

## Subalternity and Resistance in the Kenyan Political Autobiography: A Critical Look at *Not Yet Uhuru* and *The Flame of Freedom*

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### Article History

Received: 12.10.2018

Accepted: 24.10.2018

Published: 30.10.2018



**Abstract:** An interrogation of the autobiographies by leaders who write from the margins of power show that subaltern political autobiographies inhabit a privileged position that enable one to see the effect of power on subaltern subjects. Their writings, thus, resist and mount a challenge to hegemonic structures that encroach and sustain the materiality of domination. In this regard, their political autobiographies can be said to be engaged in the quest for dismantling the silence of being the "Other." This paper contends that the Kenyan subaltern political autobiographies are not merely literary but political acts, and examining these texts will lead to a better understanding of the current political frameworks that help in the conceptualizing the Kenyan nation. The unit of analysis will be two Kenyan political autobiographies, particularly Jaramogi Odinga's *Not Yet Uhuru* and Raila Odinga's *The Flame of Freedom*. Biographical method of analysis will be employed. The perspectives and experiences of Jaramogi and Raila are used as the basis for a critique of the dominant discourse of the post-independence political elites. In particular, the emergence of these autobiographical works is interrogated here as counter-narratives of Kenyan politics and society, alongside the persisting elite structures of politics and culture extending from the colonial through to the post-colonial eras. The analysis of the autobiographical reflections of Jaramogi and Raila demonstrate levels of resistance which have not been recognised until now.

**Keywords:** Subalternity, autobiography, representation, self, autobiographical pact.

## INTRODUCTION

"The book is a collection of memories, and memory is, of course, imperfect, but I have rendered this story of my life the way I remember it..."

Raila A Odinga

"Truth depends not only on who listens but on who speaks."

Birago Diop

In the recent past, the Kenyan literary stage has witnessed an upsurge of political autobiographies. What is clearly notable in these productions is the political quest that they are engaged in. Fronting the self, the genre of autobiography becomes a privileged source of information about the past of a country like Kenya. This is so because the genre provides a personal perspective on information that cannot be mined from the official history. This is, in a way, to argue that stories about detention and political assassinations would not be found in official history textbooks because the education system and curriculum are sanctioned by the state and therefore children would only be taught what the government would want them to know. The autobiography, thus, complements

historical records as it offers the unofficial history of a nation in the making.

The genre of autobiography has always elicited a flurry of debate in literary circles, and especially in the current critical and theoretical space. Autobiographies have increasingly become popular literary documents which calls for sustained interrogation and analysis of the narratives produced. The Kenyan political autobiography is not only the story of the narrating subject but can be read as a quest for resistance in the society within which the subject writes or lives. This paper interrogates the autobiography as a historical document written by a representative individual which serves more purposes than just a historical record. Historians, like autobiographers, are writers assembling a story about the past from archives available to them. However, as Muchiri [1] argues, while historians place themselves outside or at the margins of the historical picture, autobiographers are at the centre of the pictures they assemble and are interested in the meaning of larger forces, conditions, or events for their own stories.

### Theoretical Underpinnings

The advent of the twentieth century saw the dawn of an era, which presented the fertile ground for autobiographical writings [2, 3]. Autobiography is a genre that tries to capture such complex, complicated and elusive phenomena called life and self. Its patterns change, its formal qualities change, the contours and textures change from one life to another, from one self to the other. Misch [4] notes:

*Autobiography is unlike any other form of literary composition. Its boundaries are more fluid and less definable in relation to form. In itself it is a representation of life that is committed to no definite form. It abounds in fresh initiatives, drawn from actual life: it adopts the different forms with which different periods provide the individual for his self-revelation and self-portrayal. (p. 2)*

However, attempts have been made to define the genre, to describe the common threads to be found in the genre called autobiography. Autobiography usually denotes the story of one's life written by oneself [5]. Lejeune identifies four elements constitutive of autobiography: prose as the medium, real life as the subject matter, author as narrator and retrospective as the point of view. The autobiographies of Mahatma Gandhi [6], Jawaharlal Nehru [7], and Kwame Nkrumah [8] formed a new dawn in autobiographical writing by public figures, more specifically, political leaders in the third world societies. These autobiographies went beyond a sub-genre of history and attempted to introspect and reflect on personal dilemmas and crises. They take to an explication of "the self" in their autobiographies and portray a self that is knowledgeable. In this regard, the autobiographies can be thought of as the attempt to forge a national self.

