

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PORTRAIT OF SUBVERSION OF THE NORMATIVE
GENDER IDENTITY IN WANGARI MAATHAI'S *UNBOWED***

BY

PAMELA NG'ONG'A ODHACHA

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN LITERATURE,**

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

MASENO UNIVERSITY

© 2021

DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any other university for the award of a degree. The work should not be presented to any other institution or University without permission of the author and/ or Maseno University

ODHACHA PAMELA NG'ONG'A, PG/PHD/011/2010

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Declaration by Supervisors

The work has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors;

1. PROF. KITCHE MAGAK

Department of Linguistics, Literary Studies and Culture, Masaaai Mara University

Signature: _____ Date: _____

2. PROF. CATHERINE MUHOMA

Department of Literary Studies, Maseno University

Signature: _____ Date: _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank the almighty God for bringing me this far. Many people helped in one way or another in working on this thesis and to all of them I am deeply indebted. Firstly, I wish to express my deep gratitude to Maseno University for allowing me to undertake this study. To my supervisors' Prof. Kitche Magak and Prof. Catherine Muhoma. I am very grateful for keeping the light on. Even when I would have given up, both supervisors guided me with dedication throughout the trying period of study. Both of them were not only encouraging and patient, but were available for me and they created a friendly environment that made it possible to go back and forth for consultation.

I would like to thank the School of Graduate Studies for the series of panel meetings they had to do on the work to make it what it is today. I single out Prof. Ogonji Agure and Prof. Patrick Onyango for the support. Special thanks go to Dr. Benson Ojwang, Dr. James Ogone, Dr. Jane Bwonya, Dr. Yakubu Adams and Dr. Pamela Oloo who assisted in various ways to ensure the work did not stagnate.

Lastly, I am indebted to my family members for the support and encouragement during the period of study. In particular, I would like to thank my husband, Amos Odhacha for standing by me even when he was struggling similarly to complete his PhD studies. To Justine Awino, a big thank you for assisting in several ways. Phance Akinyi came in handy whenever I needed assistance in surfing the net- her specialty, an area she handled with dedication. To Odhacha Hannington and Gladys Adhiambo your persistent questions on how far the thesis had reached kept me going. I thank you all for the inspiration; support and willingness in helping me achieve this goal.

DEDICATION

The thesis is dedicated to my Father Richard Ng'ong'a who started me off in the journey of academia. His great love for education has kept me going. I also wish to evoke the presence of my mother for believing in me. Both parents have been the source of my inspiration and encouragement in the course of this work. I also dedicate this thesis to my immediate family; to my husband Amos Odhacha, and our children Awino, Akinyi, Odhacha junior and Adhiambo together with whom we have all grown with grace and compassion.

ABSTRACT

Subversive literature is a powerful tool in a rebel's arsenal throughout literary history of mankind. Many scholars concur that autobiographies by women indicate their struggle for equality playing field in all spheres of development. Related studies designate the society as biased against women, a phenomenon that entrenches marginalization and some male authors have used the momentum in portraying female characters in a manner that ingrains the spectacle further. On the other hand, autobiography has been used by the marginalized to wage social campaigns aimed at their inclusion as the sub-genre accords the writer space to tell the story of one's own life from a more intimate perspective especially for women writers. Wangari Maathai is one such writer. The purpose of this study is to show how Maathai participates in the scheme of subversion in her autobiography. The objectives of this study were to: explore a self-portrait that subverts normative gender identity in Maathai's *Unbowed*, interrogate the extent to which the emergent portrait of a subverted normative gender identity challenges power relations in Maathai's *Unbowed* and analyse the effectiveness of the autobiographical form in concretizing the subverted portrait. The study used the theoretical framework derived from New Historicism by Greenblatt (1980) and the Gender theory by Bem (1980) whose main tenets state that power hierarchy in governance can be subverted and that the roles that the patriarchal society assigned women were biased, respectively. The analytical research design was adopted. The choice of Maathai's *Unbowed* was purposive due to a realistic perspective that subverts normative gender identity. Data was collected through library search and textual analysis employed in data analysis. The findings indicate that Maathai portrays self as an existing, independent entity rather than one that fits into the patriarchal hysteries of a stereotyped tradition, depicts identities that make her a figure of fascination as a human rights activist, ecofeminist, astute politician and a literary artist. Maathai defines herself as 'Unbowed' which implies defiance and resilience. Maathai's emergent subverted portraiture of fearless strength in adversity, creative approach to building a peaceful, healthy planet, empowering women, dismantling patriarchal societal structures and challenging male dominance, as well as recreating legacies culminating into her being crowned a Nobel Peace laureate. She thus subverts the order of doing things. The First person narrative technique, the artistry of the journey motif, the use of metaphorical frames of reference among other autobiographical art forms are effectively used in concretizing Maathai's subverted portrait. *Unbowed* is highly inspirational and Maathai comes out as a role model whose literary journey offer an international celebrity persona. The findings of this thesis will advance women autobiographical literary scholarship, provide legacies and add to policy in gender mainstreaming at the work place and in the society.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.1.1 Literary Subversion.....	1
1.1.2The autobiographical Narrative	5
1.1.3 The Confluence Between Subversion and Autobiographical Narrative	7
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	12
1.3 Research Questions.....	12
1.4 Objectives of the Study.....	13
1. 5 Significance of the Study.....	13
1.6 Scope of the Study	14
1.7 Theoretical Framework.....	15
1.7.1 New Historicism	16
1.7.2 Gender Theory	18
1.7.3 The Interplay of the Tenets of New Historicism and Gender Theory	20
CHAPTER TWO	22
LITERATURE REVIEW	22
2.1 Introduction.....	22
2.2 A Self Portrait	22
2.3 Challenging Power Relations in the Quest for Identity	41
2.4 Concretizing Emergent Self- Portraiture Through the Autobiographical Form	64
CHAPTER THREE	74
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	74
3.1 Introduction.....	74
3.2 Research Design.....	74

3.3 Study Area	74
3.4 Study Population.....	74
3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size	75
3.6 Data Collection	75
3.7 Data Analysis	76
CHAPTER FOUR.....	77
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	77
4.1 Maathai’s Self Portrait Subverting Normative Gender Identity	77
4.1.1 Introduction.....	77
4.1.2 Maathai’s Subversive Self Portrait	78
4.1.3 Rebirth of a subverted Character	103
4.1.4 A Subverted Portrait Confronting Gender Battles	115
4.1.5 The Subverted Portrait of an Environmentalist and Eco- Feminist	118
4.1.6 The Subverted Maathai in Prison for Treason	127
4.1.7 Conclusion	129
4.2 Maathai’s Subverted Identity Challenging Power Relations	131
4.2.1 Introduction.....	131
4.2.2 Dismantling Power Structures	134
4.2.3 The Subverted Maathai Survives Divorce to Tell about It	147
4.2.4 Stripping as a Form of Protest and Subversion.....	165
4.2.5 The Subverted Maathai Peace Ambassadeers.....	170
4.2.6 Maathai’s Subversion Playing Nationalist Politics.....	176
4.2.7 Conclusion: Legacies	185
4.3 Concretization of Maathai’s Subverted Identity	186
4.3.1 Introduction.....	186
4.3.2 First Person Narrative Technique	188
4.3.3 The Art in the Journey motif.....	199
4.3.4 Fiction and Autobiographical Art	200
4.3.5 Truth and Autobiographical Art.....	203
4.3.6 Experiences through Metaphorical Frames of Reference	206
4.3.6.1 Experience and Autobiography.....	207

4.3.6.2 Autobiographical Experience in Historical Perspective	212
4.3.7 Conclusion	219
CHAPTER FIVE	221
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	221
5.1 Introduction.....	221
5.2 Summary of Findings.....	221
5.2.1 Objective One	221
5.2.2 Objective Two.....	222
5.2.3 Objective Three.....	223
5.3 Conclusions.....	224
5.4 Recommendations.....	225
5.5 Areas for Further Research	226
REFERENCES.....	227

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This study is situated within the field of Literary studies as it focuses on the concept of subversion, specifically as reflected in an autobiographical work of art by a woman in Kenya. This section provides background information on the relationship between an autobiography and subversive literature, the confluence with the autobiographical narrative focusing on subversion of normative gender identities through literary portraiture. It also provides a general background of the study describing the setting where the study was conducted. Included are the statement of problem, the research questions and objectives of the study. The scope and justification of the study are outlined and the theoretical framework chosen for the study is also described.

1.1.1 Literary Subversion

Thomas Paine (1995), states that Subversive literature has been a worthy tool in a rebel's arsenal throughout the history of mankind. For this type of literature to be effective, it will not blatantly state the superiority of one side of an issue; instead it portrays two separate ideals urging the reader to explore for him/herself. Merriam and Webster (2020) describe subversive literature as a systematic attempt to overthrow a government or a political system by persons working secretly from within to undermine its acceptable hierarchical structures. The Social changes witnessed in society are products of several processes that literature tends to imitate and re-enact in its multiple genres by either resistance or encouragement. Literature for a provide an avenue for elevation of own consciousness as well as other persons. Like literary gurus of old did and contemporary ones still do. Subversive literature aims to undermine authority, signify a rebellion of sorts and aims to outrage. Paine (1995:14) states that subversive literature is unique in its rendition. He says: 'Here then is the origin and rise of government; namely, a mode rendered

necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the world; here too is the design and end of government, viz. Freedom and security. However much, our eyes may be dazzled with show, or our ears deceived by sound; however, prejudice may warp our wills, or interest darken our understanding, the simple voice of nature and reason will say, 'tis right to do this or wrong to do that.' The study wishes to concur with Paine and add that the aim of subversive writing is to urge people to think for themselves, and to question whatever they think is unjust or unfair to the society. The writing and reading of subversive literature lead to conscience-raising in society thus requiring accountability which cannot be taken for granted, and where the Commons get to have a voice in the real sense.

Literary works are bestowed with the ability to show the gullible nature of a people and the ease with which movements and governments are subverted and destroyed. Letemendia (1992) studied Orwell's (1943) that depicts anthropomorphized animals who overthrow farm management only to abandon its core revolutionary values. The novel has remained a classic subversive work of art for all time, posits Letemendia. In the preface of a 1947 Ukrainian edition of *Animal Farm*, Orwell explains how escaping the communist purges in Spain taught him 'how easily totalitarian propaganda can control the opinion of enlightened people in democratic countries' Letemendia (1992:27). He continues to reiterate that what motivated Orwell to expose and strongly condemn what he saw as the Stalinist corruption of the original socialist ideals, was the complacency of a people being cheated by political propaganda. The masses were being hoodwinked to support a system that did not have their interest at heart. Orwell decided that fiction was the best way to describe totalitarianism. The use of subversive portraiture in an autobiographical work of art by a woman, artistically modeling this phenomenon has not caught the attention of literary scholars in Kenya.

According to Kristine Yee (2013), Nelson Guerin (2013) and White Ray (1983) Steinbeck's subversive artistry was a call to action against inhumane treatment of the immigrants. Steinbeck wanted to highlight the plight of migrant workers in America that attracted the wrath of some leaders who banned the book publicly and even sent death threats to Steinbeck at home. But *The Grapes of Wrath* also had its fans, and migrant workers' conditions did begin to improve after widespread public outcry (Ray 1983). Similarly, what Maathai's *Unbowed's* portraiture targets has gender revolutionary move of sorts to it.

Subversive literary works has women authors struggling to subvert norms of portraiture. Sedehi Kamelie (1994) study of Walker's (1982) novel, certainly has appealing qualities of portraiture that depict black women in elevated roles unlike the traditional mode. Effects of patriarchal systems on women are depicted as questioned and sisterhood encouraged to counter male power in contrast to strong female characters. Similarly, Mrinalini Saran (1994) examines Chang (1991), a biography of Chung's grandmother Yufang, mother Bao Qin and her own autobiography. She tells the stories of three generations of Chang's family in 20th century China. Chang challenges China's History of subjugating women. Though a nonfiction blend of memoir with verifiable history, this subversive autobiography is still banned in China today. Chang goes against the culture and its norms and subverts the norm by portraying Chinese women boldly. In the current study, there are attempts to investigate how Maathai portrays herself differently from the norm and that is the fascination with the study.

Subversive literature is a form of writing that is unique, where the author intends to inspire people to embrace change in the social systems. Therefore, the essence of subversive writing is to transform a peoples' ways of seeing, hearing and analyzing issues that affect them. The rise of

governance systems that seek to hoodwink their citizenry; namely, a mode rendered necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the world (John Ruganda 1996) says of Francis Imbuga's art works (Imbuga: 1976, 1979 and 1984). Ruganda's analyses of Imbuga's art works allowed for a systematic form of subversion towards the governance system then. In Maathai's *Unbowed*, the interest is to unearth how the author retrospectively concentrates on the self and subverts the societal systems.

Michela Wrong's (2003) analysis of Gathongo's (2002) subversive literary work, giving an account of how a pillar of the establishment turned whistle-blower describes the consequences of such a work of art. Wrong argues that Gathongo becomes simultaneously one of the most hated and admired man in equal measure in Kenya, Further to the Kenyan experience, Wrong (2002) *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz* assesses the acts of the villains and the heroes in this fascinating story of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He discusses Mobutu Seseseko's rule in the Democratic Republic of Congo where he was known as 'the Leopard,' the president of Zaire for thirty-two years. With respect to the current study, the focus is on how Maathai in *Unbowed* portrays herself in a characteristic subversive manner.

Bansky and Wall, (2020) Indicate that Subversive writing is controversial, since its job is to pick on authority or authoritative figures, but at its heart remains a unified goal, the one which urges people to think and review their surroundings, and to stand up for what is right. Exponents of the craft rely on sarcastic wit and a slanderous tone to establish its views as done by Imbuga (1976, 1979, 1984 and 1989) in his political plays, observes Ruganda (1996). This is deliberate, since the form, at its core, seeks to create awareness through sensationalism. Wall states that the condescending tone also helps portray authority in a different and lighter vein, alluding to the fact that their opinions and orders do not matter, or are irrelevant. Though it may seem that

subversive literature, is at times comical, or even nonsensical, at its heart lies a very emotional appeal. Baskin adds that subversive writers and poets are those who are deeply affected by the general state of affairs which plague society, and only seek to create a sense of awareness among people. Through their writing, they hope to convey the message that rules need not be accepted as they are, and that they need to be scrutinized before being accepted. Like subversive literature, autobiographical works of art tell stories of oneself but the self there, could be some attack wedged at a system. That is the question, the research on Maathai's *Unbowed* seeks to answer in this study.

1.1.2 The autobiographical Narrative

James Olney (1980:6) explains that the acceptable standards for an autobiography include 'nonfiction' story of an individual's life. However, the autobiographical sub-genre of literature may include the fictions that are part of people's lives, their dreams, values, memories, and fears. The leading advocate for a formal generic description of autobiography was Lejeune (1975). He presents a formula that combines chronological narration, mimesis, and individualism; in his famous characterization of autobiography as 'retrospective prose narrative that a real person makes of his own experience, when he emphasizes his individual life especially the history of one's personality.' Weintraub (1978) delineates autobiography as the demonstrative narrative of an individual's life written by that individual with the aim of telling the true story of his public and private experiences. An autobiography, therefore seeks to search for self through narration of a writer's experience. The central concern of such a literary work is to describe, evoke, and recreate the proceedings of the writers' experiences. This study uses Maathai's *Unbowed* to espouse the writer's personal experiences as an epitome of subversion.

Sidon Smith (2012) interrogates the hyper-masculinized genre of the aspiring candidate's autobiography; and how she would perform the intimacy that secures the claim to authenticity in this highly mediated form. Smith studies Hillary Clinton (2003) autobiography and scrutinizes this woman, this feminist professional, former First Lady, and duly-elected senator, craft the story of representative American-ness. In Barack Obama's (2003) autobiography, the primary trigger of the self-creation was the haunting void created by an absent father figure. Filling this vacuum is a paternal presence that oscillates between the "real" father who had abandoned the son so early in life and a very "mythical father" that he reconstructed through imagination, dreams and stories he heard about him (Lopez Carlos, 2012). Maathai's choice to use this form could be an attempt at undoing myths about the being of a woman.

While studying Winnie Mandela's autobiography, Kathrada (2013) demonstrates how an empowered woman hungers for open space where she could express her ideas. He states that Winnie depicts an outstandingly strong personality; and an impressive capacity to speak her mind in an extremely hostile environment which records the very horror of apartheid as she experienced it. Likimani's *Passbook Number F.47927*, published in 1998 focuses on the role of women in the struggle for Kenya's independence. She begins her story by explaining the title of her work. *Passbook Number F.47927* which refers to her passbook, the letter "F" referring to her gender, female. The passbook was an identification document required of people from the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru communities living in urban areas during the colonial period, particularly during the State of Emergency. The passbook was especially required of people from these communities because they were believed to be members and supporters of the outlawed Mau Mau. Anyone from these communities was treated as a suspect and the colonial authorities reduced their identity as human beings to a mere number on a card. The title therefore points to

Likimani's autobiography as an exploration of the dehumanization of Kenyans by the colonial authorities. How Maathai's autobiography participates in the scheme of subversion is the bane of research in this study

Evidence from literary scholars who have analyzed this genre, concur that autobiography is the narration of the life of a person written, where the 'self' is significant. The current study explores the autobiographical genre as an art that models, but subverts a certain norm. It is this scheme of subversion that the current study premises upon to interrogate in Maathai's *Unbowed*.

1.1.3 The Confluence Between Subversion and Autobiographical Narrative

This study postulates that subversion can be used as a scheme in literature to correct certain phenomena. One such phenomenon is the gender role assignments; another could be misuse of authority. The standout feature of subversive literature is the manner in which it portends challenges to authority. This study notes that, it is about not accepting things at face value, but to explore, investigate, and validate the truth in order to put it out there. Going upstream is not the easiest thing to do, but then, this subversive form thrives on sensationalism. Its purpose is to shock readers into facing the reality of what ails them, and that there are ways to repair or resolve the issue at hand. This study seeks to examine how Maathai writes the story of a self that she recreates in her work, in actual fact as a possible fighter of certain systems. The mode of portraiture that highlights these subversive tendencies was the item for interrogation in this study.

Autobiography comes in as a story written about the self. However, when it uses the subversive scheme, a hidden agenda comes out, states Saran (1994) while examining Chang's (1991), biography. She posits that Chung's agenda that aimed at correcting the ills inherent in her Chinese society caught the attention of the intended audience. Contemporary subversive autobiography would seem to be highly managed and instrumental, and thus inauthentic. But in actual sense, convincing authenticity is the coin of the realm in Maathai's *Unbowed*.

The present study questions how exactly an aura of subversion produced in the utilitarian, commodified form of an individual autobiography like Maathai's, performs. Autobiographical discourse itself promises a kind of authenticity. The 'narrating 'I' functions as the 'voice' of the writer seeking to capture the attention of the reader sitting at home, in a coffee house, on the beach, in a classroom setup (Smith and Watson :2001) and pointing out on the ills inherent in the society and the possible causes. In its address to the imagined interlocutor, the narrating 'I' promises to draw the reader into the zone of familiarity, identification, and affective attachment, thereby overcoming, if only for a moment and illusorily, the sense of remoteness between the vulnerable; those easily taken advantage of and the villain issuing directives daily but to the detriment of the led. The usual tactic is to set the proven truth against the mythical.

The bottom line is to correct what is ailing the society, much as the story of the self also proceeds a long side, moralizing. The case with the current study emanates from a desire to correct the image of women and label them better than has been done in the past. For instance, it suggests that the society should not misconstrue strength in female characters for deviance.

The traditional history defined normative gender identities based on a patriarchal system that tended to favor men and discriminated against women (Clark 1990). According to Clark the

problem, is that the society has not changed its thinking despite the fact that times have changed. The current study encounters an autobiographer who, echoes a different sentiment thereby creating awareness that gender relations are social constructs that are dynamic. Socialization and gender role stereotyping have been documented as shaping the identities of men and women (Kabira et al 1996, Yelfin1990, Ba 1981).

Cultural norms influence behavior and gender roles. Through observation, children learn what women and men can do or not do. It also dictates a person's value and potential. Cultural schemas according to a gender theorist (Bem, 1981) have an impact not only on how people process information but on the attitudes that direct gender appropriate behavior. New Historicists, according to Greenblatt (1980) believe that there are processes at work in society that man can do little to alter. For instance, subversive tendencies of one trying to alter an order could be reflecting a need whose time has come. A deviation from this norm that defines the author differently from the set norms of the society, could spell a different portraiture and identity hence the subverted normative gender identity. Greenblatt's view provides this study with the impetus to focus on an autobiography such as Maathai's *Unbowed*.

In literary texts, cultures are depicted as socializing boys and girls differently through family, school, community, religious institutions, rituals, sayings, stories and even idiomatic expressions. Boys are made to internalize masculine identities such as learning to be independent, aggressive, dominant, strong, competitive, adventurous, protective over women, and decisive, states Bumkhatko (1992). Girls on the other hand, are brought up to be submissive, nurturing and passive (Grambs, 1978) especially in the company of men. The girls are socialized to believe that it is more ladylike to be soft spoken, non- assertive, submissive, a good cook, indecisive,

vulnerable and humble. How, *Unbowed* fits within these definitions of identity or breaks away from them forms the basis of inquiry.

Female characters in fictional literary texts have been depicted by male authors as shying off from taking more active roles in society. According to Heron (1976) study of the portraiture of the female character; he states that she is depicted as the true image of the oppressed African woman who has been deprived for centuries by her male counterpart. Consequently, Lawino is seen as being in the same shoes with Miriam, Mumbi and Nyokabi in Ngugi's trilogy: (1965), (1967) and (1964), respectively. The major achievement of p'Bitek in the poem, Heron (1976), argues, was his ability to portray the level of deprivation of the African woman and her seemingly endless struggles to free herself from her bondage. Imbuga (1976: 11) depicts Nina as gullible and naïve. For instance, Doga says of Nina: '...women will never think beyond the beds where they lie for the night.' Thus female characters are misrepresented, a norm that entrenches their marginalization; a portraiture that Maathai's *Unbowed* seeks to break from.

As the development of female writing in the new millennium depicts changing trends of communicating a higher truth by interpreting reality with accuracy and intelligibility; there has been a growth of African women's autobiography that enhances an expression of her identity like, Ellen Sirleaf's (2009), Winnie Mandela, (1998) and Likimani M. (1995). The selected text for this study enhances a portrait of a subverted gender identity; thereby capturing the experiences of a Kenyan female writer and politician.

Women in Africa in general and Kenya specifically have historically suffered marginalization and exploitation. Traditionally, they were less favoured than men and the contemporary African society denied women equal opportunities in education, employment and politics. By the early

21st century, however, the current study notes that women have started to claim a voice and a space of their own within public discourse. The autobiography chosen for study offers alternative pictures through the author's self-portrait as to how a woman in the contemporary society should be viewed.

Many writings of art by female authors in positions of authority have chosen the autobiographical mode as the most suitable medium for articulating a female perspective, challenging the male dominated field of autobiography. The autobiographical genre embraces the working class experience, women's experience and that of minorities posits Warah (1998). On a similar note, Molara (1987) in Jones *et al* posits that the female writer has two major responsibilities: first, to tell about being a woman; secondly to describe reality from a woman's point of view or perspective and to tell her story differently from how men have told it.

However, it is not until recently, in Africa that a female autobiographer has sought to explain how women are fighting for gender spaces in an effort to occupy positions of power, while ensuring that their rights are respected and at the same time trying to balance between work and family life. How differently *Unbowed* portrays the self of the author in this endeavour necessitated an interrogation.

Until recently, the literary output of subversive autobiographical expressive writing by women has been minimal in the African continent probably due to historical and sociological factors of patriarchy. However, there has been a sudden shift that has sought to destabilize the balance of power. This has been brought about by the female character pursuing education and trying to mount the ladder of equity. This ensures that her voice is heard and that she is given space to negotiate at the political table. Maathai is one such woman who has probably exercised her democratic rights and broken out of the societies' social constructions of what a woman should

be according to patriarchy. Her choice to express self through the autobiographical narrative testifies uniquely to this claim through the reconstructed and reinvented identity (ties) of her subversive portraiture.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Literature draws heavily from reality to tell a story, mirror society and to influence thought. The reality in Africa today, is that women have been under-represented and misrepresented in all spheres of development including literature. Whereas the body of literary works on women continue to grow, there is contestation in terms of portrayal of women characters and autobiographical contributions by women has been minimal. Male authors who are the majority of writers have portrayed a biased picture of women thereby entrenching women marginalization. To that end, this study focuses on how the autobiographical form participates in the scheme of subversion and how this manifest in Maathai's *unbowed* with regards to normative gender identity. The current study explores the portraiture of Maathai, a woman herself in *Unbowed* to establish how an African woman captures the experiences of a person imploring the society not to misconstrue her strengths. A female self, thus, textually redefines her portrait to grant women access to the presumably masculine sphere of public debate and at the same time grant the female folk a role model to emulate. The articulation of an autobiographical portraiture of a subverted normative gender identity has not been conducted by any literary scholar in Kenya.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does Maathai's self-portrait in *Unbowed* subvert the normative gender identity?
2. What is the extent to which the emergent portrait of a subverted normative gender identity challenge power relations in Maathai's *Unbowed*?

3. How effective is the autobiographical form in concretizing the subverted normative gender portrait in Maathai's *Unbowed*?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to explore how Maathai uses the scheme of subversion in her autobiography, *Unbowed*.

The Specific objectives were to:

1. Explore how Maathai's self-portrait in *Unbowed* subverts the normative gender identity.
2. Interrogate the extent to which the emergent portrait of a subverted normative gender identity challenges power relations in Maathai's *Unbowed*.
3. Analyse the effectiveness of the autobiographical form in concretizing the subverted normative gender identity in Maathai's *Unbowed*.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Maathai's *Unbowed* raises the visibility of art work and the life of a woman, serving as an archetype of empowerment that narrates experiences of gender and power relations in a changing society. The study was inspired by the literary debate that ideologies of domesticity and power relations have continued to subjugate women. Women have been depicted in literature as subservient to the male folk confined to the domestic chores hence entrenching their marginalization by the society. The sustainable development goals (SDG's) of the 21st century on equality confirm this point. The literary artist who has been in politics would explain a variety of reasons for minimal participation of women in the political arena and the possibility to delimitation. The need to give prominence to a woman's portraiture narrating her own experiences as well as the phenomenon of subversion which interestingly give her a chance for

visibility in an otherwise culturally suffocating context of masculinity becomes necessary. The belief by Albrecht (1978) that literature is a reflection of society but that it also influences and controls society, is important to this study.

This particular study goes beyond mere desire of actual portraiture that voices a unique female perspective. The achievements through subverted normative gender portrait in autobiographical literary texts done by women, especially in representational positions, improve how a woman views herself; and likewise on how the males view females. This could help change the general attitude of the society towards women, inspire other women on participation in politics or other challenging roles and make them feel encouraged to be part of the whole.

The subversive autobiographical work makes a great contribution to literature on African women and the expansion of African feminism leading to the selection of Maathai's *Unbowed*.

1.6 Scope of the Study

Scope erects the fence for the study. The physical scope of this study is Maathai's *Unbowed*. The subject matter investigates how Maathai participates in the scheme of subversion in her autobiographical work. Theoretically, the study operates within the bounds of New historicism as propounded by Stephen Greenblatt (1980), and Louis Montrose (1996). The theory is of interest because it argues that any textual literary analysis should consider 'the textuality of history and the historicity of that text. The textuality of history and the historicity of a region codify national reality and space and allow for the emerging identity to be re-enacted. The second theory used for the study is the gender theory as advanced by Sandra Bem (1981) Florence Fedewa (2007) and Judith Butler(1999) in the tenets of gender schema, patriarchy, androgyny and social change. Butler's performativity also applies. Both theories of New Historicism and Gender share a common point in power subversion.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework for the study borrows from two theories: New Historicism and the Gender theory. The choice of the two related theories grants perspective to varied thoughts on a given phenomenon., The tenets of the two theories have a common point of interest between them in defining the concept of power and hierarchy as relates to gender identity. This study uses the term in a broader sense, to refer to the actual ideas and beliefs that the research holds about the autobiographical portrait of a subverted normative gender identity in Maathai's *Unbowed*.

According to Abrams (1999), New Historicism seeks to find meaning in a text by considering the work within the construction of the prevailing ideas and assumptions of its historical era. New Historicists concern themselves with the political function of literature and with the concept of power, the intricate means by which cultures produce and reproduce themselves. Fedewa (2007) posits that the gender theory finds meaning in a text by looking at how femininity and masculinity affect an individual's thought process.

On the other hand, patriarchy established masculine identities according to the gender theory (Bem 1981). The masculine descriptions are: brave, courageous, unemotional, strong, protective and domineering, as well as, aspiring for leadership, independent, aggressive, dominant, competitive, adventurous, dynamic, ambitious and decisive. Bem states further that the same patriarchy, defined feminine identities as: passive, cowardly, weak, emotional, submissive, tender, gullible, indecisive, nurturing, soft spoken, less assertive, polite, caring, vulnerable, and patient. Bem (1980) shows how particular phenomena such as male/ female-dichotomy can be usefully seen as social constructs that undermine a particular gender. Specifically, the study examined autobiographical gender identity (ties) exhibited or manifested in the portrait of Maathai in *Unbowed*.

The study uses the theoretical framework generated from the tenets of the two theories in a broader sense, to refer to the actual ideas and beliefs that the research holds about the autobiographical portrait of a subverted gender identity in Maathai's *Unbowed*. The portraiture perhaps reveals one who has sought a higher position in the societal hierarchy for herself and voices her concerns from an empowered vantage point. She selects the facts and events of her life to include in her story demonstrating how she has subverted the normative gender identities by depicting self as unbowed to reflect a difference. Against the theory of New Historicism, the narrator dismantles the old traditional structures and replaces them with new ones in the course of her narration thus creating new portraiture, according to Greenblatt (1980), and in the process, literature dismantles the existing structures in the set society of the text and replaces them with new episteme.

The use of tenets from the two theories, New Historicism and the Gender theory, allowed the study to view the literary data that has evolved historically through the gender lens demonstrating that there have been positive social changes that allow women who have been previously marginalised to take more active roles as outlined in *Unbowed*, The self-defined subverted normative gender identity viewed through the Gender lens interests the study. In any case, the writer as a human being is the product of history and relationship, of time and place.

1.7.1 New Historicism

The New Historicist theory premises upon the fact that the literary text depicts a person's or a people's way of life in a given period at a point in time as demonstrated in Maathai's *Unbowed*. In other words, history here is not a mere collection and synthesis of facts and recording of events, but rather a complex description of human reality and evolution of preconceived notions. Maathai's *Unbowed* may or may not tell us about various factual aspects of the world from

which it emerges. It tells us about prevailing ways of thinking at the time: ideas of social organization, prejudices, and taboos, among others. *Unbowed* raises interesting literary questions to a scholar, pre-empting such prejudice and perhaps suggesting ways of overcoming them. According to Greenblatt (1980) and Montrose (1996), New Historicism is more socio historical than it is a delving into factoids: concerned with ideological products or cultural constructs which are formations of any era. New Historicists, suggest that ideology manifests itself in literary productions and discourse as well as focuses on the interpretive constructions which the members of Maathai's society (in the case of our study or culture) apply to their experience. New Historicism as a literary theory is based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. Thus, New Historicism acknowledges that literary texts reflect the writer's times, and also recognizes that current cultural contexts are in agreement with the conclusions of critics. An autobiographical work of art according to New Historicism must therefore be judged in the context in which it was written; in turn, cultural history can be revealed by studying the work. For instance, that Maathai elaborately discusses marginalization of women and the fact that they were considered subordinate to men makes her depict her portrait as bent on changing problematic relationships in the society of the text. An example is when the leadership of the day remind her that 'a woman's place is in the kitchen.'

We note that marginalization of women indeed appears within the work as in other literary works. Studying the history reveals more about the text; studying the text reveals the truth about the story. The marginalization of women and an effort at gaining space is a story told in *Unbowed*. How Maathai depicts her subversion of the normative gender identities in *Unbowed* to rise to political limelight is explored in the study.

According to Montrose (1996), the author in a literary discourse could depict the issue of subversion and containment. He expresses the view that a character representing the dominant order is given capacity to generate subversion so as to use it to its own end thereby marking the very condition of power. An autobiography as an unimaginative and an archival discourse gives access to unchanging tricks and expresses philosophical matters. Maathai in her role as the protagonist in *Unbowed* demonstrates the enactment of subversion, and tells her story differently from how male authors have done it was a matter that the study used the new historicist and gender theory to interrogate.

1.7.2 Gender Theory

According to, Bem (1980), Butler (1999) and Fedewa (2007), all social differences between men and women are the result of patriarchal constructs and should be eliminated in order to promote gender mainstreaming. Patriarchy as a tenet of the gender theory is an ideology that forms the basis for the argument in this study as it enhances male dominance over social structures which systematically keep women out of power and influence. The social structures are supported and maintained by the socialization process and the division of labour based on gender. Bem (1980) argues that in principle, there is nothing wrong between the biological reality and the cultural or personal expression of masculinity and femininity. However, this phenomenon should not be used as a tool or condition for preventing one from achieving their full potentials. As a result of these factors, attaining statistical equalities in positions of responsibility may be depicted in *Unbowed* as having become elusive, globally and in Africa specifically.

In our study, we note that Maathai depicts self as striving to add gender identity and gender expression to anti discriminatory laws in her self- narrative. Bem's (1980) Gender Schema (a

pattern of thought), targets promoting positive social change. The research explores how Maathai concretizes and raises consciousness that the male/female dichotomy framework has been used unnecessarily in the society to suppress women, a phenomenon that Maathai attempts to dismantle in *Unbowed*. Members of the society are socialized as early as in preschool. The proponent states that the Omni relevance of gender has a negative effect on society and that gender schema should be limited in scope. Bem states that androgyny, masculinity and femininity determinants still exist in society and they limit efforts of certain cadres of people and suggests that the society should apply gender dichotomy as a functional unit and not be a schematic. The study explored, how these ideas have impacted on the writer's attempts at her self-identity as she wrote her narrative and to what literary merit.

The field of gender studies explores the ways that femininity and masculinity affect an individual's thought process, (Fedewa 2007). An analysis of how gender roles as perceived in Maathai's society are portrayed as affecting the female and male characters in *Unbowed* became the propelling factors of this research in addition to how the gender perceptions affected Maathai's role in the transient history. Fedewa's (2007) argument on gender theory suggests that it explores history and the diverse experiences of men and women that are players in politics and intimate lives. (Butler's 1999) Performativity, is important as Maathai portrays self as able to perform her roles differently, fulfilling her visions amidst the patriarchal dictates. Thus, becoming an item for investigation in this study because she deviates from the norm.

The role of women in power relations as performed in an autobiographical work of art demonstrates transformation. The form thus attempts to seal the political gap of under representation of women in positions of responsibility in the society. The study interrogates ways

in which the narrator perhaps reclaims political positions and redefines her identity differently, subversively challenging patriarchal ideologies in the process.

1.7.3 The Interplay of the Tenets of New Historicism and Gender Theory

The intersection of the tenets in the two theories is the gender role and identity according to dictates of culture vis a viz desire for equality by the new woman in literature. New historicism reconnects Maathai's *Unbowed* with its time period in which it was written. The tenet of power hierarchy identifies it with cultural and political movements of the time. Maathai positions herself as an observer on inside giving the reader factual truths of selected, synthesized events some of which she strenuously depicts differently from the expected norm.

The First-person narration gives the writer authority to ascend to a hierarchal subject position of power and to be able to select and synthesize facts from the passing history. While narrating her experiences, the self comes to prominence in the fragmentation of the text; Maathai's authority of self-expression and female subjectivity comes to the fore giving her a hierarchical position of power unlike what patriarchy would have her take or do as a woman.

According to Montrose (1996), the New Historicism ideology seeks to change the worldview with regard to domination. The domination is often achieved through culturally-orchestrated consent rather than force. These are critical underpinnings to the new historicist perspective. It also comprises political and economic practices aimed at putting individual high achievers in control over their lives. The study interrogates how Maathai's achievements put her in control over her life, and if so how and to what gains; politically, familial, literary, among other possible gains. How she changes from being what the society expected of her to be a different person in full control of her own self enthused the study as it is an element of social change.

The control basis makes the idea provocative and the society may be depicted as attempting to resist this change or be viewed as very slow in accepting it. How the female narrator expresses her participation in this transient history fascinated the study. The tenet of social change enables the reader analyse the tale told through self- expression as it pays attention to the specifics of a portrait that subverts the normative gender identity. The gender theory states that there is nothing wrong between the biological reality and the cultural or personal expression of masculinity and femininity but observes that this phenomenon should not be used to prevent one from achieving their full potential. Gender schema indicates how the African culture looked down upon women and did not allow them get into positions of leadership or decision making. As a result of these gender stereotypes in the society, achieving numerical equalities in positions of responsibility could be depicted as either becoming intangible or as realized in Maathai's *Unbowed*. How these realities are depicted differently for the author of *Unbowed*, and which portray her as subversive are explored in the discussion of the thesis through the two lenses of gender and New Historicism.

The tenet of social change enables the study analyse how the autobiographical portraiture of a new breed of womenfolk in literature refute the subsidiary positions earlier allotted them. The tenet allowed the researcher to examine how the autobiographer's dreams eventually come true; and how she finds a successful way to become a new person with a new life embracing her ambitions, principles and values. How Maathai portrays self as able to fulfil her visions amidst the patriarchal dictates was an item for investigation in this study.

Finally, the study sought to analyse the interplay between the attempts of New Historicism to resolve the conflict enhanced through inclusion of socio- political context and historical vision.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The section reviews related studies of autobiographical works, the global situation of women in synergized positions of power and their attempts at producing subversive literature to counter patriarchy. It is divided into subsections as: A self-portrait, gender concepts challenging power relations and concretizing of the emergent portraits.

2.2 A Self Portrait

The term portrait, as used in this study, connotes depicting a character in a certain way in a literary text. In an autobiography, the writer portrays self, hence the subtheme self-portrait. The autobiographical narrative provides an avenue for the expression of the self as the author makes an effort to define and understand the self through the utilization of the journey motif. Through the journey one makes from childhood to adulthood, the character is granted an experience that gives a sense of identity and an avenue for letting out self to others. It features as a way of coming to terms with the past. The writer comes of age and brings to light connections between the self in the narration, and the society. These connections are important to the author as they justify their perceptions in the transient history. Maathai's *Unbowed* fits in with Horace's '*dulci et utile*' as captured in his Treatise which suggests that a worthy literary work of art should delight and teach. Even though Maathai's *Unbowed*'s commitments to model an individual in the society toward acceptable social practices, the literary work must be enjoyed. However, Maathai's *Unbowed* portrays her pleasure in modelling her subversion of the normative gender identities.

The autobiographical form consequently grants opportunity for the storyteller to invent and uphold desirable features. Thus, the self is reinvented, rediscovered and redefined; differently

from those images fostered by the society or cultural stereotypes. The study investigated how the female autobiographer attempts to define self differently from how an ordinary female character has been defined in literature before or how a male author has defined her in the past. (Ngugi: 1964, 1965, 1967) and p' Bitek (1967), Ng'ong'a (2002), and Imbuga (1976). The current study makes the differentiated portraiture apparent.

Forster (1927) argues that 'people in a novel can be understood completely by the reader, if the writer wishes; their inner as well as their outer life to be exposed. Forster further states that the author speaks about his characters as well as through his characters or arranges for the audience to listen and peer deeper through the sub conscious mind. As a result, fictional characters are usually depicted as people whose lives are visible. In addition, Forster stresses the importance of character, in a work of art and reckons that maintaining both flat and round characters may be necessary in the successful rendition of a literary work of art. The emerging character heralds an identity that is depicted in the text. The portrait Maathai's *Unbowed* gives of self, depicts her as a subversive character and not necessarily a, fictional character as Forster (1927) suggests.

Forster narrates the necessity of plot, which creates the effect of suspense, as a problem by which a character is frequently sacrificed in the process of providing an end to a conflict in the story and also creates fantasy and prophecy, which provide a sense of the universal or spiritual as central aspects of a great work of art. However, Forster dismisses the value of 'pattern,' by which a narrative may be structured, as another aspect that frequently sacrifices the vitality of character. Considering that the storyteller in our study is also the protagonist whose role in the society has seemingly changed, it would be interesting to listen to what she has to say, bearing in mind that the story revolves around her and the subversive gender strides she has made.

The foregoing explanation is supported by Spengemann (1980) who reckons that an autobiographical narrative as a literary form resorts to a limited range of modes of expression. It will either be a historical form of self-explanation, philosophical self-scrutiny, or a poetic self-expression. The descriptions therefore confirm that most autobiographies tell stories or a history of self that always comes from a deep human side. The need to let the others know or understand why the author made certain decisions in their life therefore becomes imperative. The idea of a finished self that can be articulated successfully in one flounce takes the researcher to a female autobiography. The female voice in the autobiographical genre has missed significantly, as most scholars have tended to concentrate on 'his' but not on 'her' story. What constitutes authenticity, and to what extent the female writer allows herself to apply her memories of experience in works of nonfiction, arouse curiosity about her portrait.

An autobiography contains a significant message or life story of the author who is also the subject of the story. The reconstructing of life at its peak particularly makes it a preferred genre for expressing a real self in the literary space (Helga 2014). Helga states further, that the story teller destabilizes conventional tightening of meaning thereby seeking to alter or challenge the formation of an allotment that constitutes gender, especially where gender battles are concerned. A self-portraiture of gender identity that could be challenging an existent order of power relations in Unbowed becomes the standout feature of subversion for interrogation.

The term gender, sometimes confused to be synonymous with sex refers to the socially constructed roles which can change or attributes society ascribes to either of the two existent sexes, (Harrison 1985). In the traditional society the woman was relegated to the kitchen while men worked outside the home. Today, both men and women go out to work. The picture in

Maathai's *Unbowed* depicts a marked departure from the previously constructed female identity which was interrogated in this study.

