs and are shipped away to unknown destinations. Kaveni is bought by a slave trader whose wife suffered from pathological jealousy about Kaveni, seeing her as her rival for her husband's love. Kaveni eventually escapes, after treating Memsahib to a fatal blow. She swims through a crocodile-laden River Kelele before being saved by the Man of

War. She is later miraculously united with her childhood admirer, Musyoka wa Mng'oka, whom she marries and they live happily ever after.

The narrative traces the long-distance trade of the 19th century, paying particular attention to the relationships of the slave trader, and how slave trade at the Kenyan Coast impacted on the interior communities mainly among the Nyamwezi from Tanzania and the Kamba from Kenya. Through humour, irony, juxtaposition and satire, Mulwa explores themes of friendship, betrayal, greed, cultivating enduring teenage love and family ties as elements that are part and parcel of history that should be savoured for posterity.

Edward Mwangi, *The Delegate*

The text revolves around a teenage female protagonist, Chebet who hails for Marigat. Her father is killed by unknown people while later her mother dies leaving Chebet to take care of her two younger siblings. She flees home to Nairobi soon after the death of her mother when her uncle threatens to marry her off at her tender age. After a harrowing experience in Nairobi she eventually lands in Rosemary's home where she meets the motherly Roselita who works as a maid in Rosemary's house. After enduring mistreatment in Rosemary's house, Roselita manages to connect her with a priest who in turn takes Chebet and her siblings to a children's home. In the orphanage Chebet's hard work and resilience earns her nomination as a delegate to represent the children of Africa in the United Nations in Geneva Switzerland.

The text traces the journey of growing up as a YA in a poor family, an un-empathetic society, unfriendly and hostile school atmosphere, and multiple levels of loss.

Fundamentally, the text contextualises that YA can overcome and negotiate their way through painful experiences of loss, orphanhood, betrayal, fear and triumphs beyond trials to heights of achievement.

Eric Ngonda, *A Name for Himself*

Mollusks has just received a scholarship from the director of Greenfields primary school, one of the high-cost school in his home area. His joy is short-lived when on admission to the school he is bullied and made fun of due to stereotypes attached to his name, Mollusks. In the school there are also friendly students who side with him when he eventually floors one of the bullies defeating him in the fight. As a result the two have to face the Indaba (a kangaroo-court that is solely governed by the students). In a devastating turn of events, the director of the school is incriminated in a drug racketeering ring, is arrested, the school closed indefinitely and Mollusks finds himself right where he had started.

The author exposes the devastating effects of school bullying and the YA ability to make serious meaningful life decisions. He demonstrates how YA characters endure pain of separation through transfers due to economic dynamism of working parents and the migratory agony suffered when YA have to part company. The practices threaten retention of lasting friendship or love relationships due to the hiccups resulting from such transfers that in turn necessitate that YA also have to move out with the family. The book also interrogates and castigates agents of authority's engagements in vices that impact

negatively on the YA lives, thus exposing sanitized hypocrisies that thrive subtly in society.

Eva Kasaya, *Tale of Kasaya*,

Tales of Kasaya is an autobiographical exploration of experiences the writer goes through as a house girl (bosch) in different sociocultural and economic families in Nairobi. The book is about Kasaya, who is both the writer and the protagonist of the text. The text records how Kasaya tries to escape family poverty and the way peer influence of other girls who have been employed as maids in town affects Kasaya's vision. Her experience with different employers in Nairobi leaves her devastated but worst of all, she has to live with her secret of the cruel treatment she receives from her employers, including the meagre pay, unpaid wages, and rape threats. She eventually finds a humane employer, Wanjiru and her husband David, who supports her tailoring training and she saves enough money to buy a sewing machine after which she goes home to start her own tailoring business.

The YA with their intrinsic desire to gain material advancement will find this book quite appealing. Kasaya's resilience, determination, clothed in a never-give-up spirit is the thread that holds the plot intact.