The history of autobiography has almost always pointed to the elusive fallacy that most autobiographies are a docket of men who belong to the public sphere and enjoying a prime status in society. This tradition neglects the autobiographies of the downtrodden. The determinants of class, race and gender are excluded from the record of autobiography. The autobiographies of the marginalized have been silenced in the historical process; their narratives have been sucked into the metanarratives of the state. This paper endeavors to recover the lost tradition of the nationalist leader's autobiographies, leaders who reigned but never ruled.

The autobiographies of the leaders who reigned but never ruled, just like the gay and lesbian autobiographies, autobiographies of the disabled, autobiographies of geisha and sex workers, autobiographies of ethnic minorities and so on attain complex magnitudes; for, they question not only political hegemony, heterosexual, patriarchal,

normative regimes but also bring an alternative sense of the self and identity, worldview and perspective into existence [9-12]. Analysis of works like these necessarily makes autobiographical criticism transdisciplinary. Marginalised groups reside in a negative relationship to power. The degree and kind of power and powerlessness may differ, but they do inhabit structures of power. An interrogation of the spaces that the subaltern autobiographies inhabit enables one to see the effect of power on subaltern subjects and the element of resistance written into them. This makes the subaltern autobiography not merely a literary act but a political act.

Subaltern autobiography is synonymous with survival literature, and is thus, narrative of resistance. The state of subordination of a community/ group entails that its identity is conditioned by the dominant community/group. In this context, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga's (here after referred to as Jaramogi) and Raila Odinga's (hereafter referred to as Raila) autobiographies are subaltern political autobiographies, and as such, are narratives of resistance. Janice Morgan argues, ". . . to be marginalized to a dominant culture is also to have had little or no say in the construction of one's socially acknowledged identity" [13]. What Valerie Smith speaks about the African-American autobiography becomes pertinent to all those who occupy subaltern position and attempt to construct a narrative of the self:

*Simply to write the story of his or her own life represent[s] an assault' on the line of reasoning that assumes and perpetuates the construct that African Americans do not live...as fully imaginative, significant, intellectual, and complex lives as the dominant American community, 'since to make oneself the subject of a narrative presumes both the worth of that self and its interest for a reader [14].*

Basing our argument on the conceptualization above, this paper contends that Jaramogi and Raila are autobiographers who "re-write" selfhood, in their description of their lives and the life of their community. Hence the act of writing autobiographies by these leaders becomes a measure of resistance against oppression and hegemony. It is an act imbued with political connotations. These autobiographies thus call for more complex and equipped critical and reading strategies. They are not mere explications of the self, but intricate platforms of political performance.

Autobiography as a genre has an important place in subaltern ideology as it proves that there are many versions of reality:

*Autobiography now has the potential to be the text of the oppressed, the culturally displaced, forging a right to speak both for and beyond the individual. People in*

*positions of powerlessness – women, black people - have more than begun to insert themselves into the culture via autobiography via the assertion of the personal voice [15].*

Autobiography is thus a platform for the exploration and explication of the self. The subjects of subaltern autobiographical narratives speak from marginal locations. Subjectivity of subaltern autobiography is constructed in the encounter between power and powerlessness, domination and subjugation. The leaders who reigned but never ruled have been relegated to the margin, being treated as “the other” by the political rulers. There has always been a political line drawn between “we” the rulers and “they” the leaders who reigned but never ruled. This demarcating line not only divides people into two categories but also implies a hierarchy. Their “self” often remains effaced or defaced.