Stegeman (1974) identified a new breed of womenfolk in literature who will not accept subordinate positions. The new woman represents a theory of personhood where, as an individual, she portrays self as an existing, independent entity rather than one that fits into a stereotyped tradition. It is this new breed of women that the study has interest in listening to, particularly at how she relates her experiences in private and in positions of prominence in her society. Whereas challenges still abound, some self-driven women have chosen the best medium for articulating a female perspective through the autobiographical narration thus enabling the authors to provide first-hand insights into the highly disputed space of the private sphere (women's intimate lives). Through Maathai's *Unbowed* the attitudes in the society that undermine the capacities' of women could therefore be unlearned, so that significant steps in balancing gender roles are realized.

According to Hameron (1987), human beings have always been curious about the achievements of others; charismatic individuals who galvanise fellow humans into great victories. Tales of this kind include the reign of kings, military conquests, the wielders of power; princes, courtiers, generals, governors', prelates, among others. Until recently, women's achievements had not been part of the great tales. Today, however, women have transcended this and have even written about their own experiences. Since literary works are a response to a writer's environment, the female politician's autobiography becomes both a response to the existent representation of women and an attempt to manoeuvre forth women's worldview especially that concerning their

identity. How *Unbowed* portrays a self differently in this endeavour aroused need for analysis in the study.

This study views Maathai's *Unbowed* as depicting the female character differently, as the 'Other'. By 'Other' we mean 'the other' as espoused by Said (1978). Literary critics regard Said's orientalism as the cornerstone of postcolonial canon. It was this celebrated work that generated other related books and materials. Orientalism is affiliated to the representation of the self or occident and the 'Other' or Orient in which the self is privileged and has an upper hand to redefine, reconstruct the passive, silent and weak 'Other'. For Said, this geographical line made between the Occident and the Orient is arbitrary. *Unbowed's* attempts at reconstruction of gender identity differently was at the core of the current study.

The autobiographical narrative in literature accords the writer space to tell the story of one's own life. The writer has the latitude, space and autonomy to discuss both the private and public participation in the ephemeral history. In this study, an autobiographical work of art is viewed as attempting to alter the normative gender identities in society. Indangasi (1993) recognizes artistry in autobiography in his study of the autobiographical impulse in the African and African-American literature. He asserts that the autobiography is more than just an I-narrative telling the writer's life story but a narrative that purposes to communicate a higher truth by interpreting reality with shrewdness and intelligence. He gives illustrations of several autobiographies by African and Afro-American writers that seek to answer the question: 'who am I' besides propelling an impulse to fight injustice. Indangasi highlights Fredrick Douglas' autobiography depicting the historical time as allowing the author's motive to take centre stage. Indangasi's work is informative in that pointing out certain weaknesses inherent in the Kenyan political

systems could be a concern that Maathai raises in her autobiography. However, Indangasi concentrates on autobiographies by male authors based in the US, while the current study focused on a female author with the local Kenyan experience in mind.

Spivak Gayatri (2008) asserts that subversive writing has been used by the marginalized to wage social campaigns aimed at inclusion of the previously marginalized; of the excluded histories, stories, beings both in the private and public spheres. The emblem of life recreating particularly makes it a preferred genre for the articulated struggles to ground an authentic self. How Unbowed re-enacts a portrait of identity was of interest especially as it could be challenging those in authority and also questions structures of governance inherent in the society of the text.

Gayatri further endorses the view that a subversive work of art encompasses an artful conscious sub variety of literature that employs a wide range of sources, strategies, and insights that tend to render a whole sense of its subject; not the life only but what it was like at its various stages. The sub type undertakes to tell the authors' attempts at recreating their personal development from a replicated present point of narration.

According to Scuuchi (2015) Condoleezza Rice's memoir is a fascinating and inspirational story for young people. Scuuchi sees it as 'a Place for the Personal'- in the US. She quotes Rice making a strong statement in the process: 'Life is short and what academic investments are we making in the world for our offspring?' Rice became one of the most influential women of global politics when President Bush named her as his National Security advisor in December 2000. She is an American scientist and diplomat. She served as the 66th United States secretary of State, the second person to hold the seat in the administration of President Bush. In 2000, her role became extremely important after the September 11th, 2001 attacks on New York City and the

Pentagon in Washington. She has played a major role in shaping the most aggressive US foreign policy in modern history with wars launched against Afghanistan and Iraq during her time in office.

Scuuchi in examining Rice's autobiography grades it as a hybrid literary genre through the lens of transformative learning. In her analysis of the text, Scucchi demonstrates the ways in which literature cultivates, reflects and creates positive changes within lives. According to Scuuchi, Rice's work depicts her life beginning in the comparatively placid 1950s in Birmingham, Alabama, where black people lived in a segregated parallel universe to their white neighbours. She narrates growing up during the violent and shocking 1960s, when bloodshed became a part of daily life in the South. Rice's portrait of her parents, John and Angelena, highlights their ambitions and frustrations and shows how much they sacrificed to give their beloved only child the best chance for success. Rice also discusses the challenges of being a precocious child who was passionate about music, ice skating, history, and current affairs with vivid clarity. Her memoir reveals, how her early experiences sowed the seeds of her political beliefs and helped her become a vibrant, successful woman. There are similarities in the early lives of Rice and Maathai albeit in different continents. The challenges in early lives of both are similar in that while Rice experienced violent and shocking 1960s due to racial discrimination, Maathai had to contend with gender discrimination. Similarly, their parents sacrificed to give their beloved children the best chance for success. Maathai was taken to boarding school, a rare feat for Girls at that time. This was the beginning of her success in life. How Maathai' uses her acquired education to express women's views at a time when it was unimaginable during the Moi era is the subversion of identities depicted in *Unbowed*.

Dukule Abdoulaye (2010) discusses another exciting autobiography by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf the world's first black female president and Africa's first elected female head of state referred to internationally as 'Iron Lady.' According to Dukule, the great novelty of Sirleaf's book *This Child Will Be Great* is that it does not simply address itself to the growing pains of a nation in search of a soul or the life of a political icon who has cast a giant shadow on the recent history of the youngest, yet oldest republic in Africa. Dukule argues that it is a narrative that encompasses both the personal and the political, the intimate and national portraits, the local and international, all at the same time. It is as if the life of the nation, in the past forty years and more, mirrors the personal and family life of the first woman president in Africa. Like all great books, it draws its universal dimension from its very personal human story.

Dukule argues that Sirleaf's narrative functions at many levels. One could read the book as the story of a woman growing up in Liberia in the 1950s, leading to her maturity as an aging, but very dynamic political leader in the 2000's. Another reader may want to consider how Liberia's particular political history unfolded in the past 50 years, through the eyes of a woman who lived very close, sometimes too close a proximity to every political leadership that influenced the course of history during that period and transformed the lives of the millions of people in that small republic hanging on the West coast of Africa. Yet, other eyes may want to focus on the struggles of a nation in the making while economists and political scientists may scrutinize her analysis of what works or does not work in Africa in general and Liberia in particular. Unbowed's mode of portrait of a woman daring the male field subversively in Kenya becomes an item for scrutiny.

However, stories that impact the lives of so many, or transform the destiny of an entire nation and serve as an inspiration to millions like Maathai's *Unbowed* are rare. This is because in her autobiographical voice, she does not lose out on her femininity and the legacy of environmental conservation. Sirleaf's autobiography depicts a militant character that robs the reader the opportunity of seeking to emulate her. Maathai's autobiographical writing depicts a more literary portrait. Her autobiography makes some attempt at a comprehensive overview of the writer's true life account thus, making it the best suited medium for articulating an African female perspective.

Steedman (1986) describes an autobiographical writing as a psychological outburst and as an act of cognition. While studying the similarities and differences between autobiography and history, Steedman notes that history and autobiography are both narrative and fiction in that they both present variation and manipulation of current times, as well as the portrait of the writer to the reader. They are also sentimental as they describe the heroic journey that transforms an ordinary person into a hero/ heroine. The current study sought to investigate Maathai's self-portrait subverting normative gender identity. The difference between history and autobiography according to Steedman is that historians have had as their stated objective exhaustiveness as they proceed upon the path of refutation by pointing out to exceptions or the possibility of one while on the other hand autobiography uses details of time, place and politics of that time to construct a psychological narrative rather than a historical one. Steedman further points out that in a psychological narrative, truth comes out as a valid resource for a historian. How Maathai uses details of time, the politics of her time in the social context to create a psychological narrative that portrays her as a subversive self was of interest.

Steedman (1986) writes her own autobiography as a way of coming to terms with her own past. She portrays self in the book as an unwanted illegitimate child. In this, there was a personal act of cognition. She also comments on the cultural inclination of the environment in which she grew up as bearing testimony to what she later becomes. Maathai's *Unbowed* delves into the intricacies of paradigm shift of power in her environment. How power that used to be concentrated in the hands of the male folk is portrayed as seined (a large net with sinkers on one edge and floats on the other that hangs vertically in the water and is used to enclose and catch fish when its ends are pulled together or are drawn ashore). Seining power by the woman arouses curiosity in the current study. Unlike Steedman Maathai does not say much about her family apart from the fact that she is born in a polygamous family with many siblings and half brothers and sisters. She does not talk much about them but herself.

Bloom (1987) raises the issue of the intended audience in autobiographical writing and asserts that while some auto biographers write for themselves, others consciously write with an external audience in mind. She studies a large body of autobiographies to illustrate her point, but her main concern is to train students to identify skilled and unskilled authors through their different techniques of writing. She observes that through a close examination of autobiographical texts, students can become powerful writers. Bloom's study is informative on techniques of writing autobiography. This skill aids this particular study to identify the mode of portraiture in Maathai's *Unbowed*. The style of writing Maathai deploys in her autobiography point to the fact that she had audience away from herself.

While studying Winnie Mandela's autobiography, Kathrada (2013) demonstrates how an empowered woman hungers for open space where she could express her ideas. He states that

Winnie depicts an outstandingly strong personality; and an impressive capacity to speak her mind in an extremely hostile environment which records the very horror of apartheid as she experienced it. She says that doing her diary made solitary confinement manageable because the difficulty experienced during the era of apartheid would have killed her. She says that writing saved her from despair. Her autobiography is the case of a story within a history; the history of apartheid. She indicates that she wrote for her daughters and grandchildren. Kathrada argues further, that the rise of global, multi-ethnic, and women's literature, works in which writers reflect on experiences shaped by culture, colour, and gender endows autobiography with a special interest. From Obama's autobiographical narrative, we also encounter a story within a history. Lopez(2012) did discover that that the primary trigger of the self -creation was the haunting void created by absent father figure in his life. Filling this vacuum was a paternal presence that oscillates between the real father who had abandoned the son so early in life and a mythical father that he constructed through imagination, dreams and stories he heard about him.

The study therefore sought to establish the impulse behind Maathai's self-portraiture as it could be undoing certain mythical concepts in the African society about the being of a woman. Kathrada's observation on Winnie Mandela's autobiography is similar to the psychological, inclination in Maathai's literary work as it was written with an audience in mind. The difference is that the audience for Maathai's work is what Freire (1970) describes in his book Pedagogy of the oppressed. The narrative of how Maathai vocals her experiences during the Moi dictatorial era in Kenya could have been an attempt at subversion.

Owuor Solomon (2016) while studying Miguna Miguna's autobiographical works, delineates historical processes that depict class issues in society. The social structure of the Kenyan society

demonstrates the super-rich contrasted with the “hoi polloi” referring to the poor of the poor. In his arguments, Owuor depicts Miguna’s efforts at producing subversive literature. In both texts Miguna seems to be telling interesting stories about himself when in actual fact, he is disparaging the Kenyan government’s accepted hierarchical structures. Owuor’s study of Miguna’s works concentrated on his depiction of the Kenyan historical process. Maathai’s *Unbowed*, however, allows for a systematic form of subversion pointing at the poor structures- of governance, exclusion of women and asserting the self -identity to it.

William Ochieng (2005) says that autobiographies provide interpretation and not merely records. He explains that this genre wrestles with the truth of personal identity; trying to record the sense of self, to discover it. He goes on to say that autobiographies assure the author of their existence beyond any possibility of philosophical denial. Through it, the author comes to terms with their past or exorcises it. The author presents for public scrutiny and contemplation a version of the self that they want the society to see. In Ochieng’s view, the primary concern of autobiographies is with the formulation of the images of the authors themselves that is not contaminated by subjectivity. Ochieng’s study however uses a historical approach, unlike this particular one, that applies the literary lens. Maathai embellishes the self in her literary discourse drawing a contrast to Ochieng’s study that concentrated on autobiographies by male authors thus, lacking views on the female perspective.

Over the years the United States has enjoyed hegemony, a state whereby the balance of power is maintained by one nation being at the top, dominating world politics and economy (Waltz Kenneth: 1979). Today, however there is a bi-polar shift in the stability of supremacy hence the famous colloquial saying that, ‘the world is moving East.’ China, using her large population to

provide labour and a fast growing economy, has worked hard to ensure that she competes favourably with the United States. The world is therefore moving from a hegemonic structure to a bi-polar system. Similarly, the balance of power in the single most important unit of the society, the family, has been destabilized. The society equally experiences a paradigm shift from a balance of power as a patriarchal society, a fact Maathai's *Unbowed* helps demonstrate and offer remedies toward coping with the new situations. Thus, *Unbowed* renders her story differently in the light of these societal changes.

Namuhindah (2014) indicates that Maathai plays down her husband's abuse of power in dealing with family matters in marked contrast to how Maathai was vocal about abuse of power in the public sphere. For her, Maathai laments the wasted years of marriage, amounting to wastage of energy, time and delay in fulfilling her potential caused by married life. Natahsha (2010) examines the history of the current status of women activists and explains that Maathai's divorce initiated by her husband was a result of her strength of character. Strength was her undoing because she curved a voice for women in the legislative assembly at a time when this characteristic of women in leadership had not been fully accepted. In other words, balancing power translates to roles in the family, and career roles that have put society in an awkward situation. This compares favourably to the global bipolar shift in the competition for hegemonic power. How *Unbowed* discusses the historicity of alternated power structures necessitated a literary interrogation.

In her autobiography, Maathai states that her husband, Mwangi Mathai, walked out on her because he felt that she was too strong for him a clear indication of the realization that women can be active members of the society and refuse to conform to the carefully moulded

psychological box by the patriarchal society. The so-called gender issues that relegated women to the periphery in terms of power struggle are challenged by the appearance of female power. This is the emerging identity that the female autobiographer may articulate for the audience. How Maathai utilizes this space, and how the men and women perceive her new status offer new meaning as well as instructions on new developments in the society that the study interrogated. How *Unbowed* brings out the contexts of these constructs of identity subversively, was of interest.

Supryia and Murfin (1997) describe auto writing as transforming empirical facts into artefacts and states that expressive writing of the self through a given medium allows for the revitalization of one's dignity. Self-expressive subversive writing is thus a blending of techniques that releases the inner meaning, feelings, and ideas of the writer. It gives shape and form to the energies and growth of the inner identity. The power of writing bestows into the hands of the writer, where the conventions of autobiographical discourse for instance condition the reader to look for it; to redefine who she or he is creatively. This study was keen on exploring how Maathai creatively redefines her portrait differently from how the male counterparts have done of female characters, in the past.

The expression of self takes a historical form of self-explanation or a philosophical self-scrutiny. The autobiographical narrative indicates creatively the role of the author in the form to uniquely express the self. A case in point is the autobiographical narrative examined in this study. The author who has held prominent positions, and who at given times in her social and political life has had both positive and negative experiences hence using the autobiographical narrative as a site to relate her story differently from how others would have told it. *Unbowed* spans an entire life from birth to late adulthood. Maathai arranges it chronologically and invites the reader in

confidence to listen to intimate stories. The sense of a subversive self-identity as the focus of her autobiography captivated the study.

Heeh (2013) examines self-writing while undertaking the challenging task of summarizing the history of the concepts of self and self-consciousness, as well as a history of self-expression through the use of the first-person accounts. Heeh's "History of the Self" offers a concise yet thorough introduction to textual explorations of the self. The novelty of Heeh's criticism lies in the focus on autobiographical texts, and the skilful weaving of primary sources into larger theoretical shifts. Heeh is an adept storyteller, presenting intertwined characters and plots that drive the story being told and make the book a pleasure to read. 'The pleasurable tag' has the ability to keep a story alive. An autobiographical narrative therefore invites the reader to enter into the private life of the author. This view is corroborated by Abbs (1974) who indicates that an author makes an attempt to answer certain questions about self: Who am I? How have I become me or what may I become in future? As one writes the autobiography, he or she seeks to consciously or unconsciously answer these questions.

Aristotle (2004 print) in *The Poetics*, defines a story's plot as the arrangement of events that highlights causality. This arrangement holds the reader's attention to the narrative as they keep asking, and reading to find out what happens next. The Portrait of the subversion of normative gender identities encompasses seeking of a way of doing things differently from the established norms of society. Bem (1998) discusses the creation of an egalitarian marriage, and suggests that it requires looking at the roles that men and women were assigned in contemporary society and being critical of the limitations that are placed on women. Some scholars Gusdorf (1980) and Butler (1999) regard gender as a kind of improvised performance. In this study, an autobiographical work of art provided an avenue of subverting normative gender identity (ties).

The writer in the chosen study further had the autonomy to tell the story of her own life and to constitute an acceptable identity. How Maathai constituted this identity differently became the point of inquiry.

Oduol (1992) examined the issues of experience. She observed that women's limited contributions to political leadership may be attributed to lack of political maturity and experience. Further, she reiterates that their preoccupation with domestic and family obligations and the existence of an ambivalent attitude towards political participation hampered their efforts. She concluded that their lack of experience due to their increased household chores makes women remain behind in politics. However, in a later forum, Oduol (2013) reminded women that being appointed to prominent positions of power need not make them shed off their femininity. She reckons that they needed this quality to perform other roles, especially those related to family.

Oduol's work was relevant to this study as it creates the need for role modelling at the political level, through the experiences of a female politician in Maathai's *Unbowed*. This statement highlights the modern career African woman. Gender roles of the career women are often redefined by the fact that they are professionals and have careers to attend to in addition to the demands of motherhood. Meanwhile, the society continues to have expectations of them regarding the performance of certain domestic and family duties. How Maathai straddles this treacherous route to subversively portray self differently was of interest to our study.

Even after the promulgation of the new constitution (COK 2010), women who related their campaign experiences in the 2013 general elections in Kenya still faced a number of challenges based on their gender. Odhiambo (2013), indicated that the male folk still attempted to put road

blocks on the efforts women had made. She confessed to having been threatened with a gun so as to surrender but she held on. Ombaka (2013) shared similar sentiments, adding that the addition of the women representative post, sounded stereotypical and men saw it as a position, specifically for women or about women. Ombaka went on to affirm that women indeed faced a hostile environment politically and the men folk intimidated them through violent tendencies. The study interrogated the experiences in gender and power play as portrayed in Maathai's *Unbowed*. The minimal voices of female Kenyan politicians that could be giving a contradictory picture of the vulnerability and dimness of such entities; challenging power relations necessitates a literary investigation in relation to portraiture in an autobiographical work.

In making contributions to the debate on Power and Politics Ndegwa (2013), reminded the women that they must begin thinking of the bigger picture in order to get power. Ndegwa was commenting in relation to the 2013 General Elections in Kenya where women registered a dismal performance. Not a single woman was elected Senator or Governor. He confirms that women face many social, economic and political challenges globally. The line between male and female in society was still so blurred even after women tried to get a foot hold onto politics. He ascertains that, indeed, while developed countries would have us believe that gender inequality is a problem exclusive to developing countries (specifically African), women faced discrimination in various forms the world over. The main difference was in the nature and magnitude. The present study advances Ndegwa's argument to establish if the portraiture of such a phenomenon existed and how Maathai negotiated her identity in merging roles in her *Unbowed*. The genre's closeness to advocacy enables it to claim visibility of minorities (groups) such as women at the time of writing. Depiction of how Maathai explores visibility in herself portraiture subversively, becomes dire.

Pope Francis the XVI (2015) adds his voice to the gender debate stating that the gender theory is the problem and not the solution to interpersonal relationships in the society. According to him, the right way to solve the problems and conflicts in the male or female relations is to have men and women talk and listen to each other more, know each other better, care for each other- for the woman compliments the man in creation. Eradicating female or male identities does nothing to solve the problem of relating but aggravates it. This means that issues of relationship between men and women are exacerbated by the dictates of the gender theory because it removes the nuances of submission from the female folk. Sexual differentiation, therefore, exists not for creating conflict or a situation of subordination, but for reciprocity and fruitfulness -- "for communion and generation, always in the image and likeness of God," (Francis 2015: II)

This study adopts an over-arching gender theory that proposes to explore ideological inscription and the fundamental analysis that problematizes Maathai's gender agenda in her *Unbowed*. The communication angle to it that the Pope suggests is what the current autobiographical narrative does talk to the society more about; and through its mode of portraiture that reveals her identity, the reader learns something of value.

Boehmer (2005) states that there are three good reasons for choosing the autobiographical form: One is writing for themselves to discover the meaning of their life by setting it down. Secondly one is writing their life story for their offspring/s so that they can know them as a person not just as a parent or grandparent. When one is famous, distinguished in their field or infamous, people will be interested in the story of their life and that a full autobiography by oneself would be most appropriate. The portrait, that the study was interested in, closely resembles a thematic memoir which focuses on a relationship, except that it emphasizes the subjects' concentration on

achievements, disappointments and the political milestone made rather than on the society in general.

In our study, we read about Maathai simultaneously demonstrating a female politician coming of age par excellence. Depending on her popular interest in balancing of gender roles; the female autobiography becomes both a response to the writer's environment and a representation of women attempting to extol a female perspective that could be subversive. It perhaps demonstrates a unique ability bestowed on strong women to transform societies. Maathai's attempts at such transformations of identity aroused interest in her *Unbowed*.

Zabus (2003) examines new developments in Africa's female writing in an effort to acquire self. She argues that the field of African women's autobiography is still under-exploited compared to the scenario in the West. It merely emerged in the 1970's along with feminism in Africa, an offshoot of black feminism in the US. She points out the late appearance of the African female writers in general and particularly in autobiography as opposed to their male counterparts. The explanation sits in the skewed educational practices that delayed or limited women's schooling as captured in Cockburn (1991), Kabira et al (1994) and Yelfin (1990).

Conversely, after noting the growth of African women's autobiography as a genre, Zabus (2003) concentrates on the female body's materiality and the trauma of genital mutilation as practiced by the Somali community in Africa. She focuses her analysis on Somali writer Dirie's (1998), (2002;) two autobiographies respectively as well as Barry's (1987). She observes that these texts represent a new turn in the history of female autobiography. Her study is an analysis of the three autobiographies to demonstrate the violation of the African woman's body right through the ritual cut. The current study examines autobiography as a conduit for an emerging unique

portrait. The study is therefore more inclined toward self-identity and public portraiture unlike Zabuz' who focused was on the violation of the rights of African women using the example of Somali woman body rights.

Omuteche (2004) observes that autobiography is a creative discipline that involves interpreting the past as a store house and as a tool for revealing the present. He reiterates that, in situations of oppression and quest for justice, autobiography can be used. Omuteche makes these observations while studying Nelson Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom. He further states that the narrative value lies in the autobiographer's conscience whereby she or he selects and reshapes her or his past experiences to reveal her or his stand point on particular pertinent issues. Omuteche's study of plot in Mandela's autobiography reveals the author's effort in interpreting and communicating self. This approach aided our study in identifying Maathai's concerns, for her plot. The emerging identity portrayed in Unbowed was of particular interest. The presentation of the processes of unlearning of certain concepts in the society as was similar in Omuteche's analysis were important to this particular study

2.3 Challenging Power Relations in the Quest for Identity

According to Boehmer (2005: 47) 'to write is not only to speak for oneself, in one's place in the world; to speak is also to leave a legacy behind, to mark a position.' Historical contexts depict ideological norms of doing things and how this has been negated by some characters. Complexities of power relations are not only realized at the political level but even in the family unit and in boy or girl relationship. In certain cases, responsibilities are assigned to the male but the females are left out. Yet elsewhere, it could be seen in master/ servant relationships. Therefore, a writer's quest for identity is depicted as an exploration of an existent order on how

people should relate. *Unbowed* depicts the portrait of the character under scrutiny as defiant to the existing order and seeks to restructure it. a subject that aroused interest in this study.

Paulo Freire's, (1970) is an approach to education that organizes to transform oppressive structures and create a more equitable, caring and beautiful world through action and reflection that is co-created with those who have been marginalized and dehumanized. In 1962, Freire created culture circles in North Eastern Brazil to support 300 sugar-cane workers to teach each other how to read and write in 45 days, which enabled them to register to vote. These culture circles that began with sugar cane workers, catalysed thousands more each with the purpose of not just literacy, but conscientization which involves people joining with their peers to rename their world by reflecting on their conditions, imagining a better world, and then taking action to create it. This approach by Freire to help the workers was so galvanizing that within two years he was jailed and exiled by the military government. Freire's attempted and succeeded in opening the eyes of the sugarcane workers to register as voters and vote for the things they desired- the world they created for themselves whether in reality or fantasy. Maathai's *Unbowed* had the same objective though through a different strategy. Her strategy comes out as the inequality based on gender in society through Literary work.

Through a lifetime of working with revolutionary organizers and educators both in Brazil and in exile, Freire offers a compass to direct his audience towards liberation from structures of oppression. This compass is both an approach to education, and an organizational lens against which to understand systems of oppression in order to transform them. In raising the awareness, Freire also uses the fora as a mobilization for change. It flips mainstream ideas of education insisting that true knowledge and expertise already exists with people and that they need no deposits of information (what Freire calls Banking Education) or propaganda to convince them

on their problems. What is required is dialogue, respect, love for humanity, and praxis or action and reflection to transform the world. In Maathai's literary debut: *Unbowed*, how she forges ahead to portray self differently offering a compass to direct her audience toward liberation from structures of oppression captivated the study.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed is an education as a practice of freedom, which Freire contrasts with education as a practice of domination. How Maathai's experiences of vocals subvert an order, as a tendency in her story, was an item for interrogation. Of particular interest is her ecofeminist stance as she endeavours to mark a position through the Green Belt Movement for which she is globally famed. Gates (2011) reinforces the view that the private sphere and the selves of the women inhabiting it have through the autobiographical literary form, been and are being re-enacted to fit the political agenda of their authors. The anonymity provided by the public sphere encourages authors to refute predominant notions of femininity and female outfit as ascribed by society, to show aggression toward societal application of double standards and to propose other forms of social interaction. The empowered and politically conscious women make every effort at their disposal, including literary scholarship, to sensitize the society that women can be worthy leaders given the right latitude. How Maathai depicts self in the recreated literary spaces; enables the researchers appreciate the unique portraiture in articulating self-experience of the Kenyan woman in the literary gender spaces.

Spretnak (1993) introduces the idea of women nurturing quality as relevant to environmental protection. She refers to this idea as Ecofeminism. Several eco- feminists make the distinction that it is not because of their creation that women relate to nature, but because of their similar states of oppression. The oppression is perpetrated by mostly the male folk in society directed towards nature, environment and women. The marginalization is verbalized in the language used

to describe nature and to describe women. (d'Eaundbern:1974, Glotfley: 1996, Reurket:2020 Barry:2002) discourses link women specifically to the environment because of their traditional social role as nurturers and caregivers. These are qualities that Maathai depicts in her portraiture as having; but could also be urging her readers and other women to enhance these character attributes in order to protect the environment.

Simon and Schechter (2010) refer to Maathai as 'Mama Miti-' Translated literally, it means 'tree woman' They depict 'a breathing portrait' of an African woman always in beautiful African prints, with textiles that exhibit the brightness and beauty inherent in Africa. They later publish a book entitled Mama Miti that teaches children how to take care of the environment. With each page of this book turned children realize their own ability to positively impact on the future. How Unbowed could be depicting such unique portraitures attracted this interrogation.

Spentrak further links the gender theory to feminism and creates a tenet she refers to as eco-feminism. The term ecofeminism is believed to have been coined by the French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974). From arguments that there are particular and significant connections between women and nature, ecofeminism relates the oppression and domination of all subordinate groups (women, people of colour, children, and the poor) to the oppression and domination of nature (animals, land, water, and air). All these subordinate groups have been subjected to oppression, domination, exploitation, and colonization by the Western patriarchal society that values men. Ecofeminists believe that these connections are illustrated through traditionally 'feminine' values such as reciprocity, nurturing and cooperation, which are present both among women and the environment. How Maathai's portraiture confirms or refutes D'Eaubonne's view is an item for investigation.

Bryson (2007) indicates that self-writing provides women with a unique chance to share a self-portrait from a more intimate perspective. An attempt to retell the stories from a more feminine position is better demonstrated in an autobiographical narrative by a female author. The study therefore uses the autobiographical variety to witness a process of a narrative self-description of a characters' prowess into literary history. Whether the Kenyan society allows women to make tangible contributions toward political representation and play their rightful role is an attempt to which Maathai's experiences in the autobiographical self -portrait could be relating. Bryson's argument allows for need to develop a political modelled structures for women participation in Kenya. How Maathai models her portraiture so as to enhance transformations different from the existing ideologies is an area that called for interrogation.

Gathoni (2008) studied the portrayal of Nelson Mandela in his autobiography; *Long Walk to Freedom* and Winnie Mandela's *Part of My Soul Went with Him*. Her study reveals that, in both texts, the writers have used autobiography to model the first black South African President, Nelson Mandela as a political icon with Winnie Mandela's autobiography complimenting Mandela's image in her autobiography creating the intended image of the protagonists. In studying the works by a female auto biographer, Gathoni discovers that the author does not concentrate her writing about herself but on what she says about Mandela. Gathoni's study provides an image of Mandela from a witness perspective unlike what our study set out to interrogate. This particular study sought to examine the portraiture of Maathai in her autobiography as written by herself.

Siundu (2009) looks at three autobiographical works by female Asian authors in Kenya. He does so at the level of power, politics and gender. His focus was to problematize current ideas on gendered engagements with historical and cultural discourses that are played out in literary

productions, especially in the genre of autobiography. In these works, one notes only a marginal, departure in the reading of historical events in which the Kenyan woman of Asian community is implicated. In his study, Siundu reports that the discursive interpellation of Asian women is that they are doubly marginalized members of a community. He reiterates further that little has been written about the wives and daughters of the dukawallahs. At present, the specificities of the East African Asian woman are gradually coming under scholarly scrutiny, revealing the inward struggles and social challenges these women faced. This article focuses on the memoirs of three women writers of East African Asian descent—Parita Mukta's *Shards of Memory: Woven Lives in Four Generations* (2002); Neera Kapur-Dromson's *From Jhelum to Tana* (2007); and Yasmin Alibhai-Brown's *The Settler's Cookbook* (2008)— as examples not only of thought-provoking studies of female migratory experiences but also as reminders that class and ethnicity need constant unravelling in order to reach a clear understanding of the dynamics of colonial structure (Felicity Hand, 2011).

Mason (2000) argues that women's 'literati' informs their establishment of identity as relational rather than individual. She asserts that the self-discovery of female identity acknowledges the real presence recognition of another consciousness and the disclosure of female self- linked to the identification of some 'other.' This view indicates the ability of the autobiographical form to create an identity for the woman in the process of narration. Women autobiographies may further hold the view that the basis for their practice is experience. The study examines Maathai's *Unbowed* as emphasizing personal and domestic details and describing relationships with other people.

The emerging identities from the autobiographical self- portraiture in the review proceed from four main perspectives: The motivation, forming identity, the impulse, identity and the self. The motivation angle to it asks; what motivates an autobiographer to tell the story of her life? The motivation tag takes the reader to Plato the literary theorist of old. Plato argues that literature tells lies because it is three times removed from reality in its imitative act. Aristotle, on the other hand, is of the view that literature, which is his expression for all artistic work, rises above description of particulars because it desires to represent universal truth. The impulse that prompts Maathai to portray self differently from the expected norm interfering with gender relations is the point of inquiry in this study.

The impulse or inner compulsion to write is self- driven by a certain force that finds an explanation in Ng'ong'a's (2002) study of Ogola (1994) who calls the artistry of writing 'an itch,' and the writer's effort at writing a soothing response or massage. This phenomenon is supported by Ngozi (1981) view that themes choose authors and not vice versa. Ngozi says further that the passion to make the feature of personal experience a governing emotion' may result in a compulsive disposition in the literary works of any artist especially those of a protest kind. Thus, Ngozi justifies the inclusion of personal details in literary works in its creativity. How Maathai treats the audience to her experiences both in the confidential and communal spaces amounts to deconstructing her portrait. The question to be answered here would be the compulsion behind the writing of *Unbowed*; and the autonomy of her portrait that the writer could be asserting as she challenges an existent order.

Hewett (1975) observes that literary traditions are constantly being made and remade, that literature after all is continually evolving and changing. Ngugi (1972) view corroborates Hewett that literature cannot escape from class power structures that shape everyday life. This study

concur with both views from the two literary scholars and inquires as to whether the education that women like Maathai had started receiving made them dream bigger and better, and therefore sought alternative pictures as to how they should be viewed. In the process of such a narration, challenges to the existent norms in the society are posed. How Maathai's portraiture challenges power structures inherent in her society calls for a closer scrutiny.

A woman, just like a man, dares to dream of a time of power, a time of beauty and enduring truth of her vision. Maathai's work could be portraying the time-tested belief that a woman is seeking the right latitude through her writing and that, she too could compete favourably alongside the male. The study manoeuvres to interrogate the trigger and the anxieties that could have led Maathai to write the intimate story of her life and present it in the public gallery.

The period ranging from 1975 to 1985 was designated by the United Nations organization as the UN decade for women. This period was to be used by nations of the world to empower women. Women were to be encouraged to take part in developmental activities previously a preserve of the male. The autobiographical narratives could represent the results of such efforts aimed at raising the consciousness of the female folk. Literary art has a strong message in shaping the vision of women participants in such forums. It enables women to dream and participate in roles that would make them fulfil their visions. Some of these views are captured in the autobiographies written by socially and politically empowered women who have also participated in such fora. The present study investigates Maathai's *Unbowed* as an illustration of power challenges to gender relations.

Issues concerning women and their part in the social and political development processes have been gaining in prominence over the years. In this new scheme, the rediscovery of a woman's political representation in senate or parliament may overlap with the most recent trend and interdisciplinary investigation of various gender issues that call for the psychological consideration of female participation in politics as could be depicted in literary works. The selected author in this study has been a politician before and is sharing out her experiences in her autobiographical narrative some of which could reveal the trigger behind her work as well as reveal her vision in challenging power games. The study interrogates the structures of power that Maathai could be targeting to dismantle through her portraiture.

Mbeo (1989) and Murungi (2000) noted that no legislation in Kenya had been formulated in answer to women subordinations or marginalization in response to feminist concerns. They observed that on the contrary most political leaders both men and women argue that the laws of Kenya provide for equality of the sexes and that women should take advantage of this equality. In reality, Mbeo (1989) stresses that there were discriminatory laws in the government of Kenya's statute. They further state that ideology of equality was a legal fiction, which helped legitimize the status quo. Laws are supposed to define the norms of conduct by promulgating objective and value neutral rules applicable to all citizens irrespective of their status. It is precisely this equality of treatment that results in or reinforces actual equality. They conclude that in treating unequal persons equally, the law enforces existing conditions and promotes inequality. Although the studies give a comprehensive analysis of the issue of Kenyan legislation as impacting on women's political participation, they fail to address other equality important factors like the experiences of the female political aspirant, as well as power challenges the

incumbent faces. These power challenges could be captured in confessions by the female autobiographer as she advances her experiences in her portraiture under scrutiny.

Nzomo (1991) and AAWORD (1998) noted that women lack finances, which was necessary to support their campaigns into political leadership. Hayden (1992) observes that it is due to various cultural situations that women have less access to various resources among which are lack of income and family backing. Nzomo (1991) and Hayden (1992) add that economic empowerment through materials, logistics and finances are a prerequisite to political participation and leadership. Although these studies address the issue of finances as a factor militating against women's political participation, they mention this in passing and moreover fail to address other equally important factors that impact on women's political participation such as pre occupation with domestic and family obligations. A self-narrative description of one, who has been there (in Kenyan politics), like in Maathai's case, would make fascinating explanations on women and leadership challenges.

Frank (1987) suggests the depiction of role models of female characters who are portrayed as peculiarly exhibiting a western orientation toward individualism and self-fulfilment. Simultaneously, they put themselves in the limelight toward female struggle for dramatized literary democratic spaces. The autobiographical narrative offers an avenue for possible self-definition of women's experiences into literary history. The definition of self through the writing of autobiography places power into the hands of the writer to define who she is; expressing how she has been able to utilize the democratic space and bargain for political representation that was previously in the domain of the male folk. Maathai's *Unbowed*, therefore creatively indicates her role in the passing history in which cultural, socio-economic and political players dominate.

Whereas the depiction of women role models with western orientation features in earlier autobiographies, this study concentrates on a role model from an African perspective.

The act of writing about the self is driven by the conviction that the writer's life is inspirational and worth writing about. In the context of the present study, the author is modelling own self but not being portrayed as Frank (1987) ascertains. Many female writers starve for open, less standardized genres as vehicles for their vision having belonged to the private and excluded spaces and spheres of operation. As a result, there is need to model exemplary performances of women in positions of responsibility as a way of demonstrating that women need to expedite their acts of heroism to compete with their male counterparts. The modelling of the self- other than that done by somebody else; and by an African woman is more emphatic as it illustrates a self -portraiture. The current study deviates from that of Frank's by focusing on Maathai thereby offering an African woman's perspective.

The rationale behind the modelling is that there is something of value to be learnt by the reader.

Through other devices, the reader may infer what a character is like. The current study investigates how a woman's verbal presence within her text, brings home her subject matter as part of a story's conflict and resolution in terms of plot arrangement; and how through this, 'her-self' identity as the writer's vision is revealed. With regard to forming identity and the self, Perrine (1966) articulates that character and plot are inseparable. It is through the incidences and events which when arranged sequentially become the plot through which the writer's story unfolds. Perrine continues to say that an author can present characters directly, whereby he/she tells us straight away what a character is like or gives someone else the onus to tell us what a character is like. With the exploration of identity, the writer possibly attains therapeutic effects. The therapy could emanate from deep psychological unburdening, consciously or unconsciously.

A healing of sorts could thus be realised. This could ensue from both the writing and reading of an autobiographical work. In an effort to capture a painful and emotional past, a writer purges and in the same vein extends that release of pent up emotions to the reader. Thus, both writer and reader experience a healing power in their quest for identity. How Maathai concretizes her portraiture in this regard is the point of inquiry.

Damasio (1999), in reaction to the inquiry that Mary Kerr's autobiographical writing poses, had this to say: 'that the feeling of what happens to the body and emotion in the making of consciousness in autobiographical writing is complex.' This, according to him, is because autobiography is a referential art, its readers and critics are inevitably led to explore its relation to the world to which it refers in all sorts of ways. The question we sought to answer in our study of the autobiography was how Maathai related to the hierarchal political world around her at the time and how she portrays power relations. The present study sought to investigate whether the text selected for the study could be part of the solution to giving women desire for playing more active roles in their societies. The author transformed her past as a gesture of faith in the future. For the self, of the female author, in other words sieved through her story to assess if it contains visionary clues in finding one's true identity which she could portray differently from how the male folk had done in the past.

Eakins (1999) discusses the psychological impact of a period on an individual's reasoning. He reiterates that the idea of self in as far as the writer's content in autobiography was concerned, denoted identity. He argues further that 'self' is less of an identity than a kind of awareness in one. Details of time, place and politics are used to construct the process. Theories of gender role in socialization explain the process by which individuals learn the behaviour that culture depicts as appropriate for them. From birth, children learn the behaviour suitable for their sex via the

process of sex role socialization. The need arises therefore, to turn to the growing number not only of novels by women authors but to autobiographical narrative in order to find a female character with a destiny of her own modelled. The role model of a female character who is depicted as peculiar with western orientation toward individualism and self-fulfilment; and simultaneously putting selves in the limelight toward female struggle for dramatized literary democratic spaces is slowly emerging. The study sought to interrogate if the selected narrator in the sampled text indeed challenges hegemonic patriarchal structures.

Peterson (2006) compares two autobiographies in casting characters through political imagination in central Kenya. The two autobiographies are first; by the Presbyterian Rev. Charles Muhoro. This particular work of art pierces through characters in the work as casts and lists duties and sketches of heroism. His autobiography poaches from the missionaries' archive. The second autobiography, by Cecelia Muthoni, is a tale of personal torment and salvation. Cecelia's private life is open to public scrutiny; testimony of personal failing and religious redemption. Both authors converge in agreement that the Agikuyu community preferred to have their private lives balanced against political consensus. Peterson concluded that both authors produced literature faithful to the Agikuyu community in relating how authentically they reproduced the values of the local community. One confession the researcher makes in his finding is that religion in both works is depicted as providing remedy for human reprieve. The present study sought to explore the possibility of a region's influence on identity especially in challenging hierarchical positions of power.

Adichie (2009) ascertains that there is a way in which the environment someone grows up in determines what they write. She narrates how she grew up on a university campus in Eastern Nigeria. The female African writer as we have come to know her is, inevitably slowly and

surely becoming a public figure unlike previously. She then adopts a public stance and blossoms. Similarly, Maathai in articulating the Kenyan female self in the recreated literary gender spaces could be generating an influence, as she goes through a mental shift in her perception of literature stirring the reader's imagination; for she may possibly be opening up new worlds to her audiences, especially those of subverted gender perceptions. Study of a subversive autobiography with a Kenyan experience became necessary.

DE salvo (2002) studies Kuwaiti Women and expressive writing. He concentrates his studies on an autobiographical narrative titled: Laila Al Othman found herself through writing. During his study, he discovers that self- expressive writing is a blending of techniques that release the inner meaning, feelings, and ideas of the writer. It gives shape and form to the energies and growth of the inner self. In all her stories, Laila manages to reflect her own suffering along with that of other women. She herself manages to marry a man not chosen by her father. Laila also refuses to accept the belief that it is permitted for a man to feel love, but for a woman it is illicit. So when a woman admits that she loves someone this means that she is jumping in where jumping is forbidden. Laila explains how she was brave to talk about sexual relations between men and women. She gives the women in her stories the right to smoke, drink alcohol and make love to different men. This was a big mistake, which many people in her society will never forgive her for. Bad memories are the background to most of her stories. She tries her best to let her pain go in order to gain psychological balance. The challenges Maathai faces as she rises in ranks, becomes an item for interrogation in this study.