Kingwa Kamencu, *To Grasp at a Star*

This book comprises two short stories, "To Grasp at a Star" and "The Muddled Transition" both of which involve YA whose ache to become famous and popular lands them into trouble. In "To Grasp at a Star" we encounter Makena and her friends at

Nairobi City University. Through a flashback in Makena's recollections, we are taken back to her high school days when she had ached to become a star. Sylvia's mother owned an advertising business company that searched for, and featured glamorous people. The two girls sneak into Sylvia's mother party where Makena meets an old man, Conrad Mshenzi, who pushes his number into her hands before Sylvia's mother discovers the drunk girls. She whisks them out, taking Makena home to her devastated father. Threatened with being taken to the rural Meru to stay with her aunt, Makena in her naivety connects with Conrad and finds herself in Mombasa where Conrad is planning to traffic her. She is finally rescued by the Special Branch detectives and Conrad is arrested and charged with kidnap and human trafficking. Makena is reformed, studies hard and makes it to the university, the setting in which the text opens.

The second narrative, "The Muddled Transition" is about Muthoni and her friend Malaika. The two are in form three at Nairobi City Girls School. Muthoni has just joined the school after her father was transferred to Nairobi from Meru. In her struggle to fit in, she lands in the bad company of Malaika who introduces her to smoking cigarettes and other drugs. She and Malaika sneak out of their homes at night to attend a university students' birthday party. At the party Muthoni drinks and takes hard drugs and is almost raped by the twenty-three-year-old Jerry were it not for Michael, her mathematics mentor who happened to be at the party. She ends up in hospital, to the chagrin of her parents, after she falls into the swimming pool where she is again rescued by Michael. She is discharged from hospital, forgiven by her parents, and she goes back to school a reformed

character. The book closes with her having passed her high school exams and looking forward to joining university where she hopes to meet Michael, her guardian angel.

Confronting themes of peer pressure, family input, security alertness, the text explores the modern culture of glamour and stardom, dissecting the concealed consequences and camouflaged realities of an unbridled craving for fame. It mainly features female YA characters at risk.

Ngumi Kibera, *The Devil's Hill*

The Devil's Hill offers a dramatic examination of YA at risk. It revolves around the adventure of three characters, Dani, Zack and Stevee, students in Ujuzi High. They begin their mischief by sneaking out of school, bullying other students, smoking stubs of cigarette picked from their parents, before graduating to smoking weed, taking alcohol and finally joining hard gangs where they even handle guns. In their involvement with the adult gangs, the three YA are hunted down by the police into Leseven's Mines in Kajiado. Stevee is arrested and taken to an approved school; the adult gang are apprehended, while Dani and Zack evade the police net in a daring escape to their home.

The text portrays how YA characters negotiate their lives through school that alienates them, society that labels them, families that misunderstand them, and peers that bond in an adventurous mission. It will appeal to a wide range of interests in YA, and agents of authority manning YA in trouble and risky situations in and outside school. It stresses the strains and constraints between YA and agents of authority and how their relationships

influence and define the YA character. The visual and linguistic appeal unites to embroider a narrative of heightened suspense that various readers can relate with.

Stephen Mugambi, *Walk with Me Angela*

In the text we meet two lovers, Wangu and Angela, who are form three classmates at Kilimambogo High School. The two maintains a good relationship though not without the challenges of peer rivalry as Kigotho (another of their classmates) tries to make a pass at Angela. However, while Angela manages to remain faithful to the relationship, Wangu betrays her trust by engaging in a love relationship with Tressa, a university girl. The news of Tressa and Wangu's relationship devastates Angela who tells her friend Sandra that "men are dogs". Through peer intervention and Wangu's willingness to own up to his mistake, the two characters reconcile, rekindle their withered love but at a more informed level, where caution takes precedence.

Through heartaches of deceit, betrayal, forgiveness, and reconciliation, the fast paced narrative leaves the YA reader doubtlessly appreciating their everyday experiences. There appear a persuasive authorial vision asserting that intimate relationships among YA are healthy and possible without necessarily compromising each other's' values of life.

Tonny Mochama, *Meet the Omtitas*

Two characters, Tommy and Angel live in the same estate in Nairobi Eastlands section. Set in the school holidays, the story follows Tommy's escapades as he and his girlfriend (Angel) sweeps their estate, through the Nganyas (pimped matatus), to Nairobi Cinema,

the Nairobi Show Grounds, and see his anticipation for this first kiss. The parents sanctions the relationship as we see the lovers often engaging their parents, mainly mothers in decisions about their relationship. Tommy's mother gives him some money to take his girlfriend to a movie in the Nairobi Cinema while Angel's mother permits Tommy to go out with her daughter.

The text explores unique family and sibling bonds of friendship and the YA engagement in love and fun. The narrative features the family influence on YA well-being, frames positive relationship among female/male friendships and romance in a more modern sense leading to the text's appeal.