### **Resistance in the Kenyan Political Subaltern Autobiographies**

Resistance is a term that is largely associated with Edward Said in his groundbreaking work, *Orientalism* [16]. In this paper we argue that the autobiographies of Jaramogi and Raila are texts that are involved in political resistance, reconstructing the Kenya’s political past, and in a way sanitizing the political image of the writer. *Orientalism* is mainly interested in showing the existence of political ideology that governs and uses orientalism to rule and impose hegemony over the orient. “Hegemony” as referred to by Said is pertinent in this study. Said shows how orientalism distributes assumptions and prejudices about the orient to the western audience, without a corresponding challenge from the “Other” (209; 324). It also demonstrates that every agency involved in the production of orientalism is guilty, either by association, or by themselves is central in the making and sustaining of imperialism. Judging from this, Said felt it was warranted to claim “Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West” (204). Jaramogi and Raila are thus weak, and we argue, thus, they write to reject this position.

As we are going to show in the course of this paper, the writers explored here assert an independent or “an oppositional critical consciousness” [16]. The aspect of “oppositional consciousness” was identified by Ashcroft & Ahluwalia [17] as a strategy of resistance. Wan-Ahmad [18] contends that it is a strategy of “writing back” to the orientalists by exposing their political connection disguised under the academic pretension of pure knowledge. In writing their autobiographies, therefore, Jaramogi and Raila subvert what is commonly regarded as oriental muteness that has led to more oppression of the orient in this power relationship. For this reason, the potential for resistance

is present when “the history that resisted its ideological as well as political encroachments” is brought into life. In short, it requires the revival of repressed or resistant history that can mount challenges to hegemonic structures such as orientalism [19]. This means that studying the autobiographies of Jaramogi and Raila as documents of political resistance and providing an alternative history is very important, especially so, when Kenya is undergoing various political cultural, social, and economic changes.

### **The Politics of Betrayal: Not Yet Uhuru and The Flame of Freedom**

In this paper, the study gravitates towards interrogating the way writing has been used by the leaders to deconstruct the Kenyan elite narrative. In it, Jaramogi’s and Raila’s autobiographies are contextualized within the narratives of politics of betrayal. The phrase is borrowed from the title of Khamisi’s (Khamisi was the Member of Parliament for the coastal constituency of Bahari from 2003 to 2007) autobiography *The Politics of Betrayal: Diary of a Kenyan Legislator* [20] which explores the leadership betrayals that he believes are responsible for the political, social, and economic rot that are pervasive in Kenya.

Politics of betrayal in Kenya is one of the major themes that define the country since independence. According to Branch [21] and Hornsby [22] political betrayal in Kenya began even before the Union Jack was lowered and the Kenyan flag hoisted in the midnight of 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1963. Specifically, Hornsby observes that the narratives of betrayal are discernible when Kenya’s alternative history is interrogated. This is the history of popular resistance to an alliance of comprador elites and foreign rulers. This history was sustained by academics, socialists and nationalists, who believed that the leadership had made fundamental errors from the beginning. This narrative begins with resistance to the colonial conquest, then the struggle for land and identity leading to the Mau Mau war. It challenges the concept of ‘development’ as growth and argues that Kenya has been exploited and abused by the comprador elite. After independence, the victory of the conservative ‘home guards’ was a betrayal of independence, and attempts to reverse this civilian coup led to repression and murder in the years after independence.

The attempt to change this state of affairs is followed up by Kenya’s novelists, poets and playwrights. After *uhuru*, an upsurge of new novels, poems and plays that examined the postcolonial betrayal in Kenya and the role that the comprador elite played to cause this situation emerged. Examples of these are novels, which Manghan-Brown identifies as “novels of Freedom” [23], include Meja Mwangi’s *Taste of Death* [24], G. Wachira’s *Ordeal in the Forest*

[25], and Charles Mangua's *A Tail in the Mouth* [26]. All were written between 1967 and 1975, reflecting a time in Kenya when the neocolonial bourgeoisie consolidated its power.