DE salvo (2002) further says that Laila did not have the chance to continue her studies; she was shocked by her father's strict decision. She tries her best to pursue her ambition to become a famous writer by reading her father's books and writing poems and stories. Laila got married at

an early age. It was her own choice to marry the family doctor who was her father's age. After his death, she married another man and took on the responsibility of being a mother to children from both husbands. Her dream eventually came true and she is now one of the most popular names in the Arabic world. It seems she has found a successful way of becoming a new person with a new life embracing her ambitions, principles and values. She is no longer a person who can be easily directed or controlled. She has had enough orders and now does not allow anybody to say no when she wants to say yes. In other words, she has found her true identity as depicted in her work. Our study seeks to explore the power challenges in *Unbowed* as could be brought out by Maathai.

History testifies that patriarchy acknowledged the men folk as intellectually superior to women and therefore fit for leadership roles. In the process, this affirms the feminine genders' relegation to the kitchen. Attempts by women to get to the top were often punished and met with resistance. In an effort to reconcile feminist input and the African integrity; Ogundipe (2007) says that writing bestows wholeness to the person. It brings to that female writer and her readers a sort of rebirth and renewal. If these things do not already exist; the writer persuades thought with her pen and even dares to dream of a time of the power and enduring truth of their vision. Some voices have resonated giving the same thought. The present research interrogates Maathai's *Unbowed* as portraying the resonations that could thereby be marking a position of power, differently.

Cock Burn (1991) emphasizes the important role patriarchy plays in shaping the lives of men and women. He explains, "If the United Nations Decade of women, (1975-1985), did nothing else, it demonstrated the reality of patriarchy. The opening years saw the assembling of detailed evidence of women's subordination around the world: the end of the decade confirmed first how

hard it was to change anything. 'Patriarchy was real and it was durable.' What new historicists propose is that the critic of a literary work should understand women subordination as a tendency to self-reproduction. This is the history; the men folk have told that in all probability, 'her story' depicted in the selected autobiographical narrative, sought to break away from.

Kinyanjui (1995) endorses the concept of social change stating that literary discourse involving women in airing their perceptions indicate that many communities worldwide are struggling to give women an equal playing field in the worlds of academia and politics; a situation that literary scholars could be looking at with a tint of social hypocrisy. They suggest need to upscale women representation. The society represented by the selected text for a long time had been patriarchal. It is acknowledged in the fact that the Agikuyu community to which Maathai belongs is traditionally matriarchal. They have a long history of powerful female figures such as Wangu wa Makeri. Ancestry is also pegged on female ancestors, a practice that is evident to date. For example, some men use their mothers' names as surnames. The illustration of the Kenyan athlete Samuel Wanjiru, whose life was cut short in a love triangle, is a life to the reader. The study argues that this socio-cultural context contributed to the moulding of a strong feminist character in Maathai in a manner that should not be ignored as the writing of an autobiography entails the recreation of the movement of life, or part of a life, in the actual circumstances it was lived.

International relations theorists have attempted to examine the balance of power. Balance of power refers to the hierarchical approach States have and maintain. Balance of power is attained when there is parity or stability between two competing forces (Graham 2004). Graham expresses the doctrine intended by any one nation from becoming sufficiently strong as to enable it to impose its will upon the rest. The same shift in power base is depicted in the

autobiographical works but at the level of family and the public. Historical trends show that women writers began to respond in tandem, and to revitalize their dignity.

In agreement with the view on restoration of women dignity is another New Historicist critic Montrose (1996) who observes that intellectual belief in the printed' textuality of history draws on the culture of a people as a self- regulating system. It also looks at the high self- reflectivity in a person. The general social view is that a woman's first responsibility is her domestic work. This is in spite of the fact that women have become professionals. Various gender theories assertions' share one thing in common: their opposition to a patriarchal society in which women are subordinate to men. It is made clear that feminism is bent on changing problematic relationships such as negative attitudes toward the female gender. How the study of Maathai's *Unbowed* presents upon such reflexivity of portraiture was the point of exploration.

In the same vein, Musyoka (2010) called on women that in addition to domesticity, they needed to fully involve themselves in political gains and governance issues. Musyoka said that time to participate only as bystanders, cheer other leaders or be passive observers was long gone and urged upon women gender groups and development organizations to support women participation in political and electoral processes. The Kenyan Vice president was speaking when he officially opened the experts' meeting on the launch of African women decade at KICC, Nairobi. Musyoka further posited that he aimed at reminding the participants on the progress made toward gender equality in the women's empowerment process. This, he stated, aimed to elucidate the concrete actions to be taken to accelerate women participation in the nation in the attainment of goals articulated in various declarations, conventions and protocols. How Maathai's *Unbowed* could be a sort of reinforcement of women participation in the political

agenda as it attempts to challenge power bases in the setting of the book was of interest to the study.

Literature imitates life, and no literary genre may attest to this truth more than an autobiographical narrative. This genre has the difference and an edge over others in that it reflects commonness between the author and reader. Wanjama (2002) discusses factors influencing gender mobility at the top level of educational management in Kenya. In her study, she realizes that women have faced institutionalized road blocks and hurdles in their effort to reach the top level decision making positions. Most of the hurdles she quotes were created by the patriarchal system which believed that decision making is a preserve of the male folk. The gap she cites was that there is need to continuously create structures that would in turn enhance a political environment favourable for women participation in levels of decision making. This study advances from here and seeks to analyse the self-portraiture depicted in Maathai's *Unbowed* to demonstrate a possibility of dismantled structures that served as road blocks to female participation in politics.

Greenblatt (1981) identifies the process of subversion and containment; which are processes in the society with a capacity of the dominant order to generate power and maintain it. He continues to assert that conflicts and rules of a culture affect the selves that may in effect bring changes in the course of history because they are conditioned by gender, religion and race. How subversion plays in Maathai's *Unbowed* is in question as it relates to power challenges.

For Black Lesbians, especially writers, *The Color Purple* has been inspirational. In a sense, Walker's characters embody the experience of many people, memorable contrasts between the oppressors and oppressed, a downtrodden central character who overcomes both horrendous

abuse and deprivation to bloom into a strong person, and, above all, an optimistic, some say a fairy-tale, ending. The novel won the Pulitzer Prize, but that wasn't enough to stop the book from being repeatedly banned due to its 'troubling ideas about race relations, man's relationship to God, African history, and human sexuality.' The troubling ideas being that racism and sexism are bad and damaging. The book is still challenged in schools today; despite being considered a classic because of its subversive elements. How Maathai's portraiture subverts normative gender identity like Walker's (1982) intrigued the study.

In January 2003, Kenya was hailed as a model of democracy after the peaceful election of its new president, Mwai Kibaki. By appointing respected longtime reformer John Githongo as anticorruption czar, the new government signaled its determination to end the corrupt practices that had tainted the previous regime of his predecessor Daniel Arap Moi. Yet only two years later, Githongo himself was on the run, having secretly compiled evidence of official malfeasance throughout the new administration. Unable to remain silent, Githongo, at great personal risk, made the painful choice to go public. The result was a 'Kenyan Watergate – a subversive literary text:'. His subversive work grips like a political thriller while probing the very roots of the continent's predicament. In part, he mentions the fact that when African leaders are given appointments, they see it as an opportunity to grab and a mass wealth pauperizing their countries. This precisely is what act of subversion Githongo writes about. How Unbowed's portraiture depicts a subverted gender identity was the item for interrogation.

Seseseke, showed all the cunning of his namesakes in the continent seducing Western powers, buying up the opposition, and dominating his people with a devastating combination of brutality and charm. While the population was pauperized, he plundered the country's copper and

diamond resources, downing pink champagne in his jungle palace like some modern-day reincarnation of Joseph Conrad's crazed station manager.

Wrong, a correspondent who witnessed Mobutu's last days, traces the rise and fall of the idealistic young journalist who became the stereotype of an African despot. Engrossing, highly readable, and as funny as it is subversive in its rendition. Unbowed's challenge of Moi's regime in Kenya gives a more or less similar view but from a female perspective and the experience is Kenyan.

Bradley (1984) notes that an autobiography is one which takes a retrospective glance at the life and personality of a person, one in which facts carry less importance than the veracity and profundity of the experience. It depicts a voyage of self-discovery which acquires a sense of perspective and integration. An autobiographical narrative therefore invites the reader to enter into the private life of the author. This view is corroborated by Abbs (1974) who indicates that an author makes an attempt to answer certain questions about self: Who am I? How have I become me or what may I become in future? As one writes the autobiography, he or she seeks to consciously or unconsciously answer these questions.

Comments that autobiography was used as a campaign instrument to sell former first Lady as a US Presidential candidate. She would be aged 69 at the time; not the oldest candidate; Ronald Reagan was 69 when elected. She would have had her experience as Secretary of State in the Obama administration, international bona fides, and security credibility that expanded her claims to formidable expertise. Smith argues that Living History meditates on the political gendered arena of American presidential politics. Smith says that Living History earned the author good money and it put Hillary Clinton in contact with a national audience of celebrity fans and

potential voters that the aspiring presidential candidate would recruit into ‘Hillary land.’ Smith reiterates further that translations of the book, including the Chinese version, turned Clinton’s autobiography into a global best seller.

Clinton was the first former First Lady to position herself for a presidential run, and the first woman with national and global celebrity status to establish a viable plan for pursuing and gaining the nomination. The ‘Hillary’ of Living History, then, would translate celebrity aura into active support, skepticism into investment, and do so by performing a convincing political persona. Smith reacts on the social action of contemporary candidate autobiography. A corporate production, the candidacy of late capitalism is crafted, packaged, marketed, displayed, polled, and sold. The presidential candidate must perform as a celebrity, sustain celebrity appeal, and successfully navigate the shoals of celebrity culture. In this densely mediated environment, the political persona is ever more deftly and promiscuously imaged, voiced, choreographed, and networked. Whereas Smith views Clinton’s autobiography as mobilizing the authentic political persona, this particular study explores the mode of an emerging portrait of Maathai’s Unbowed that subverts gender identity in an African set up.

The act of writing an autobiographical work of art makes a very private matter public. It also co-opts the narrator into a perception of his own anxieties as he reveals his innermost self, posits Carlos (2012). While studying *Dreams from My Father*, Carlos did discover that the trigger for this autobiography was the mythical search of an absent father. From Obama’s autobiographical narrative, we encounter a story within a history. The subject of Maathai’s narration interests this study as she could be undoing certain mythical concepts about the female character in politics. Demonstrating in the process that the experiences of women in empowered positions is not unique to particular societies. The study therefore sought to establish the impulse behind

Maathai's self-portraiture as it could be undoing certain mythical concepts in the African society about the being of a woman.

These autobiographies tell their stories both in private and public sphere. How a woman portrays self as struggling to play her role or fit into the social attributes the society ascribed to her or how some of them seek to break out of these social attributes interests our study. This is probably the beginning of change of societal views of women in positions of responsibility. The study presumes that the view Maathai fronts in her autobiography spells a female perspective differently from those presented by male authors.

Maathai's *Unbowed* demonstrates this assertion. As a writer, Molara (1987) adds that the female writer must seek to do justice to her art work, stay committed to her dream at all cost and tell about perceptions of women. She must destroy male stereotypes and remain politically conscious. The direction taken is a merger- putting writers from all walks of life on an equitable platform, and providing the third space. The third space here refers to interconnectivity brought about by modern technology that has made the world a global village and thereby enhanced politics of polarity. This creates the interest in the literary work written by a woman about her in between space. Maathai's focus has always been her country. She was among the first generation of Kenyan professionals who came back after studying overseas to help rebuild her country and enhance quick development after independence. Maathai's investments in her nation, Kenya could be seen in better and healthier rewards for her country as could be depicted in her story. As she alone has the privilege of discovering herself in her autobiography. How she portrays the discovery of self differently was the item of enquiry in the current study. The need for a subversive text therefore became dire.

Maathai (1940-2012) won the Nobel peace prize (2004), a highly coveted international award, becoming the first African woman to become a laureate. She was active in the National Council of Women of Kenya, rising to the position of chairperson in later years. It was while she served in the National Council of Women that the Green Belt Movement (GBM) for which she is famed, was born. Maathai will be variously remembered for her persistent struggle for democracy, human rights and environmental conservation. How she depicts self in the journey toward achieving such coveted accolades becomes a matter for investigation. The choice raises the visibility of the life and work of a woman, serving as an archetype model of empowerment, relating experiences of power play' and perhaps influencing others to seek to emulate and accomplish even more daring feats.

Simon and Schechter (2010) refers to Maathai as 'Mama Miti-' Translated it means 'tree woman' They depict 'a breathing portrait' of an African woman always in beautiful African prints, with textiles that exhibit the brightness and beauty inherent in Africa. They later publish a book entitled Mama Miti that teaches children how to take care of the environment. With each page of this book turned children realize their own ability to positively impact on the future. How Unbowed could be depicting such unique portraiture intrigued the study.

Namuhindah (2014) indicates that Maathai plays down her husband's abuse of power in dealing with family. In marked contrast, she notes how Maathai was vocal about abuse of power in the public sphere. For her, Maathai laments the wasted years of marriage, amounting to wastage of energy, time and delay in fulfilling her potential caused by married life. Natahsha (2010) examines the history of the current status of women activists and explains that Maathai's divorce initiated by her husband was a result of her strength of character. Strength was her undoing because she curved a voice for women in the legislative at a time when this phenomenon of

women in leadership had not been fully accepted. In other words, balancing power translates to roles in the family, and career roles out there that have put women in an awkward situation. This compares favourably to the global bipolar shift in the competition for hegemonic power. How Unbowed discusses the historicity of alternated power structures necessitates a literary interrogation that also links the scheme of subversion to the process of concretization of the portraiture.

2.4 Concretizing Emergent Self- Portraiture Through the Autobiographical Form

Concretizing emergent portraiture implies using language in a certain manner to create certain impressions that appeal to the reader, hence artistry in autobiography. For instance, the use of the first person narrative enabled Maathai to deliberately craft her mode of speech in telling of her story. The storyteller employs strategies that allow her to recreate her past and, through the narrative genre, reconstruct her concerns. Forster (1927) defines a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence. The autobiographer who is also the narrator chooses deliberately to commune with the reader. Forster further says that the stance or point of view of the narrator influences the reader's ability to receive what is said. Our study sought to assess the artist's literary strategies in the choice to use the autobiographical form in concretizing the emergent self- portraiture.

The autobiographical narrative strikes the reader as authentic and genuine. The explanation of the sincerity lies in the style of writing. Cockshut (1984), uses style as a criterion to determine an author's sincerity. The question to ask here becomes: Is the personality conveyed by the style of writing recognizably the same as the one described? Cockshut, claims that in great autobiographies, there is a perfect unity which goes far beyond any conscious intention and which is a witness to the truth of interpretation of the self. There is concurrence on this thought

by Styron(1960) when he underscores the point that for a work of art to thrive, the artist must use style as a vehicle through which the character must be given ideas to transmit to the society. Sidone (2001), refers to this as form, the organization of the elements in relation to its total effect. Thus, since form is the pattern or structure on use of language to give expression to the content, the history of metaphors has to be kept to ensure that what is already said is not repeated lest it bores the reader (Rice and Waugh 1996). The narrator curves in rich metaphors in order to defamiliarize and arouse excitement. There was need to find out what variety Maathai's *Unbowed* has used and to what literary effects. Ways in which the choice of the autobiographical form helps to concretize the portrait of the autobiographer was of interest in the current study.

Sidone (2001) recognizes the use of the autobiographical form, and its borrowing of the use of fiction. For instance, she describes how patriarchal culture fictionalizes woman and how in retrospect, women autobiographies challenge the gender ideologies surrounding them in order to write differently but truly about the woman character and role. Similarly, Bumkatko, et al (1992) examines child development processes in relation to leadership. In their commentary on this topical approach, they realize that traits of political leadership are given totally different interpretations when possessed by men and women. Attributes considered positive when possessed by male leaders such as dynamic and ambitious traits, are perceived as negative when exhibited by women characters. In a related study, Harrison (1985) reveals that, if a woman was portrayed as achievement oriented, assertive, ambitious and aggressive, she was considered unfeminine.

Skakespeare (1989) shares in Harrison's (1985) view above on women being considered to have lost femininity if they showed ambitious leadership traits. He states that the female figure with these qualities is in fact given derogatory names such as 'iron lady' but that if a man exhibited all

these qualities, he would be showered with praises. Such a man was encouraged by social structures to become tough and fulfil his dreams of leadership. Thus, while masculine traits have always been considered as suitable for one's career progress, feminine traits are considered irrelevant and unnecessary in the leadership and political spheres that require tough, courageous and aggressive tendencies. Based on the role modelling that a woman depicting self with a destiny of her own displays, our research inquired whether Maathai had fears and whether or not her acquisition of a feeling of self-confidence was a trait learnt over time.

Over the past few decades, there has been loud and persistent debate about the issue of gender roles (Ngugi 1967, Imbuga 1988, Achebe 1987) in the society with many scholars trying to show that the patriarchal arrangement, which had prevailed in many societies, had given women subordinate roles. Consequently, there has been an effort by women to mount campaigns aimed at instituting equal opportunities while their male counterparts have endeavoured to maintain the status quo in all sectors of development including the political and literary arena. We infer that the character depiction and role in *Unbowed* illustrate a trend different from that of the previous period.

Roy (1960) points to the historical and aesthetic approaches to autobiographical narrative. Her main concern is with the element of truth in autobiography. Conway (1998) discusses writers and readers of autobiography, in relation to the history of a self-narrative. She explains why readers are more attracted to the autobiographical form than ordinary fiction. In her argument, she states that male auto-biographers write with a conviction and have power over their fate, unlike the female counterparts who seem to waver and are not confident about their destiny. The present study explores how the female auto-biographer uses this form of art to define, identify and re-insert self into literary history. She further states that the autobiographical genre has a magnetic

field of significance that works like a spark to hold the reader spell bound and enable her or him enter into the life of another person. This experience widens and instructs the reader's life. In essence, what glues the reader is the inner reflection of one's life that the story sets in motion. The study of Maathai's *Unbowed* attest to a different poise in defining self' more confidently and in perhaps exuding power over her destiny, differently.

Matiang'i (1999), in his study of the treatment of the theme of women's identity in the Fictional Works of Mariama Ba, Bessie Head and Buchi Emecheta, focuses on the subject of identity in African women's writings. His study of the literary texts reveals that African female writers are committed to negotiating their identity in the face of the pre-existing patriarchal African cultures. The questioning into the issues of identity is relevant to the present study in as far as the intention of the female autobiographer is brought out. This is essentially a mode through which the female writer seeks to categorize and delineate herself. Matiang'i dealt with novels. The question our study sought to answer is how the female autobiographer has used the autobiographical strategy to concretize her subverted emergent gender identity.

According to Montrose (1996), the New Historicism ideology seeks to change the worldview with regard to domination often achieved through culturally- orchestrated consent rather than force. These are critical underpinnings to the new historicist perspective. It also comprises political and economic practices aimed at putting individual high achievers in control over their lives. This makes the idea provocative and the society may be depicted as attempting to resist this change or be viewed as very slow in accepting it. One such area that women have ventured into is politics. The autobiographical genre affords them the opportunity to relate their experiences in that arena. It is how the female autobiographer attempts to remodel in a unique way the history of a people, particularly a woman's that aroused curiosity in the study.

The literature reviewed points to the need to unlearn certain attitudes that show spite on the being of a woman. This is best captured through an autobiography done by a female who embraces gender parity in politics. The autobiographical forms reviewed indicate the genre's attraction of making available to both the necessity of investigating intensely private matters and that of presenting them to a public audience, enhancing necessary changes in the lived circumstances of the narrative according to the transient history. The review has discussed related studies on autobiographical narratives but there is need to look at the autobiography by a woman as a literary tool she uses in subverting the normative gender identities. The author's emerging portrait spells a meeting point between her and the external world in the course of her narration. The female autobiographical narrator as the protagonist of her work thus balances private interests against the homogenizing demands of political censors. The subverted portraiture is an intervention promoting a gender balanced society since male authors have portrayed women differently from who they really are. These reviews further accentuate efforts at creating equilibrium at power levels, which Maathai's *Unbowed* attempts to explain as a synergy between power, politics and literature in as far as portraitures of emerging roles, challenging power relations and creating legacies go in autobiographical gender spaces.

It is *The Color Purple* which homophobes and antifeminists undoubtedly refer to when they talk about queer writing. The Novel currently has both Black Lesbian subject matter and an unsparing critique of misogyny in the Black community. For Black Lesbians, however, especially writers, the book has been inspirational. In a sense, these characters embody the experience of many people, memorable contrasts between the oppressors and oppressed, a downtrodden central character who overcomes both horrendous abuse and deprivation to bloom into a strong person, and, above all, an optimistic, some say a fairy-tale, ending. The novel won

the Pulitzer Prize, but that wasn't enough to stop the book from being repeatedly banned due to its 'troubling ideas about race relations, man's relationship to God, African history, and human sexuality.' The troubling ideas being that... racism and sexism are bad and damaging. The book is still challenged in schools today; despite being considered a classic because of its subversive elements. How Maathai's portraiture subverts normative gender identity intrigued the study.

In January 2003, Kenya was hailed as a model of democracy after the peaceful election of its new president, Mwai Kibaki. By appointing respected longtime reformer John Githongo as anticorruption czar, the new government signaled its determination to end the corrupt practices that had tainted the previous regime of his predecessor Daniel Arap Moi. Yet only two years later, Githongo himself was on the run, having secretly compiled evidence of official malfeasance throughout the new administration. Unable to remain silent, Githongo, at great personal risk, made the painful choice to go public. The result was a 'Kenyan Watergate – a subversive literary text.' His subversive work grips like a political thriller while probing the very roots of the continent's predicament. In part, he mentions the fact that when African leaders are given appointments, they see it as an opportunity to grab and a mass wealth pauperizing their countries. This precisely is what act of subversion Githongo writes about. How Maathai's portraiture depicts a subverted gender identity was the item for interrogation.

Sese Seko, showed all the cunning of his namesakes in the continent seducing Western powers, buying up the opposition, and dominating his people with a devastating combination of brutality and charm. While the population was pauperized, he plundered the country's copper and diamond resources, downing pink champagne in his jungle palace like some modern-day reincarnation of Joseph Conrad's crazed station manager.

Wrong, a correspondent who witnessed Mobutu's last days, traces the rise and fall of the idealistic young journalist who became the stereotype of an African despot. Engrossing, highly readable, and as funny as it is subversive in its rendition. *Unbowed*'s challenge of Moi's regime in Kenya gives a more or less similar view but from a female perspective and the experience is Kenyan.

Maathai's *Unbowed* tends to ignite Bradley (1984) comments on autobiography that it is one which takes a retrospective glance at the life and personality of a person, one in which facts carry less importance than the veracity and profundity of the experience. It depicts a voyage of self-discovery which acquires a sense of perspective and integration.

Comments that *Living History* was a campaign instrument used to sell former first Lady as a US Presidential candidate makes pleasurable reading. The fact that Clinton would be aged 69 at the time; not the oldest candidate; Ronald Reagan was 69 when elected. She would have had her experience as Secretary of State in the Obama administration, international bona fides, and security credibility that expanded her claims to formidable expertise. Smith (2012) argues that *Living History* meditates on the political gendered arena of American presidential politics. Smith says that *Living History* earned the author good money and it put Hillary Clinton in contact with a national audience of celebrity fans and potential voters that the aspiring presidential candidate would recruit into 'Hillary land.' Smith reiterates further that translations of the book, including the Chinese version, turned Clinton's autobiography into a global best seller.

Clinton was the first former First Lady to position herself for a presidential run, and the first woman with national and global celebrity status to establish a viable plan for pursuing and gaining the nomination. The 'Hillary' of *Living History*, then, would translate celebrity aura into

active support, skepticism into investment, and do so by performing a convincing political persona.

Smith reacts on the social action of contemporary candidate autobiography. A corporate production, the candidacy of late capitalism is crafted, packaged, marketed, displayed, polled, and sold. The presidential candidate must perform as a celebrity, sustain celebrity appeal, and successfully navigate the shoals of celebrity culture. In this densely mediated environment, the political persona is ever more deftly and promiscuously imaged, voiced, choreographed, and networked. Whereas Smith views Clinton's autobiography as mobilizing the authentic female political persona in the US, the current study premises upon a female character that subverts gender identity in an African set up.

These autobiographies tell their stories both in the private and public sphere. How a woman portrays self as struggling to play her role or fit into the social attributes the society ascribed to her or how some of them seek to break out of these social attributes interests our study. This is probably the beginning of change of societal views of women in positions of responsibility. The study presumes that the views Maathai fronts in her autobiography spells a female perspective differently from those presented by male authors.

Maathai's *Unbowed* demonstrates the above assertion. As a writer, Molar (2007) adds that the female writer must seek to do justice to her art work, stay committed to her dream at all cost and tell about perceptions of women. She must destroy male stereotypes and remain politically conscious. The direction taken is a merger- putting writers from all walks of life on an equitable platform, and providing the third space. The third space here refers to interconnectivity brought about by modern technology that has made the world a global village and thereby enhanced

politics of polarity. This creates the interest in the literary work written by a woman about her in between space. Maathai's focus has always been her country. She was among the first generation of Kenyan professionals who came back after studying overseas to help rebuild her country and enhance quick development after independence. Maathai's investments in her nation, Kenya could be seen in better and healthier rewards for her country as could be depicted in her story. As she alone has the privilege of discovering herself in her autobiography. How she portrays the discovery of self differently was the item of enquiry in the current study. The need for a subversive text therefore became dire.

The chosen text for study depicts a female character portraying self as competing alongside the male folk demonstrating a reawakening in seeking hegemonic parity. The growing consciousness has inspired women and their supporters globally to mount campaigns to claim equal opportunities in all sectors of development including the literary and political arena. The selected autobiography depicts an archetype of such an empowered woman. In studying the text, a modelling of a high achiever is depicted. No document better illustrates the central ambivalence of the modern world concerning the role of women in power relations than an autobiographical form thus attempting to seal the political gap of under representation of women in positions of responsibility in the society. The study interrogates ways in which the narrator perhaps reclaims political positions and redefines her identity differently, subversively challenging patriarchal ideologies in the process.

Of greater significance to the study was the view that an empowered woman throughout history uses a range of approaches in fighting hegemonic disparities (Myers: 1981). An overarching of the gender theory enables the researcher in Maathai's *Unbowed* to look at, and analyse a female auto biographer's subversive self -portraiture deviating defiantly from the norm to enable her

realize her vision whatever it is, which means that the writer has to stand or fall by that vision. Maathai has to tell the truth about the being of a woman; but in her autobiography nothing but her own subversive tale.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section entails the methods and procedures that were followed in the research. It outlines the research design, study area, study population, sample and sampling procedure, data collection techniques and the data analysis process as well as the ethical review.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopts an analytical research design. This design allows for the extraction of information and analysis from the selected text. The analytical research design is non interactive document search which describes and interprets content and context from selected sources as suggested by Schumacher et al (1997). In the case of our study, it involved in-depth reading of the autobiographical text enlisted for study: Maathai's *Unbowed* was read intensively and extensively.

3.3 Study Area

The study adopts a thematic research area. Maathai's *Unbowed* was chosen because it depicts subversion. The autobiographical narrative allowed for the female portrait to be defined in reality and space that enabled the emerging identity to be re-enacted.

3.4 Study Population

Wangari Maathai has authored seven books. *The Green Belt Movement* (1985), *The Bottom is Heavy Too: Even with the Green Belt Movement*; *The Fifth Edinburg Medal Address* (1994), *Unbowed* (2006), *Flight of the Humming Bird* (2008,) *State of the World's Minority* (2008), *The Challenge for Africa* (2009), and *Replenishing the Earth* (2010). Only one text was selected for study: *Unbowed*. The choice was based on the fact that the text is literary, autobiographical and has the highest instances of a woman who has sought gender spaces in the male public world. It

was of interest to this study because the author's self- portraiture intrigued the research. Depiction of high instances of a woman daring power and politics is reflected in the chosen text. *Unbowed* is an early millennial publication and has not been explored much. How Maathai demonstrates portraiture of a subverted gender identity was the point of enquiry of the study.

3.5 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The sampling procedure for this study was purposive and the sample size was one book. Maathai's *Unbowed*. The procedure is suitable because it allows a researcher to use cases that have the required information with respect to the objectives of the study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) the procedure allows the subject to be handpicked because they are informative and possess the required characteristics. In our study, the procedure enabled the researcher to deliberately select instances establishing that *Unbowed* depicts the autobiographical portrait of a subverted normative gender identity. Only areas relevant in answering to the research questions were analysed. This method also allowed the researcher to exclude texts by the same author that were not relevant to the portraiture of the subverted normative gender identity.

3.6 Data Collection

The study was mainly carried out through library research. Primary data was collected from the selected autobiographical work, *Unbowed* (2006) by Maathai. Secondary data was accessed through intensive and extensive reading from other sources like the internet, periodicals and journals. The library research was important to the researcher because it helped make inferences by objectively and systematically identifying the specified characteristics of the selected artistic work in relation to the inquiries the study sought to answer. The library search allowed for

collection of secondary data. Reading *Unbowed* itself provided primary data. *Unbowed* was read and reread before inferences were made. From it, qualitative data was generated.

3.7 Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected from library search, from both primary and secondary sources was subjected to textual analysis. Textual analysis was important to the researcher because it helped make inferences by objectively and systematically identifying the specified characteristics of the selected autobiographical work in relation to the research questions the study sought to answer. According to Nachmias and Nachmias (2009) textual analysis is a technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specific characteristics of a message. The researcher gathers information about how other human beings make sense of the world. To this end the autobiographical work sampled for study was used. By this method of data analysis; Maathai's *Unbowed* was read and re read several times and inferences made from it. The stated tenets of Gender theory and those of the New Historicism theory were used in analyzing the data. How *Unbowed* depicts portraiture of the subverted normative gender identity was discussed. The power games, and legacies creatively left behind were also analysed, exploring the literariness of the autobiographical form in concretizing the emergent portraiture. The findings from the analysis were then discussed qualitatively in the order in which they addressed the three objectives of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Maathai's Self Portrait Subverting Normative Gender Identity

4.1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study and also discusses the results based on the theoretical contexts outlined for the study. Maathai's autobiographical narrative begins from the self and her story, as narrated, embedded in the culture of a people, oscillating between the struggle for truthfulness and creativity. The story depicts the authors' account of her extraordinary journey from her childhood in rural Kenya to the world stage. Her self- portrait is a personal experience articulated in the public sphere. The autobiographical act is performed in a manner in which Maathai strenuously engages in writing to reaffirm her dignity that would otherwise have been ruined by a distortion of identity.

Through her literary contribution, Maathai preserves and gives voice to memories that history would have ignored. She defines her portrait by inventing a new woman who subverts the previous subordinate spaces allotted to women to assume a more fluid one that ruptures as she breaks the rule of silence, through a strong voice to question the status of women. *Unbowed* is a subversive narrative allowing the author to decode the mysteries of her world and define her portrait differently from how the society would have defined her.

Maathai amplifies her voice through the Green Belt movement in 1977, to earn recognition in a space previously occupied by the male and this amounts to a subversion of the normative gender identity. The new historicist theory largely reconnects the work with the time period in which it was produced based on socio-political and cultural contexts of the time (Foucault, 1970), (Greenblatt 1980). The New historicism theory is used in analysing Maathai's subversive gender identities. The gender theory (Bem 1980, Butler 1999 and Fedewa 2007) explores ways that

femininity and masculinity affect an individual's thought process but also targets promotion of positive social change that questions the patriarchal ideology. The tenets of these theories are used in interrogating the writer's subversion of the gender identities.

4.1.2 Maathai's Subversive Self Portrait

The title of Maathai's autobiography, *Unbowed* indicates the writer's belief in her heroic valour evident in the spirited fight she puts up in order to achieve her dreams. It is a gripping account of an individual's trials and triumphs, a universal story of courage, persistence and success against great odds for a noble cause. She becomes a most celebrated woman in terms of her contributions to world peace through several collaborations to which she is affiliated and chooses the autobiographical form to pass across information to the audience. About her choice to use the autobiographical narrative, she narrates:

Writing a memoir was like walking down my life through a journey of some sixty years. It brought up many memories and reflections of past, current events, relationships, friendships and collaborations, as well as times of great difficulty and great joy... along the journey, I never walked alone I have been supported and assisted by many people who shaped my life through the experiences I shared with them. (Maathai: xi)

Maathai mentions a deliberate choice to use a memoir as a form of communication. Spengeman (1980) states that an autobiography is a literary form that would resort to a limited range of expression: giving in depth human side to one's story. In the process, letting others understand the difference in a path one can create for self. Through the autobiographical narrative, Maathai offers explanation as to why she made certain decisions. The choice to use autobiography in telling the story of her life conforms to Atlick's (1960) view that such works of art are bound to be representative of their period, within a range that will vary with the intensity of the authors' participation in contemporary life and with the sphere in which they moved. This view points to

the significance of the autobiographical narrative in reflecting the historical period in which Maathai writes about.

Maathai subverts the norm in depiction of her gender role and identity, unlike what male authors had made a norm in literature. For instance, Okot p' Bitek'(1967) according to Heron (1996) in his analysis of the female character portrayal, describe attributes of a good woman as a good cook for the husband, a submissive wife, a hardworking woman, and in Lawino's (the protagonist in the song) traditional view, a woman's might was tested by her cooking. In Imbuga (1976:11) Doga says of Nina 'Women, women will never think beyond the beds where they lie for the night.' The description of Nina here brings her out as gullible. The two male authors portray women in a manner that demean them; they are depicted as vulnerable and thus misrepresented.

Contrary to the depictions above, Maathai defines her portrait by inventing a new woman who breaks the rule of silence, raising a strong voice to question the status and role of a woman. She subverts the previous subordinate space she was allotted, discards the fixed space to assume a more fluid one that defies all these simplistic identity definitions of p' Bitek and Imbuga to speak differently about what a woman can do and is capable of.

In this memoir, *Unbowed*, Maathai, reveals her life as a literary artist in Africa and an activist on the world stage on environmental issues. The various roles she performs suggest a self- reflection that she uses to define the childhood landscape she recreates about the notion of perception, including that of the self as a woman. She says; 'I was an iconoclast as a child' (Maathai:6). This statement confirms that Maathai observed her society keenly and noted the biases placed on women, according to Bem's (1980) gender theory, in the tenet of gender schema, the patriarchal

society shaped thought patterns that particularly limited the potential of women members. Maathai delineated these schemas and defines self as an iconoclast- one who sets out to dismantle disagreeable structures in the society. Indeed, Maathai dismantles these societal structures in the cause of time in her narration.

Orientalism (Said, 1978) is one of the cornerstone of new historicism. The eponymous term 'Orientalism' as a critical concept to describes the West's common, contemptuous depiction and portrayal of 'The East,' the Orient. To orientalise is to be affiliated with the representation of the Self or Occident and the 'Other' or Orient in which the Self is privileged and has an upper hand to define, to reconstruct the passive, silent and weak 'Other'. Maathai's stance in her portraiture fits in well with the concept of orientalism as discussed by Said (1978) but asserting that as the west treated the orient contemptuously, is the same way women have been treated worldwide. '*Orientalism*' concludes that 'Western knowledge of the Eastern world,' that is, orientalism, fictionally depicts the Orient as an irrational, psychologically weak, and feminized, non-European 'Other', which is negatively contrasted with the rational, psychologically strong, and masculine West. Said argues that this geographical line made between the Occident and the Orient is arbitrary. Maathai thus voices the representation of the 'Other,' she is a strong woman voicing her concerns and on behalf of the other women who are dominated and bound by the patriarchal system in Africa. Maathai depicts herself as a social activist differently from how women have been defined in the past. According to Butler's performativity tenet, the study construes Maathai as performing in roles that defy Bem's (1980) gender schema, where women were limited by culture to underperform. Maathai performs beyond societal expectations.

Maathai demonstrates the intimate connection between sustainable management of Africa's rich natural resources, democracy, good governance and peace. She states that such are the solutions that will bring new light to the African continent and to her young country, Kenya. In her memoir she illustrates that because Kenya's environmental degradation was largely due to the policies of corrupt governments, she had to make the Green Belt Movement (GBM) part of a broader campaign for democracy. The GBM serves to create awareness on tree planting but also opens the eyes of women to exploit their potentials and utilize the democratic spaces opening up to them.

Maathai defines realities distorted in her depiction of the environment, depicting Kenya at that time to be hostile to dissenting voices even if from women. When she opposes the powers of the incumbents in grabbing public land, the authorities condemn her raising of voice. She says:

For forty -five minutes, MPs, including a Minister and an Assistant Minister lined up to express their outrage at what I had done. How dare I write to a foreign government over what they considered a sovereign issue! Had Kenya not achieved her Independence years ago... they referred to the Green Belt Movement as a “bogus organization” ... I was not elected a parliamentarian and what right did I have to speak on Behalf of the people. One MP declared a ‘salala’ (a curse) on me. (Maathai: 190-191)

Maathai uses the inertia of the world as supporting her vision of hope in radiating a sense of empowered peace with historic brilliance and heroism in order to dissolve the boundaries and conventional notions of the place of women in the society. She has done letters to report on the incumbent President and his cronies' efforts of misrule. The title *Unbowed* that means unbent; standing upright and erect implies Maathai's resilience. She depicts self as hugely charismatic and with a rare determination to achieve what she has set her eyes on. She levels these parallels to the African continents' struggles to fight disease, famine and poor governance. Faced with odd

challenges, Maathai does not relent or break or accept defeat. A little further; the term ‘Unbowed’ has implications for the gender relations under scrutiny. ‘The woman in question portrays self as being in defiance of patriarchal structures’ that exert pressure upon women with the intention of making them be subservient to the patriarchal authority. The male members even declare a ‘salala’ on her, that is a curse. This is because she has displayed a unique performance unexpected of a woman then. Applying Butler’s (1999) performativity tenet, the study construes Maathai’s efforts as performing resilience and therefore provoking the wrath of the powers that be upon her. This is the reason why they spend a lot of time discussing her and cursing her in Parliament. Ngugi (1972) in an essay in *Homecoming*; notes:

A writer responds with his total personality, to a social environment which changes all the time. Being a kind of a sensitive needle, he registers, with varying degrees of accuracy and success, the conflicts and tensions in his changing society. Thus the same writer will produce different types of work sometimes contradictory in mood (47)

Maathai represents the kind of writer that Ngugi describes. She observes the society she grows up in and records the happenings. She explores the normative gender identities that treat women discriminatively. Unlike these portraiture, Maathai depicts herself as assertive, intelligent and thoughtful person. She subverts these notions on the being of women by replacing the traditional roles and identities with subverted representative perspectives of gendered identity. She presents self as an activist championing worthy causes for humanity. According to Bem (1980), Maathai has defied the gender schema. Her views are elevated and she does not allow the patriarchal ideology to limit her just because she is a woman. She champions several causes successfully, even earning international accolades. For this reason, members of the then parliament comment negatively, vilifying her for her strength in character.

Having been born on a unique day has literary gender implications for the study of Maathai was born on April 1st, a day recognized globally as April Fools' Day internationally. This is a day accepted as a day when people tell all sorts of lies and jokes to their friends for the fun of it. She says:

I was the third born of six children, and the first girl after two sons on April 1, 1940, in the small village of Ithite in the Central highlands of what was then British Kenya. My grandparents and parents were also born in this region near the provincial capital of Nyeri, in the foothills of the Aberdare Mountain Range. To the North, jutting into the sky is Mount Kenya (Maathai :3)

The above extract is an example of the attention to detail that Maathai pays to the circumstances surrounding her birth. To unpack the April Fools' Day symbol a little further; her life turns out to be the opposite of a joke in that she succeeds beyond imagination. She is not a fool either in that she achieves high intellectual accolades unexpected of a village woman born in a conservative rural society.

What Maathai says about having been born on April Fools' Day is an indication that she is going to challenge (to fool) her allotted place in the society. She is going to subvert the normative gender identity (ties) used in identifying and limiting a woman's potential. Maathai points to a time in the future when she will dismantle societal structures. Her portraiture also interferes with the old patriarchal order. The interference with the old order is a new historicist view (Greenblatt 1980) in the hierarchy of power, which gives emphasis on new phenomenon arising. A woman is portraying self as acquiring power which she didn't have earlier. She gives portraiture of a strong woman who is created in literature to dare the male world of leadership and decision making; to point to a new history. *Unbowed* thus points to the futuristic notion of a history of created spaces that realizes its fulfilment in the work of art. Maathai acquires several hierarchical positions of power as we shall see in this thesis.

Maathai depicts self as an environmentalist, as her early childhood is denoted with several references to the seasons and the environment as they exist in her village. She says:

In July you knew that it would be so foggy you wouldn't be able to see ten feet in front of you, and so cold in the morning that the grass would be silvery-white with frost. In Kikuyu, July is known as 'mworanyoni,' the month when birds rot, because birds would freeze to death and fall from the trees. We lived in a land abundant with shrubs, creepers, ferns and trees like the 'Mutuindi, Mikeu and Migumo,' some of which produced berries and nuts. Because rain fell regularly and reliably, clean drinking water was everywhere. There were well large watered fields of maize, beans, wheat and vegetables. (Maathai:3)

Maathai acknowledges having been born two weeks into the season of the long rains, in a traditional mud walled house with no electricity or running water. She indicates how the birth of a child was received with a lot of joy. In her explanation of these happenings, the narrator draws attention to the environment and the climatic seasons. She portrays self as an ardent environmentalist who has a lot of interest in nature from a tender age. This foreshadows her passion for environmental conservation that emerges strongly later in the autobiography. The quote above indicates the love the narrator has towards her environment right from birth. She, thus, portrays self as an environmental activist subversively gearing to fend for and defend the environment. According to Butler(1999) Maathai's performativity is grounded in her role effectively as an environmentalist. She is performing resilience and moving along in the course of her narrative.

Maathai defines self as a nurturing and as a care giver in the image of Mother Nature. She keenly observes the environment in which she grows up and later relates her observations from her own point of view. She has crafted her story from the vantage point of a child who loves and closely observes the environment. She depicts self as helping in developing, nurturing and protecting the

environment thereby qualifying to be seen as an ecofeminist. According to Montrose (1996), a proponent of the new Historicist theory, the gender ideology seeks to change the world view with regard to domination. In this context Maathai, as the narrator in this story, does not allow somebody else to tell the story even when she is still so young. She expresses her participation in this transient history herself. Maathai, puts herself in control from the onset of her narration. She participates in the scheme of subversion, dismantling the normative gender identity.

There is an element of significance to note in the author's relationship with her environment that is repeatedly mentioned throughout her autobiography to denote extreme love for the environment and therefore desire to protect it. Her interest in the environmental protection, appears further as she describes the place of her birth as having been at Ihithe village at the foothills of the Aberdare Mountain Range. She says:

At the time of my birth, the land around Ihithe was still lush, green, and fertile. The seasons were so regular that you could almost predict that the long, monsoon rains would start falling in mid-March. In July you knew it would be so foggy you would not be able to see ten feet in front of you, and so cold in the morning that the grass would be silvery- white with frost. (Maathai: 3)

Maathai feels an urgency to use the environment as a tool for correcting her society as well as for her 'self' advancement. The recurrent phenomenon of Maathai's feel of affection for the environment keeps featuring as early as the time surrounding her birth, showing and foreshadowing the role she will play later on in life; that of being an accredited environmentalist. The 'green lush look' didn't escape her eye even as a child. The vivid description of her environment denotes her adoration for the environment and therefore great desire to care for it. Her performance in environmental protection earns her recognition, allowing her to compete favourably with the male folk.

Concurrently, Maathai puts her child like imaginations into good use. She employs fictional writing to some extent. The nexus between historical facts and fiction in the autobiographical genre is explored further here, in as far as the narrator takes the reader back and forward in her narration. Since taking the reader back in time to when she was very young, implies that she is imagining and writing along. The writer is chronological as she takes the reader on an expedition of her experiences from birth to adulthood, adventures, achievements, fame and even disappointments and heartaches in her life's journey. The linear plot of this autobiography points to Maathai as desirous of having full control of her life such that she relates proceedings of her life as vividly as possible. The narrator was not of age yet to fully get details of the circumstances of her birth so she imagines and writes along but does not give anybody else a moment to steal her show. One would have expected her to allow an aunt or mother to tell the details surrounding her infancy but she does not.

Myer (1993), a New Historicist theorist traces the origin of the idea of being in control in terms of economic determinism. Maathai's portrait confirms Myer's assertion as she is economically empowered and can therefore afford to be in control. In her view, this idea ought to be transformed to suit the current times. The current times spell moments at which women such as the narrator are dismantling patriarchal structures and getting in control as a result of their economic empowerment. Thus, the empirical self and the criticism voiced by a woman who does not see self-included in the generic woman subject, compose the ideology. In this study, Maathai is an ideal character who portrays herself as being in charge. She narrates:

As a child I did not realize that some of the children were not my full siblings. In a polygamous homestead, we learned to live with our half siblings as part of a small community... In the traditional Kikuyu society, a man had the freedom to marry as many women as he wanted. But unlike today, he was required by culture to take care of all his children. The

society would not allow men to escape these duties. For one a man was under strong peer pressure to enhance his responsibilities... He could marry as many wives as he could look after. My father had six wives. (Maathai: 18)

Like all the children and the women, she was categorized as a property of her father. The author portrays self differently from how society had defined women in the past. For instance, she views her father's polygamy (he married six wives) as a retrogressive practice. She portrays self as independent minded, proud and patriotic. Maathai demonstrates a performative role of a woman who observes the privileges presented to the male in her society and silently questions them from the outset and delineates self as not being defenceless in the eye of the society like the other women who readily accepted their allotted place and remained silent.

The women's voices are silent by the artist's description of the traditional polygamous set up. She thus draws attention to the voiceless status of a woman in the traditional Agikuyu society. Maathai depicts how patriarchal culture fictionalizes a woman and denies her voice. In retrospect, a woman's autobiographical narrative challenges the gender ideologies that surround her in order to write differently but truly about her role in history. Maathai's performative role brings her out as geared at dismantling patriarchal structures that make women passive and insignificant in their societies (Butler 1990). She demonstrates a strong presence in her autobiographical work that in essence gives the vocal power to voice on behalf of other women.

When we analyse her autobiographical narrative, we realize that Maathai begins her story at the time of her birth, a beginning that defies the use of the first person narrative because she would have had to be told about the environment in which she was born and the culture of her people. This opening strategically points to a kind of embellishment of individuality on her part because she does not acknowledge the source of the information concerning the time and place of her

birth. She tells her story herself. This, according to Stegeman (1974), depicts such self-expressive writing as representing a theory of personhood where the new woman in literature does not allow herself to be limited by the clan, to work within tradition and to maintain the closed society. In contrast:

The new woman in literature is an individual existing as an independent entity rather than her kinship relations. She has a responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than to accept her role, where she has indefinable value rather than qualitative financial worth, and where she must reason about her own value rather than fit into a stereotype tradition (Stegeman 1974:92)

The new woman in literature defines self as empowered and as being sovereign. She includes in her ideas, a sense of socio-political content and historical vision writing. According to Greenblatt (1980), a new historicist theorist, empowered women throughout history have used a range of approaches in fighting hegemonic structures. Maathai's subversive narrative voice therefore mimics fiction in selecting, ordering and interpreting the writer's vivid experiences. This narrative mode consequently enables Maathai to depict self as subverting the norm. She is in control of her life and is not a passive bystander as opined by Grambs (1978). She also portrays self effectively as she narrates her story from an individual point of view. Maathai portrays self differently from how Lawino of p' Bitek's (1967) was done. The study notes a totally different portraiture of a strong woman.

Maathai defines and describes her identity as an intellectual and educationist. At the onset of her tale, she indicates that as a child, she was determined to get education even though most African girls were uneducated at the time and therefore an iconoclast. Her parents decision to send her to St. Cecilia's Intermediate School, a boarding Primary school at the Mathari Catholic Mission on the slopes of Nyeri Hills participated in making her an intellectual. She says:

I would join my cousin Wangari at St. Cecelia Intermediate Primary School, a boarding school. The school was run by the Consolata Missionary Sisters from Italy... St. Cecelia had a reputation for good teaching and discipline. As a boarding school it was thought to offer no distractions or disruptions to studies. I later learnt that my family had one concern about St. Cecelia that I might convert to Catholicism and that the catholic sisters would woo me to become one of them. The nun's way of life was completely unknown to the Kikuyu community which expected girls to marry and have children. Becoming a nun was considered a major loss to the community. (Maathai: 54)

The idea of going to school presents Maathai and the family with two major challenges: First, that Maathai would convert to Catholicism and second, that she would become celibate. Her parents feared that the Catholic sisters would woo her to become like one of them. On the contrary, the best influence they impart to her, is love for the environment and detailed attention toward its conservation as well as strong roots for the academic world. St. Cecelia also imparts on her the virtue of self- discipline. She expresses herself as a disciplined person having acquired this from the strict nuns who raised them up to be orderly and responsible.

The narrator depicts self as being aided in deviating from the norm. This is because her parents take her to a catholic girl's boarding school, not a common occurrence at that period in history. The fact that her parents already feared that she might turn out differently after interacting with the white nuns is a confirmation that the narrator is gearing to subvert the norms of the society in her portraiture. The formal school environment under the management of the strict nuns provides the narrator with the opportunity to interact with the world of education in a Christian mission school and to acquire transformed world views. These transformed views inspire her to rethink her roles in her traditional Agikuyu society.

According to Butler (1990) the female writer has provided ways of rethinking gender. A key contribution has been the challenge to conventional social order. The society in which Maathai

grows up in a male dominated society and she narrates how she had to work particularly hard to counter it. Traditionally, society also put more value on boys than on girls: boys are provided education before girls and boys are expected to be greater achievers than girls' (Maathai:139). This shows the insubordinations of women. Her story invites readers to share the experiences of a woman who is bold enough to declare her courage publicly. She describes herself as brilliant, courageous and hardworking. Helga (2014), argues that the autobiographical sub- genre of literature signifies a retrospective narrative that undertakes to tell the authors' attempts at reconstructing her personal development from a pseudo present point of narration. This view holds true in the narrator's case.

Historically, and culturally, Maathai's going to school contrasts the reality of the time that women had limited chances of going to school. However, the chance to study worked out positively for her as she was able to work hard at school and by seeking to emulate the strict nuns at school, she becomes different. Maathai says:

At St. Cecilia's Intermediate Primary School, on the slopes of Nyeri Hills... The following morning, I woke up to what would become a routine for the rest of my time at St. Cecilia. At dawn each morning, one of the sisters would ring a bell to wake us up. We would spring out of bed, get down on our knees, and say our morning prayers... we had an hour long mass every day, after which there was breakfast of maize flour porridge... Finally, we would go to class to study. (Maathai: 56)

The educationist missionary nuns inculcate the love for education in the young Maathai, shaping up her life differently from the traditional norm. The notion deviates from Bamkhatkho (1992) and Grambs (1978) views, that the patriarchal society brought up girls to be submissive, nurturing, defenceless- needing male protection and passive. The way Maathai portrays herself therefore goes against the grain of the normal order of the then society hence- subversion by one whose conscience has been elevated. As an intelligent writer, she puts herself at the centre of the

action and recreates an image of strength and endurance unlike the patriarchal portraiture of women as weak and in dire need of male protection

In furthering the argument, Butler (1990) states that identity is a type of 'doing' that is only manifest at the point of action. Maathai's pursuit of education indeed does determine who she becomes later. The education she receives is a form of identity nurturing. Maathai nurtures intellectualism, an initiative she develops to counter patriarchy; manifest when she performs resilience reclaiming self-respect from the society. However, she blends her acquisition of formal education with a tint of oral traditions. She volunteers: 'The Kikuyu stories served to entertain, educate and encourage creativity in children. It was an effective tool for informal education' (Maathai: 50). In other words, Maathai is stating that not all aspects of the African traditional society were repugnant. She embarrasses those that were good and discards those that discriminated against women and buried them with their potentials.

Of major significance in the narrative is how Maathai explores her world of academia cognizant of the traditional impetus at a point in time when women were subjugated and relegated to the private space. Her association with, and link, to the Anjiru clan are attempts at a conviction of her identity as a born and nurtured courageous leader. Maathai portrays self as coming from the Anjiru clan- famed for its leadership qualities that are unmatched among the other ten clans of the Agikuyu community. She narrates:

Gikuyu took them home and each daughter married the man who was the same height as she was and together they gave rise to the ten clans to which all Kikuyu belong. (Even though the youngest, Wamuyu did not get married, she had children.) Each clan is known for particular trade or quality; such as prophesy, craftsmanship and medicine. My clan Anjiru is associated with leadership. The daughters made the clans matrilineal but many privileges', such as inheritance and ownership of land, livestock and perennial crops, were gradually transferred to men. It is not explained how women lost their rights and privileges' (Maathai: 5)

In order to create an African sensibility and realize its experience, Maathai borrows heavily from the oral traditional archive; by exploring and discovering herself as a woman with her regional background of identity and as a member of the Agikuyu community. Orature provides an oratory platform for rupture where she performs traditionally as an Agikuyu woman from Nyeri. Through this rupture her sense of identity is enhanced and this aids her in her journey to self-discovery. She relates the Agikuyu myth of origin. She notes that god showed Agikuyu and Mumbi the wife, the land on which they were to settle between four mountain peaks.

Further to that, Gikuyu prayed under a holy fig tree. She muses that the daughters collected sticks to aid them get suitors from the forest, and Gikuyu sacrificed a lamb under the fig tree. Thus, Maathai further underscores the importance of the environment in the socio-cultural identity of a people and of her own self as a leader.

In addition, through this myth, Maathai discovers that she belongs to the Anjiru clan; one she explains is associated with leadership. Through the Agikuyu oral tradition, she reveals to the reader her conviction that she is a born leader and gives explanation for the leadership roles she undertakes later in life. Through this myth, she also explores the role of a woman in nurturing the society especially in her community where clans are matrilineal. Maathai notes that with time, however, women have lost this control of the society as men take on land and leadership rights originally in the women's docket. This may partly explain her efforts to empower women through the Green Belt Movement, conceivably in the hope of rediscovering the woman's control of power in the traditional Agikuyu society. Greenblatt (1980) in the tenet of power hierarchy, can be used in exploring Maathai's demonstrations of power in her portraiture. For she subverts the norm of what was generally accepted, to a point of power in her as a woman in the

Kenyan society then. A hierarchal power form that the male members of the then society were in disagreement with, when bestowed on a woman.

In addition, we invoke Butler (1990)'s argument that gender identity is a type of 'doing' that is only manifest at the point of action. Maathai indeed depicts several identities at different points of action that require her to act differently regardless of the then set norms. For instance, if an activity requires her to act traditional, she would and if it required her to react subversively, the same would apply. The story of the Agikuyu myth depicts her as appreciating her traditional background to a large extent.

According to Mineke Schipper (1987) myths contain the truth and the dogmas and utterances in them are not to be doubted in the community. 'Myths explain and justify how man created order from chaos, and how by way of culture, he imposed his will on nature' (Schipper 1987:11). The female figure on the other hand is depicted as restricted by codes and norms. The inclusion of the Agikuyu myth is an attempt to preserve culture and identify proudly with her roots. Although Maathai has been to the United States of America for a number of years, she does not allow herself to be culturally alienated like the Ocols of Africa depicted in p'Bitek (1969), and Adichie (2006). Many such men felt alienated from their cultural roots and sought to live out their borrowed values in African societies. Westernization and colonialism robbed them of the right to appreciate their own African traditional values. Western capitalism relegated women's contribution to social and domestic categories and increased their dependency on their husbands, especially those who embraced Western standards like Ocol. Maathai depicts self as charting an academic path that in time earns her freedom from being dependant. As a young African woman she is plotting to subvert the norm in the period soon after independence by depicting self as self-sufficient and not dependant on any male.

Maathai's determination to obtain higher education is realized when she receives a scholarship to go for university education in the United States of America. However, the writer does not allow self to lose her identity. Keeping in contact with her traditional African community, she only seeks to subvert those values inherent in the patriarchal ideology that subjugate women. The central focus of this argument is a woman whose identity has gradually refused to sojourn in the courts of cultural imperialism through western education. This was a peculiar social problem in the immediate post-independence era when there were a few western educated African men and women, but which Maathai refuses to bow to.

To foreground her traditional enculturation into her roots further, Maathai gives another Kikuyu story. She says the stories were told around the fire place in the evenings after a hard day's work. Similarly, the story 'Konyeki and his father' (Maathai: 50-51) is a story the author remembers being told by the aunt. She narrates how one of the four ladies who went to watch a dance fell in love with one man who was extremely handsome and a beautiful dancer too. As the evening passed, three of the women noticed that the young man behaved strangely. She narrates:

...at one point as he danced, he broke one of his fingernails, took the nail, and popped it into another. Still, the lady who fell in love was too blind at heart to notice all these. The man behaved strangely severally till the three other women decided to escape from this compound, they tried to persuade the other lady but she refused and accepted to marry this man till finally after getting a child who takes after the father, eating human beings, this is when she changed her mind and decided to escape. The mouth was hidden at the back of his neck. As the other mouth opened a swarm of flies came out buzzing noisily... (Maathai: 51)

This is just one of the ogre stories that Maathai used to listen to as she grew up. The Agikuyu, was a story telling community, and used these ogre narratives to impart moral lessons to the young. The identity of a woman's naivety is explored here since the lady in question is gullible and refuses to see the obvious. Maathai is alive and sensitive to what defines her as an African

woman and although she is about to interact with another culture, she acknowledges her own oral tradition as flourishing. She prepares the reader that she does not want to have to fully embrace anew culture since she was properly socialized in her own Agikuyu community that has helped her develop as an individual. Going abroad therefore does not make her abandon her community.

At another level, we explore Maathai's view of her culture against the backdrop of the western scholars. We also venture into explaining how her critique of African cultures is more valuable than that from other non-African voices, for instance from the West. She comments about a culture that she experienced and clearly understands from an insider perspective. Her critique is therefore informed. For example, the early European writer Elspeth Huxley (1934) writes about the native African:

... perhaps it may be as some doctors have suggested that his (African) brain is different; that he has a shorter growing period and possesses less well formed, less cunningly arranged cells than that of a European. In other words, that there is a fundamental disparity between the capabilities of his brain and ours. (Huxley: 221)

The attitude Huxley has toward the African recurs in most of her writings and echoes the writings of other European writers who would comment on the Africans carelessly yet they did not understand them. This demonstrates the kind of spite the western scholars had of the African. Maathai's comment on the African culture is therefore more immediate and more valid.

Maathai playfully performs her role as an oral artist. The contributory character of the folk stories presents the narrator as proud of her African, Agikuyu ancestry. The nexus between historical facts and Maathai's story depicts her as a literary artist who destabilizes conventional contractions of meaning. In demonstrating her strength of character, she gives the story of the Agikuyu myth of creation – in relation to the Anjiru clan known in terms of its headship roles.

The ogre (*Irimu*) story: *Konyeki* could be explored further here. Maathai construes the two stories to her own purposes of continuing her African traditional heritage as a legacy. She reclaims her female ancestors' story to sustain herself through their empowerment. In any case, power was originally in the hands of the womenfolk. She should thus be seen as subverting the contemporary order since the original order was matriarchal. The study notes that, this view allows women to be viewed differently from how the society was viewing them at the time of writing her memoir.

The high sense of pride in her oral traditions makes Maathai an interactive oral performer capable of constructing authentic oral heritage with a sense of immediacy. The Agikuyu myth fused into her life story creates a collaborative oral narrative. The autobiographical narrator here locates a geographical site for her resistance in history. She is from a formidable clan that is not easily tossed around. Maathai's self- portrayal in *Unbowed* is a story which traces the development of her character from childhood at Ihithe village to the zenith of power and international recognition.

In all these performances (Butler, 1999) Maathai, demonstrates strength that gears to counter male dominance. She is a strong character who has refused patriarchal dominance and asks the society not to misconstrue this feminine strength of character for deviance. She demonstrates her performativity by saying that:

Throughout my life, I have never stopped to strategize my next steps. I often just keep walking along through whichever door opens... in 2002, another opportunity arose for me and my country to fulfil a long held dream. Once again, the question of whether I should run for parliament in the elections scheduled for that December came up. Even though I had run in 1997, it was still a big decision for me to rejoin elective politics...I told my supporters that I had to finish at Yale and would then return to Kenya. In June 2002, I returned home to begin a new adventure...once I got home

I decided to contest the parliamentary seat for South Tetu. the voters elected me to parliament. A dream come true- realizing a truly representative democracy. (Maathai: 286)

According to the New Historicist theorist Montrose (1996) in the tenet of subversion, such a strong character in literature seeks to change the worldview with regard to domination. Maathai enters Kenyan politics through a heated contest a long side man and wins, demonstrating her strength as a woman. New Historicism- in the tenet of subversion, contends that domination is often achieved through culturally orchestrated consent rather than force. These are critical underpinnings to the new historicist perspective. It also comprises political and economic practices aimed at putting individual high achievers in control over their lives. Maathai's run and win of a parliamentary seat in an election against men demonstrates courage unlike the traditional set up whereby a woman was viewed as less equal to men. The study also notes that Gender did not become a significant factor in Kenyan elections until the 1990s. Up to that time it was probably assumed by all and sundry that politics was an exclusive male domain. Many considered the few women that ventured into politics in the 1960s and even 1970s as an aberration. Also, there is no evidence that such women engaged in electoral politics on a gender platform: they simply considered themselves as politicians like their male counterparts (Peter Wanyande 2006).

Understanding the narrative according to Greenblatt's (1980) New Historicism, in the tenet of selection, synthesis of facts and events, the study notes that there is a requirement that the reader gets to know the authors' biography and social political climate at the time. By depicting self as being in control and as strong, Maathai demonstrates having a level of power that enables her apply a sense of control to her experience. She is in command of herself, owns her background and chooses particular excitements she derives from her past to include in her story. This is

because to her, nothing happens perchance. Her actions are cognizant of a definite plan and she tells her story backwards and consistently. She defines the happenings around her by their history juxtaposed with her story, stating clearly the processes she goes through to the current state. She gives dates that authenticate the autobiography, like the date and day of her birth.

Self- portraiture as a kind of writing, explores the private life of the author seeking to give recognition to self- worth. Fedewa (2007), a gender theorist, reckons that interpretation of a literary text through the gender lens would help identify, analyse and correct social inequalities locally and globally. Fedewa's argument on gender theory suggests that it explores history and diverse experiences of men and women that are players in politics and intimate lives. She argues that narrative writing, as done by Maathai, seeks to give representation of the self in and through its relation with the outer world. It is this outer world, through the journeys the character in literature makes, that lead to empowerment. The argument presents Maathai, in the autobiographical work with two worlds, the American one and the Kenyan one, and we interpret these worlds to imply audience.

Crystallizing her academic background, with experiences in the US and in Kenya in the hands of white educationists, coupled with the fact that her autobiography was first published in the United States of America, persuades us that Maathai's implied audience is global. Maathai regards the white educationists highly but She also has regard toward her own people. Narrating her school days in Kenya in the 1950s, she describes the teaching nuns (unmarried catholic women who have dedicated their lives to the service of God) in glowing terms. She portrays them as nurturing, encouraging and compassionate as they related to their students. She later lands a teaching job at the University of Nairobi, and effectively uses her global experience to the advantage of her students. Maathai also describes her early teachers as strict and attributes

her strictness to their influence. The narrator does concretize her emergent portraiture in several unique ways as we attribute her immense achievements to the influence she got while studying both in Kenya and in the US.

While Maathai's implied audience is global, Bloom (1987) raises the issue of the intended audience in autobiographical writing and asserts that while some auto biographers write for themselves, others consciously write with a targeted audience in mind. The study construes that Maathai's work must have had women folk in the entire globe but more specifically the Kenyan women. In addition, she implores the male folk as well to appreciate the females in positions of responsibility. Maathai introduces dialogue on gender parity that forms a major basis for our arguments that Maathai desired to demonstrate her strength of character.

The fact that her estranged husband Mwangi's major reason for divorcing her was that she was too strong a woman and too high an achiever for his bruised ego. Dismantling old episteme and putting new ones in place; is a phenomenon on the 'new woman' character in literature. New Historicists insist that to understand a literary piece, we need to understand the author's social background. Myers (1989), a proponent of New historicism posits that historicist theory has borrowed heavily from historical facts as a succession of episteme or structures of thought that shape society. Formal Education was a new thing and the fact that Maathai ventured into it at a time that many women did not has made all the difference in her life. Her academic journey has contributed greatly to her prowess in playing significant roles in the society. According to Bem (1980) in the gender schema, androgynous individuals exhibit both masculine and feminine thinking; a characteristic quality the narrator exhibits. Maathai works hard to realize her dreams, one at a time but continuously sees open doors ahead. In the process of realizing her dreams she becomes a great woman. The journeys she undertakes reconstruct her steps, leading her to the

fulfilment of her dreams. Her autobiographical persona defines a self that is inaccessible to all except her, preoccupied to accomplish the dream.

Maathai portrays self as a scholar and tutor of high repute. Of great concern to our study is the long awaited journey that the narrator anticipates. Ngugi (1987: 32) qualifies ‘the language a writer uses has double character: it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture.’ The process of narrating her life story reveals Maathai’s high regard for the country’s resources. For instance, while describing the day she receives information about a proposed building at Uhuru Park, she says that it was a moment to fight back as one from the ‘Anjiru’ clan. She demonstrates how she fought for justice in the public space and joined in the public debate. Her language in the text is that of defiance to an authority that hoodwinks her citizenry. She gives a promising sign of change by her action. She says:

People were amazed not only that one relatively insignificant woman could stop a large project that those in power wanted to see completed, but astonished that it could be done only a year after we had watched in despair as losers of an election were declared the winners. I remember one man from the central region came over to congratulate me with the following words on his lips: ‘you are the only man left standing.’ We both laughed as we shook hands... People following the discussion were afraid that the government might harm me. But when the building was stopped, I was not harmed, people felt extremely empowered and have never gone back... Indeed, the slaying of the ‘park monster’ as we called it energized the Kenyan people. From that time on, we moved with more speed, confidence and courage. To me this was the beginning of the end of Kenya as a one-party state. (Maathai 204-205)

Maathai presents self in her portrait as having the qualities that subverts the powers of an incumbent President from doing the wrong thing. No wonder, she says that a man in the crowd commends her as being ‘the only man left standing’(Maathai:204) in the then hostile political environment. It is a subversion of the feminine identity that expects women to be submissive. Maathai displays this masculine identity, particularly her bravery in confronting President Moi.

During this period in Kenya, nobody let alone, a woman could dare say no to a man in a position of leadership more so a serving president. She thus demonstrates a rare bravery and courage on the part of a woman that amounts to subversive gender identities. Greenblatt's (1980) tenet of subversion in the New Historicist theory, indeed, construes Maathai as subverting the norm. She is attacking a power base. The reader sees a narrator who appears to be telling her life story when in actual fact she is destroying President Moi's dictatorial power base. She is also destroying the patriarchal hierarchical structures. This notion compares favourably with Chang (1992) who appears to be telling her life story when in actual fact, she is fighting a system. Saran (1994) studies Chang's autobiography and discovers that the story captures a century of seismic socio-political change seen through the eye of a brave woman. Chang challenges China's History of subjugating women. This subversive autobiography is still banned in China today. Like Chang, Maathai subverts the gender norm in Kenya and also puts the leadership of the day to question.

Maathai's writing continuously reveals her keen interest in conserving the environment and is addressing universal issues deploying experiences and sensibilities that cut across the cultural divide. This notion is also in agreement with Bem's (1981) view that individuals are more likely to use the gender clustering systems. This is the male/ female dichotomy used as an organizing framework, often unnecessarily, especially in the patriarchal society. Buoyed by the knowledge that she comes from the 'Anjiru' clan makes Maathai self-determined to pursue leadership positions. This knowledge helps promote positive social change in her that makes her compete favourably alongside the male folk. That competitiveness' character quality from an African woman is androgynous and therefore, qualifies the writer as partaking in a subtle scheme of subversion.

Maathai identifies her enigmatic qualities in her demonstrated efforts to conserve Karura forest and Uhuru Park. These attempts at preservation of the environment do not augur well with the government of the day, portraying her as defiant. The task she performs challenges the concept of nature destruction because as a woman who knows how to nurture, she is representing a feminine image that will not allow for environmental mutilation. She echoes Butler's (1999) performativity tenet that requires that that action be performed when it is required at a point in time, contrary to the gender roles spelt out. Revealed are manifestations of her devotion to the conservation of the environment and the fact that she will champion for its protection. The greedy and corrupt government officials are discussed alongside the conservation efforts. The memoir reveals the powers that be that this woman from the Anjiru clan endeavours to fight. She says: 'From that time on, we moved with more speed, confidence and courage. To me this was the beginning of the end of Kenya as a one-party state. (Maathai: 204-205). This statement illustrates Maathai's major agenda. She aimed at subverting Moi's leadership. Subversive literature has been a worthy tool in a rebel's arsenal throughout the history of mankind Paine (1895) states. Maathai is producing exactly this kind of literature according to Paine. She puts Moi's leadership into question.

Indangasi (1993), while studying Afro American autobiographical works, posits that autobiographies tell stories of the writers' lives besides propelling an impulse to fight unjust institutions. Maathai pushes through environmental activism to fight land grabbing and violation of human rights inherent in the Moi era in Kenya. Her frantic fight of similar injustices in Kenya is established in her effort to conserve Uhuru Park against the regime's plan to construct Kenya Times towers which was proposed to host government offices. The reader acknowledges the fact that were it not for her, Uhuru Park would be history today to accord Kenyans a site for

relaxation. Maathai's win makes her bold, powerful and more conscious of her own efforts and other women supporters. She encounters a rebirth of sorts.

4.1.3 Rebirth of a subverted Character

Rebirth explores an identity of a portraiture that has undergone transformation due to exposure. In the US, Maathai explores her life before going to America and discovers, the education offered by the British colonizer back home concealed some aspects of slave trade and therefore, wanting. This was an indication that her consciousness had been raised and she questions what she could not a few years earlier. This is evident in her observation that:

Years of colonial education of the subject of America had somehow kept the African American part hidden from us. Even though we studied the slave trade, the subject was taught in a way that did not leave us appreciating its inhumanity. An African has to go to America and the ghetto, take on lives of their own. (Maathai: 78)

In retrospect, Maathai notes that interaction with America bridges a gap and opens a new chapter in her life. While there, she acquires experiences and knowledge that widen her worldview. Maathai's experience reminds the researcher of Paulo Freire's (1970) that recommends that 'there should be a renewed relationship amongst the stakeholders in the pursuit of knowledge: student, teacher and society' (Freire 1970: 55). He contends that the learner should be seen as a co-creator of knowledge. As Kenya turns on a new chapter at independence, Maathai rediscovers herself as an African in America. By the end of her university studies, her greatest desire is to return home and help build her independent country.

Maathai explores herself from the time when she leaves Kenya as a young girl, inexperienced and naïve. While in America, a country that instils in her a sense of discovery making her more mature, knowledgeable, and experienced Maathai discovers that the Africans in America were despised and subjugated, and relegated to poor neighbourhoods and uses the term 'Ghetto'- to

refer to racial segregation. The Blacks there were also referred to by the derogatory term 'negro.' The term ghetto refers to a part of a city, especially a slum area, occupied by a minority group or groups. By encountering the 'ghettos,' Maathai states that her eyes opened to the reality of racial segregation rekindling her desire to come back home and help build her young, newly born nation.

In America, Maathai discovers her identity as an African, and a woman. Her first step after discovering herself is to drop names acquired through Christian baptism back in Kenya. She reverts to her traditional African surname, Wangari, which she proudly uses throughout the autobiography. She leaves Kenya as Mary Josephine Wangari but returns as Wangari Muta '...which was what I should always have been' (Maathai: 96). This indicates that as a learning student in the US, she discovers and creates new knowledge so that even this young nation newly born, called Kenya will have to reckon with her as a force to be taken seriously, and as a new person- having received a new consciousness.

The two events of Maathai's discovery and the birth of her Kenyan Nation are juxtaposed. This is important as it offers the essence of discovery and self -worth. This study, engages with this naming debate further, clearly explaining, the nexus between naming and identity. Some schools of thought maintain that a name does not matter much. Shakespeare, in *Romeo and Juliet*, once famously asked "What's in a name? That which is called a rose by any other name still smells as sweet" (Shakespeare: 42). Other scholars are, however, persuaded to believe that your name defines who you are. Maathai therefore defines herself as who she is. Despite having gone to America, Wangari Muta is culturally conscious of her roots and proud to be an African woman albeit with education. She is not Mary Josephine Wangari Muta the submissive woman who

went to America to acquire Whiteman's education. She comes back as an empowered African ready to take the chores of Nation building. She does not allow herself to be culturally alienated.

Maathai's name change also fits into a pattern in many postcolonial societies where oppressed people wanted to sever ties with the oppressor and the institutions that symbolise their power such as religion. In the USA, many Black people changed their names and religion as well. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King fought racism, waging a serious black protest against racial segregation in the US. In 1950, a fully-converted Malcolm replaced his birth surname 'Little' with 'X,' explaining that 'X' symbolized the African family name that he would never know. In his autobiography, he wrote, 'For me, my 'X' replaced the white slave master name of 'Little' which some blue-eyed devil named Little had imposed upon my paternal forebears.' Both men emerged as prominent voices in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, with different philosophies and approaches to solving racial inequality.

In Africa, President Mobutu Sese Seko of the then Zaire once ordered all citizens to drop the Christian or French names they had and even renamed the Country. Renowned Kenyan writer James Ngugi changed his name to Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe also dropped his Christian name, Albert, while at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria to acquire his new identity used in all his publications. The social and political implications of these name changes are significant to this study. Name change has served a pivotal role in making Africans regain their lost identity. Maathai's name change therefore redefines her identity as a proud African woman. Language is a central question in post-colonial studies. Many post-colonial scholars and writers detail the colonial practice of imposing the colonizer's own native languages onto the people they colonized, even forbidding the use of the colonized people's native tongue. Maathai reckons:

Years later when we became part of the Kenyan elite, we preferred to speak in English to one another, our children, and those in our social class. While the monitor approach helped us learn English, it also instilled in us a sense that our language was inferior and insignificant. The reality is that mother tongues are extremely important as carriers of culture, wisdom and history. When they are maligned, and educated people are encouraged to look down on them, people are robbed of a vital part of their heritage. I am very glad I did not lose my desire or ability to speak Kikuyu, because this helped ensure that a gap did not open between my parents and me, as it has for some children for whom education became synonymous with Westernization. (Maathai: 60)

As critics, we examine this practice as part of the systematic oppression of imperialism in neo-colonial societies, and could investigate its ramifications on the psychological, physical, and cultural well-being of colonized peoples. Within the context of post-colonial studies, language is a weapon and a site of intense neo-colonial conflict. Hence, Maathai's name change ignites a rebirth of sorts in character, and a change of her world views. In a recent forum during a book launch ceremony, Ngugi (2019) gave a speech in which he underscored the importance of the use of vernacular as a medium of instruction in Kenyan schools. He argued that loss of one's mother tongue was a prerequisite for slavery. He emphasized the need to free 'ourselves and our children from the yoke of neo-colonialism' by embracing what is truly ours- our mother tongue. The book he helped launch is a junior reader written in vernacular and entitled: 'Somo Ber' to imply that education is good. The book has been translated into all the different ethnic languages in Kenya and it is used to teach vernacular in the catchment area of the learner. Ngugi argued further that it was noble to learn English; however, it must not be allowed to rob one of their cultural identity.

This instance reminds the study of Abiola Irele's (1970) critic on the African consciousness; that represents a means of confronting the bad history of the African when he was made a slave physically and mentally, when the colonial master taught him to hate himself and seek to ape the white man and his ways. Abiola refers to this as the motif of the prodigal- the wasted years of slavery. Therefore, the need to go back to African cultural roots in spite of having acquired western education like Maathai had done cannot be over emphasized in this thesis. A legacy Maathai bequeaths her readers.

Maathai defines her self- portrait differently from how society defined her, thus acquiring new status by reverting to her traditional name Wangari Muta, dropping Mary Josephine. Greenblatt (1980), in his New Historicist view- in the tenet of power hierarchy, equates this to dismantling structures of the old order and replacing them with new ones.

Maathai says of her stay in America:

The United States prepared me to be confident not only in reclaiming my original names but critique what was happening at home, what women were experiencing...even though many women were still bound to traditional ideas about themselves at that time, I came to see that as an African woman I was perhaps even more constrained in what I could do or think or even hope for. (Maathai: 96)

Maathai's stay in the United States of America helps her to rediscover herself anew, particularly as an African woman. She also rediscovers herself as a champion of women rights, because women rights are human rights. She categorically states that the US opened her eyes to critique what women were experiencing back home. According to Freire (1970:14) 'education enlightens,' like it had conscientized Maathai about the plight of women who were still stuck to traditional ideas about themselves at the time. Maathai had acquired critical consciousness in her

world views and in her views as a woman. Her reminiscence concentrates on her self-rediscovery. This rediscovery is contained in the statement that:

When I left the United States, I was taking back to Kenya five and a half years of higher education as well as a belief that I should work hard, help the poor and vulnerable. I knew that I wanted to teach in the University and share what I had learnt about biology, I wanted to start a family of my own. (Maathai: 95).

The higher education Maathai receives opens her eyes, enabling her to demonstrate her vision in the desire to help the poor and vulnerable, including women. Magak and Kilonzo, (2014) define vulnerability as determined by the extent to which the vulnerable group can anticipate, cope with, respond to and recover from a hazard. Maathai therefore strives to help women fight patriarchy as a hazard that has impacted negatively on the womenfolk. She gears to subvert the order of doing things in her society. Like Martin Luther King, she has a dream- her vision is to help remove the yoke of subservience from the being of a woman. She also strategizes to fight poor governance in Kenya.

While in the US, Maathai acquires a resilient spirit. She asserts her power and authority as she expresses the desire to teach in a university setup and share her newly acquired and created knowledge. Until then, there was no African woman teaching in the university setup in Kenya. This vision certainly depicts her as poised for challenges in the male dominated workplace. The changes in her world view and role dynamics lead us to wonder if the Kenyan society to which she is returning is ready for empowered women. In this way she foreshadows her gender battles later with the male chauvinists' inherent in the patriarchal order and with the powers that be. To this end, Maathai destabilizes conventions of meaning, in particular gender and sexual identity.

The historical narration Maathai gives about her growth to a position of empowerment tallies with Greenblatt's (1980) argument on the importance of historicity, self and experience of autobiographical writing. These are communicated through her narration. In our analysis of her autobiography, we establish that indeed the narration bears testimony to the author's regional historicity. When Maathai, comes back to Kenya from America she was not willing to accept the order she finds. One of the order is the absence of women in position as University lecturer. She resolves to challenge it, since it seeks to make women vulnerable by denying them equal chances of competition. Maathai is categorical that she will not allow the patriarchal structures to get in her way. She models a subverted normative gender identity. It is this kind of idea that she masks in the title of her memoir as 'unbowed.'

In her autobiography she takes us through her discovery, rebirth and a trail blazing spirit path toward women empowerment through acquisition of education with the Catholic missionaries, earning Bachelors and Master's degrees in the United States. Maathai quotes from the biblical verse: (Acts 3: 1-10) 'Rise up and walk' (Maathai: 287). She further states that throughout her life she has never stopped to think and work hard to achieve her set goals in life. She argues that she often just rises up and walks along through whichever door opens. In the global South, Maathai reminds the reader that she was the first woman in East and Central Africa to earn a doctorate degree.

An ardent reader and researcher, Maathai enrolled for doctoral studies in Germany and the University of Nairobi, graduating with a PhD in 1971. She teaches veterinary anatomy at the university rising to become the Chairperson of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy and an associate professor in 1976. In both cases, we see a new woman reborn, daring the male world of

academics, work and politics. She recounts that rising up and walking, is the reason for her immense achievements. She portrays herself as the trailblazing woman in the region, displaying an identity of academic prowess and a pioneering fortitude. Moreover, she demonstrates a subversion of the status quo, in reinforcing the notion that given the right latitude, women can also achieve highly in the worlds of academia and leadership. This is a latitude, Clinton (2003) echo in her autobiography. Smith (2012) studies Clinton's *Living History* (2003) and comments that it was a campaign instrument used to sell former first Lady as a US Presidential candidate. She would have had her experience as Secretary of State in the Obama administration, international bona fides, and security credibility that expanded her claims to formidable expertise. Smith argues that *Living History* meditates on the political gendered arena of American presidential politics. Smith says further that *Living History* earned the author a national audience of celebrity fans and potential voters that the aspiring presidential candidate would recruit into her campaign agenda. Smith reiterates even further that translations of the book, including the Chinese version, turned Clinton's autobiography into a global best seller. Clinton was the first former First Lady to position herself for a presidential run, and the first woman with national and global celebrity status to establish a viable plan for pursuing and gaining the nomination. The autobiographical persona' of *Living History*, then, would translate celebrity aura into active support, scepticism into investment, and do so by performing a convincing political persona (Butler 1999). Smith interrogates this woman, this feminist professional, former First Lady, and duly-elected senator, craft the story of representative American-ness in the hyper-masculinized genre of the aspiring candidate's autobiography. Like Hillary, Maathai ascertains the astuteness and capability of the female persona in leadership positions in Kenya.

The slogan; ‘Rise up and walk’ (Maathai: 287) is a biblical allusion that can be explored further, as it inspires the narrator and subsequently, the reader in equal measure, in the context in which it appears in the bible. When the disciples Peter and John come across a beggar, who has all the characteristics of a disempowered person: he is poor, self – effacing, dejected and has no sense of pride in himself. On seeing him in such a dehumanized and humiliated state, Peter says to him, “silver and gold have I none but what we have we give you” And taking him by the hand, Peter helps the lame man stand, saying: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” Maathai explores two views here, one, the plight of women in their subjugated state by the patriarchal culture. Two, she explores the status of the impoverished citizen in Kenya. In relation to this, she says:

What I wanted was for the voters to understand that I could not give them alms or even miracles, but together we could lift ourselves up and address our poverty and disempowerment and regain our sense of self-respect. Together, we could lift ourselves and establish good governance that was responsible and accountable to the people. (Maathai:287)

Maathai uses her subjectivity to highlight the extent to which she goes to achieve what she did. It was almost a single handed struggle, educating Kenyans that there was need to view gender roles differently and to also hold the leaders to account. However, the main point here is to seek to change the leadership of the day. Foucault (1970) in the new historicists’ view states that power from whichever source produces discourse. Maathai’s ability to recount the Moi era gives her content for her work. She expresses reactions to power structures of the surrounding society of Unbowed. Ngugi (1972) in his Treatise says, that ‘a writer is a sensitive member of his society and that he/ she responds with his total personality to the social environment, which changes all the time...he registers with varying degrees... the conflicts and tensions in his changing environment (Ngugi: 47). Maathai indeed takes note of the Kenyan environment during Moi’s

tenure in office. She then comments accurately on his misrule and misappropriation of the country's resources and suggests ways of overcoming them.