Jared Angira's poem "No Coffin, No Grave" evinces a critical concern with social injustice in post-independence Kenyan society. The poem is a chronicle of events that marked the death of a traitor-ruler who was "buried without a coffin" (line 1) and whose post-mortem was carried out by scavengers, vultures in the open, outside a place where people go to celebrate and have fun. A night club! (line 6). This gives a sense that his death may have been wished and when it came, it was a necessary party for his people. The poem records that politics was for the "experts" while the common man was cursed to brood on books, think about schoolgirls and hunger, sleeping under torn mosquito nets (lines 15-22). And if our politician should step into a bar, he is the lord (line 24) and woman magnet (line 25) who speaks the language of money; the people's money. The masses are portrayed as powerless and can only cover the darkness of their mouths and tell their prayers to the devil for all the post-independent politician cares. This poem is thus an insight to the wanton theft and betrayal of the masses by the leaders after independence.

Angira's poem reads into Kresse's [27] examination of *Sauti ya Dhiki* (Voice of Agony), a collection of poems by Abdilatif Abdalla written in 1973. This scholar rightly observes that Abdilatif's poetry condemns what he sees as dictatorial features of Jomo Kenyatta's KANU government. The poems in *Sauti ya Dhiki* illustrates a fundamental turning point in Kenya's early postcolonial politics, and bears witness to the demise of democratic structures and processes that had been implemented only five years after independence. One of the vices that bring about the demise of democracy and thwart development in Kenya is tribalism.

The same line of argument can be raised and sustained in Ngugi wa Thiong'o [28] *I Will Marry When I Want*, a play that critiques politics, corruption and economic exploitation in postcolonial Kenya. The play became an interrogation of 'the poisoned gift of independence' and an examination of political betrayal through land grabbing, arrogance and the greed of the political 'big-wigs.' Notably too is Francis Imbuga's [29] *Betrayal in the City* in which the author examines the wanton betrayal of the masses through exploitation, nepotism and inefficiency that characterized the post-independence state.

Looking at this post-independent literature in Kenya, two levels upon which betrayal in Kenya occurred, thus, can be discerned. The neocolonial elite betrayed the masses through the failure to provide frameworks within which Kenya would forge ahead and

attain an all-round development. The post-independent Kenyan elite laid the foundation of negative ethnicity and advanced it within the contexts of ideological differences. This is because by the end of 1965, Kenya had restored the 'command and control' system that the British had tried to replace as independence dawned. A system of state regulation would dominate an otherwise capitalist society, with the President at the apex of power. The tension between Kikuyu and Luo that had begun before independence had deepened, and the foundations of Kikuyu dominance had been established [30]. Negative ethnicity became the lenses that defined Kenya's future. Political structures and economic institutions would continue to mirror the pre-independence model, with a new elite at the apex rapidly arrogating to itself the wealth and privileges that the Europeans had enjoyed, and calculatingly isolating the other ethnic groups who could threaten their hegemony.

Also, betrayal occurred among the neocolonial elites themselves. After independence, Hornsby [22] reiterates that Kenya African National Union's (KANU) leadership was becoming more conservative and Western oriented. According to Opondo [30] class, power and ethnicity became increasingly intertwined and thus displaced race as a factor in the political process hence the Kenyan society became deracialised but not de-ethnicised [31]. Kanyinga asserts that at independence, "the concept of tribe became more important as the new elites turned to their ethnic groups for support in their competition with each other" (86). Subsequently and for the sake of power, ethnicity became a toll for political survival. There was variance between key policy decisions made on land, defense and Western investment during 1962-5 between the ruling elite and the masses. The masses felt alienated by the policies made by their leaders and this brought out a section of leaders among the ruling elite who started championing the interests of the masses. This chapter delves in the literature that interrogates this betrayal of the masses by the post-colonial elite leaders.