Maathai's subversive stance in her autobiography reminds the study of Banský and Wall (2020) who indicate that subversive writing is controversial, since its job is to pick on authority or authoritative figures, but at its heart remains a unified goal, the one which urges people to think and review their surroundings, and to stand up for what is right. Exponents of the craft rely on sarcastic wit and a slanderous tone to establish its views. This is deliberate, since the form, at its core, seeks to gain awareness through sensationalism. Wall states that the condescending tone also helps portray authority in a different and lighter vein, alluding to the fact that their opinions and orders do not matter, or are irrelevant. Though it may seem that subversive literature, is at times comical, or even nonsensical, at its heart lies a very emotional appeal. Banský adds that subversive writers are those who are deeply affected by the general state of affairs which plague society, and only seek to create a sense of awareness among people. Through Maathai's writing, she hopes to convey the message that rules need not be accepted as they are, and that they need to be scrutinized before being accepted. This is exactly what Maathai does in her autobiography. She is commenting on the ills of the Moi regime by evoking the Biblical allusion; and persuading the citizenry that change is possible. Maathai was deeply affected by the misrule in Kenya at the time and uses her literary art to create awareness among her people.

Maathai's subjectivity compares favourably to Piatek (1996) assertion, that subjectivity may be an asset to autobiographical writing and that it may compensate for factual distortion. Piatek states further that it was only in the mid-20th century with the emergence of the so-called New Historicism, that embraces working class experience, women's experience and that of other

minorities as worth noting. This study takes Piatek's reference to experience seriously, and treats it as an aspect of concretization that Maathai as the narrator uses to wage war on gender positioning particularly at the university in the period soon after independence. Her experience lends weight to politics of positionality, where as narrator, she chides the gender discrimination inherent at the university at the time of writing her autobiography. This study advances Piatek's ideas on experience as an important feature of autobiography.

The writer's experience enables her to be the subject of her autobiography. Experience here becomes a primary source of evidence to what Maathai tells the reader. Her commentary on the idea of gender bias at the University again evokes in the reader memories of gender discrimination inherent in the patriarchal society.

Maathai defies (Bem's 1980) identities to rise to leadership positions. An analysis of how gender roles were perceived in the writer's society are depicted as affecting the female and male members, especially the male figure in Kenya. However, Maathai rises above what roles the society expected her to play to chart a different path for herself. Fedewa's (2007) argument that femininity and masculinity affect an individual's thought process is important here. The path to eco-feminism and environmental conservation are such ventures that she artistically narrates as having carved for herself.

Like Freire (1970) Maathai wields the same powers in recruiting women to plant trees and also join the Green Belt Movement as life members. In a chapter she entitles; 'Foresters without Diplomas, we see Maathai's agenda for the Greenbelt Movement born. She uses the movement to open the eyes of the women. She makes a decision to create and nurture relationships through rural and urban women environmental groups and through Non- governmental organizations;

efforts that earn her international recognition. Maathai realizes that activism must be grounded in the community. She communicates with the poor and reaches out to the illiterate through her GBM. For instance, in Isinya, Maathai introduces the use of donkeys to help water the seedlings in the tree nursery and to also offer relief to the women who were burdened with drawing water. Maathai says: 'I learnt that the members of the community (the Maasai) had decided that donkeys could be better used to fetch water (Maathai: 133).' This shows that the community needed to be made to feel that tree planting was an investment. Consequently, they would mobilize themselves and their neighbors' to take action and responsibility that would sustain the trees. Thus, Maathai makes strides to recruit many members into the GBM that would in essence aid in environmental conservation.

Maathai narrates that the male character in Kenya then, had difficulty allowing the female personality to serve alongside him in the civil service. She therefore makes interesting reading of how these gender perceptions affected her character and role in the passing history. This is relevant in several realms such as social organizations and institutions, interpersonal relations as well as in understanding identity and sexuality. She narrates her life's journey from a perspective looking back at her life and describing how she changed from what the society expected her to be and became who she was at the time of writing her memoir for she insisted in serving alongside the men. She subverts the normal way of doing things just like Freire demonstrates he did to the oppressed in Brazil.

In retrospect, Maathai tells the reader that, upon coming back to Kenya after her studies, she lands a job to teach at the University of Nairobi and is therefore optimistic about the role that she can play in serving independent Kenya. She, however, discovers that the professor of zoology

has offered her teaching post to someone else on the basis of ethnicity and gender. As a result of this, she brazes herself for a struggle against the ethnic and gender discrimination that she faces. She discovers that her ambition might be a hindrance to her advancement in the male dominated field, observing that:

It was the first time I had encountered that form of discrimination. Was it also because I was a woman? Perhaps not, but it wasn't long after that, when seeking another job at the same institution as a woman was shunned. Both ethnic and gender barriers now were placed in the way of my advancement. I realized then that the sky would not be my limit! Most likely, my gender and my ethnicity would be. (Maathai: 101)

The social dimension of the autobiography comes into play at an intra-textual level, whereby the protagonist acquires the role of a narratee to communicate and to seem to be the one listening and observing other than the one narrating the story. Maathai is disappointed that the male members of faculty at the university deny her the chance she deserves to serve independent Kenya. She therefore discusses the need to subvert that existent structure and to replace it with a more gender responsive one. Gender mainstreaming at the work place therefore becomes an urgent need for Maathai to address, while serving at the university.

4.1.4 A Subverted Portrait Confronting Gender Battles

Maathai makes a realistic first hand observation that the society she comes back to in Kenya was gender biased and discriminated against women. She realizes that she must subvert the societal views about women, through her deeds, in order to fit in. The narrative process gives her an opportunity to look back introspectively and take stock of the hurdles she has had to clear to become who she is at the time of writing her autobiography. Although she later gets a job as a Research Assistant in the Department of Veterinary Anatomy in the same institution, she confesses that, as a young female lecturer, it was not easy to deal with male colleagues and male students who doubted her qualification and capability on account of her gender. She observes:

When I began teaching, all the students were male and they found it hard to believe that I had the qualifications to be their instructor in anatomy. I was a woman after all and in my twenties, so not older than them. It wasn't always easy to deal with the students or my male colleagues. They later would often tease me: 'do you really have a Master's Degree in Biology. I knew deep inside that they doubted my capabilities (Maathai: 103)

The Society raised up the boys to believe that women belonged to the kitchen spaces at home and not in educational institutions. Women were marginalised and relegated to the lower echelons of education, the kindergarten if at all. Maathai takes note that her students' judgement of whether or not she was capable, is governed by the gender schema, as espoused by Bem (1980) in the schema theory. The fact that Maathai could actually stand before male students, was a new phenomenon in that dispensation. Fedewa (2007) posits that the interpretation of a literary text through the gender lens helps identify inequalities and further argues that the gender theory explores relationships in society. This is evident in the fact that Maathai was able to ascend to the position of Chairperson of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy by merit. Therefore, if women were given equal opportunities to go to school like their male counterparts, then the social attributes the society has ascribed to them would be broken and more women would fight to hold more senior positions of decision making. The education Maathai receives enables her unbind herself from retrogressive stereotypical expectations of the society. She rises above the position of subjugation to serve in several senior positions of authority. In her empowered roles, she enacts enlightenment in decision making. In this instance, she is seen to be subverting roles and daring the male field. Subversion from the normal way of doing things, by seeking a different way of how the society views her, is therefore evident here.

In a flashback, Maathai tells the reader how she discovers the need to struggle for gender equity and justice with regard to remuneration and personal emoluments while teaching at the

university. She says: 'Both ethnic and gender barriers now were placed in a way of my 'self-advancement' (Maathai: 101). The autobiography heralds the need for equality and inclusivity in the day-to-day running of independent Kenya. The university administration denies female lecturers housing allowance, health insurance, and pension on the basis of their being married, yet give these benefits to the male lecturers. They also pay the women lower salaries than their male colleagues. With her friend and female colleague, Vertistine Mbaya, she fights for better terms of service, and the university administration yields to their demands. Gender battles at the university are waged by women whose conscience has been pricked by their education.

Maathai seeks equality as a member of staff at the University of Nairobi. Fedewa's (2007) argument on gender suggests that it explores history and diverse experiences of men and women who are players in politics, and players in intimate lives at the family level. Gender might be depicted as playing itself out in culture and the work place as well as in social injustice activism. Indeed, Maathai's depiction demonstrates this phenomenon. She displays acts of inequality that discriminate against women at the work place.

Maathai again destabilizes the structures at the work place that suffocate women when it comes to financial benefits for their work place. According to Greenblatt (1981), the portrait is subverting the old order and replacing it with another. In other words, roles are being redefined along not gender lines, as was previously the case, but along merit. The gender battles she fights at the university, involve both notions of manhood (masculinity) and womanhood (femininity). Indeed, Maathai and her colleague friend Vertistine fit both gender roles and are therefore described as androgynous. For instance, they question why male lecturers earned better pay and house allowances whereas the female counterparts earned much less. Courtesy of her education,

her conscience is elevated and she is able to correct these particular social inequalities in terms of the benefits received at the work place. In other words, Maathai helps mainstream gender at the work place. She helps lay ground for such later changes in her young country Kenya.

It has since become policy in Kenya, anchored on the Constitution (2010), Article 27 that women and men to earn equal salaries and house allowances. The Constitution of Kenya (2010) emphasizes on equality and freedom from discrimination and espouses the rights of women as being equal in law to men, and entitled to enjoy equal opportunities in the political, social and economic spheres.

Further to that, the narrator demonstrates the belief that women should not be made to feel apologetic about their sex. She argues that, as a result, women ought to seek leadership positions that would enable them make decisions. However, they must wear ‘masks’ such as the one Maathai demonstrates she wears which reveals her relationship with various societal roles. Maathai has won the mask of ‘unbowed person.’ She has had to recreate survival techniques in an effort to cope. For instance, as a politician’s wife, this performative role elicits the need to dress decently in order to avoid scandalizing her husband. It is also worth noting that in spite of her qualifications and experience in environmental issues, Maathai was only appointed as an assistant minister in the Ministry of Environment but not as a full- fledged Minister. This is an indication that gender considerations still played out at the work place and men are slow in allowing women to serve and earn equally like them at the work place. Women must therefore continue to stand their ground in the gender battles echoed in Maathai’s narrative.

4.1.5 The Subverted Portrait of an Environmentalist and Eco- Feminist

Maathai portrays self as an environmentalist and as an ecofeminist in her autobiography dwelling on real life situations that require interrogation. It is noteworthy that the environment and women

are both given prominence in Unbowed's empowerment process. The portrait of an eco-feminist is preserved for posterity because she is bequeathing humanity with a legacy.

Ecofeminism describes movements and philosophies that link feminism with ecology. This movement seeks to eradicate all forms of social injustice, not just injustice against women but injustices against the environment as well. From arguments that there are particular and significant connections between women and nature, ecofeminism relates the oppression and domination of all subordinate groups (women, people of colour, children, and the poor) to the oppression and domination of nature (animals, land, water, and air). All these subordinate groups have been subjected to oppression, domination, exploitation, and colonization by the Western patriarchal society that subjugates women. Ecofeminists believe that these connections are demonstrated through 'feminine' values such as reciprocity, nurturing and cooperation, which are present both among women and in nature.

Maathai details her feminine contributions to the environment and to the welfare of women. Her contribution to the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK) from 1976 to 1987 rising to the position of Chair. She was nurturing as a person and rises up the ranks to head women organization. It is while serving in the National Council of Women that the Green Belt Movement is born. The movement, introduces the idea of planting trees enmass in 1976 and continues to develop it into a broad-based multi-faceted organization. The organization's main goal and focus is the planting of trees with women groups in order to conserve the environment and improve their quality of life. Maathai through the Green Belt Movement, assists women to plant more than 20 million trees on their farms, in schools and church compounds. In recognition

of her efforts, UNEP made it possible for her to attend the First UN conference on human settlement about which she says:

The conference was called Habitat 1, in Vancouver, Canada, for two weeks in June 1976. Habitat 1 examines the spread of cities around the world and the problems associated with this, including the creation of concrete jungles and air pollution from vehicles. One of the solutions the conference participants pointed out was “greener” cities that had more trees and vegetation in them. Among speakers at the conference who most impressed me were noted anthropologists Margaret Mead, Mother Teresa of Calcutta and the British Economist and journalist Barbara Ward. This was the first time I had been to a global meeting of this kind and listened to such inspiring women leaders. (Maathai: 129)

In the quotation above, Maathai intertwines her personal, national and international politics, and narrates to the reader how the green belt movement grew. She receives global support and attention and grows in her quest through inspiration received from like-minded characters. Maathai elaborately narrates the government’s discomfort with her activities in the Green Belt Movement which expose the ills and unjust conduct of the political leadership of the day. Maathai forges ahead as an environmental activist under the Green Belt Movement which she single handed initiates in the 1980s. She says:

By late 1977, news of tree- planting initiatives had spread throughout the NCWK networks and soon farmers, schools and churches were eager to set their own programs. That was the beginning of communities themselves taking ownership of greenbelt movement initiatives, and I have continued working like this ever since. It was gratifying that after so many disappointments, my idea was taking shape for me. But it was still an extra-curricular activity, on top of my job at the university, my other affiliations, and raising my children. (Maathai: 133)

The excerpt depicts Maathai’s resolve to protect the environment at all costs. She also makes the Green Belt Movement into predominantly female machinery for fighting gender battles. The forums NWCK and GBM- are tools that Maathai uses in sensitizing women about their

potentials in conserving the environment and also improving on their livelihoods. To demonstrate how she empowered the women, and metaphorically explains:

A great river always begins somewhere. Often it starts as a tiny spring bubbling up from a crack in the soil, just like the little stream on my family's land in Ithi, which starts where the roots of the fig tree broke through the rocks beneath the ground. But for the stream to grow into a river, it must meet other tributaries and join them as it heads for the sea or lake.' So, when people learn about my life and the work of the Green Belt Movement and ask me 'why trees?' The truth of the matter is that that question has many answers. The essential one is that I reacted to a set of problems by focusing on what could be done. As it turned out, the idea that emerged with other sources of knowledge and action to form a confluence that grew bigger than I would ever have imagined (Maathai:119)

Maathai volunteers to explain that, as the Green Belt Movement matured, so also did its vision on how to meet the challenges that continued to unfold. She uses the metaphor of a small stream to bring out her idea of the GBM that grew beyond expectation. However, it was not without challenges. One such challenge was confrontation with the City Council 'askaris'(security officers) and the Kenya Police under the directive of the powers that be 'the top government officials including the then incumbent President Moi' (Maathai:272). The gender theory in the tenet of seeking social change applies in this case. She creates awareness on the need to relate well with nature, protect the environment in concerted efforts. Maathai attacks the power bases that extend their dominance of women to dominance over the environment. She explains further, that every time the city council askaris confronted them, they found ways to protect themselves. She further narrates:

“When we were confronted with a tense situation, we would sing about the need to protect the forest, and dance... the singing and dancing made us feel strong (Maathai: 272)”.

These defence mechanisms indicate the self- determination Maathai makes to conserve the environment. Using the influence of the oral traditions, singing and dancing, she, together with

her team makes the situation tolerable. The literary devices of art, the singing and dancing are used as instruments of power to counter the askaris. Her resolve reminds us of the study by Boehmer (2005) who posits that to write an autobiography is not only to speak for oneself, in one's place in the world; and that 'to speak is also, to mark a position. Maathai charts a direction in environmental conservation and realizes her dream. She indeed marks a position, in relation to environmental conservation and the Green Belt Movement.

Maathai's love for her culture depicts her strong roots of feeling for the environment in her childhood. She mentions the 'fig tree' and 'Mt. Kenya' and attaches a lot of symbolic meaning to them in the course of her narration in her assertion that:

I also learnt that someone had acquired the piece of land where the fig tree I was in awe of as a child had stood. The new owner perceived the tree to be a nuisance because it took up so much space and he felled it to make room to grow tea. By then I understood the connection between the tree and water, so it did not surprise me that when the fig tree was cut down, the stream where I fetched water as a child and played with tadpoles dried up. My children would never be able to play with the frogs' eggs as I had or simply to enjoy the cool, clear water at the stream. I mourned the loss of the tree. I profoundly appreciated the wisdom of my people, and how generations of women had passed on to their daughters the cultural tradition of leaving the fig tree in its place. I was expected to pass it on to my children too... Whatever the inspiration for not cutting these trees, people in that region had been spared landslides, as the strong roots of the fig trees held the soil together in the steep mountains. (Maathai: 122)

The attachment to the environmental features such as the fig tree indicate Maathai's love and adoration of the physical features in the environment. She becomes nostalgic about the stream where she had fetched water as a child. Maathai's narration continuously demonstrates interest in the environment from a tender age as evident in the first chapter of her autobiography, entitled 'Beginnings.' However, the mutilation of that particular tree by those who did not care makes her lament that her own children will miss out on the opportunity to cherish such physical

features. Her description of Mount Kenya and the importance the Agikuyu community attached to it, is worth noting. She narrates: ‘For the Kikuyus, Mount Kenya known as Kirinyaga, or place of brightness and the second highest peak in Africa, was a sacred place. Everything good came from it; abundant rains, rivers, streams, clean drinking water...’ However, she notes sadly, that: ‘...these beliefs have now virtually died away. They were dying even as I was born’ (Maathai:5). Maathai intertwines her love for the environment with the cultural beliefs of her people and illustrates that their mothers handed over the legacy of protection of the environment particularly that of the fig tree because it brought water and protected the land. The study notes that Maathai was socialized by her mother to nurture the environment.

In honor of her efforts, a day has been put aside to commemorate Maathai’s efforts. Wangari Maathai Day is celebrated on 3rd March in conjunction with Africa Environment Day following The African Union’s (AU) resolution in January 2012. The day was established in 2002 by the OAU, now AU, to pay tribute to the late Nobel Laureate’s legacy; the heroine Maathai thus leaves a legacy behind on environmental conservation. She has acquired a hierarchal position of power and become a celebrity persona.

The Assembly/AU/Decision 406 (XVIII) recognizes Maathai’s numerous achievements as the first Presiding Officer of AU-ECOSOCC (Economic Social and Cultural Council-the Civil Society Organ of the African Union, as an African Union Peace Ambassador, as Founder of the Green Belt Movement, as Goodwill Ambassador for the Congo Basin Forest, as UN(United Nations) Peace Messenger for Environment and Climate, and as UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program) Champion of the Earth.

Maathai's self- portrait presents an occasion that symbolizes challenge and hope for Africa, as this aims to raise awareness on sustainable environmental management among all stakeholders at national, regional and continental levels. It also draws attention to the increasing environmental problems faced by the continent and encourages the development of appropriate policies at national and regional levels as it also enhances environmental sustainability.

Pope Francis reminds the readers that 'the earth's resources are being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production' (Laudato Si 2016:18). It is no coincidence that the world environment day, wildlife day and Wangari Maathai day are celebrated on the same day. This is an emphasis to the recognition of her efforts in conservation. Our study points an accusing finger at the leaders of the post-independence Africa for their short-sightedness regarding environmental issues. Whereas Maathai would have wished to lend them her long sight, they refused to see her point and stubbornly declined to budge. However, the Green Belt Movement which she builds has continued to champion her course, an indication that she has left a legacy to continue providing guidance toward environmental conservation and sustainability not only in Kenya but at the global level as well. Maathai's commitment to environmental protection gets support from those with similar minds like the ecofeminist, Charlene Spretnak (1992). Spretnak introduces the idea of women nurturing qualities as relevant to environmental protection. She refers to this idea as Ecofeminism.

Several feminists and gender theorists make the distinction that it is not because women are women or feminine that they relate to nature, but because of their similar states of oppression by the same male-dominant force. The marginalization is evident in the gendered language used to describe nature and the animalized language used to describe women. Some discourses link

women specifically to the environment because of their traditional social role as nurturers and caregivers. Maathai's qualities closely mimic these in her portraiture but beyond she also urges other women to embrace these character attributes.

Since there are several different types of feminism and different beliefs held by feminists, there are different versions of ecofeminism. Spretnak (1992) further explains that there are three main 'paths' to ecofeminism, and that they draw in a diverse group of people, which strengthens any movement, such as: one, through the study of political theory as well as history; two, through the belief and study of nature-based religions; and through environmentalism that links up closely with Maathai's Green Belt Movement.

The study suggests that Maathai can be described as an Eco feminist through her role in the Green Belt movement. In her efforts to conserve the environment, she protests against the allocation of portions of land in Karura Forest to private developers in 1988 and gets into trouble with President Daniel Arap Moi's regime.

In the chapter titled 'Cultivation' Maathai narrates her Agikuyu community's love for the soil that the older people especially her mother handed over to her as a legacy. She says:

Like many African girls with their mothers, I saw my mother cultivating the soil and so I did the same. We did not have refrigeration or coolers so each day we had to harvest food for that evening, especially roots and green vegetables. Although the work was hard, it was rewarding. Because of the frequent rainfall, the soil of the central highlands was often wet enough that you could make a ball with it, but still porous and smelling fresh. When you could rub it between your fingers you could almost feel the life it held... In addition, food crops like peas, beans, arrow roots, millet and maize, my mother continued to grow pyrethrum... it was the only cash crop black farmers could grow. Tea and coffee cultivation was restricted to the white settlers. My mother also had two cows, a few goats, and chicken-just enough to provide for our household needs. (Maathai: 37)

The traditional gender roles among the Agikuyu where women were closely associated with farm work, such as weeding, prepared Maathai for a close relationship with the environment in her later life. According to Bem (1980), each woman exemplifies a life that begins within the boundaries of local traditions and ends in the open spaces of globalised debate and activism. Giving specific dates, Maathai describes efforts to prevent the construction of office and residential blocks in the forest by raising people's awareness and planting tree seedlings in the forest. She reveals her courage and resilience as she stands up to police brutality in order to save the forest. Even though she is wounded during the protests, she does not give up the struggle to conserve the forest and she construes the injuries as part of her desire for environmental conservation.

As the literary artist conveys her feelings, she determines the meaning that the reader construes of the work of art. She curves the GBM as a sword with a double edge. One side genuinely meant as an instrument of environmental conservation. Another meant to wage war on the corrupt government of President Moi. For instance, Maathai's self-proclaimed mettle in fighting the corrupt governance of the then Moi regime are aptly captured in the following words:

Many of us had been working for years to extend the democratic space and protect the environment ...that gave us more hope that we could peacefully restore democracy in Kenya. Elections were to be held in 2002, and there were strong indications that President Moi would finally step down. The international community had grown weary of the corruption and misrule in Africa, where strong men drove their Nations deeper into poverty and despair... despite this Kenyans had to contend with realities of a government hell bent on its own enrichment and power. (Maathai 280-281)

The image of space is worth exploring here. The environmental, the political, the democratic as well as the domestic spaces, indicate that the idea of 'space' has assumed renewed attention in Maathai's narrative. Further to that, we argue that it is the private sphere that can help articulate

the public sphere. To this end, we demonstrate that Maathai gained more voice and strength after her divorce. For one, the divorce picture redefined the gendered individual 'at home' and the collective one out there. Maathai's domestic space was so intertwined with environmental politics that occluded her public space. Maathai studiously subverts her roles in all these fights in the eye of the society.

Foucault's (1970) New Historicists' view on the idea of changing spaces lends credence to our discussion. The history of spaces, at the same time becomes a history of powers that derives fulfilment in Maathai's *Unbowed*. Maathai gives us 'her story' as opposed to history. She tells the story of her life as opposed to the histories others have told.; thus, subverting the norm. A heroine tells her own story. Her prison occurrences as a result of treason helps explore Maathai's diverse identities. In prison, she acquires the gait of a human rights activist in addition to eco-feminism.

4.1.6 The Subverted Maathai in Prison for Treason

Maathai identifies self as an activist in championing various courses relevant to human rights and Kenyan rights in politics. Maathai was charged with treason because she sought to destabilize the corrupt Moi regime by attempting to claim and free more democratic spaces for the Kenyan people. These efforts are evident when she translates individual problems in to societal concerns. This lands her in trouble with the government of the day. She defines self as a prisoner in Kenya and more so a woman prisoner. She narrates the incident reflecting on her time in prison for treason. Maathai narrates: "Denying me the ability to control what happened to me, was for me the greatest punishment the regime could met on me" (Maathai: 214). The arbitrary arrests meted on Maathai and men or women with similar agenda were an indication that the Moi

government had become highly dictatorial and therefore countered these oppositions with a full thrust of their force.

The autobiography gives the narrator the chance to tell her story differently as it maintains access to unchanging truth as a subversive literary discourse. According to new historicism, the tenet of subversion, the narrator exposes the malpractices of the Moi era, by use of literary tools. Innocent personalities were being detained for raising a voice on the right to be heard against the dictatorial leadership of the government of the day. Maathai felt called upon to act. She narrates the incident of going to court when her legs could not literally carry her.

The charges against me were serious; spreading malicious rumours, sedition, and treason, the last of which carried a death penalty... I was confined to a holding cell at Langata Women Prison. There were no coverings, and I slept on the floor of the cell that was wet, freezing cold, filled with water and filth. I wondered whether the floor had been flooded deliberately. Unlike the first time I was imprisoned, I didn't have a blanket and I was alone in the cell. I was also arthritic in both knees, and suffering from back pain. In that cold, wet cell my joints ached so bad that I thought I would die... the guards left me alone but constantly opened and closed the door and the boom, boom, boom it made... the lights were kept on twenty four hours (Maathai; 214-215)

This is an indication that Maathai suffered in the hands of the dictatorial regime. Other members of the public would at times join her in support of protesting against the government of the day. Whereas Maathai was more economically empowered and could afford to hire lawyers to represent her in a court of law, others could not. The women who join hands with her to fight for the release of their sons' over their arbitrary arrests is another good example here of President Moi's misrule of Kenya during his tenure in office.

The role Maathai plays here compares favourably to that played by Beatrice in Achebe's (1987) novel. Beatrice's depiction is parallel to the Nigerian traditional culture whereby; the women could not participate in the running of the society until such a time that the men had failed. When

such is the case, Achebe says: ‘women then move in to rescue the society from further damage (1988: 41).’ Maathai does this. She intervenes on behalf of fellow Kenyans to try and salvage the society. A similar sentiment is echoed by Ngugi (1972). He says:

The African writer... must be committed on the side of the people (as indeed he was during the anti-colonial struggle) whose silent and violent clamour for change is rocking the continent. By driving himself deep into the collective consciousness of his people, he can seek the root, the trend, in the revolutionary struggle. (Ngugi: 42)

Maathai’s *Unbowed* has chosen commitment. She is on the side of the people struggling to bring revolutionary change from the cruel dictatorship of the Moi regime. She decries poor governance and grabbing of public land by the President and his cronies. As an African writer, Maathai responds to the collective consciousness of her society urging fellow Kenyans to join hands in fronting for multiparty politics in Kenya.

Maathai argues that the incumbent President Moi then, applied a lot of police brutality to sustain himself in power. She explains how she joins mothers of political prisoners to fight for their son’s release. To indicate anger and frustration the women strip in front of the police. They have to resolve to a temporary measure of stripping naked to counter the police brutality. Undressing therefore implies that the women are using what they hold dearest to fight their war of liberation. In so doing, they manage to win the moral war and rally the masses to their side. They become the victims and the government rogue agencies the villains. Maathai thus subverts the normative gender identity by being forceful and pushing the leadership of the day to free more democratic spaces.

4.1.7 Conclusion

Maathai’s portrait displays subversion from the normal order of doing things in Africa particularly on the part of the woman. This chapter has examined the autobiographical portrait

that seeks to subvert an existent order by portraying self differently, thereby seeking an alteration of gender identity. She therefore defines her portrait as an ardent environmentalist, emerging as an advocate of revolutionary change through which women ought to be given recognition to play politics alongside the male folk for there is space enough to accommodate them. She dismantles the male stereotype of women by destroying the patriarchal hierarchy that relegated women to the periphery, and replaces them with women in positions of power. In addition, she fights the unjust governance of Moi by putting frantic efforts at protecting the environment. She cleverly links women specifically to the environmental conservation because of their traditional social role as nurturers and caregivers. The writer does not allow self to lose the sense of identity. She identifies with her traditional African community confronted with culture clash.

Maathai thus creates a subverted normative model portrait that speaks on behalf of women, for women and for the citizenry's desire for change. Her series of imprisonments are sacrifices she has to make in order to free democratic spaces for fellow Kenyans. This is a show of commitment and demonstration of solidarity with her people. Maathai's efforts are acknowledged worldwide. She gives a vision of hope through her Green Belt Movement and through the several collaborations that she forms to help develop women as full members of the society, not subordinates and to also keep check on poor governance. Of great importance is the creation of 'Freedom Corner', from where disgruntled political elements have continued to voice their displeasure over poor governance issues. Suffice it to say, it is this 'Freedom Corner' that provide-d the crucible for multiparty politics in Kenya, culminating in the freeing of the democratic space in the country – the dawn of multi - party politics in Kenya.

4.2 Maathai's Subverted Identity Challenging Power Relations

4.2.1 Introduction

By mention of the term challenge, the study construes the autobiographical narrative calling for a shift in thinking. The narrator makes attempts at constructing, reconstructing and reinventing the self even as she navigates for new identities. Maathai redefines self differently from how the society did in the past in an effort to offer solutions to the problems of gender relationships and roles in the African societal structures. The language used cleverly communicates that literary imagination shapes cultural values, social distinction and political contestation. Fascinating debates since classical periods of Plato and Aristotle as to which is superior between history or literature and which should therefore be accorded more significance continue even in the hegemonic power search at the global level. *Unbowed's* formation as text, deviates in its construction of gender identities in that it challenges' existent power structures. The narrator subverts such inherent structures in her text.

The study argues that over the years the United States has enjoyed hegemony, which is a state whereby the balance of power is maintained by one nation being at the helm, dominating world politics and economy (Kenneth 1979). Today, however the world is therefore moving from a hegemonic structure to a bi-polar system in the stability of supremacy. Similarly, the balance of power in the single unit of the society, the family, has been destabilized. The society equally experiences a paradigm shift from a balance of power as a patriarchal society, a fact Maathai's *Unbowed* demonstrate and offers remedies towards coping with the new situations. Thus, she renders her story differently from how male authors have done in the past, in the light of these societal changes. For instance, the narrator identifies environmental degradation and sets on a move to bring solutions to the problem. She thus identifies self as an activist but not passive, as

the then patriarchal society would have wished to define her. Maathai sensitizes her readership on the issues of government officials grabbing public land, mutilating it and therefore affecting the natural ecosystem, a deed that she challenges head on because she sees it as a cause of poverty in the African continent.

In *Unbowed* there is a conscious and deliberate process whereby Maathai as the protagonist shifts from her cultural views to adopt global views so as to partake in new roles. In Maathai's case, she has had to change her way of thinking so as to fit in with a dominant social group. At the family and professional level, she has had to juggle with societal expectations that have put the patriarchal order at the apex. She portrays self as destroying male stereotypes of women by dismantling the patriarchal structures that relegated women to the periphery. While struggling to describe self differently from how the society would have her do, she appears defiant, and portrays self as challenging an order that is opposed to strong women almost to unimaginable levels. What Maathai alludes to in her reconstructions of identities in *Unbowed*, is in agreement with Ndegwa (2013) whose contributions to the debate on Power and Politics, reminded the women that they must begin thinking of the bigger picture in order to get power. Maathai portrays self as seeking this power by venturing into competitive politics and organizational leadership roles alongside the male folk in the patriarchal power structures.

Faced with real life situations which are difficult because the society demands a different person from who she really is, Maathai tries to challenge the statuesque. However, she does not let the then male dominated society destroy her resolve to nurture and protect the environment, in putting checks inherent in the dictatorial and corrupt governance of the Moi era in Kenya; and in helping improve on the lot of women even as she fights poverty. In actual fact, she emerges as an advocate of revolutionary change in an effort to help fight diseases, hunger and poverty in

Africa. This is because she realizes that poverty is a result of poor governance. Maathai also tries not to let her education and her social class bar her from performing her God given roles as a woman, as a mother and as a wife. She depicts self-playing her roles as a wife, as a mother as well as attending to her professional demands. She juggles all these roles, depicting identities that defy fixity in the process, thereby creating legacies. Bem (1995) discusses how women's pursuit for education results in dismantling gender polarization and compulsory heterosexuality: giving options for alternative roles; and alternative attitudes as to how women should be viewed.

Butler (1990) argument that gender identity is not fixed and can change is in agreement with the challenges Maathai poses over her portraiture. Foucault's (1970) intriguing suggestion that a whole history of spaces that would at the same time be a history of powers remains to be written. Maathai certainly writes in a manner that challenges the power spaces that a woman now wants to compete for alongside the male folk. She moves back and forth in her narrative as she connects the significant events in her life. She is concretizing the subverted gender identity; in telling the story of how she undergoes all the transformations to become who she is at the time of writing. She uses explication to illuminate subjugation of women, whose remedy is empowerment through education. *Unbowed* therefore renders a story of personality formation, the character of an ordinary woman slowly transforming to become a formidable woman.

Freire (1970), examines how knowledge organizes to transform oppressive structures and create more equitable, caring and a beautiful world through action and reflection that is co-created with those who have been marginalized and dehumanized. However, as democratic spaces open up to them, they subvert the normative gender identities and identify selves as heroines where before the patriarchal society did not take note of them. For instance, the reader witnesses the accolades that Maathai receives for actions such as the Green Belt movement, being the first woman south

of the Sahara to attain a PhD and to hold a teaching job in a university setup, and standing up in the political turmoil. Unbowed thus constructs an individual life course as a coherent meaningful whole of a woman challenging her ascribed normative roles and seeking a difference.

Maathai makes a statement in the clamour for gender equality and parity in her memoir. She makes a strong statement and works hard to reclaim matriarchy arguing that in any case power was initially in the hands of women in her traditional Agikuyu community. However, by a twist of fate that she narrates about in the Agikuyu myth in their traditional society, the male folk grab this power from the women.

Maathai narrates how she actively disrupts the then Moi government's dictatorship and its destructive elements. She also sets herself free from restricted boundaries set up by the patriarchal order. Maathai disqualifies the patriarchal notion of a 'mere woman.' This is in agreement with Greenblatt's (1980) New Historicism tenet of power hierarchy. She scales immeasurable heights of positions of power which duly interfere with the traditional patriarchal hierarchal structures.

4.2.2 Dismantling Power Structures

Maathai is privileged to attend school and excels in her academics at a time when education was not so accessible to women. She exhibits an excellent performance in academics and excels at St. Cecelia Primary Boarding School and joins Limuru Girls High School. At Limuru Girls her scores reveal of a promising student earning the Kennedy Scholarship to study in the United States. Maathai joins St. Scholastica College in Arkansas graduating with a master's degree in Biology and comes back to Kenya where she gets a lucrative job as a lecturer at Nairobi University. She earns another scholarship to pursue her PhD at the University of Pittsburgh, Germany and graduates with a doctorate in Biological Sciences becoming the First African

woman south of the Sahara to attain this degree. She says of her academic prowess: ‘I was an iconoclast as a child, determined to get education even though most African girls then were uneducated at the time’ (Maathai :6).

Whereas most girls were uneducated at the time of the narrator’s early childhood, Maathai had the privilege and support propelled by determination to get education. Social justice advocates view social identities as established by the existing cultural norm. The sociocultural norm thus allocates powers to different segment of the society. In the Agikuyu community and by extension many cultural formations in the patriarchal order determines who has which power. This is very well explained by the gender theory. The traditional society did not allow women to exude power, the inherent structures discriminated against them; and subjected them to oppression. Education in the Agikuyu society where Maathai grew up, was thus viewed as a privilege for male children but not girls. The fact that Maathai gets education in Kenya at this point in time indicates that she was going against the set norms of society. The study construes Maathai as subverting the gender norms by seeking education at a time when it was unattainable for girl children. Mandela (1994) says of education that it was a weapon that freed the mind from oppressive structures. Patriarchy enhanced secession, a selective practice of discriminating against others, particularly women. However, the fact that Maathai portrays self as ‘an iconoclast’ going in pursuit of education indicates that she is geared towards seeking a different way of doing things. She foreshadows her attempts at dismantling systems that treat women with a bias.

The patriarchal society that Maathai depicts is one that has preference for male academic achievements but is very negative towards female high achievers. For instance, her husband

views her in a socially defined manner according to the culture of her people then as illustrated in her assertion that:

We were a young couple, both well educated in America, and society expected a lot from us. We both had demanding jobs (he in parliament, me in the university) and we were raising three young children. We were under a lot of pressure. I was also facing the challenge of venturing into what was considered a man's world... Nobody told me that a man would be threatened by the high academic achievements of a woman like me. But Kenyan society idolizes education and considers it a panacea for all other social problems. Traditionally, society also put more value on boys than on girls: boys are provided education before girls and boys are expected to be greater achievers than girls. Therefore, it was unspoken problem that I and not my husband had a Ph.D. and taught at the university. That societal attitude toward me in regard to my husband shaped Mwangi's view of me: he saw me through the mirror given to him by society rather than through his own eyes. He was a product of the times and felt toward educated women the way most men in Kenya did then... (Maathai 139-44)

The balancing act in merging roles clearly becomes a challenge of power games to Maathai and her husband. The New historicism proponent Abram (1999) attempts a plausible explanation for this phenomenon. He posits that Literature can play a political function in relation to power play. To this end, we situate Maathai's circumstances to a period in time when culture dictated that a man or a woman perform certain roles but not others. According to Abram, the tenet on subversion seeks to explain the degree to which a text such as Maathai's *Unbowed*, is more the product of a culture than an individual author and in turn how the text helps create culture. However, this is a norm that the author opts to subvert. Unlike most women at the time of writing her memoir, the author was empowered. She enjoys a level of power as a result of her

level of education which Mwangi her husband has difficulty understanding because he is a product of the society that looks down upon women. Yet Maathai is a woman who has chosen to be viewed differently; and who has chosen to subvert the usual patriarchal order of doing things, particularly that of discriminating against women. She portrays self as refusing to be discriminated against.

Maathai's title *Unbowed* seeks to conceptualize a new woman. She therefore portrays self as challenging the power hierarchies in the then male dominated society. She seeks spaces alongside the male members of the society and refuses to be chained to patriarchal cultures that refuse to recognize her worth. For instance, she chooses to pursue formal education at a time when the opportunity to go to school was not so open to all girls. Another good illustration manifests itself at the university when as a lecturer; she demands to know why women are discriminated against by denying female lecturers housing allowance, health insurance, and pension on the basis of their being married yet give these benefits to the male lecturers (Maathai: 103). They also pay the women lower salaries than their male colleagues. Maathai has a major quarrel with the university's schemes of service and the remuneration package. Coates (2001) examines conceptions of identity as more often than not articulated in terms of space metaphors arising not merely from convenience but rather because of an individual's desire to seek a difference in quest of a new identity. So Maathai is seeking a space that was not initially allotted her, which is tantamount to subverting the normative gender identity. The subversive tendency questions the order the male folk have hyped for themselves.

In our analysis of Maathai's attempts to balance the two demanding roles with which she is confronted, raising up family and growth in her career, she steps on her husband's toes, bruising his ego- the patriarchal foreboding, thus. She laments that her husband, Mwangi later complains

that he found her to be “... difficult; too educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn and too hard to control (Maathai:142). The study notes that she resolves to do only what was practically possible. In the process, she learns to become a new person. According to social change, a tenet of gender theory, Bem(1981) states that depiction of a character as trying to mould self differently is a method of, seeking social change, a different way of relating.

Maathai depicts a society that is in dire need of changing its views towards how men and women relate. She has to exercise more power than the society allows her by including the socio political context and the historical vision. The socio political context implies that she demonstrates how she has had to relate with others with a view to impressing them to vote for her husband, Mathai Mwangi who was contesting a political seat in Langata Constituency Nairobi. Nevertheless, the husband misconstrues her efforts. Seeking to include the historical vision, on the other hand implies projecting her dreams to accommodate the odds that she is likely to be confronted with as a result of the societal expectations. In order to survive, Maathai has no choice but to subvert the status quo. She therefore contests and seeks the very political positions earlier reserved for the male gender.

Maathai decides to seek the seat of Chair, Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization. (Progress for Women’in Kiswahili language). She says that at this time in Kenya, ‘the number of highly educated women was still small and ‘they were viewed with suspicion by many people in authority’ (Maathai: 157), as seen in her observation that “I had made some headlines. Now I was known to the authorities and they didn’t like what they saw ‘an educated, independent African woman aspiring for leadership’ (Maathai:157)

This indicates that being active advertised Maathai negatively in the public domain. She indicates that the authorities didn't like the fact that she was educated, was independent and was aspiring for leadership. Gender schema as elucidated by Bem (1980) determines the view on how personalities in a given society shape their thought on relationship according to the norms of that society. The society then still expected a woman to be passive and subservient to male power. Maathai's thoughts started to shape up differently because of her education hence her attempts at subversion. She portrays self as subverting the normative gender roles. The male folk, including Maathai's husband are unhappy with her because of her construed strengths. Mwangi probably saw her as usurping his powers as head of family. She was doing and undoing gender roles (Butler 1990) therefore, going against the gender norms as prescribed by the patriarchal ideology.

Butler (1990) discusses the concept of 'doing' and 'undoing gender. Undoing gender entails working outside the set norms of the society, causing gender trouble and subverting identity. The set patriarchal structures are depicted in Maathai's literary text as being destroyed. The spaces previously in the docket of the male members slowly open up to her as a woman. The metaphor 'Unbowed' implies resilience, as she demonstrates while seeking and asserting her presence in public service while engaged out there; instead of cooking at home as was the norm. She has had to wade through enormous storms narrated through a sense of historicity, frequently implying, in the instance of writing, a close link between her life and the literary work. Unbowed thus reconstructs an entity itinerary as a consistent, meaningful whole of a woman challenging her allotted place.

Maathai admits that, rather unexpectedly, she finds herself as part of that campaign in which Mwangi as a political contestant needs her support. The social norm expected her to be at the beck and call of her husband at all times. Mwangi himself expected her to be by him at the campaign rallies that turns out to be very demanding since she has to undertake her teaching duties, dissertation writing and the politics. Her absence from the public beside him would be construed as not being supportive of her Husband. More so from the society that was already questioning her performance. For instance, she says that: ‘the authorities didn’t like what they saw: ‘an independent African woman aspiring to leadership...’ (Maathai: 157). The statement implies that the patriarchal society did not like strong women. The society was comfortable dealing with soft spoken, submissive and passive women (Grambs,1978). In the patriarchal societies strong women are perceived to be going against the grain and interfering with the inherent structures. The Gender theory in the tenet of social change (Bem: 1980), asserts that by women raising their voices, they were seeking spaces to deconstruct societies’ earlier identities about them and reconstruct their own. by way of illustration Maathai says” ‘Sometimes I would work all night, even though I was pregnant with our first child like any other woman without my academic credentials, I attended to my home, personally received and served guests, and made them feel welcome...’ (Maathai: 109)

The above quote shows that Maathai made efforts to conform to the demands of the patriarchal society but only rebelled when she realized that they were putting undue demands on her to conform. This is because unlike the other women, she had the strain of her career, coupled with the fact that she was studying. She depicts the African woman as overburdened because amidst all the work and even when without house help, the spouse does not help at all but instead still blame her for various shortcomings. The gender theory states that femininity and masculinity

affected an individual's thought process. Fedewa (2007) posits that the gender theory finds meaning in a text by looking at how boys or men are ridiculed by others if they fail to conform.

Complexities of who does what or who steps in for the other can be overwhelming for the female member. For example, if boys and men, women and girls fail to stick to their boundaries according to the societal expectations, they fall out with the patriarchal order. So Maathai and her husband get into conflict because the gender roles have been supposedly violated by the strong, educated and working class woman taking the lead in Mwangi's household. She thus appears to be challenging the set normative gender identities of that historical period as she depicts subversive behaviour.

Maathai defines her new roles that emerge as a result of her marriage, work and her husband's political interests. For instance, while participating in her husband's political campaigns, her eyes open to the mutilation of the environment, and poverty faced by women and other vulnerable groups both in the urban and rural set ups. The major challenge between the work and family fronts; the societal expectations notwithstanding, proved difficult for her. At this point in time and with their first child on the way, Maathai did not just sit back or, hire a house help to run her family affairs on her behalf. With the salary she was drawing from the university, she could easily do that. In any case, her plate of obligations was already full, but she goes ahead and tries to balance the different fronts.

She narrates:

I was very conscious of the fact that a highly educated woman like me ran the risk of making her husband lose votes and support if I was accused of not being African enough- of 'being a white woman in black skin'- this means that competitors and detractors would visit our home with a double agenda: some would claim to be supporters and want Mwangi's guidance, while others would look for gossip that could be used in public rallies to

embarrass him and make him lose votes. I treated everyone the same, even when it was obvious they were detractors. They were often surprised I spoke in Kikuyu, as well as the National language Kiswahili and the official (English). I received them warmly and treated them with respect... (Maathai:110)

In all these family undertakings, Maathai does not tire. She narrates that she believes she played her role well. She muses that the educated African men, however, wanted to project their ‘Africanness’ through their wives, both at home and in the society. She states that “women are commonly described as carriers and promoters of culture” (Maathai: 111). This therefore put societal expectations on women, especially the educated ones that were quite demanding. According to Bem (1998), women are encouraged to sublimate other desires to accommodate the traditional roles of wife and mother. Once they start serving in these roles, their lives are dictated by putting the needs of others first and by a narrow definition of appropriate behaviour.

By the definition of putting other people’s needs first, at the expense of their own, Maathai implies that, as an intellectual, her portrait has to be developed to accommodate change. Thus, the study concludes that the gender discrimination that women face in society is mirrored in the traditional conceptions of wife and motherhood. Maathai consequently describes how being a politician’s wife put her in the public eye and how she had to change her mode of dressing to fit into this space allotted her. However, Maathai tries to fit in and when she realizes that the societal expectations are too demanding on the part of women she reflects on the existent structures by saying:

Another reality of being a politician’s wife was that I was constantly in the public eye, whether with Mwangi or on the campaign trail, or as often was the case, representing him at forums where I was the featured speaker. This experience led me over the next few years to develop the style I maintain to this day. It became important to me not to put on clothing that might put

me in a compromising situation because it was too tight or too short. Therefore, long dresses and skirts, practical as well as comfortable and stylish became my mode of dressing. I gradually abandoned the short dresses (even my nice red one!), trousers, and high heels I had accumulated and loved to wear in America. (Maathai: 111)

As evident in the foregoing observation, Maathai clearly tries to fit into the demands of the society then and explains the extra mile she goes to negotiate acceptability. For instance, she has to tailor garments that are 'all weather' and has had to abandon wearing short and tight dresses, trousers and high heeled shoes because they did not seem comfortable with the Kenyan society to which she had returned. While out there in the US, she loved to wear them and the American society had no problem with her mode of dressing. She makes enormous sacrifices to balance the several roles that she is confronted with. She goes to great lengths to enable the reader see the facts of her own time, in the historical context, in a particular way. The New historicism theory holds the view that a writer of a literary work, while representing a period in the work, selects a synthesis of facts and events and tells her or his story in a certain way, (Greenblatt: 1980). Maathai selects and synthesizes the facts of her time to include in her story. She explains to the reader what used to happen and why she tried fitting in but when she could not, she chooses to become 'unbowed' to imply that she has limited choices but to subvert the normative gender identity.

To this end, the study seeks to interest itself in the interpretive constructions which the members of a society or culture apply to their experience. Maathai applies her reconstruction of identity to her experiences in her narration. We conclude that she resolves to be unbowed as she seeks a new identity that allows her to be herself and to realize her vision. In being herself and in resolving to be subversive and unbowed, she acquires a different gender identity. The study infers that Maathai dismantles existent patriarchal structures that put a lot of pressure on a

woman to be submissive yet did not acknowledge their efforts in an attempt to conform, and does not guarantee her happiness in her marriage. She therefore resolves to subvert the gender norms of her identity, particularly that of being unbowed or astute and defining self as subversive.

Maathai is disappointed in the society that seeks to make her conform yet it does not guarantee her a happy marriage and even seems to take sides with her husband against her. Having tried and failed to balance work and family, Maathai attempts a lengthy narration to explain herself and why she becomes so resolutely ‘unbowed.’ In retrospect, she volunteers events leading to and the aftermath of the elections in which the husband loses. A few weeks after Mwangi had narrowly lost the election, Maathai had their first child. This was therapeutic for both of them; it was a huge source of solace after the loss in politics. Maathai reminisces:

...a few weeks later, our child was born...in line with the Kikuyu tradition, we named him Waweru, after Mwangi’s father. I took a few weeks off from the university but went straight back afterwards. I hired a nanny to take care of Waweru during the day, although at lunch time I came back home to nurse him, even though these were the days when African women were being advised not to breastfeed but instead to give their babies formula. I enjoyed being a mother and had a wonderful time during those early years with Waweru and then with our two other children, Wanjira, our daughter, whom we named for Mwangi’s mother, and Muta, our second son, named for my father...(Maathai:112)

The power of male dominance is noted in the imbalance of naming the children. The Gikuyu culture of naming children require that the man’s father and mother are named first then the mother’s parents. Two of Maathai’s children are named after Mwangi’s parents., This is a clear indication of male dominance in the culture of the Agikuyu people where Maathai belongs. The ideological norm of naming children indicates the bias inherent in the patriarchal society at the

time of writing *Unbowed*. To this end literature is reflecting a factual historical context, depicting a culture of the Agikuyu traditional naming of children which favoured men.

Despite full time work at the university, Maathai had to balance among several other roles. She performs several roles differently from the set norms, as her new responsibilities dictated. Butler argues :‘You say that categories such as ‘man,’ ‘woman,’ ‘male,’ ‘female’ are displaced. We have to consider what displacement means: they have lost their traditional place in a kind of political argument but does not mean that that they cease to be an urgent political theme (Butler 2004:3). For instance, she had to support her husband Mwangi on the campaign trail as well as nursing her new born baby. She used her Lunch break to go home and breastfeed her son, Waweru. This shows that she values both family and work; and allows both to seamlessly weave into her daily life. Being the educated woman, she is viewed by the society as a ‘white woman in a dark skin,’ she ironically pulls stunts and communicates a clear point to the society that, being educated, does not hinder a woman from performing her family obligations. She argues that one need not lose out on her femininity. The balance is in performing these multiple tasks at the point of need; of the specific task on what needs to be done. However, this proved quite a challenge for both Maathai and her husband culminating in their going the divorce way.

The educated woman demonstrates a dual identity of sorts. Her ambivalent disposition is evident in her attempt to simultaneously conform to the African expectations of what defines a good woman in the eyes of the African society; as well as carrying out herself as an elite woman. The intellectual finds herself alienated temporarily. This is because; Maathai is not completely assimilated into the Western world. Artistically she tries to accommodate western ideas against the backdrop of African culture. For instance, as narrator, she encourages women to breast feed and to take motherhood in their strides, and discourages them against the use of milk formula.

In other words, Maathai promotes breastfeeding. On the contrary at this period in the history of Kenya, there was an aggressive campaign to promote milk formula by international business organization. On the contrary, African women were being advised not to breastfeed but instead give their babies milk formula during the period just after independence. Maathai subverts this phenomenon by teaching African women a different view. Like many emerging lifestyles, use of milk formulas such as lactogen and Nan, dried powdered milk products was being promoted by the multinational companies meant to penetrate and sustain their markets. Commercializing the powdered milk was a way of offering a ready market for the colonialists who owned the economic power of the businesses that dealt in these products. Mother's milk, according to Maathai was best for her baby. For Maathai, mothers' milk had the best nutritive value for the new born babies. The breast milk is available within themselves and is free of charge. She therefore, advises women to go for breast milk as it was the best for their babies.

It is ironic that Maathai is capable of coping with all her duties. This implies that the career woman normally expected to fail in her duties on the domestic front due to too much attention to her job was different. She subverts the norm, does all her work and still performs her different roles satisfactorily. Maathai's only major disappointed is that Mwangi does not seem to take pride in her achievements.

The portrait of a female intellectual elite is displayed under strenuous circumstances because the male member of the society is uneasy with a strong female character that depicts identities articulate in merging roles like the narrator does. According to the Bem's (1980) gender theory, in the tenet of androgyny; Maathai is androgynous thus displaying both masculine and feminine identities. As a result, the husband who embraces the patriarchal ideology loses favour with her. He indicates that she was 'too strong, too successful, and too hard to control' a woman

for him; so their marriage ends up in divorce (Maathai: 146). It is indeed curious for the study to note that a female character's achievements at the academic front could be misconstrued to be challenging male supremacy in the single unit of the family. This partly explains the reason for the divorce, which Maathai survives to tell about. The picture of challenges that intrigued the study, is what the reader intends to unravel in the "Unbowed" yet the narrator depicts self as having tried to allow, career and the domestic obligations to seamlessly flow into each other.

4.2.3 The Subverted Maathai Survives Divorce to Tell about It

Divorce, connotes the termination of a marriage or marital union, the cancelling or reorganizing of the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage. Thus, divorce culminates into dissolving the marriage union between husband and wife. Maathai narrates that she was confronted with divorce on account of her mounting ladders of success to the chagrin of her husband, Mwangi. The revelation made here is that at the time Maathai attained her PhD, the male folk had difficulty accepting the power relations in balancing roles at the family level, hence her family problems and consequent divorce. In her case however, she survives her divorce ordeal to be able to tell about it publicly. Rather than divorce put Maathai down, she put it aside and does not allow it to bother her. She rises out of it an even stronger person.

Maathai cites an interesting situation in the courtroom during their divorce proceedings that sheds light on the perceived stubbornness as viewed by the male folk over their attitude towards the professional woman in her observation that:

One moment in the court room encapsulated the situation I found myself in. I was on the witness stand and Mwangi's lawyer had asked me a question ... instead of answering I posed my question: 'why did you ask me that question?' The lawyer should have replied but he turned to the judge and said, Your Honour, did you hear what she asked me? If she dares, ask me a question in court what do you think she does to my client at home?" I realized that I had put a rope around my neck. I knew that I would lose the case. I knew that because of the exchange, the Judge would be persuaded to

believe that I was indeed a stubborn, unyielding and difficult person who dared to ask questions and seek explanation in a court of law. The Judge would use that to show I was giving hell to my husband at home! (Maathai: 147)

Maathai performs roles that demonstrate a woman who is not defenceless in the eye of the patriarchal society. She understands the law and can stand her ground. Her autobiography shows how she later advocated for family friendly courts to avoid such humiliations as she had suffered. From Oduol's (2002) argument this study observes that it is possible that Maathai lost her femininity before her husband as occasioned by high profile in academics' involvement in women movements and political attention. The series of achievements she had attained made Mwangi feel uneasy in his household hence difficulty living with Maathai. With that kind of power exuded as a result of his wife's achievements, Mwangi's authority as head of family in the gendered eye of the society is put to great test and their marriage is bound to collapse. He probably judges himself and feels henpecked before this strong woman. The patriarchal society's judgement notwithstanding; Maathai comes out strongly within the boundaries of the court to ask: 'why did you ask me that question?' She defies an existent order that expected her to be passive, to be seen but not to be heard.

In reminiscence, Maathai describes her anxiety and distress after her husband leaves using a series of rhetoric questions not only meant to explore her new status and identity as a divorced woman, but also to let the reader into her anguish and invite the reader to sympathize with her. She takes us into her literary confidence as she searches her life to identify what she might have done wrong to warrant Mwangi's departure. The reader comes along with Maathai when she makes these confessions:

I thought I had done everything: humbled myself, helped with his public role, served him, and loved him. I had tried to be a good mother, a good politician's wife, a good African woman, and a successful university teacher. Is it that those were just too many roles for one person to excel in? Did I miss something I should have paid attention to? Where did I go wrong? What did I do wrong? Because of the nature of our work, did we spend too much time apart? How could I have done so much for somebody, only to find it had not been enough to keep him with me? How was I going to cope with three children by myself? (Maathai: 142)

Maathai apportions self-blame as she describes her different responsibilities in the process exploring the roles that she plays as a wife and mother. Her androgynous quality also comes to the fore. She discovers that it is not easy to strike a balance between all of the roles. She repeats the word 'good' several times to present herself as having done her best to save her marriage and although she does not blame Mwangi directly for the failed relationship, she pauses as a first person narrator who is perturbed by the outcome of an ironical situation. The repetition of 'good' convincingly depicts her plight. However, her reference to herself as 'unbowed' in the title of her autobiography paints a different picture of her as uncompromising and the study is persuaded to believe that her inflexibility, rather than her husband's discomfort with her academic qualifications and job, may have been part of the cause of her marital woes. She tells us that when the ruling was made: "it went against me, I was now divorced. I felt cheated, betrayed, taken advantage of and misused. I walked away in pain. I was in pieces, and the worst was yet to come" (Maathai: 147). Indeed, the writing of details of a self- analysis of her marriage offers the narrator a vent to release her pent up anger and ill feeling about her failed marriage.

In the process of narrating her story, Maathai explores her new identity as a divorced woman. The study observes that African societies have a negative attitude towards divorced women (Swati:2014). Wives who cheat on their husbands are viewed badly while husbands who cheat on their wives do so because their wives failed to meet their "need" for care, love, or sex. Paying

no heed to whatever the reason for divorce, women are made responsible for divorce and it is considered as a sin in society. Instead of consoling her and helping her to get out of that situation, society makes a divorced woman's situation more miserable by insulting her, and watching her with disgrace, among other ills. In many cases, even the family members of divorced women do not want to keep her at their home.

The negative image that Maathai goes through after divorce is captured in Swati's analysis: "Women normally suffer the most after a divorce, both in terms of quality of life and emotional well-being (Swati 2014). In the African context, society has always looked at divorced and separated women as failures and treats them harshly. Their chances of future romantic relationships are pretty low. They are mentally vexed and sexually harassed. Biased attitude towards divorced woman remains the same from her parents' side. She is always seen as a burden to live with after her broken marriage. For Instance Achebe's (1987) Beatrice, comments that her mother regretted her birth because she turned out to be a girl. The mother would have wanted a baby boy. This attitude confirms the societies' spiteful attitude towards girl children and women generally and the envisions Maathai enhances so that she views herself differently and also urges the society to do the same. According to Swati (2014), there are innumerable problems faced by divorced women like rudeness of maternal family members, hardships in getting jobs, dependence on family members, remarriage problems, ridicule and gossip at the workplace.

Many people are quick to judge, stereotype and discriminate the affected women without taking time to comprehend their circumstances. Maathai seems to appeal in the text for the need to change the mind-set of the society. She says that sometimes the circumstances of the divorced woman may be beyond her control. In her case, she narrates that she had hoped it would work for

Mwangi and her but it did not. She narrates how she even tried reaching out to him but her husband had been resolute about the divorce.

Maathai's conduct in court demonstrates the need for fairness in dealing with women who might find themselves on the wrong side of the law. These women need patience and understanding as a requirement before they get their rightful place, for which a strong will is needed in the minds of the people, and in law-governing bodies. These facts of divorce lead Maathai to reinforce the establishment of family friendly courts where women would be given patient hearing. She says: 'I don't claim much credit but the government of which I became a member appointed the first woman judge, Justice Martha Koome (Maathai: 146). This is a legacy Maathai has bequeathed families in Kenya.

There is no easy solution to making members of the society change their attitude. It all starts at home with the family educating their children to accept divorce when it inevitably comes like Maathai's had. The media, educational institutions, religious organizations as well as legal bodies can help create awareness on the realities and circumstances of divorced women. Maathai narrates that what the news Editor Salim Lone did to her was to worsen her situation by interviewing her about the divorce, a week after the judgement; later and then the interview went viral soon after. She says:

A week or so after trial, Salim lone, then the Editor of Viva magazine and advocate for free expression, interviewed me about the case. When he asked me about the judgement, I told him that the only way a judge would have granted divorce was on hearsay. So that he was either incompetent or corrupt. The truth of the matter was that there was not enough evidence to

dissolve our marriage. Although it was not considered enough ground for divorce, incompatibility would have been a fairer ground (Maathai :146-148).

The court had made her a victim. She was made to appear as the culprit but instead accepting defeat, Maathai licks her wounds and turns this experience into a portrait of the legacy of subversion of gender identity. Through the women caucus, where Justice Martha Koome the first woman judge was a member, she initiates family friendly courts. Maathai anticipates that this kind of a court would minimize the harrowing experience of conducting family disputes cases in the eyes of the public and the press.

This study argues that as long as people in the society do not change their attitude and adopt an open mind, many divorced women will go on suffering the added pressure that is inflicted on them. We posit in this study that there is need to treat women more humanely, not like an isolated part of society. As literary scholars, we view Maathai's *Unbowed* as a legacy she has bequeathed humanity. The divorcees could pick up the legacy she has left, in order to make full meaning of their lives instead of wallowing in the miasma of self-pity like (Swati: 2014). The divorced or separated and widowed women could use that space created to aspire to grow their careers to become better and broader in other areas like Maathai did.

Maathai role models in this endeavour teaching by example that one should not sink into depression when marriage fails. What one needs to do is face up to it, accept it did not work and move on. Maathai does not have to allow self-pity to overwhelm her as already explained, so shouldn't anyone else as a result of divorce.

Even as Maathai negotiates identity after divorce, Mwangi adds insult to injury; as he did not want her to continue using his name. He therefore orders her to stop using his name. She

recollects, with bitterness, that she had resisted adopting her husband's name, in the first place when she was newly married but later agreed in order to avoid conflicts. Yet, ironically, the change of names into Wangari Mathai does not assure her of a happy marriage. She explains that since she does not wish to go through the inconvenience of changing names again, she adds an extra 'a' to Mwangi's surname so that it reads, Maathai, to signify her new status. With the divorce and change of names, therefore, she becomes a different person with a new name and a change of marital status.

The study echoes Myers' (1981) sentiments on new historicisms' view on economic determinism. She states that women, who are independent economically, dismantle societal structures with ease. Maathai's behaviour, in part, is in agreement and her views affirm this. She says: one aspect that helped me was that I had become a very independent person during the course of our marriage... due to my own sense of responsibility (Maathai: 143). Maathai's ability to be independent, backed up by her financial muscle, made her wade through the storm of divorce. The study infers that economic independence and professional career growth can be a cushion to a divorced woman should a marriage institution fail like Maathai's did.

There is the symbolic implication of Maathai's modification of her husband's surname from Mathai to Maathai. The study spots a protest of sorts in the initiative. Rather than revert to her maiden name, Wangari, she reconfigures the very name that she has been ordered to drop. This perhaps implies an attempt to seek solutions from within the patriarchal system. logically, we construe a symbolic implication of Maathai's modification of her husband's surname from Mathai to Maathai, as also a demonstration of her new status; a rebel with a cause- a stubbornness in conforming, but conforming all the same because there is a change of name; and therefore an acquisition of a new identity.

Out of the experience of divorce, Maathai resolves to only choose what works for her, while what does not work is discarded. The study's argument here needs to be explored further; especially the symbolic significance of her refusal to totally abandon the name altogether. By opting to modify the name, she demonstrates agency and assertively transforms her identity. She redefines herself within the very patriarchal system that seeks to change her identity at will. She therefore subverts patriarchy and stubbornly remains located within the very system but on her own terms. She reinvents a new identity that is a hybrid of her male-female identity thereby capturing the reality of the new woman she had become. Bem (1995) refers to this characteristic quality as androgyny. Maathai presents an 'in between character' attribute quality- she is both masculine and feminine in her deliberations. In the process, she displays the kind of strength that the society then would construe to belong to the male species according to the gender schema, a tenet of gender theory (Bem: 1981). So in a way, Maathai's identity subverts the normative gender identity.

At another symbolic level, the name change to Maathai is significant in that she adds a letter to the Mathai name to become Maathai implying that rather than letting divorce, deprive her, actually it adds something to her. It metamorphosis's her into a new individual ready to encounter the new challenges the world would pose to her. Rather than feel subdued, Maathai gains renewed strength and vigour to become an activist and champion several causes culminating into her winning the internationally coveted, the Nobel Peace Prize. She makes history by being the first African woman to win this prize. Thus, the reader is confronted with a strong female portrait who is courageous and persistent in a noble . This feature presents a subversion of the normative gender identity.

Maathai depicts her exploration of her identity as a woman once married, but now divorced. she depicts gender portrait as performed but not fixed in line with Butler (1999) assertion. It is therefore a mutable mask that one can wear and remove at will, depending on the dictates of time as well as place or region at a point in time. Butler (1991) describes identity categories like that of Mrs as defining a married woman. It is not descriptive but normative and therefore exclusionary. Gender here, is an illusion maintained by a prevalent power structure. Maathai once identified herself as Mrs. Mwangi, but now that she is divorced, her title changes, and with it she acquires a new identity. However, her advances in the world of academia, gives her a more gigantic title of Professor. The failed marriage rather than ruin her, builds her to the position of professor, Minister and a Nobel Laureate among other coveted accolades.

Maathai defines self in her new status. Her story has recorded details of her new identity with the double 'a'- signifying a reassertion of sorts. Through the change of names, she discovers her new self and asserts her new identity in the new name she gives herself, Wangari Muta Maathai, saying that from then on she would identify herself on her own terms. The study infers her insistence on retaining her husband's name, albeit slightly altered, as ironically revealing a kind of uncertainty in her as she begins life as a new woman. However, she is able to overcome her uncertainty by being even stronger and persistent in her pursuit of career growth and even entry into active politics in Kenya.

The use of the name 'Maathai' to replace Mathai depicts self-pride- a radical woman at performance who refuses to find a solution to her identity confronted with a masculine imposition, outside patriarchy. By adding letter 'a' to Mwangi's name 'Mathai' to read 'Maathai', she legally changes her identity that ruptures the societal expectations and Mwangi's

views that the society has a fixed identity but rather portrays the instability of identity. The study concurs, further, with Butler (1999), that gender identity is performed and not static. Maathai has simply shifted and negotiated identity but still retains the name that her readers know her as, and calls her by. To this extent therefore, the study notes her subversion of gender identity. Nonetheless, Mwangi cannot also complain because she has altered the appearance of the name Mathai to Maathai.

In addition, the study logically attributes Maathai's silence about how she meets Mwangi to lack of a period of lengthy courtship. She marries him because one of her doting aunts had told her that 'her' biological clock was ticking constantly" (Maathai: 105) yet she had not been psychologically prepared to start a family of her own. Coupled with this view is the material determinism view as fronted by Montrose (1996). According to Montrose, New Historicism insinuates materialist effects or what she prefers to call contemporary self-identified fiscal determiner.

The fact that Maathai was economically empowered determined how she related with her husband. Her economic independence makes her exude a rare confidence that many women did not have at the time. This is what Myers (1989) refers to as economic determinism. Maathai has subverted an ideological norm of the times. Mwangi perceives this as disrespect. According to new historicism, complexities in power relations not only occur at the political arena but even in family units like Maathai and Mwangi's household. For instance, she personally met the expenses of her legal team during the divorce case. She explains earlier that although she is engaged to Mwangi, she is not in a hurry to marry him but he persuades her to return from Germany where she had been to hasten their wedding plans. It can therefore be argued that she

lacked the will power for the building of a strong foundation for marriage when she weds Mwangi; hence their marriage was bound to have problems evident in her observation that:

While my family never put pressure on me to find a husband, my aunt Nyakweya always made it her business to declare that a woman's biological clock ticks constantly... she would remark on the importance of a woman marrying in good time- not waiting for too long and not paying her debt to society. She would look at me out of the corner of her eye and hope I was listening to her every word. I would smile back at her playfully, but I got the message! (Maathai: 105)

Maathai's marriage was more out of an obligation to please her aunt. Maathai met Mwangi in April 1976. She says that he was a good man, very handsome and religious. She adds that he grew up in Njoro in the Rift Valley, not far from Nakuru, where his parents had relocated from Nyeri. He had also studied in the United States and worked for various corporations in Kenya before entering politics. She states that he was always a good business man and taught her more about the business world, even though she was more at home with books, chalk and blackboard. When Maathai eventually let her family know that she was going to get married, Aunt Nyakweya, she says, could not hide her urge to celebrate and as tradition demanded for a woman, she ululated four times in honour. She indicates that her Aunt and mother were genuinely happy for her. Again her tone distances the involvement. Maathai left for Germany to study for her doctorate and stayed for twenty months. She states that:

Unlike Mwangi, however, I was not in a huge hurry. He was obviously worried I might stay in Germany longer than was good for his plans. Therefore, he wrote me many letters and sent me emissaries to persuade me to return to Kenya so we could start our family (Maathai: 107)

Maathai demonstrates a lacklustre attitude towards her marriage, and again we are persuaded to believe as readers that it carries indices of failure. When she takes us through the divorce proceedings a little later, we are doubtful it would have succeeded. In a lengthy narration, she treats her audience to detailed divorce proceedings in court, and offers information that Mwangi

“accused me of adultery, of causing him high blood pressure and of being cruel” (Maathai: 145). A contradictory view to this interpretation could be found in (Oduol: 2013) where it is reckoned that from her observation of women in leadership positions, she has realized that indeed some women have lost their femininity. She suggests that there was need for women in positions of authority to play their family roles well.

At some point in the courtroom, Mwangi’s lawyer asks Maathai a question that seemingly irritates her and instead of answering, she asks the lawyer why he is asking that question.

The study explains why patriarchy is brought out as the single most important phenomenon behind women’s subjugation. Patriarchy hangs over women, illuminating discrimination and suppresses women. So any woman who wields power, falls out with the patriarchal society. By relating the significant moments in her life, Maathai as the female autobiographer questions the existing order, through tracing the growth of the protagonist in a chronological manner. As the central character in the autobiography, she has overcome patriarchal binding of women, and refuses to take the subordinate position. The New Historicist proponent, Montrose’s (1996) view that literary texts reveal the economic and social realities, especially as they produce ideology and represent power subversion, is supportive of our view. Thus, this view assists in portraying the emerging new identity and how the protagonist has to endeavour to challenge the male power so as to fit into her new roles. She boldly questions the lawyer representing her husband, prompting him to throw a jab back at her that could easily lead the judge to a biased judgement. Maathai has also gone against a cultural schema. At the time of writing her autobiography, women in Kenya were subdued by the patriarchal male dominated society to think in a certain way, a norm that Maathai portrays self as seeking to break from. She defends self and stands her

ground against the patriarchal ideology, a decisive woman seeking voice in a male dominated society culminating in total subversion.

The study realizes that Maathai refuses to be intimidated by the husband's lawyer who asks her questions that touch on her personality. Cultural schemas according to the gender theorist (Bem 1981) have an impact not only on how people process information but on the attitudes that direct gender appropriate behavior. Gender schemas also dictated a person's value and potential, a phenomenon the narrator digresses from. Unbowed deviates from this norm in its portraiture, indicating that Maathai did not think the way the then society brought women up to do. Having been exposed to education within the country and abroad, her world views had changed remarkably and she was therefore unbowed, as the title of the book suggests. She was not ready to take trash from the lawyer even if it was in a court of law. It is this state of mind that prompts her to lose favour with the judge, leading to her loses in the divorce case.

In a later comment, Oduol (2013), observes that women who have become high achievers ought to humble themselves so that they do not lose their femininity. Maathai seems to have over reacted. She lost patience and humility. While in court, Maathai realizes that she has put a rope round her neck and confesses as much. In other words, she has depicted herself in court as defiant and unbowed. The fact that she would allow her temper to flare regardless of the fact that she was in a court of law is taken as proof of Mwangi's accusations that she had been cruel towards him. The study construes cruelty in her relationship with Mwangi at the family level. She describes herself engrossed with the lawyer in a verbal exchange in court giving self, a moment to import meaning to her artistic work- through masking and unmasking conventional roles and representations of identity. She witnesses to patriarchal discrimination of women; and

adduces evidence at the same time through her own portrait- all at one go. Indeed, Maathai challenges power relations as she mitigates in her divorce case while in court.

On the other hand, the reader notices her determination to carry on with her life after the divorce despite the feelings of rejection from Mwangi and the public. She depicts self as actualized. She realizes that, although her academic achievements may have come in the way of her marriage, she needs to be proud of her success. The autobiography not only becomes a boulevard for her to recall and celebrate her academic achievement, but also an avenue for immortalizing the self. She depicts self as highly intelligent as evident in always being the first in her class at St. Cecelia. While abroad, she portrays self as the first African student to make it to the dean's list several times at Mount St. Scholastic, and quotes part of a letter written by one of her teachers to her parents, "your daughter is doing highly satisfactorily" (Maathai: 80). Talking about her doctorate, she says:

I was the first woman in East and central Africa to receive a doctoral degree-a significant achievement that went largely unnoticed. It didn't even make the media headlines, probably because I was not the president, or his daughter, and my husband wasn't famous. It is funny how such things can be conveniently ignored (Maathai: 113)

There is a significance to note in Maathai's remarkable achievement going unnoticed. This says something about the society's view of women. In cases where women have made immense achievements, the male members of the society find fault instead of recognizing them. Mwangi's is a case in point, divorcing his wife because she has made immense achievements. His paranoia fuels his imagination even further and he makes a conclusion that Maathai is too strong, too ambitious and has caused him high blood pressure. Maathai continues with her narration to tell the reader that, within a few years of teaching at the University of Nairobi, she becomes a senior lecturer, then a head of department, and finally an associate professor. She reveals her pride by

repeating that she was the first woman to hold all these positions in the region. In particular, this demonstrates of her astute character as an unbowed woman illustrated severally in the course of her story. Her academic prowess is a legacy that she leaves behind that finally women are breaking the silence by raising strong voices. Divorce does not, and should not destroy a strong woman as she could use the space created by the divorce to pursue and enhance career growth. Indeed, she grows enormously in her career. She thus, goes against the expected norm of a divorced woman.

While narrating her experiences during the divorce proceedings, the autobiographical genre offers Maathai a concourse, which helps her get over the traumatic period of her life. It is soothing to her to make such public confession. It is highly therapeutic for her also in the sense that she is able to release pent up emotions of anger and bitterness, what Aristotle would call, catharsis. A friend, Mbaya, who stands by her side all this time, deserves acknowledgement for supporting a divorcee in Kenya then. When such identities of strong women defying their stereotypically allotted places, were rare. Such characters were sneered at and shunned.

Maathai has this to say about Mbaya:

Vertistine Mbaya helped me enormously. She was a wise and kind friend. In 1976, she experienced the trauma of her husband's death in a car crash, leaving her a widow with four children to raise. Having just gone through deep emotions herself, I think Vert could understand what I was experiencing. She knew I needed to forget what had happened and not dwell on it. She and I rarely talked about the divorce and the aftermath. By not sharing what she heard, Vert also protected me from any comments my colleagues at the university might have made to her about my situation. She helped me cross that valley (Maathai: 152).

In the observation, Maathai gives an account of a true friend who stands by her side during this traumatic episode in her life. At the time, divorcees were labelled derogatory names, but Mbaya went against the tide and stood by her through all these tribulations. The fact that she mentions

only this friend as a pillar of support implies that she may not have been able to make new intimate relationships after her divorce or if she did, then she has decided to be silent about them.

Maathai faces the challenge of her divorce head on and even tries to explain that despite the financial struggle she was facing, she could spare time, space, and resources to give her children the best she could afford, and also play both roles of father and mother. Through the autobiography, she portrays self as a caring mother who does all she can to protect her children from the pain of her divorce. She reckons: “I wanted to protect the children as much as I could from what had happened between their father and me. They were too young to fully understand the pain and struggle I was experiencing (Maathai: 152).”

Maathai acquires a new identity as a single mother and works extra hard to cope with her new situation. She sees in her children a reason to live and works extremely hard to ensure that they are comfortable. She explores her new marital status and discovers that as a single woman with children, she may face financial problems. Indeed, she faces financial problems. She says:

Money however, remained a problem. There was no legal requirement for Mwangi to support me, and, in any event, I had decided not to seek any of his wealth or property, since the loss of him as a friend and companion far outweighed any money he could give me. But I was in debt, with very few savings, and hiring the lawyers to handle the divorce had cost a lot. They had also demanded their fees up front because they didn't think I could pay once the divorce was finalized. (Maathai: 151)

Maathai explains at length how penniless she becomes after the harrowing incident of divorce and how she anticipates the hardship in raising the children single handed. She also didn't want any financial support from the estranged husband, since he had betrayed her trust in him as a friend. she indicates that she had had more value in the relationship and the bond of friendship than in his wealth. She entitles this chapter: 'Difficult Years.' Maathai demonstrates how difficult it becomes to make ends meet, especially when it came to recreational activities such as

taking the children out to swim. The reader empathizes with her when she takes her children to swim but she cannot afford a pair of floaters for the youngest, or a plate of chips for each one of them. she relates the swimming pool incident to explore her experience as a divorcee because when she was married, she did not struggle financially- implying that she and Mwangi shared the costs of the family budget. Now that she was divorced, she might run into financial problems and her identity as a divorcee comes to the fore.

Maathai discovers herself more after the divorce than she had done before. Her identity as an astute woman is revealed and reinforced. She presents self as a considerate mother whose view is futuristic. For instance, although she thinks that Mwangi has been unfair to her, she tells her audience that she tries to ensure that the children do not get dishevelled in their parents' differences and encourages them to cultivate a good relationship with their father. For instance, she entrusts the children under his custody when she has to go to Zambia on an assignment for six months. She acknowledges the fact that he takes good care of them. Unbowed presents a matriarch.

Maathai is also responsible and concerned about the welfare of her children and ensures that they have a good education, but she is quiet about their development, personalities, achievements, or her personal relationship with each of them. She only tells us that she made an effort to have them study in the US so that they would get her kind of educational experience. The fact that she keeps quiet about her children is consistent with the nature of the autobiography as the story of one's life and not the others. Maathai has chosen to leave out details about her children and of what they become later in life probably to let them tell their own stories.

Sidone (2001) proposes that the autobiographical form enables the writer to choose what to include in their stories or what to leave out. Nevertheless, since Maathai has introduced herself to us as a mother who has had to contend with the pain of a divorce, we would have wished to see her relate with the children. We feel deprived of information when we do not actually see the mother in her as she relates with her children. The matriarchy lacks in flesh, when the reader is not given a chance to see her relate and interact with her children. We would have wished to see her response to the rhetorical question asked earlier: “How was I going to cope with three children all by myself?” (Maathai: 142). However, she chooses to remain silent about them. The series of rhetorical questions depict anxiety appearing in her voice which spells some kind of uncertainty and apprehension about her divorce status.

Maathai’s new status as a divorcee tends to give her a split personality and she has to renegotiate her identity. She undergoes a conflict of anxieties that could easily go against the grain and break her; but the autobiography comes in handy to offer her subterfuge. Even as she scripts the story of her life, the fact that she is silent about certain vital information the reader would have wanted to know makes the reader equate it to anxiety on her part. For instance, the then President, Moi made it his business to keep referring to her and some other women as a ‘bunch of divorcees.’ In many cases, even the family members of divorced women do not want to offer support. As Swati (2014) claims, divorce is stigmatized. Uniquely, Maathai overcomes her pain of divorce and even goes public about it by writing about it in this autobiography.

In a way, the reader is persuaded that Maathai might also be a protective mother who wishes to safeguard her children from publicity because, unlike them, she has chosen to go public. Her children might have decided to keep their spaces private. Since her children are not of age yet

when she relates the experiences in the text, we want to applaud her for making the wise decision of respecting her children by not going public about their private lives. As she explores herself, she relates her experiences in the Green Belt Movement, women's organizations, and politics with a lot of passion, but lacks the same passion when she talks about her children. She is very sparing toward them, deliberately. The reader construes motive for the autobiography as efforts to highlight her work as an environmentalist, and therefore satisfy her implied audience. We infer that for her also, the autobiography is a vent that allows her to make confessions about her divorce, to market her curriculum vitae as an environmentalist and show her strength and immense achievements as a woman in spite of her divorce.

Maathai leaves a legacy of established family courts where disagreeing family members can seek to be heard. She also helps change attitude of society toward divorced women. She further leaves a legacy of encouragement that divorce need not break a woman by deterring her from building her career. If anything, she should use that space created to better self in terms of the fulfilment of any aspirations she might have had that marriage perhaps delayed the realization of. She leaves yet another legacy in terms of stripping by women as a form of demonstrating a strong protest. Remonstrations and protests can take different forms, uniquely as demands in given contexts may dictate.

4.2.4 Stripping as a Form of Protest and Subversion

Maathai challenges the powers of the government of the day, in holding political prisoners behind bars; and also challenges the patriarchal structures by using stripping as a form of protest. She identifies self as a women rights activist. She joins the mothers of political prisoners, women who are petitioning the government to release their sons. She demonstrates that she is a woman and a mother, feeling together the pains of their children in incarceration for political opinions.

She says that she felt that the women had: “a right to seek the freedom of their sons” (Maathai: 221). The enigmatic role she performs in her negotiation of identity on behalf of the mothers of political prisoners to voice their concern is worth noting. She leads a group of old women to undress as a last resort to have political prisoners released. She clearly incites these women to riot against the then government of the day. She writes:

I said to them, if you walk quietly to the Attorney General’s office he will not listen. I suggested to them to meet the Attorney General and petition him to free their sons and all the political prisoners... on February 28, 1992, about five mothers, their supporters and I met in Uhuru Park and walked with our beddings to the office of the attorney General. He received us well. The AG was taken aback... Go home. We’ve received your petition and we’ll review the cases and take action... but we know all about the government, how it never really did or honoured promises (Maathai; 217-218)

In her narration, she tells the reader how the government unleashes terror on the women and has Maathai beaten up. She indicates that the government initially requested and later issued an order that the women camping at the infamous ‘Freedom Corner’ disperse. By this time, she says that a big crowd had gathered around them. However, the mothers refused to be intimidated with Maathai spurring them on not to relent. Instead they did something very brave; several of them stripped, some of them completely naked and showed the police officers their breasts. ‘I myself did not strip’ (Maathai: 220-221).

From the narrow piece episode, we note the significance of stripping as a form of protest in African societies. In Africa, feminine nudity as protest goes beyond simple defiance. It takes on certain cultural connotations inclined to taboo and curses that are guaranteed to get the necessary attention. In our study, we infer that feminine nudity therefore could be perceived as a source of power in certain circumstances. Maathai explores the power and weapon of aggrieved mothers crying out to the authorities to listen to their petition. The women are using their nakedness as a

weapon to fight Moi's dictatorship. The study interprets this nudity as a militant maternal protest that draws on the cultural power of African motherhood, motivated with a desire to protect their children.

At another level, Maathai's refusal to join the other women in stripping naked could also have some vital literary implications. The study construes that, she had status to keep. As an elitist woman, she still sees various options available for expressing her displeasure at the government rather than resorting to such a desperate act. For instance, she can go to court and pay her lawyers to defend her. She has the option of writing her experiences in a memoir to be read worldwide. Moreover, she has options of doing campaigns to champion a course, like she does in initiating family friendly courts. On the contrary, the ordinary women have no alternatives at their disposal. They therefore resort to use their nudity to express their strong protest (but she leads them to it which could have been premeditated). Undressing therefore implies that the women are using what they hold most dear to fight their war of liberation. In so doing, they manage to win the moral war and rally the masses to their side.

Maathai recreates the role she performs in human rights activism and foregrounds her identity as a resilient woman. She recreates the realities surrounding her artistically, depicting self as indeed unbound. During the actual riot against the police, the women and the crowd that joined them, in support face hunger, cold, disease, and beatings from the police, but they do not give up. In the course of describing the experiences, she discovers persistence of Kenyan women and firmness in fighting for the welfare of their children. She makes a strong case for Kenyan women's contribution to the struggle for more democratic spaces, where women's pleas could also be heard, and where women's voices become forces that challenge power relations.