The paper contends that ethnicity provided the historical context that gave an impetus to the rise of subaltern political autobiographical writings in Kenya. Imbued in this objective is the assumption that Jaramogi's and Raila's autobiographies are a critique of the Kenyan nationhood. The argument advanced in the chapter is that Kenyan nationhood has slid into ethnicity, and this has given birth to the avalanche of political autobiographies in Kenya. The paper gets its thrust from the ability of the genre to engage the concept of negative ethnicity from a personal perspective, and how this vice has been perpetuated in successive regimes and how this impinges on development and unity. However, the term ethnicity is used synonymously with the terms tribalism and negative ethnicity in Kenya, and this study has adopted this Kenyan view.

In their autobiographies, Jaramogi and Raila are involved in constructing a single narrative: that Kenya as a country has been betrayed since 1963. The common man, the wretched of Kenya has been betrayed by the ruling class. As we read through *Not Yet Uhuru* and *The Flame of Freedom*, we learn the clarion call that Kenya as a nation has undergone four political miscarriages. The first miscarriage happened in 1963, independence and the first republic, 1992, the second republic and the reinstatement of pluralism, the exit of Moi and the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) dream of 2002 and the new constitutional dispensation of 2010. Michael Wainaina argues that all babies die at birth the political class entrusted to midwife the process of the birth of modern Kenyan state is too invested in the primitive tribal state to give the new, modern Kenya a chance for survival [32].

The four missed chances have, therefore, not been by default but by design. The political class midwifing the process has deliberately strangled the baby to protect the status quo. They have consistently squandered the opportunities for renewal. In most cases politicians are given the job of midwifing the modern state because people think that they are statesmen and not just regular politicians. These leaders are so heavily and hopelessly invested in politics of ethnicity, impunity and mediocrity for them to midwife a modern Kenya. In their autobiographies, Jaramogi and his son Odinga, present themselves as leaders whom Kenya should regret for not having. In their texts, they are the statesmen per excellence.

In his autobiography, *Not Yet Uhuru*, Jaramogi comes out from the pages of his autobiography as an unrepentant patriot at heart, a pan-africanist, a staunch anti-white domination in Kenya's pre-independence politics, a genius, a father, a writer, and a leader whom we would regret for not having [33]. Reading through the text it becomes clear that Jaramogi seems to be fighting what he takes to be a misrepresentation by many a modern scholar. In this authoritative, sometimes brutal autobiography, the author re-writes the Kenyan history; the history oftentimes meticulously contorted to suite British Imperial propaganda; the history that is guilty of vilifying saints, and exalting villains; the history whose dying embers must be rekindled [34].

*Not Yet Uhuru* recounts that although many of his British-Sponsored early scholars (through the several church missions) succumbed to the allure of the colonial staggering material wealth, prestige, and promises of overnight riches, Jaramogi remained steadfast in his resolve. It highlights his contribution to the welfare of the Kenyan scholars by sourcing for scholarship opportunities, and highlighting the plight of Kenyans.

In the text, it is recorded, when James Gichuru

(in alliance with Mboya, Moi, Ngala, through KANU) joined forces with the self-proclaimed settler minority led by Blundel and company, it was Jaramogi who remained unmoved with Kenya African National Union, especially with respect to KANU's demands of 'Kenyatta na Uhuru.' It was Jaramogi who, through endless petitions, conferences in London, trips overseas, public speeches, engineered the release of the Kapenguria Six. These assertions make Jaramogi stand out. The assertions aim to counter the misrepresentations of the Kenyan past by the mainstream state-sanctioned narrative. In this regard, Jaramogi's autobiography serves the function of self-clarification and self-justification [11, 12].

As it appears from the text, Jaramogi amplifies what he has done to the Kenyan state, the roles he has played and the sacrifices he supposedly done for the Kenyan nation. For the sake of Kenyans, and Kenya's unity, Jaramogi ignored countless attempts made by KADU technocrats (on behalf of their Imperial Masters) to wage a rift between him and Kenyatta once the latter would assume office, first as Prime Minister in 1963, then later as President in 1964. And when he couldn't take it anymore, like a gentleman, Jaramogi left KANU without causing a scene [34, 35]. The text profiles Jaramogi as a nationalist leader who has always been consistent patriotism. His personal interests only came after the interests of the nation.

This profiling points an accusing finger to the other leaders, especially the then President, Jomo Kenyatta, who, as the author seems to suggest, was a self-seeking oligarchic capitalist and a budding dictator [36]. That he had to part ways with Kenyatta (a fellow Kenya African Union member since the early 1920s, a mentor that he had cordially welcomed in Nyanza years prior to the State of Emergency in 1952, a friend whom he had consulted about Kenya's readiness for independence), as he portrays in the text, was by no means a product of selfishness, but rather a clear sign that he was not going to throw out of the window his patriotism.

It is noteworthy that in *Uhuru* Jaramogi amplifies what he has done to the Kenyan nation, the roles he has played and the sacrifices he did for the state. For the sake of Kenyans, and Kenya's unity, Jaramogi ignored countless attempts made by KADU technocrats (on behalf of their Imperial Masters) to wage a rift between him and Kenyatta once the latter assumed office, first as Prime Minister in 1963, then later as President in 1964, and when he couldn't take it anymore, like a gentleman, Jaramogi left KANU without causing a scene [35, 34]. In his resignation letter he stated:

*I have a conscience and this in fact does prick me when I earn public money but with no job to do. I*

*consider this a waste of public money and I am worried lest the future generation questions my sincerity, when they would learn that I allowed myself to hold a sinecure post in the midst of poverty and misery in our country. With this realisation, I cannot continue to hold this position any longer and I hereby tender my resignation. (300)*

As it will be recalled from the foregoing, the rift between Jaramogi and Jomo Kenyatta had started few years into independence. This paper notes that to understand these two leaders' differences it is illustrative to interrogate the ideological frameworks within which they operated. According to Jaramogi, the rift between him and Kenyatta was caused by the operatives that surrounded the Presidency. This group of politicians opposed him because he had earlier on advocated for Kenyatta's release from detention (292). Ideologically speaking however, Jaramogi and Kenyatta's rift could have been caused by their differences in their ideological persuasions.

*Not Yet Uhuru*, therefore, is a portrayal of Jaramogi's frustration with Kenyatta's turn-about that had turned fellow Kapenguria Convicts such as Bildad Kaggia into his foes. Kenyatta, like KADU political stooges, had betrayed the people, and there was no way Jaramogi was going to be a part of such grand betrayal. The formation of Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) and his resigning from the Government are narrated here to highlight his patriotism. The same argument can be raised in regard to Raila Odinga, Jaramogi's son.

*The Flame of Freedom* chronicles the remarkable journey of one of Africa's leading politicians and statesmen. Raila's life-story mirrors the triumphs and tragedies of Kenya's struggle to entrench multi-party democracy and the rule of law into the fabric of the State. The book is a testament to his courage, determination and sacrifice in the cause of peace, development and public service. It is a bold call to action for all African leaders.

Raila's autobiography takes an in-depth look of how the former prime minister of Kenya has struggled to end corruption and bring freedom. It reveals the life journey of Raila (His family and political life) and gives an account of how he, Raila suffered while inside the government. In his autobiography, Raila paints an image of how Party of National Unity (PNU) used every means to frustrate and humiliate him and his coalition party Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). Odinga reveals of how the ODM ministers were undermined by PNU associates. The autobiography also indicates how PNU machines used propaganda to politically kill him. It mostly talks about Raila's time in the coalition government with Mwai Kibaki and the betrayals he has undergone all through to bring him down. *The Flame*

*of Freedom* also gives a history of Odinga's challenges since the death of his father and how he managed to overcome the challenges. It gives a slight hint of his role in the 1982 coup.