The struggle for fairness amidst cruelty and lack of democracy bring out Maathai's tireless commitment to humanity as evident in her support of the old women's course. Listening to these women and joining them is tantamount to amplifying the voices of the disempowered toward the country's leadership; and the decision makers around the globe. Gayatri's (1994) rebuttal: Can the Subaltern Woman Speak? Whereby, the earlier marginalized group is seen to voice their disagreement compare favourably to Maathai's efforts in this endeavour. Maathai depicts self as indeed speaking and as joining the women in their protest in an effort to have their sons released. Her narrative depicts a resilient woman, whose motive is a raging storm against the Moi era, fighting injustices of a corrupt government and going beyond borders to seek help. The quote below confirms the extent of Maathai's advocacy work. She tells us that she had put in a formal request to:

The U.S Senate Foreign Relations Committee... to apply pressure on the Moi regime..... as a result, eight Senators, including Al Gore and Edward M. Kennedy sent a telegram urging government to substantiate the charges against us. (Maathai: 220)

The fact that, Maathai involves the US in her advocacy demonstrates her fearless strength in adversity, her creative approach to building a peaceful, healthy planet and her hard work to inspire and empower women to thrive, a relentless effort noticed worldwide. She is communicating to the leaders to do the right thing. As she inspires the mothers of the political prisoners not to relent in their quest, her passion and commitment move countless people to take action to improve the circumstance of the women. Even after getting rough beatings from the police that gets her hospitalized, she declares that: "I wouldn't be silenced or deterred from telling the truth and I wouldn't go away" (Maathai: 221). The title of the autobiography, *Unbowed*, again finds its fulfilment in depicting a subversive portrait that defiantly goes against an existing order. Indangasi's (1993) study of the African American autobiographies indeed

confirms this phenomenon propelling an impulse to fight unjust institutions in the US. Maathai propels a direct confrontation on the dictatorial Moi era. According to New historicism, the retelling of history grants her the chance to tell the story of a cruel leadership that is being forced through orthodox means to respond to a people's request. Maathai speaks from an insider perspective and not just an observer; she is giving first-hand information on the daring feat of women wedging protests. The factual truths about her autobiography reconnects the work with the period in which it was written. There was a lot of agitation in Kenya with the citizenry seeking to introduce multi party politics and reduce the powers of the incumbent President at the time. Culturally, stripping, particularly on the part of a woman is a strong demonstration of protest. The protest is against the regime holding their children in custody over sedition. Thus, *Unbowed* reflects the social, political and historical contexts of the period.

Maathai portrays self-identity as stoic and makes a strong resolve to do the right thing and force the authorities to release the political prisoners. She confirms her self-portrait as an active participant in establishing a modern African cultural identity in creating a peaceful and fair Africa where democracy can be nurtured. She pushes the then regime of President Moi to acknowledge her as a force and out-rightly subversive. She runs many battles with the police in an effort to ensure that the government did not take its dictatorship too far. She appropriately subverts the existence of certain orders, artistically depicting self as obstinate and judicious. She thus destabilizes the Moi dictatorship putting his governance to question.

Maathai depicts self as challenging male power and seeking justice for the voiceless. She appears as a women's rights' activist. Her subversive narration of these events helps her to discover herself as a defender of human rights; her true identity. The president of Kenya then, Arap Moi refers to her as 'a mad woman' and as 'an Iron lady.' These are negative terms that insinuate that

she lacks feminine qualities. He refers to her and her fellow women camping at the freedom corner as “a bunch of divorcees” (Maathai: 221), derogatory terms meant to make her lose her resolve in fighting the unjust system.

In all these establishments of identity, Maathai depicts distorted realities that demonstrate conventional notions of gender, identity, sexuality and art as not being static but dissolvable. We infer that the subversion of her portraiture is attached to the legacies she leaves behind. Maathai leaves behind the legacy of cultivating peace in her ambassadeering efforts.

4.2.5 The Subverted Maathai Peace Ambassadeers

Peace denotes a state of tranquillity, quiet and harmony; the absence of violence. It describes a state free of oppression and unpleasant thoughts. *Unbowed* explores how the narrator tries to advocate for peaceful co-existence in Kenya that requires a different outfit from real diplomatic peace talks. Maathai’s tree planting venture provided this opportunity, as the global understanding of peace values people, plants, and animals. Yet to bring amity, human beings must be in harmony with nature. In challenging authority to create political spaces in freeing political prisoners as well as conservation of the environment, she tries to bring peace in Kenya. Maathai thus abrogated herself the duty of peace ambassador. She channels a path to amity. *Unbowed* is a narration of her strength to her tree planting efforts; particularly toward peaceful co-existence. The trends at a local village set up affect those in the next town or village; particularly the future generations, thus, transforming the environment, leading to less clashes for lessening the already diminished resources. Maathai’s peace narratology, describes the steps she made to ensure there was peaceful co- existence between and amongst different communities living in the Rift Valley.

In her story, Maathai narrates that ignoring the local perspectives makes it easier for the powers to exploit the land and the people on it, because the land becomes a pencil mark. The people become either important as workers or unimportant (and thus easy to displace). She recollects the story of the clash victims of 1993 in the rift valley in her mapping strategies. She reminisces:

In Kenya, people depend on their land and primary natural resources, and are very attached to them. They can quickly make an enemy out of someone who has taken land that is seen as theirs. It was this history and attitude that made it easy in the early 1990s for agents of government to stir up supporters in the rift valley to lash out against “other” tribes occupying “their” land. (Maathai: 237)

Maathai writes her autobiography for posterity to counter tribal mappings. She creates awareness to posterity by preaching peace and helps build harmonious co -existence in sharing communal resources. She observes that some politicians seek cheap popularity to gain political mileage by stirring tribal animosity. She posits that:

The ethnic violence that erupted in early 1993 in the Rift Valley, Nyanza and Western provinces was widely believed to have been kindled by senior members of the government and ruling party KANU. The government appointed the chiefs and sub chiefs in towns and villages, and used them to maintain its control at the local levels, and also used them to organize attacks on communities that the regime wanted “cleansed...” When I and others in the Kenyan opposition learned what was happening and detected the governments hand in it, we decided to bring the facts to light. We wanted people in Kenya and overseas to understand this was not just random tribal violence but rather cynical, political manipulation of the deadliest kind. As had happened with Uhuru Park and the protest of mothers of the political prisoners, people came and informed me about what was happening and asked for my help. Fortunately, I was in a position to take action. (Maathai: 237-238).

Maathai portrays self as a change agent for a noble cause. She tries to change the mind set of feuding community members. She concretizes her emergent portrait of being unbowed by demonstrating how she could intervene at various levels to try and achieve peace whenever the society was aggrieved, especially where the government of the day was concerned. It is these

intervention processes that she involved in that culminate into her being crowned an international Nobel peace laureate. By way of illustration, she explains in her autobiography what she did exactly during the 1993 tribal clashes in the Rift Valley by explaining that:

In February 1993, I gathered several friends active in opposition politics, including Dr.Makanga, and visited the Rift Valley to verify what we heard and read about. Local guides showed us houses burned and schools destroyed, leaving adults and their children with no place to go. Women had lost their husbands, men their wives and many parents their sons and daughters. People had been displaced from their homes and were sleeping in churches. It was devastating- and it was being done with the full knowledge of the government. “This is wrong!” I thought. “the politicians must be stopped.” We began to organize the victims of the violence. We held seminars, usually in local churches, where we would appeal to people not to engage in retaliatory attacks. I urged them to recognize that this was not an ethnic quarrel, but rather one that was politically instigated. You can’t beat them, so don’t join them. ,” I pleaded. “Things can only get worse.” This was proved to me by what happened in Rwanda... I also wrote, signed and circulated leaflets to churches, to local communities with the same message. I warned of the dangers to the Kenyan society if the clashes continued- escalating violence, further involvement of government security forces, anarchy and the use of the army. (Maathai: 238)

There is value to prizing peace initiatives like Maathai did in the Rift valley, parts of Western and Nyanza. In her narrative, she provides the vertical view provided by maps, the whole of a place contained in comprehensible, tangible way. She explains her being an unbowed person by endeavouring to do what was right and globally accepted. She advocates for peace by encouraging the feuding communities to plant trees and also play football. This was done so that in the course of playing the games they may forge reconciliation and forget about their enmity in her statement that:

We also suggested to the communities that they establish tree nurseries. When the seedlings are ready for planting, I told them, “invite the other communities and give them seedlings. Tell them, “These are trees of peace. We are not interested in conflict. We want to foster peace.” Maathai: 239)

Maathai depicts self as an advocate for peace by visiting victims of ethnic clashes and trying to educate them to accept to undergo a moral revolution. She persuades them not to retaliate even if another community attacks, but to plant tree nurseries and offer the enemy community the trees to plant as a gesture of peace. As an accomplished environmental conservationist, she takes great exemption as a leader in transforming the thinking of these clash victims. She preaches peace and teaches the community to adopt patterns of production that safeguard the earth and make it a better place to live in. Maathai further educates the warring communities to take care of the environment so as to help restore and support their human dignity.

Maathai advocates and negotiates for peace through her Green Belt Movement, which she single-handedly forms in the 70's. She makes democracy out of difference- by mobilizing women to plant trees. The Green Belt Movement is multifaceted: it helps improve on the living standards of the women in that it guards against soil erosion, it provides fuel, creates a steady source of lumber, shade and fruits. The yields from some of the trees planted to provide fruits curb malnutrition in children. It thus helps rein in against the high child mortality rates in Africa; as a result of malnourishment. The study concludes that the tree planting venture initiated by Maathai is thus versatile.

Moreover, Maathai also uses the tree planting undertaking to keep watch on the Kenyan Government that attempts to mutilate the environment. The tree planting exercise thus benefits the women and the other under privileged in several ways. It empowers them into positions of decision making. It benefits characters like the mothers of political prisoners who gain voice to air their disgruntlement. They are able to petition for their sons who were arrested and jailed without trial. By planting trees, Maathai was slowly freeing the democratic spaces, where women

could voice through and be heard. Women were also gaining independence from the shackles of the patriarchal structures that had denied them voice.

Maathai also demonstrates her ability to challenge power relations by mobilizing mothers of political prisoners to make a statement in a peaceful way. In reminiscence, she recalls former president Moi referring to the entire group of women camping at the freedom corner as ‘a bunch of divorcees.’ These unconstructive terminologies present as highly metaphorical and derogatory insinuations aimed at her; meant to put her down and kill her resolve in participating in the then so called manly field: the political arena of the day. Maathai plays the role of a human rights activist when she rallies the women to petition for the release of their sons, in a peaceful manner. She applies the role of a suppliant mother; the study notes that women tears command a certain secret power within the traditional rite of supplication in the Agikuyu community to which Maathai belongs. When they plead with those in authority, their plea commands attention.

A woman’s plea coupled with tears shed for mercy, is a peaceful way of putting in humble requests to those in authority. It also communicates as it has power to challenge the most indifferent and hard hearted. Both classical and biblical narratives show how the tears of a petitioning mother could win her son mercy. For instance, Rachel in the Christian Bible is a figure who best incarnates the intercessional power of the female suppliant’s tears. Rachel’s combination of beauty and `maternal instincts give her the power to soften God’s anger against her sinful descendants of the house of Benjamin in the Bible. Like Rachel, Maathai and the women camp at Uhuru Park ‘Freedom Corner’ to bemoan the fate of their sons. However, she defines self as having subverted her gender identity and now leaves a legacy of (democratized spaces) women participating side by side with the men folk. The depiction Maathai presents,

indicate how women have acquired voice and can petition their disgruntlements publicly. A peaceful way of putting in a request that challenges those in power to yield to one's plea.

The views of Maathai's memoir take on the metaphor of an ecological, historical and geographical peaceful foreboding; as she tries to establish peace with the environment as well as humanity. What strikes most is that both the global and local perspectives are best viewed through the peaceful lenses that Maathai recreates in the autobiography. The study argues that the importance of people learning 'how to think about the relationship between places and the environment, and in so doing, understand how global patterns may be interpreted from the time and place where one happens to be. She depicts an important perceptual skill in learning how to recognize the salient connections between seemingly desperate times and places. The desperation at this point in time in Kenya's history was that peace became elusive as political assassinations, arbitrary arrests and tribal clashes take centre stage. These events as told echo the new historicists views that a literary text reveals a product of historical context and is a means to understanding the intellectual and cultural context. The lack of peace in a country that had fought so hard for her independence brought back memories of political injustices in Maathai's mind during her narration.

Her use of ecology and the geography of regions help her codify her identity. She feels both rooted in the Agikuyu culture and alienated at the same time. This is because when she comes back from the US, she does so a transformed person. According to Butler's (1999) performative roles, Maathai's identity is not fixed and she plays the different roles as dictates of time and her vision for her young country, Kenya, and for women require her to do. These are ways of illustrating her thought processes, as each is a snapshot of a particular place at a particular point

in time in history. This is especially so, as the freeing of democratic spaces create in her a desire to join active politics and entwine it with peace ambassadeering.

4.2.6 Maathai's Subversion Playing Nationalist Politics

Maathai's preference for playing nationalistic politics is depicted as her undoing at a point in time in the Kenyan history. She is ahead of her time and she explains that acting as a state's woman was a liability. She first seeks a parliamentary seat in 1982 as her earlier ambitions were thwarted by Kenyan authorities who knocked her out on contention of an unconvincing technicality. She says metaphorically that in Kenya "a woman needs the skin of an elephant" (Maathai: 254) to do politics. She authenticates this by placing her portrait within the autobiography as she leaves the office of the Deputy Supervisor of Elections in January 1982.

Subsequently the authorities make a ruling that "Maathai would not be allowed to run in a parliamentary office" (Maathai: 257). This makes her realize that a patriarchal school of thought among members of the society had black walled daring women who tried to seek national elective seats. The disappointment leads Maathai to make a decision to run women's organization in leadership positions. She indeed attempts to head women organizations in order to belay, and to seem to divert her political interests that were thwarted by the patriarchal authorities. She narrates:

Our refusal to acknowledge and reward ability and performance are among the reasons that Kenya finds itself in a state of underdevelopment. I eventually learned that these are some of the games people in politics play. Those opposing my candidacy had a problem. They and their surrogates could not of course, simply come out and say that the government wanted to control NWCK, by installing its own candidate. They also said; I should not be elected head of a National women's organization because I was divorced, so didn't set a good example to Kenyan women. (Maathai: 157)

Maathai sets out to prove her capabilities in the eyes of those who had condemned her leadership skills and kept vilifying her about her marital status. She narrates the government's discomfort

with her activities because she revealed some of the weaknesses of the political leadership. Such as suppressing university students involved in human rights activism. The government of the day expresses discomfort with Maathai's Green Belt Movement. She makes efforts again in 1992 to seek a parliamentary position as a presidential candidate but loses (Maathai: 257). Competing with a society that upheld male views proved a challenge to her. However, she depicts self as strategizing to dare a political office and challenge the inherent power relations.

In terms of applying the concept of concretizing strategies to Maathai's *Unbowed*, the memoir's plot is an indication of a challenge to the existent structures inherent in Africa and the desire to give an alternative. For instance, Maathai says that some of the best brains were destroyed historically, as power wrangles took centre stage. Political assassinations compare to destruction of nature by people with no care to what was on the ground, no attention given to natural boundaries that might have made more sense, or names of places that had identified with the locales. Of significance is Uhuru Park, and Karura forest that would have been mutilated but for Maathai's timely intervention on the geographical map.

The challenge to the dictatorial, President Moi had drawn toward interference of the demarcated areas so as to build office structures and enrich himself and his cronies, are concerns that are raised in *Unbowed* through the political outfit. New historicism captures the use of historical facts as Maathai tells her story. The plot of the memoir shows that the continent needs brave women and men like Maathai to chart a course that could help save Africa from the plunder of corrupt leaders and poor governance. The fact that women were denied equal opportunities to compete men, explains in part why Africa has continued to lag behind in development. Maathai intertwines her story with the political history of the country. She illustrates that just like the environment is mutilated, so similarly does the patriarchal society destroy strong women by

subduing them through stereotypical labelling. Maathai would have been destroyed by her failed marriage had she not journeyed academically and been empowered to seek a difference. Mentioning some of these incidences illustrates the poor governance of the African regimes then; but also accords her the opportunity to reinvent and recreate historical truth for her story. Amidst all these cruelties was racism in the US that Maathai creatively includes in her story to show how challenging; and subverting a norm is possible but requires a lot of perseverance and courage.

Maathai provides a connection between slavery in America and that of colonialism in Africa, applied in the Kenyan context. The subjugation of women could be fought just as much as slavery and racism were in the US and as colonialism was fought in Kenya and brought underfoot, so could female subjugation. She therefore explores her involvement in elective politics in order to try and unite politicians opposed to the ruling party, KANU. She states that, using experiences from the US, she wished to bring social change within active politics in Kenya.

Maathai runs for a parliamentary seat after she succeeds in uniting the different parties opposed to the Moi regime. The parties unite in 2002 to form the rainbow coalition (National Rainbow Coalition- NARC) that successfully ousts the Moi regime. She says: ‘All the major communities- Luyha, Luo, Kikuyu, Kamba united’ (Maathai: 286). She wins, receiving a large percentage of the votes cast in her South Tetu constituency. She expresses her delight in the words: ‘When the ballot boxes of the first free and fair elections in Kenya were counted, I was astonished to discover that the voters had elected me to parliament. (Maathai: 288)

Maathai’s identity of being innovative in nature makes her seek to explore her environment. She uses this quality to influence various sectors in the patriarchal society especially the political

arena of the day. She attests that: ‘everywhere I went, Green Belt members came out in support’ (Maathai: 287). She understands it and crafts her Green Belt Movement to counter the corrupt governance. This is a movement recognized worldwide with most of the major ‘cities of the world going green.’ Maathai hoped to use the opportunity of her win to: ‘...lift ourselves up and address the conditions of our poverty and disempowerment to regain a sense of lost pride’(Maathai: 287). She states that the danger of forcibly compressing the global and the local into the dimensions of a map is that if one takes a place like Kenya on the global level only, you end up seeing the land only by its mappable characteristics: arable land, water bodies, elevation, mineral deposits, population density and the idea of trees to enhance a green environment. In our analysis, we conclude that she desires to use her political success to enhance biodiversity.

The political space, as defined by lines and dots, only has value in what it can bring to those who hold the maps. From these two-dimensional vantage points, of playing politics and eradicating poverty, the world becomes intellectually comprehensible, but Maathai tries to make the reader understand their environment better. Greenblatt’s (1980) tenet of power hierarchy, in the New historicists’ idea, suggest that this can be achieved by studying the use and dispersion of power and the marginalization of social classes within the work. Maathai thus achieves her vision in solving several problems through the Green Belt Movement that she intertwines with politics. The greatest of all, besides the actual conservation of the environment, is to recreate more democratic spaces for the previously marginalized- women.

Boehmer’s (2005) interests in recent matriarchal yearnings of historically dispossessed women seeking their own place in tradition and history, also informs the literary ideology that Maathai’s politics aim at. The study benefits in as far as the writer’s unique efforts at self- identity is concerned. She depicts ‘self’ as having nationalist yearnings, as probably her male counterparts

have had previously. The motivational angle to autobiographical writing seeks to answer to the reason behind the authors' literary contribution. According to Ngugi (1972:47) 'The writer responds with his total personality, to a social environment which changes all the time... Thus the same writer will produce different types of works, sometimes different in mood, sentiment, degree.' Maathai's autobiography does exactly this.

In *Unbowed*, Maathai represents the discontent concerning the issue of gender roles in society, particularly at the political table. Maathai becomes part of the change she advocates for when she joins active politics in Kenya. Like many other authors and scholars p' Bitek (1967), Imbuga (1976) Achebe (1967,1968,1987, 1988) Ngugi(,1958, 1964,1965,67,68), Ba(1981 and 1986), Aidoo (1965); she tries to show that the patriarchal arrangement, which had prevailed in many societies, had given women inferior roles. The African women's efforts at joining leadership positions were often thwarted. The patriarchal jurisdiction had been unfair and biased against women. As Maathai penetrates the Kenyan politics she eventually learns that these biases were real and were some of the games people in politics played. Kenyan women's lack of independence to carry out their businesses without interference from the men is contained in the statement; she narrates: 'Those opposing my candidacy had a problem. They and their surrogates could not of course, simply come out and say that the government wanted to control NWCK, by installing its own candidate (Maathai:157). Maathai curves a niche for self to play politics alongside the male decision makers. Just like Ngugi (1981) in his treatise says, Maathai depicts the tensions and conflicts in her changing society, like a sensitive needle in the society of *Unbowed*.

Consequently, Maathai narrates that there has been an effort by women to improve their lot, while their male counterparts endeavour to uphold the status quo. Through her literary debut,

Maathai champions several courses which she believes should prevail in society. Ngugi (1981) corroborates a literary artist's stance in the contention that a literary artist's work reflects intense economic, cultural and ideological struggle in the society. Ngugi goes further to say that a writer takes sides and can never be neutral over these ideological struggles. This study reveals that Maathai has taken the side of the people and demonstrates the ills of the Moi era in keeping the people down as he plunders the country's resources. She has also taken sides with the women as she endeavours to demonstrate the bias of the patriarchal society towards women. Greenblatt (1980) in the tenet of power hierarchy grounds this view as he demonstrates that women will struggle (Maathai depicts self as doing exactly this) to come up to speed with the male counterparts in power sharing. Maathai's entry into active politics, she demonstrates in her *Unbowed*, is but a starting point for women's political activism in Kenya.

In a similar view, Njoki (2012) continues to ascertain that patriarchy concentrated power in the hands of men and persistently emphasized on their leadership roles. As a result, if the male hierarchal position of power was threatened in any way, a man's ego no matter his intelligence quotient level was fragile and risked crashing. According to Njoki, the slightest prick on a man's ego was enough to derail his dreams and goals. This, she says, is the reason a man always wanted to stay at the top.

The power base enabled men to systematically keep women out of prominence in most of the influential sectors of the patriarchal society. So a woman who attempts positions of leadership was at risk of falling out with patriarchy. This view explains in part, reasons for Maathai's failed marriage or divorce. The study argues ironically, that Maathai's divorce served as a trigger that leads *Unbowed* to present a strong woman who spans different worlds and changing times to reveal an identity of courage, determination and tenacity. Besides that, the then President hated

Maathai for her involvement in political activism- in enlightening the masses about his misrule. The study makes inference that Maathai's narration about her entry into active politics, construes that women were starting to challenge power structures as they sought better spaces outside the domestic fronts. Maathai for one, was a champion transforming ideologies of patriarchy and leaving behind legacies.

Maathai portrays self as a heroine and a role model who has charismatic leadership qualities that the African women could easily emulate; particularly so in her establishment of 'the Freedom Corner' at Uhuru Park, whereby disgruntlements against the regime are aired openly. She has continued to inspire Kenyans to speak up and voice out even as they hold their leaders accountable in their various positions of responsibility. She stands up for what she believes in and puts up a spirited fight against police brutality. The Nairobi City council askaris brutality towards her, and negative press releases about her were made daily- but which all failed to divert her commitment toward making the environment a better place for humanity. She has made major differences globally. The sense of being alive is contained in her autobiography, which continues to testify to her audience to keep 'our environment green particularly our cities.' The birth of the GBM is notably, the mark of her single effort in changing the face of social and environmental relationships.

Her artistry ignites a flame in her readers to struggle against corrupt governance and to stand up for what is right. As literary analysts critiquing artists' works, we are interested in the 'Maathai' the author recreates who is charged with feminine strength that metamorphosis's her into a revolutionary symbol. Her choice to join the Kenyan politics and play a nationalist league uniting together political parties opposed to the ruling party KANU, and for the first time manages to oust it. She wins the elections for MP of her South Tetu constituency in 2002 after

several previous failed attempts. The new government under President Mwai Kibaki appoints her an Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources and the reader celebrates alongside her that she will now bring the change she has been struggling for. However, the study problematizes her appointment to a subordinate position of junior Minister despite her wealth of knowledge besides her passion in environmental conservation. The study argues that Maathai should have been given full Ministerial responsibility and notes the appointment to a subservient role as pointing to the President being patriarchal.

Maathai depicts self as having won an accolade recognized globally: The Nobel Peace Prize (2004). She receives news of the award while on her way to the constituency and performs a ritual in line with her interest in environmental matters. She plants a tree, the drama of which she punctuates in her autobiography giving it credibility as a work of art. For Maathai, this Peace Prize remains the most memorable achievement of all; considering that she was the First Black African woman to win this coveted prize. She wins this award while already serving in two political positions: Assistant Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, and as MP for her South Tetu constituency. However, she presents self as too ordinary a person to have achieved this internationally coveted accolade.

She says:

I thought of the long journey to this time and place. My mind went back and forth over the difficult years when I often felt I was involved in a lonely futile struggle. I didn't know that so many people were listening and that such a moment would come. When I would win such a prize... (Maathai: 292).

Maathai gets obviously overwhelmed with this award winning venture. She demonstrates to her audience that environmental conservation is closest to Mother Nature hence the need to preserve it for the sake of the future generations. The award is a mere catalyst that speeds up the process

of leaving behind legacies. Out of this award-winning scheme, Maathai has founded a foundation that funds for needy school girls. The Foundation is called Wangari Maathai Foundation or better still 'The Wangari Maathai Scholarship Fund.' This is an environmental innovations fund set up that keeps the memory of Prof. Maathai alive. The Foundation is aimed at developing action-oriented young people with strong values and commitment to the conservation of the physical and social environment in Kenya.

Each year, the Foundation Fund awards a tertiary education scholarship to a woman who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to civic engagement and leadership in environmental conservation and peace issues in Kenya. The number of scholarships is expected to grow as more actors come on board to contribute to the fund. Indeed, the funding project is a legacy the autobiographer has left behind, which lives on to posterity. As literary scholars, the study believes that this legacy will produce more models, who will continue the legacy of subverting the normative gender identities. The emergent portrait of Maathai informs and passes across to the society, legacies of fortitude that challenge power relations.

The study views Maathai as a stateswoman who fights selflessly to protect democracy, human rights and the environment from selfish and corrupt leaders who are portrayed as hell bent on enriching themselves by grabbing government land. She advises that the society must stand up for what is right at all costs. The members must be persistent in their struggles to hold the country together, and must identify the divisive elements amongst them that cause tribal clashes and plunge the country deeper into poverty. Such acts as corruption and those who uphold it; the mutilators of the environment and the patriarchs' who refuse to listen to women voices and allow them serve alongside, should be taught to accept and recognize woman power. The discussion here relates closely to Achebe (1987) in the depiction of Beatrice the heroine of the novel.

Beatrice is portrayed as a strong female character that in a way acknowledges that women can contribute to societal development as much as men do in the African society- this later improvement of the portrait was influenced by changes in the society. The study notes the increased roles that women needed to play in order to get Kenya out of the mess it was in at the time of writing *Unbowed*. A possible equally inquisitive replication of this kind of a portrait presents in Maathai's *Unbowed*. This is because, the author succeeds in subverting the normative gender identities through her portrait; which questions the corrupt governance of the then President of Kenya, Arap Moi.

4.2.7 Conclusion: Legacies

Maathai portrays self as a heroine and as an activist who has championed many courses and left behind legacies of social concern: equality of opportunities for both men and women particularly at the political table, and at the university. She has championed the start of family friendly courts and cushioned some women who were not working then to plant trees for gainful employment. She receives the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize culminating to a reward for her struggles in environmental conservation and peace keeping in the clash torn communities in Kenya. Her identity as an unbowed woman finds fulfilment in the title of her book *Unbowed* since we see the depiction of a woman who will not be defeated by difficult antagonists in her struggles to achieve her vision.

Maathai further depicts self as a role model intertwining the Kenyan nation's rebirth with her own reawakening as a courageous, strong and wise leader, who is charismatic in her deliberations. Of utmost importance is the legacy to conserve the environment, a virtue for which Kenyans should not be complacent. She says: "We cannot tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations of all species to rise up and walk" (Maathai: 295). In the

conclusion of her autobiography, she urges all women, and all men to work hard to conserve the environment and make the world a better place to live in, than they found it for posterity. In her concluding remarks at the end of her memoir, she asserts that nature can be cruel if not nurtured well and can turn its wrath on humanity. Humanity should therefore nurture it. Hence, the GBM that she bestows Kenyans with exists as a legacy that project to posterity. In her challenges towards power hierarchy, Maathai voices for gender mainstreaming in the society in her autobiography.

4.3 Concretization of Maathai's Subverted Identity

4.3.1 Introduction

Concretization in the art of autobiography connotes its implicit use of narration. Maathai employs deliberate aesthetic craft in not just telling her story but in recreating and reconstructing her identity differently from how the patriarchal society did. The story focuses on a few events that shaped the author's beliefs and personality as well as her way of thinking. Most of the incidences are crafted in such a manner that they captivate the reader. Greenblatt's (1980) power hierarchy in New Historicism and Butler's (2004) gender performativity, are the tenets used in analysing Maathai's subverted identity. Forster (1927: 18) defines a story as a narrative of events arranged in their time sequence. The narrator tells her story as lived through time. The plot is arranged in such a manner that the readers' curiosity in following the events in the story in the author's lived experiences, is highly aroused. These experiences are artistically brought out to convey the narrator's first-hand accounts of incidences. The readers' attention is hooked by the attractive narrative style and often times touched to empathize. The aspects of narrative style abound. These ranges from the use of the first person narrative strategy, the journey motif, use of interior monologue, metaphorical frames of reference, and fiction alongside truth, among other aspects of autobiographical techniques.

To begin with, Maathai metaphorically refers to herself as an unbowed person in order to concretize her portraiture. She explores the art of autobiography in the autobiographical narrative. The story focuses on a few events that shaped the authors beliefs and personality as she narrates them in a certain way. She also changes her way of thinking as a result of these experiences. She relates incidences that clasp the reader's attention toward the autobiographical narrative techniques. The use of the metaphor unbowed, attempts an explanation of a unique character that has chosen to do her things differently from the normal way or differently from what the society expects of her. The metaphor 'Unbowed' implies a private struggle questioning a self- identity. According to Butler (2004), Identity is not just a question of becoming but the social terms by which identities are supported and articulated in a given constellation of time. It is this constellation of time during which Maathai is requesting in the autobiographical discourse, to be allowed to subvert.

Maathai entitles her autobiography 'Unbowed' to imply- free, not bound by any traditions or laws. The term could also imply DE familiarization of mundane occurrences. The history of metaphors already familiar, for instance, has to be kept to ensure that what is already said is not repeated lest it bores the reader (Rice and Waugh 1996). Maathai supports what is agreeable to her but disregards that which is not. She also contributes in decision making alongside the men, thus carving a self- portrait that is unique. According to Butler, Maathai is interpreting gender in terms of power. Maathai will not stick to a definition of gender that is obsolete; she will define the gender roles according to required performances in given contexts.

Just like the male members in the society of the text make major decisions and also take up centre responsibilities in the society, so also do Maathai's ideas withstand the test of time. According to Greenblatt's (1980) power hierarchy in New Historicism, such a character in

literature dismantles the patriarchal structures inherent in the society and replaces them with others, to imply that she is making decisions alongside the male folk and demanding through her unique portrait that she must be taken seriously. This notion concretizes her conviction that she is unbowed as the title of her autobiography suggests.

In trying to unpack the title of this memoir a little further, we get a totally different female member of the society; who portrays self in deviant mannerisms from the norm at given points in time in the history of Kenya. In scripting the autobiographical work of art, Maathai inscribes for self to discover the meaning of one's life by putting it down. Concretization of the emerging subverted portraiture denotes the writer's artistry in autobiography and to what extent the practice of subversion is committed to the very model of normalization that the author seeks to dismantle. Artistic elements such as the first person narrative technique, among others come to the fore to perform gender roles differently.

4.3.2 First Person Narrative Technique

The use of the first person narrative technique is sustained as the story unfolds throughout the plot. The setting is described vividly with interesting details unveiled through the use of the first person narrative technique that authenticates the autobiography. Maathai's autobiography uses objective and subjective details as well as anecdotes to tell her life story. Objective details as she depicts can be proved. Subjective details are based on her personal feelings and opinions and cannot be proved. Point of view is the perspective from which her autobiography is written. Since her autobiography is written by herself as subject, she tells us her story from the first-person point of view and uses the pronouns I, me, and mine. As readers we experience events through the writer's eye. This entails knowing only what she thinks and feels about any given experience. Maathai's autobiography is told from her perspective or own point of view; where

the self is significant. According to Foucault (1970), literature and history remake each other. The history of Maathai (her story) constructs and reconstructs her literary writing through the use of the first- person narrative technique as she performs resilience at given points of action.

The use of the 'I' persona is significant and inspires the reader to peer into an individual's life. Maathai's autobiographical 'art' culminates into its more immediate subjective consciousness. We thus acknowledge the specificity of forms of the autobiographical self-reflection. The 'I' persona continues to dominate her autobiography, casting behind its poetic practices. One's understanding of the text itself is based on reference to the individual parts: from the birth of the narrator to the entire life circle of who she becomes to the present time of writing. The understanding of her narrative also depends on cultural, historical and literary contexts devoted to the inner truth recognizable of the generic model.

In an anecdote, Maathai treats her readers to an interesting and amusing episode at the school, at St. Cecelia. She explains how the school helped her grow into a conscientious person. St. Cecelia imparted the virtue of self- discipline to her. Maathai concretizes and explores self as a disciplined person having acquired this from the strict nuns who raised them up to be orderly and responsible. For instance, she relates how one of the girls wrote a letter to a friend, and because the letters had to be taken to the post, passing through the disciplinarian, Sister Christiana who reads but misconstrues the message. She reads the letter and gets so angry because the girl had written in the letter that they 'eat fire' at St. Cecilia. This is because their English was still rudimentary and the girl used a Kikuyu saying: 'turariamwaki'. Sister Christiana misinterpreted the context of meaning and punished the girl for the perceived misdemeanour. The Sister had rendered this expression in English- in its literal form "we continue to eat fire" (Maathai: 58) where it had no obvious meaning. The girl had implied that they were having a great time.

Unfortunately, sister Christiana misunderstood the text of the letter for disrespect for the school administration. Therefore, that evening, when the girl went to the dining hall, all the girls had food on their plates except the girl who had written the letter who found pieces of charcoal on her plate. Sister Christiana read the letter to the whole school. “She was appalled and angry.” The girl had lied and scandalized the school...that evening, the rest of the girls could not wait to get outside where they burst into gales of laughter...” (Maathai:58). This is a short and amusing story told to make readers learn to understand others and try to be patient. It is often proposed to support or demonstrate some point and make readers derive delight and excitement. The anecdote explains how Maathai acquires self-discipline and caution during her early schooling. The anecdote also shows that when an African language is translated directly the meaning may change totally as was the case with sister Christiana’s reading of a letter from one of the girls. The humour in the anecdote though lies in the fact that the sister, Christiana ensures that the girl who had written the letter is served pieces of charcoal for her meal while others are served food.

Maathai writes about herself giving the reader her identity through introspection. She searches from within herself to explain what she did and why she did it that way. For instance, confronted with the cruelty of the police force Maathai and her team would sing and dance. At some point in time, the women even strip to show the police their nakedness although Maathai does not. Plato and Aristotle’s views, on literature and its depiction of reality apply to the situation the women and Maathai find themselves in. Whereas Plato argues that the material world is an imperfect copy of the transcendental world, Aristotle his pupil begs to differ. He states a divergent view that the representation of the ideal world via artistic modes such as literature does not threaten that perfect world’s stability. Suffice it to say that, it is through such artistic representations that Maathai describes democratic spaces in Kenya, as she reveals to us in her memoir.

According to Berryman (1999), the features of autobiography are the grammatical perspective of the work, the identity of the self, self-reflection and introspection. Maathai's autobiography is written from the first person singular perspective. This is fitting because "autobiography is usually a story one tells about oneself" (Berryman 1999: 71) It would not naturally follow then that the writer recounts her past from a second or third person perspective. Quigley (2000) confirms by saying that "As soon as we are asked about ourselves, to tell our autobiography, we start to tell stories. We tell what happened, what we said, what we did" Quigley (2000: 144). Similarly, Maathai writes about herself thereby giving the reader the identity of the self through introspection.

The autobiography employs the first person voice where the narrator tells her story herself. This is the chief principal narrator in the narrative and tells the story both as a participant and an observer of the unfolding events in the story. First person narrators' report events in various ways. Maathai tells the reader what she has lived and experienced, what she has heard and seen, and what she constructs and reconstructs from the information available to her at the time of writing. For instance, through the first person narrator, she constructs her identity differently from how the society would have done; she reconstructs self as an unbowed person. The author-narrator in the autobiography is one of the strategies of achieving cohesion in the text as the first person narrator holds the story together. The strategy aids the author in concretizing her identity. Identity is the principle concern in this study. By using the term unbowed, the narrator paints a picture in the mind of the reader that she desires the reader to see.

The author, Maathai is the narrator who is also the protagonist, share a common identity for the work to be considered an autobiography posits Anderson (2001). This common "identity could be similar, but is not identical" (Anderson 2001:3). The 'self' that Maathai constructs becomes a

character within the story that may not be a completely factual representation of her; ‘the author’s actual past self’ Anderson (2001: 4-5); Quigley (2000: 106-7). The first-person point of view reflects only the writer’s thoughts, feelings, opinions, and biases. The author's purpose is the reason for writing. As author of her autobiography, Maathai often wants to make sense of the events in her life and communicates an important personal statement about life. She also wants to give credit to people who influenced her life. Being a person with an eye for details, she often writes to explain or justify her actions. For instance, she justifies why she refers to self as unbowed and the reason for entitling her autobiography *Unbowed*.

This study maintains that Maathai wrote her autobiography to explain and justify her actions, taking the readers along and telling them why she did certain things the way she did. In a chapter she entitles; “Independence- Kenya’s and my own,” (Maathai:100) Maathai discusses her return from the United States of America and how her family members receive her warmly. She juxtaposes her independence as an individual and that of the nation Kenya, to imply that just as the country Kenya is born so is this new woman coming back home, acquiring transformed identities- ‘Newness of sorts’. She therefore discusses how she seeks accommodation from the then high-class New Stanley Hotel in down town Nairobi where she stays for several days upon arrival. She adds:

This would have been unthinkable before independence because of the colour bar then in effect that stratified society into three racial layers: white, brown and black. As black Africans, we would not have been allowed to eat or drink let alone sleep, at New Stanley ... (Maathai: 100).

Nevertheless, she depicts a performance of self -independence whereby separate existence that enhanced racism in Kenya is ignored and the author exudes confidence - an emergent portraiture. This performativity echoes Butler (2004), Maathai easily goes to a previously white- only- go-zone. The use of the first person narrator here, allows her gain self -independence at the decision

she arrives at to go and seek accommodation at the hotel, which depicts her as subverting the norm. In all these, Maathai exhibits excitement on her return home and in the fact that she exudes a rare confidence, unlike majority of women at the time. To that extent, we see an unbowed woman, a character who is challenging an existing order and doing her bit differently.

She says:

“I was buoyed by the enthusiasm and optimism I sensed around me. I could almost hear myself agree with the concluding words spoken by the great American civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C on August 28th 1963: ‘Free at last! Free at last! Thank God almighty, we are free at last.’ (Maathai: 99)

The use of the first person narrator strategy, grants Maathai’s autobiography a form of witnessing what matters to others, which makes it a popular genre. She correlates the country’s independence with her own. She is elated at the thought of a free Kenya and compares it favourably to her own freedom as an individual. Writers of memoirs and life stories ‘never lack an audience’ states Anderson (2001: 126). Anderson says that in ‘autobiography’ People are interested in the actual lives of others and want to know about others’ pasts, feelings and desires (Anderson: 5-7; Quigley 2000: 2-15). A quote from Olney (1980) in Anderson’s book reveals the appeal of autobiography. Olney (1980:7) says that “the explanation for the special appeal of autobiography is a fascination with the self and its profound ‘identity.’ “Its endless mysteries” adds (Anderson 2001: 5). Autobiography is a way of organizing the story of a life to reflect on the past in order to better understand the present. Maathai certainly reflects on the self- taking the reader through step by step to demonstrate how she becomes such a successful person to even win the coveted Nobel Peace Prize. The readers are fascinated by the story that identifies her emergent portraiture differently.

Maathai as first person narrator also witnesses to other forms of corruption that would deny Kenyans the joy of thriving in their country's independence. For instance, she says: "What I didn't know then was that tribalism and corruption were going to become some of the most divisive factors of our society, and they would frustrate the dreams of the Kenyan people after independence" (Maathai: 101). As readers in Kenya, we attest to this truth. Butler (2004) on troubling genders subverting identity apply here significantly. This is because a woman in Kenya at the time was expected to be silent but Maathai is going against the norm by being loud and pointing to the weaknesses inherent in a system 'tribalism and corruption.' Wrong (2003) analysis of Gathongo's 'It is Our turn to Eat,' brings these two ailments Maathai has identified more elaborately. Gathongo himself was on the run, having secretly compiled evidence of official malfeasance throughout the new Kibaki administration. Unable to remain silent, Gathongo, at great personal risk, made the painful choice to go public about corruption and tribalism. The result was a 'Kenyan Watergate – a subversive literary text. Like him, Maathai's *Unbowed* attempts to point at such weaknesses inherent in a system, with a hope of fighting them. Maathai's performance at the point of doing, brings her subverted identity that the first person narrative technique points at in the long narration.

Autobiography is a form of introspection that concretizes Maathai's portrait. When Maathai writes about her past, it is not free of emotions. When she reveals her intentions, thoughts, and emotions the reader may evaluate why events occurred as they did. By explaining what happened within her spheres of influence, in the past, she is able to express to the reader how the self-evolved. For instance, she tells the reader that, when she came back to Kenya, she already had a job lined up for her from the US, but to her utter dismay, it was given to someone else. She says:

In those early days of 1966, of course, I had no inkling of what would happen in the coming decades. I simply got ready to report to work that, January 10th Monday. With great enthusiasm I presented myself to the Professor of Zoology, my new boss. To my dismay without blinking an eye, he had the audacity to inform me that the job had been offered to someone else. I was shocked. "but you wrote me this letter," I protested, showing him the hand written letter of appointment on official University letterhead and signed by him. "I've come all the way from the United States" The Professor was immovable; I might as well have been speaking to a stone. In my desperation I went to the office of one of the Professor's superiors to plead my case, but he supported his colleague... it was the first time upon my return that I encountered that kind of discrimination. Was it because I was a woman? (Maathai: 101)

In introspection Maathai says that both ethnic and gender barriers were placed in her way of self-advancement. She would have wanted to be competitive but she realizes to her disappointment that there were hurdles. While serving at the university, Maathai would continue to encounter sexism, ethnic and gender barriers. She therefore resolves to be resilient in order to survive; hence, the metaphor 'unbowed.' Butler's (2004) Gender performance to delineate and belay the patriarchal ideology take centre stage in trying to delimit a woman's potential as at that time. Maathai has subverted her identity. For her, Identity is not just a question of becoming but the social terms by which identities are supported and articulated as stated by Butler. In Maathai's given assemblage of time, she had purposed to come back to Kenya to help build her nation. So she resolves to get hold of this job. As the title of her work of art suggests, Maathai refuses to take a passive role in society upon her return from the US. So she overcomes the gender barriers by forcefully seeking to serve at the University alongside the male lecturers. She contradicts Conway's (1980) claim that while the male autobiographer wields power over his destiny, the female counterpart seems uncertain and demonstrates a lack of confidence over her destiny. Maathai depicts a portrait that is confident. She says: 'I knew that I wanted to teach in the University and share what I had learnt about biology (Maathai: 95).' Through introspection,

Maathai concretizes and confirms to the reader that her experiences in the US and the education she had received had made her a lot more confident and had transformed her world views considerably. Hence, Maathai acquires a subverted identity that asserts the self. According to Butler (1999) Maathai has turned to performativity as a possible way of deconstructing the passive; and dynamically allowing the social construction to speak loudly for itself.