Raila's autobiography (re)brands him as the intellectual custodian of Kenya's pro-democracy struggles, and the founding father of democracy. The photographs he selects, the stories he tells, the way he tells them and the stories that he does not tell, seem to establish Odinga as the authority on the making of Kenya. Raila's story gives clear justification for the constitutional changes that this country finally made. The text portrays how Raila stands tall against terror of a dictatorship where sycophancy, fear and silence reigned supreme. It is an examination of "the government's long vendetta against the Odingas" [37]. Successive governments have successfully isolated the Odingas from power. As one reads through the text the refrain *tumeonewa* lingers in the background.

Undoubtedly, this is a story of courage and determination but in the end, it fills one with an overwhelming sense of pity. The humiliation that Raila has suffered is partly in the brutality of detention, so he gives very few details of his second and third stints therein. Understandably, there is an even more harrowing pain. You hear it in the number of times Raila reports, "[they] attacked Jaramogi". As one reads through the text, the weight of his father's unfulfilled dreams is evidently on Raila's shoulders. The two autobiographies are, without doubt, classic examples of subaltern political autobiographies. They deconstruct history, subvert common knowledge and vilify the main stream state narrative.

*The Flame of Freedom* is a continuation of a journey has to end when the Kenyan dream is realized. This dream is tied to the Odinga family. In one of the moving instances in *Freedom* Raila writes:

*The task of keeping the flame of freedom burning had been passed to us, and already, down the years, we had fought so hard and come so far. But I knew there was still a long and difficult road ahead. As I spoke on that day in 2007, I rededicated my life to travelling that road, so that, one day, the Kenyan dream, in all its glory, would become reality. It is the dream of a fundamentally transformed society, not only in our land but across the entire African continent. (p. 4)*

Although the two autobiographies the study has examined here are written by representative individuals, Jaramogi representing the old guards, and Raila standing for the new brand of Kenyan leaders, the two presents their authors as leaders who are down to earth, working closely with the masses and leading normal lives. This portrayal is a case of autobiographers presenting only the version of history that favours the subject and erasing that which is not in

their favour. This is the case for instance with Njenga Karume's autobiography which allows him to erase certain aspects of Kenyan history such as the Mau Mau war and projects himself as a successful businessman. His narrative as Muchiri [1] argues demonstrates the possibility of convenient truths in autobiographies; it would be an inconvenient truth for him to state that the mere closeness to the ruling elite predisposes one to opportunities not necessarily available to other citizens. By narrating his story and highlighting his efforts in business, Karume camouflages the truth that opportunities are often aided by how close one is to power. The same can be said in respect to *Uhuru* and *Freedom*, especially as regards the truth in their autobiographies. Although Jaramogi and Raila try hard to convince the reader that they are subalterns, their elevated status in the society cannot be wished away, they are privileged more than the masses they claim to represent. They are as ethnic as the leaders they vilify.

### CONCLUSION

This paper has clearly shown that there is a consensus among the autobiographers interrogated here that they feel misrepresented by previous and subsequent writings, by friends and critics alike. These autobiographies seem to follow the same creed that people have failed to unravel the real person behind Jaramogi and Raila. These autobiographies are therefore narratives of resistance. In them, these leaders refuse the misrepresentations of their lives and construct images of who they think they are. This desire to self-explication seems to be the central goal of penning the Kenyan subaltern political autobiographies. As we have succinctly shown in this paper, the writers explored here assert an independent and "an oppositional critical consciousness" as a strategy of resistance. They write back to the mainstream narrative, deconstructing it, subverting it and constructing, for themselves identities that are consistent to what the masses need in an ideal leader. They present themselves as the best alternatives of the leadership. They are the most wise, consistent, intuitive, ideologically wealthy and incorruptible. In writing their autobiographies, therefore, Jaramogi and Raila subvert what is commonly regarded as oriental muteness that has led to more oppression of the orient in this power relationship. For this reason, the potential for resistance is present when "the history that resisted its ideological as well as political encroachments" is brought into life. In short, it requires the revival of repressed or resistant history that can mount challenges to hegemonic structures such as orientalism [19]. This means that studying the autobiographies of Jaramogi and Odinga as documents of political resistance and providing an alternative history is very important, especially so, when Kenya is undergoing various political cultural, social, and economic changes.

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