In another instance of introspection, Maathai depicts a heart-rending episode where Mwangi her husband packs himself out of a house they shared and publicly divorces her, subjecting her to humiliation. In order to stay sober after the harrowing divorce proceedings in court, she decides to be 'unbowed'. She says: 'I had tried to be a good mother, a good politician's wife, a good African woman (Maathai: 142). The self-now; 'unbowed' is the person she is because of the events of the past. For instance, having tried to do her best to stay married and failing so miserably to secure her marriage, she decided that from then henceforth, she would be resilient in her deliberations. The autobiographical mode gives the author an avenue to vent out the displeasure of the outcome of her marriage, and to also come to terms with it. A situation one cannot fight, Maathai concretizes, is best overcome by acceptance. She accepted the sad situation of her divorce.

Maathai recalls how she fails to meet her obligation to the children one time when she had taken them swimming. She retrospect's: I was without money and my children wanted chips but I couldn't buy them each a plate. They didn't understand how I couldn't buy them. There was nothing I could do. (Maathai: 151-152). This illustrates the narrator's Introspection. Her honesty in recounting this incident depicts her as out rightly straightforward in her deliberations.

The story proceeds with the help of pictures, diaries and documentaries that authenticate Maathai's story and seeks a sense of human connectedness in its final cathartic closure. The pattern formed strikes a perfect unity here which goes beyond any conscious intention and which as Cockshut (1984) would say, goes beyond witnessing to the truth of the interpretation of self. Maathai has attached an assortment of up to sixteen pages of photographs taken at different points in history, indicating the dates when and the localities where they were taken. To explore the use of the pictures further, we argue that the story's point of view determines and influences the reader's response. Influenced by an authorial stance and pictures to substantiate; she gives her views about the society that had unbearable expectations on the marriage institution. The accompanying pictures are not accidental –they authenticate her story.

By using the first- person narrator strategy, Maathai auto- di strategically, tells her story from the point of view of the present. She uses comprehensive and continuous retrospection, based on memory which makes her governing and structural semantic principle. Maathai's *Unbowed* oscillates between the struggle for truthfulness and creativity, between oblivion while focusing on a sense of historicity. The narrating 'I' and the narrated 'I' give *Unbowed* dual narrators hence the duality of the autobiographical narrator. As the first- person narrator, Maathai ultimately personifies the agent of focalization, the overall position from which the story is rendered. She occasionally steps back to adopt an earlier perspective. For instance, when Mwangi insists that Maathai drop his name after the divorce; she looks back- she auto self-positions herself and says:

To add insult to injury, after our divorce Mwangi did not want me to continue using his surname and let me know it through a letter from his lawyer. I remember thinking to myself, "I'm not an object the name of which can change with every new owner" And I had resisted adopting his name in the first place (Maathai: 147).

Maathai argues that in order to cope with the terrible feeling of rejection, she stuck to the name but merely added another letter 'a'. The extra syllable also signified that a part of her would always be connected to Mwangi. So she adopts to use a name that would suit both purposes; that of mother to his children, a fact she could not easily erase, and that of acquisition of a new identity. The addition of the extra vowel concretizes the auto biographer as indeed unbowed- to imply independent minded. The first person narrative technique, put the author in control as she assents to the hierarchal position of power; to include what she likes but also leave out what she doesn't. She has authority that captivates the reader as she owns her story. According to New historicism, the use of this technique puts Maathai in control and concretizes her to dismantle the hierarchal patriarchal structures inherent in the society of the text at the time of writing. The position she takes quickly allows her to shed off the divorce dust.

Maathai's autobiography uses short, humorous (stories), a frame narrative, so to speak to enliven the narrative and illustrate her point humouring the reader in the process. She uses some humour verbally (jokes and play on words), some physical (slapstick humour), that require readers to use their imagination. There are some standard criteria for creating humour, one being the use of material that is outrageous. Another is to focus on the unexpected. She takes advantage of the fact that her readers enjoy situations in which she makes fun of things that the readers themselves find annoying such as divorce. For instance, when Maathai realized that Mwangi moved out of the house they shared, she says that she picked a broom from the kitchen and literally swept his presence out of her life. She says: "Then a strong force pulled me out of my chair to look for a broom "sweep!" 'an inner voice ordered me; sweep...as I swept I realized that that might be it...' (Maathai:141). She is cracking a joke out of a very serious situation; a joke out of an imminent divorce. The joke is probably a coping mechanism for her divorce

status. This is also a subverted self –portrait for the reader sees her as acquiring a new identity of a divorcee.

The study argues that the use of the first-person narrative technique, coupled with the attendant others like introspection and retrospection is effective, in concretizing Maathai's emergent portraiture that is recreated and reconstructed through the voice of the person telling the story. The reader is led on a journey through the story, complete with biases and feelings that tell the story in the present though it took place in the past. The use of the first person narrative technique allows cohesion to be realized in the text as it authenticates the work of art. Another effective artistry that concretizes Maathai's portrait in *Unbowed* is the use of the journey motif.

4.3.3 The Art in the Journey motif

The journey motif is another effective artistic manner in which Maathai concretizes her emergent subversive self -portrait. Maathai becomes a new person as a result of the journeys she makes. The art inherent in the journey motif is both psychological and sociological. It takes the narrator to the public spaces that Foucault (1970) alternative spaces talks about. These public spaces are the domains of the masculine identity. The reader is able to go through the transformations the writer is narrating, and as the narrator interacts with that outside world so does the reader. The journey motif that Maathai evokes in her autobiography leads to an interpretation that she has regard for and recognizes the opportunity to stay and study in the US. She is in support of the view that the long journeys she makes in pursuit of education, initially to St. Cecilia and later to the US, contribute to defining her differently. She acquires the masculine gait that soon define her differently. Maathai says in anticipation: "during the next several weeks, not a day passed without my thinking of the major journey I would soon be making" (Maathai: 54). The journey motif is the author's strategy in concretizing the efforts she makes to realize her dream of

seeking a difference. According to Frank (1987:24), journeys into the great world slay the dragons of a patriarchal society, as she “triumphantly discovers the grail of feminism by finding herself”.

Maathai indeed does turn out as a feminist pilgrim through the journeys she makes in her educational pursuits. Frank (1987) further refers to these efforts as the quest motif. The journey the female character makes allows her to find her individuality and define herself differently from how other women have been socialized to do. Indeed, one of the characteristics of the journey motif is that the character in question emerges significantly transformed.

The academic journeys and the long quest for education, transform the author’s identity to be androgynous. Bem (1981) using the androgynous tenet depicts a character who has both feminine and masculine traits as androgynous. The study argues that by virtue of the fact that Maathai pursued education at a time that many girls did not; led her to acquire transformed identities. This extent, we look at the academic journeys, the author makes that transforms her world views considerably. Therefore, Maathai attributes her success to the academic journeys she makes, both in Kenya and in the US. Her portrait is concretized and we are able to see a champion- a new emergent portraiture. She is completely transformed and her world view is totally changed. She is therefore able to champion women rights and human rights out of this difference. Thus the artistry in the journey motif ties in well with the subversion of normative gender identity. She intertwines true accounts of her life with fiction in autobiographical art and subverts the norm to a large extent.

4.3.4 Fiction and Autobiographical Art

Fiction is an element of Maathai’s autobiography, *Unbowed*. Both fiction and truth are elements of autobiography that leads the reader to ask, what is fiction and what is truth? We attempt to

explore both in this sub section. When telling her story, she engages in a lot of imagination, persuading her readers to share in her thoughts. Much as she avoids conscious fictionalizing we realize it in her narrative at the onset where she describes the landscape at Ithite, her birth place.

The imagination allows her concretize her portrait in her observation that:

In anticipation of my birth, my mother fattens a lamb that slept and ate inside her house. When I was born, it was slaughtered and roasted. My father sacrificed the lamb and gave part of it to her. She would eat the meat, chew sugarcane and put some of the juice into the baby's (me) tiny mouth. This would have been my first meal. Even before breast milk, I would have swallowed the juice of green bananas, blue purple sugarcane, sweet potatoes, and a fattened lamb, all fruits of the local land. I am as much a child of my native soil as I am of my father, Muta Njugi. My parents named me for my father's mother, Wangari, an old Kikuyu name (Maathai: 4).

Maathai imagines and writes along, filling gaps in her story where memory fails her in narrating the circumstances' of the period surrounding her birth. The imaginative aspect plays with the reader's mind as a new born baby relates the circumstances of her birth: '... she would eat the meat, and chew sugarcane into the baby's (me) tiny mouth.' She merges the autobiography and fiction elements. Since fiction refers to imagination, she auto writes involving reshaping and reorganizing circumstances surrounding her birth. She uses fiction in the autobiographical art in attempt to concretize her emergent portraiture. According to Brodie (2000) "a man's memory is bound to be a distortion of his past in accordance with his present interests...What she writes may mirror less what she was than who she has become." Indeed, Maathai's autobiography uses fiction to concretize her character as an unbowed person. She probably would have used an aunt or any other kin to help her write about the circumstances of her birth, but she doesn't. She imagines and writes along. Alternatively, she was told but decides to tell it herself.

Maathai's work of art is a human mirror skit that is a good illustration of a perspective subjective matter, and no auto biographer can represent exactly 'what happened back then,' any more than a historian can definitively describe the real truth of the past' states (Porter and Wolf 1973:5). This is due, in part, to the fact that words are not adequate to fully express memories and emotions. We infer that Maathai uses both truth and fiction artistically in her autobiography in order to concretize her emergent portraiture.

Of great interest in fictionalizing is the fact that focusing on facts can kill a good story as it may cause public embarrassment but cutting off a little does also not harm a fascinating story. Nevertheless, Maathai has the poetic license to only keep what excites and be silent about what would harm.

Memory informs Maathai's autobiography, self-consciously reflected upon in the boundaries between fact and fiction inevitably straddled, as the title *Unbowed* indicates. Her memory aids in her portrait of a visionary leader who always pursued her dreams to accomplishment. The reader is in the presence of a hugely charismatic yet humble woman whose remarkable story aptly suggests extraordinary courage and determination that helps transform Kenya's government into a democracy. According to Montrose (1996), the new historicism ideology seeks to change the world view with regard to domination that helps transform views. The domination is often achieved through culturally orchestrated consent rather than force. These are critical underpinnings to the new historicists' perspective that suggest how Maathai's extraordinary courage and determination helped enhance social change in Kenya.

In the face of the inevitable subjectivity (or fallibility) of her recollection, the creative dimension of memory, and thus autobiography's quality as verbal and aesthetic fabrication, has come to the fore. In this respect, the history of the text as a literary genre is closely interrelated with

corresponding forms of auto fiction, with no clear dividing lines, even though her fiction tends to leave ‘signposts’ of its fictionality to be picked up by the reader. Indeed, as readers we pick items of fiction. For instance, she says: ‘President Moi wondered aloud as to whether women of Kenya had spoken to this “wayward woman” (Maathai: 195). The President implied Maathai.

The reader picks up the scanty details of her family members as another example of fiction. In creating and recreating her identities, Maathai cleverly gives very scanty details about her other family members; husband, children; her siblings and her parents. Yet she goes full throttle in giving her own identity politically, socially and academically. The reader is left wondering what becomes of these personalities as the story progresses. Alongside instances of fiction are those of truth.

4.3.5 Truth and Autobiographical Art

Truth is a major element of autobiography. Truth is the opposite of fiction. The reader picks instances of truth in the narrative just as much as instances of fiction. The two aspects of style co-exist side by side. Truth is a major element of autobiography that enables Maathai build a portrait that is subverted from the normative identity. In Maathai’s autobiography, we see an element of truth when she discusses ‘Freedom corner’ (Maathai: 206) in one of the chapters of her autobiography. In this chapter, she discusses the forces that grouped to fight President Moi’s dictatorship. This marked a turning point in the struggle for a truly representative democracy in Kenya. Indeed, to date there is a corner at Uhuru Park, named ‘Freedom Corner,’ where disgruntled political elements have continued to meet and air their grievances.

By establishing the freedom corner, we see a strong woman setting pace for political agitation against a regime that is stifling democracy. She plants trees at this corner, which continuously inspires her in her struggles for a just governance. To this end, Maathai engrains a legacy of

struggle inspiring those with divergent opinions to echo their dissatisfaction. The Freedom Corner at Uhuru Park depicts a truth that the autobiographical art form has put into good use in Maathai's narrative. In other words Maathai has left a legacy.

Trauma afflicts Maathai's mind as narrator during her autobiographical rendering. An experience of trauma is alive when she relates incidences of her husband, Mwangi packing himself out of a house they shared and two years later, relates of her being publicly divorced in a court of law. Pascal (1960) views autobiography as a strategy that creates the illusion of unity and coherence in a text. Pascal (1960) does an intensive study of the art of autobiography to establish the element of truth in it and discovers that the truth of an autobiographical work of art appears in the inter- subjective exchange between narrator and reader. This is aimed at producing a shared understanding between them and the meaning of life. An experience of trauma is alive when Maathai relates incidences of her legally wedded husband, Mwangi packing himself out of a house they shared and two years later, relates of her being publicly divorced in a court of law. As readers, we sympathize as she is subjected to humiliation and embarrassment. She tells her story from a deep human side as Spengemann (1980) says is characteristic of autobiography. Maathai reminisces' her trauma thus:

When marriages fail, maturity and thoughtfulness take a backseat and emotions drive you forward. Even though I held out hope we could make it work...Marriages have challenges and I thought we would find our balance... Then one day in 1977, I came back ... Mwangi had taken all the material possession he brought to the marriage, including his clothes and special gifts from his friends... "What happened?" I asked the woman who cared for the children and assisted with the housework." Papa Mathai packed his things in his car and left," She replied... I was stunned. This was real: Mwangi had made a decision to leave me. I sat down to listen to myself and reflect on the hurricane of emotions now quickly building inside me. In an instant I ran through our life together. Our courtship and wedding, the joys when the children arrived, the laughter, the quarrels and tears and now...this! I replayed the past like a film, my eyes fixed on nothing in particular...How could I have done so much for somebody, only

to find it had not been enough to keep him with me? How was I going to cope with three children all by myself? These thoughts ran over and over through my mind... The children did not realize a tornado had just passed through our home. They went through their routine as usual that night and then I tucked them into bed...I felt insecure and lonely. I went to my bedroom, turned off the last light, lay down my weary body on what was a big, cold, and lonely bed and cried myself to sleep... The following day I felt as if a close relative had died. (Maathai:142)

Mwangi's exit traumatizes the narrator and she clearly reminisces making the reader share in the trauma. She is able to give voice to the incident which she could not vent out at the time of the traumatic incident. As readers, we identify with her situation and as she releases pent up emotions in a cathartic effect, so does the reader. The study agrees with Spengemann 1980) that the autobiographical art thrives in telling stories or a history of self that always comes from a deep human side. The need to let the reader know or understand why the author made certain decisions in their life therefore becomes imperative. As readers, we share in Maathai's painful experience. Her autobiographical work of art is therefore therapeutic granting the reader the chance to look back and draw a comparison to a more or less similar situation in not so distant a past or a present.

Maathai's 'Unbowed' as a literary work of art is therefore highly therapeutic to victims of trauma and those of public scandal. By Mwangi making the divorce public, he had subjected her to public scandal. Trauma afflicts the mind of the narrator during her autobiographical rendering but is also highly therapeutic. So to Maathai, this autobiographical work of art is a tool for self care. A good way of steaming off buried emotions just as much as it is to her readers. A cathartic portraiture, for society would have expected the divorce to destroy her, but far from it, Maathai emerges a stronger person out of this experience to even go loud about it in her work of art. An

account of this incident feels the reader with admiration for the author, considering that it is an element of truth.

In a monologue Maathai reveals to the reader what went through her mind when it dawned on her that Mwangi had actually walked out of their marriage. Maathai takes the reader along to empathize with her deep felt rejection from her husband. The elements of truth in an autobiographical work of art come out as the narrator cites this incident of divorce, leaving the reader to empathize alongside the narrator.

In her stream of consciousness, Maathai takes the reader through what she metaphorically calls a ‘hurricane,’ and refers to the experience as a ‘tornado. The use of the term tornado depicts a force beyond one, which drives one almost to insanity, and one in which one has no control. Clearly, Maathai gives the reader a first-hand experience of what happens when the trauma of divorce afflicts her. By this act, she fills the reader with approbation for her art of narratology and strength of character. Instead of wallowing in the trauma of divorce, she surmounts hurdles like child care, name change and status to become a bigger and better person in the society.

4.3.6 Experiences through Metaphorical Frames of Reference

Maathai gives an account of her period of study in the United States with a colouring of rich metaphorical frames of reference so as to underscore its significance. The significance depicts a subverted portrait that defines self differently from how the patriarchal society did. Writing about her first encounter with a Catholic nun, she describes the nun’s habit as having been impressively “...as white as snow and a long black rosary around her neck” (Maathai: 55) - a quality of sincerity, elegance and self-discipline that she quickly emulates. The trait of elegance that Maathai tries to model later in life fails to augur well with the top leadership in the country then.

This is because; the leaders were crafty and could not stand the forthrightness in the individuality of Maathai, a characteristic quality she emulated from the nuns. The literary implication here is that the ‘snow’ underscores women folk depicted as being more forthright than the male counterparts when serving in positions of responsibility.

There is effective concretization of Maathai’s portrait in the use of metaphorical frames of reference. We argue that Maathai represents the views of a liberated woman who was a self appointed human rights activist, having travelled the globe and transformed her world views. For instance, She equates New York City to “... landing on the moon” (Maathai: 75) which underscores her elevated circumstances in terms of conscience raising. She describes the escalator as Irimu- powerful and noisy, slithering between floors, coming from nowhere and returning to nowhere ...” (Maathai: 76). These expressions clearly capture the narrator’s fascination with the United States of America when she arrives there for the first time. In a close rejoinder, she refers to the historical personage, J. F. Kennedy, with a lot of admiration... “President Kennedy will always remain the young, energetic, and charismatic leader who was not allowed to realize his dreams for America and the world” (Maathai: 91)’ These are characters (the nuns and J. F Kennedy) Maathai come across in her educational pursuits, and who leave indelible marks in her as a person. In fact, her going to the United States is pegged on this historical parsonage, because she describes herself as one of the pioneer beneficiaries of the J. F Kennedy Airlift.

4.3.6.1 Experience and Autobiography

Experience is also an element of Maathai’s autobiography. The author recreates her experience of having been to the US and the resultant transformation. Maathai is one of the trail blazers of the J. F. Kennedy Airlift Scholarship Programme, an academic venture she is proud of. This

opportunity to study in the US changes her life totally and determines her career path. This experience reclaims urgency in her self -portrait for the female subject. She was inspired by the American leadership style and says as much. The interaction with this icon definitely has had a trickledown effect on her, so as to seek to emulate him, or the American leadership style in her future roles as a leader in Kenya. This is because just as she is adapting to life in the US, her own country, Kenya is undergoing change, what we view in her autobiography as a rebirth of character. She leaves for America in 1960, three years before Kenya attains independence, and returns home in 1966, three years after independence. Her arrival in America puts on what she refers to as “a light bulb went on in my head” (Maathai: 77) and she discovers herself as an African when she faces racism for the first time in her life. The image of a light bulb concretizes her discovery of a totally new world and experiences that change her perspective to life completely as a woman.

The story in Maathai’s *Unbowed* is beautiful and inspiring, and the writers’ comments like “I knew the sky was the limit” (Maathai:100) and “I knew I could do anything I put my mind on ” (Maathai:100) bring out the book’s purpose as highly inspirational, that her audience is looking for her to show how she achieved what she did, that it’s important for her to establish that she is nobody special, that what she has achieved is the result of curiosity and perseverance, that anybody could do what she has done. Thus, Maathai becomes a subject of admiration to her readers. The crafting of the memoir which tends more towards a live story telling session holds the reader spell bound with a magnetic field of significance, with the linear plot arranged in such a manner that we keep expecting more from the writer.

Maathai uses the experience of the geographical map or the locality of places to enact her autobiography. She writes of flying over the Sahara Desert for the first time as she was going

from Kenya to Arkansas for college in 1960, of landing in Luxembourg, which sounds so romantic to her, a US she had only read about in books during school. Things change for her when “geography comes alive,” (Maathai: 75) when she stands at the top of Mt. Gatumbiro in Kenya and sees a new view of the fields of crops that fed her (Maathai: 31), when she marvels that “valleys were new to me” (Maathai: 32). The image of her standing at the source of the Kanungu River, wondering at those people who had never stood at the source of a river, is particularly evocative. Maathai contrasts the Kenyan locality with the geographical localities in the US. She writes of long walks along the Missouri River, “known to me from maps but now very real” (Maathai:82).

Maathai describes the experience of sensation of the solid sand under her feet dissolving. Such a moment describes an experience in Mexico with butterflies, a “visceral experience and imagery to tighten the connections” (Maathai: 81). Only with the global view of a map can anyone really comprehend the significance of what is below our feet at any given moment and how it connects to other parts of the system. Maathai confirms self as a lover of nature and therefore the immense nurturing efforts at its preservation confirmed by the presence of the Green Belt Movement that she single-handedly forms. In a nutshell, the geographical map of the globe leads her to appreciate her country Kenya with its rich diversity of natural resources and good climatic conditions. She contrasts it to the cold climatic conditions of the United States and realizes that Africa and Kenya specifically have immense beauty endowed with appealing warm weather conditions, natural resources and environmental conditions that she explores to the excitement of the reader.

Experience is explored further as indeed a rich element that concretizes Maathai’s subversive portrait in her autobiography. Without the elevation that an educational perspective provides in

her 'Unbowed,' as readers we do not know what we are really looking at. She is one who is educated, and has the experience, and is equally confident enough to talk about herself. She has both. Maathai would (likely) never have achieved what she did without moving away from Kenya and viewing it from that distance. That distance provided her with both a wider view and a narrower view of Kenya and Africa as a continent, in contrast to what was happening in the US at the time. It is this experience that triggers Maathai's autobiography. Alongside the experience is evidence that the distance she navigated, is a primary trigger which the reader uses to corroborate and qualify the tale being told. She uses several evidences of her experience to tell her story. The evidence of years and places is unique in her autobiography. Pictures of places and years when they were taken, provide evidence in Maathai's narrative. She demonstrates in one photograph:

1993-From left; my mother, Lydia; my aunt Nyakweya, the story teller; and me outside my mother's home in Ithite. Ithite Primary school building in the fore ground. I began studying there in 1948. Tea fields have since been planted in front (Maathai:138-139)

Maathai's self-narrative in the autobiography is transcendental and arranged chronologically. She gives the reader a chronological story bearing the time span covered and adept with years, seasons and sometimes time. She gives us stories about her early childhood, mid adolescence at St. Cecelia, entry into early adulthood when she travels to the US. Her early career development, her marriage and consequent divorce to the present person we read about. Smith and Watson (2001) suggest the idea of the 'ideological self' – signifies the concept of personhood. Maathai is fulfilled and is proudly telling her story as a narrator who is happy with the way she has lived her life. At the same time, she stages the self in relation to others at the level of influence and recognition. She periodically recognizes certain individuals as impacting on her life like J.F

Kennedy the President of America who was not allowed to live his dream, to meeting the Norwegian Ambassador to issue her with the Nobel Peace Prize.

Maathai uses the 'biospheric perception' to ring through her experiences to the audience: she believes that after one learns to pay attention, the only choices are to become politically active. Of course, this works well for Maathai, who goes the political route. In 'Freedom turns a corner' (Maathai: 206) she demonstrates how she goes political. She says: "I realized that I was now a political figure and that I had to take care, even as I knew that I couldn't stay silent." In a chapter she entitles 'opening the gates of politics' (Maathai: 254); she says: "In the run up to the 1992 elections, I had been asked by friends at home and abroad to run for Presidency... I thought seriously about a career in politics... they told me; practice through mainstream politics what you have been preaching." These encouraging words from her friends and supporters inspire Maathai to join active politics and to play a nationalist league.

Maathai's admirers turn into political supporters and urge her to seek representational positions. The supporters convince her that she has a gait for politics and would say: "If she can do so much and she is not in politics, guess what she could do if she was" (Maathai: 255). Indeed, Maathai convinces the reader that she needed to join active politics to help save the country from the plunder of dictators. The plunder of these dictators most likely triggered a desire in the narrator to seek to rebuff them. This led to the tree planting venture. There are, of course, benefits to favouring the narrow, local view on a map. She might not have completely explored the implications of such tree planting as she was only concerned with the local problems caused by lack of firewood, the disappearance of clean water, the erosion of the soil needed to grow crops but by the end of the book, she, together with her audience are aware of the role that trees in this particular part of the world play as one of the world's lungs. In this way, it seems very

artificial to separate the global from the local perspectives, as paying particular attention to the local in this instance gives insight to the overall sense of the global in Maathai's 'Green Belt Movement.' All of these thoughts seemed to come together in one place, at one given point at a time in the autobiography.

Maathai uses times-scapes as well as landscapes; her sojourn, to see things and places for herself and her readers, and to test her own ideas of what it means to be "bio spherically perceptive" against those who have unfolded their maps in this place before. Maathai uses the time- scapes to underscore the fact that her exposure to the rest of the world certainly made it a lot easier to subvert the normative gender identities that her society used to define an ordinary woman. Those who were still stuck to tradition are equivalent to those who had 'folded their maps' whose world views had not undergone transformation. Her use of history alongside the biosphere is also alive to her audience.

4.3.6.2 Autobiographical Experience in Historical Perspective

Maathai uses her autobiography in historical perspective alongside the 'scapes' preference for historical sources that render the work historically realistic. The use of history authenticates Maathai's work. She gives the year of her birth as 1940, a historical datability. She narrates:

When I was born, as a child, my surroundings were alive, dynamic and inspiring. Even though I was entering a world where there were books to read and facts to learn- the cultivation of the mind- I was still able to enjoy a world where there were no books to read, where children were told living stories about the world around them, and where you cultivated the soil and the imagination in equal measure (Maathai: 6)

Whereas Maathai's origins in Unbowed's ultimately date back to antiquity together with the author, she refers to her place of birth as the small village in the Central Highlands of the then British Kenya; a prominent ancient landmark, the history of autobiography as a (factual) literary genre and critical term, is a much shorter form to imply 'a true account of.' Historical data

authenticates her work of art. Colonialism in Kenya is a historical fact and a recurrent thematic concern in East African literature. Maathai narrates that, for the Agikuyu community, Mount Kenya, known as Kirinyaga, or the birth place of brightness, and the second highest peak in Africa, was a sacred place.

Maathai goes on to say that everything good came from it: ‘abundant rain, rivers, streams, clean drinking water. Whether they were praying or burying their dead, or performing sacrifices, Gikuyu faced Mount Kenya, and when they built, they made sure the doors faced it...’(Maathai:5) Maathai authenticates her autobiography and substantiates certain claims in her work of art by quoting from historical data. The story goes that the explorers Johan Ludwig Krapf and Johannes Rebmann upon encountering the mountain asked their guide, a member of the Kamba community, who was carrying a gourd, “What do you call that?” “It is called iinyaa,”(Maathai:6) pronounced Kenya by the British. She depicts a distortion of sorts of a people’s history. The study notes that Maathai’s views are in agreement with Abiola (1970), who indeed affirms that the Europeans dealt the Africans a blow by distorting her history.

The author corroborates that when the European came to Kenya, they distorted a people’s history. In her narration, Maathai poses that: ‘...They taught the local people that God did not dwell on Mount Kenya but rather in heaven, a place above the clouds. The proper place to worship him was in church on Sundays, a concept that was unknown to Kikuyus ...’(Maathai: 6).’

These neologisms later became the name of the mountain and the country afterward ‘kiinyaa’ reflect a concern with a mode of writing only just considered to be a distinct species of (factual) literature at the time; Mount Kenya and Kenya as a Nation, respectively.

The historical narrative mode of modern autobiography as a literary genre firmly links to the notion of the individual, evolved to some extent by propelling the moment of self-recognition

towards the narrative present. Only at the end of Maathai's story can it be unfurled from the beginning as a singular life course, staging the autobiographer as subject. The secular self-accounts for itself as an autonomous agent, (ideally) in charge of herself. This is the narrative logic of autobiography in its 'classic shape' that also informs the subverted Maathai in her description of self as unbowed: "I am not made like any of those I have seen;" she ventures to believe that she is not like any of those who are in existence. She is different. The self is inaccessible to all except the autobiographer. She alone has the privilege of discovering self, better through writing. She thus demonstrates a unique portrait.

Most significantly, Maathai explicitly writes of herself as a singular individual embedded in and interacting with the specific constellations of her time. Unbowed thus focuses on the life of a singular individual within its specific historical context, retracing the genetic personality development founded in the awareness of a complex interplay between 'I-and-my-world.' In this sense, it may be seen to represent the 'full convergence of all the factors constituting this modern view of "the self" in the historical period of her time. The study grounds the arguments in Butler (2004), performativity in that this displays, the unique performance of a subverted identity. Its central figure is that of a woman constituting self as a high achiever daring the male world when most women still chose to take a back-seat. Beached in Maathai's memory is her firsts. Amongst the first to benefit from the J. F Kennedy Airlift; the first woman to teach in a university set up in Kenya; the first woman south of the Sahara to attain a PhD; the first African woman to win a Nobel Peace Prize among other firsts. In all these Maathai makes 'her story' not 'his story' - the story of a woman, - a heroine not a hero, as has normally been the case- For all these reasons, for which the world remembers her, she duly concretizes her personality as an astute and bold woman that she refers to as unbowed.

In *Unbowed*, a small thing such as planting a seedling and watering that Maathai started, has led to the formation of the Greenbelt Movement and a day has been put aside that commemorates her efforts. Suffice it to say, she has made all the difference in the world. In any case, autobiography's temporal linearity and narrative coherence has frequently proved prone to deliberate relics and disruptions programmatically. So by the beginning and ending chapters of Maathai's works, there is an increasing scepticism about the possibility of a cohesive self-emerging through her autobiographical memory. She experiments with fragmentation, which subverts the normative roles of patriarchy. The subject of androgyny takes center stage with matriarchy at the forefront thereby splitting the subject. She is bold enough to dare the Moi era, dare departmental politics with male colleagues; but also caring enough to nurse her sick mother. Maathai's portrait describes both masculine (instrumental) and feminine (expressive) qualities in her deliberations in the narrative.

The story of nursing her sick mother, is narrated in a manner that makes the reader draw a closeness to her. We begin with her experiences at the department that gives her a split personality. Facing the difficulties of departmental politics at the university, Maathai narrates: '... I found myself wanting to be more than equal of some men I knew. I had higher aspirations and did not want to be compared with men of lesser ability and capacity, I wanted to be me (Maathai: 117).' To this extent the patriarchal ideology would find fault with Maathai because she assumes a hierarchical position of power that the society did not accept of women at the time. The study concurs with Butler (1999) that identities are both dynamic and historical. She says further that identity is not just a question of self-private struggle with 'who one is,' but of the social terms by which identities are supported and articulated. In this sense, it is in the context of a certain pattern of social power. Maathai gives another side of her identity when

confronted with sickness of a family member. However, a soft side to Maathai appears when her mother falls sick. She nurses her sick mother. ‘My mother had come to live with me in the late 1990s, when she became ill. I took great joy in taking care of her. Throughout the years she had always supported what I did’(Maathai:274)

Maathai was particularly devastated by her mother’s sickness and consequent death. First, she compares the bond between her mother and her maternal grandmother and realizes that they were close. She narrates this close relationship in a vivid description. She posits:

My mother was born around 1906 and married my father in her mid – twenties, the usual age for marriage then. Although my mother attended classes for adults that taught her sewing, ironing and agricultural practices, she never learned to read or write. She cultivated crops and produced food into her late eighties when she got sick. We children always had enough to eat, mostly because of her handwork. And the deep sense of responsibility toward us...I was her eldest daughter, and that naturally made us very close, because as soon as I could walk she asked me to help her. When you are a first girl in a Kikuyu family, you become almost like the second woman in the house. You do what your mother does and you are always with her. The two of you become almost like one. As far back as I can remember, my mother and I were always together and always talking. She was my anchor in life. (Maathai: 13, 36- 37)

Maathai’s narratology sees her link her tale through to her mother, to the women folk as a whole and to the society. She suggests that the legacy of hard work is usually handed over to women from their mothers almost inevitably like hers was done. According to Woolf (1929:28) ‘... women think back through their mothers.’ The death of her mother makes Maathai desire to improve the lives of women through the Green Belt Movement. She makes it an anchor for the rural women to hang on to, to help improve their lives. Her mother died on the world women’s day and Maathai attaches a lot of significance to this fact. Through Butler (2004) on women performative role that is dynamic, the study sees Maathai spell the fact that as a first born girl you hold onto your mother as an anchor but she also holds on to you to help her cope with her

numerous roles, in the process, you learn to cope with the multiplicity of tasks that a woman in the Agikuyu traditional society was expected to undertake.

The legacy of motherhood that Maathai's grandmother, hands over to her mother is also handed over to her in tandem with the Agikuyu culture. She keeps these lessons but with a wider view hands them over to humanity as a legacy in her memoir. This is because her world views have considerably improved. According to Butler (2004), the first point to understand about performativity, such as Maathai's transformed views influencing the world; is that identity is not made at one go. Identities are made again and again- this means that the identities are not static, but dynamic and are therefore, radically new. Maathai's subverted gender identity was therefore made over a long period of time and many factors have contributed to that. Ranging from the grandmother's influence on her mother, her mother onto her, to the world stage following her entry into the worlds of academia and politics.

Maathai foregrounds visual and scenic as well as topographical components, highlighting the role of an empowered woman figure in transforming lives into fiction. When she advocates for women salaries and benefits, while serving at the university; and when she sees to the construction of family friendly courts with Martha Koome as the first judge to preside over marital woos; the study sees the vision of a farsighted and creative leader realized. Her memory does not fail her and she works hard to correct injustices dealt on women. She uses her autobiography as the supreme form of the understanding of life. Such understanding involves selection as the autobiographical self takes from the infinite moments of experience those elements that, in retrospect, appear relevant with deference to the entire life course. The historical past is endowed with meaning in light of the present. Understanding the life course accordingly, Maathai fits into her different roles each of which is accomplished satisfactorily.

This also involves fitting the individual parts into a whole, thereby ascribing interconnection and causality in her story.

Maathai inevitably deconstructs her identity using nature as a form of textual ‘self-fashioning’ and therefore ultimately resists a clear distinction. She constructs her identities and thematic concerns, leaving the generic borderlines blurred. She expresses how she sets out to subvert the societal normative gender identities by quoting from the Bible. In the blurb of her book, she quotes from the book of Ezekiel:

‘The trees of the field will yield their fruit and the ground will yield its crop; the people will be secure in the land. They will know that I am the LORD, when I break the bar of their yoke and rescue them from the hands of those who enslave them Ezekiel (34:27,NIV)’

According to Gusdorf (1980), the Christian context is important in autobiography because it enables the soul find itself through communion with God. Maathai evokes God`s presence in her autobiography through the biblical allusion. By comparing herself to prophet Ezekiel in the Bible, she celebrates her multiplicity of roles enacted in her entire life as brought out in *Unbowed*. Like Ezekiel, she has tried to grow trees fighting a deforestation, she has had to assist political prisoners put behind bars wrongfully, she has helped increase the democratic space for Kenyans and helped in championing women deserved benefits and freedom from manmade fetters; hence unbound them from the yoke of discrimination and subjugation by the patriarchal society that has persistently given stereotypical female images. This phenomenon that ingrained women marginalization has been dismantled through her own subverted image portrait in *Unbowed*. Above all, she has helped in rebuilding Kenya from the ravages of corrupt governance. She also participates in accelerating the advent of multiparty politics in Kenya.

Maathai uses historical explication to illuminate women subjugation, the remedy of which is empowerment through education. She is rendering a story of personality formation, the character of an ordinary woman slowly transforming to become one of the most formidable women Africa and the entire globe has ever had. The metaphor 'Unbowed' implies strength in character, which she has had to use, to wade through enormous storms narrated in the course of a sense of historicity. She frequently implies, in the instance of writing, a close link between historical facts, her life and the literary work. 'Unbowed' thus reconstructs an individual life course as a coherent, meaningful whole. Even if autobiographical genre's aspect of re-living experience, of rendering incidents as they were experienced at the time, is taken into account, the superior 'interpreting' position of the narrative present remains paramount, turning past events into a meaningful plot, and making sense of contingency. 'Unbowed' explains the life story of an ordinary woman transforming into a formidable character who is immortalized by self in her book.

From the discussion above, it is notable that Maathai signifies an exposition narrative that undertakes to tell about her own life, or a substantial part of it, seeking to reconstruct her personal development within a given historical, social and cultural framework. On one hand, the autobiography may claim to be factual in that it proposes to tell the story of a 'real' person, on the other its creativity could be said to lend weight to fictionality to some extent. She thus, concretizes a portraiture that deviates quite from the normal way of determining feminine and masculine roles in the historicity of a people's experiences. Her story fits into both.

4.3.7 Conclusion

The use of the autobiographical art form, alongside the first person narrative technique, the journey motif, among other aspects of style are effectively used to concretize Maathai as a

narrator who has subverted the normative gender identity in the society of the text. Unbowed brings her out as an artist challenging an existing order through the ultimate autobiographical rendering of her story. She exposes the trajectory autobiographical narrative circular bid depicting a bold woman's life story; the present is both the end and the condition of its narration. We start by reading the autobiographer's acknowledgement of those who supported her, her dedication; then revert to the first chapter that deals with circumstances of her birth and early childhood, on to the narrator as an adult. She gives space in subverting Moi's despotic governance that pauperizes Kenyans even when it would have performed better economically, socially and politically

However, this apparent circularity bid is frequently destabilized by the dynamics of the narrative present. As the child narrator, she continues to grow and live while composing her narrative, thus leaving the perspective open to change that the study infers to as subversion. She moves back and forth in her narrative as she connects the significant events in her life. Through this, she concretizes the subverted gender identity; in telling the story of how she undergoes all the changes to embody a subverted masculine identity. The 'subverted identity' is who she is at the time of writing.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of findings, conclusions drawn from the various research objectives and recommendations as well as suggestions for future research in related areas.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study was guided by three objectives as follows: first, to examine a self -portrait that subverts normative gender identity emerging from Maathai's *Unbowed*. Secondly, to interrogate how the emergent portrait of a subverted normative gender identity challenges power relations in Maathai's *Unbowed*. Thirdly, to analyse effectiveness of the autobiographical form in concretizing the emergent portraiture in Maathai's *Unbowed*.

5.2.1 Objective One

Objective one examines a self- portrait that subverts normative gender identity emerging from Maathai's *Unbowed*; Maathai as a writer reveals her identity as an activist in the areas of human rights, women rights and politics. She has also portrayed herself first as a feminist, an ecofeminist and an environmentalist; she concretizes all these identities by writing an autobiography therefore a literary artist in Kenya. She uses the process of subversion and containment to define self differently. Her work offers readers new consciousness toward environmental conservation. She does not portray self as passively and as a weakling in need of male protection as the patriarchal society expected of women then.

In *Unbowed*, Maathai portrays self as a voice against the dictatorial and oppressive leadership in Kenya and being instrumental in bringing the different parties together to form the Rainbow Coalition that is credited with the ouster of the Moi regime. This is an act of subversion.

Maathai demonstrates the role she performs as an advocate of peace, good governance and democracy in the sustainable management of Africa's rich natural resources. She says such are the solutions that will bring new light to the African continent and to Kenya in particular. She illustrates in her memoir that because Kenya's environmental degradation was largely due to the policies of corrupt governments, she has had to make the Green Belt Movement part of a broader campaign for democracy. She therefore defines her portrait as an ardent environmentalist, emerging as an advocate of revolutionary change through which women ought to be recognized to play politics alongside the male because there is enough space to accommodate them.

Maathai portrays self as subverting the status quo and seeking a difference where women were complacent in the past courtesy of her raised-conscience. In *Unbowed*, she reveals a desire to break away from the stereotypical retrogressive chains that bound women and limited their operations in as far as roles in the society were concerned. Her story represents power subversion. Her creative approaches to integrating peace in a healthy planet as well as her hard work in inspiring and empowering women are accolades that culminate into her being crowned a Nobel Peace laureate.

5.2.2 Objective Two

The second objective explored the subverted normative gender identities challenging power relations. The study reveals that Maathai has broadened her terrain of engagement. It is a manifestation of Foucault's idea of power, as a textually discursive phenomenon. She depicts ability in her struggle to defend her rights and those of other people. Her views as an autobiographer seek to propel an impulse to fight unjust institutions as a narrator. Maathai's *Unbowed* undoubtedly fights the patriarchal structures that are biased against women and Moi's dictatorial regime.

Maathai fights three major battles: marginalization of women, environmental degradation and poor governance in Kenya at the time. In these struggles, she depicts self as a fearless champion, resourceful, humorous, enduring and persevering. She expresses her realization by saying that: ‘what people see as fearlessness is really persistence. Greenblatt’s idea of hierarchal position of power is subversively taken by the narrator as she suppresses patriarchal ideologies. The paradigm shifts in power bases causes instability in Maathai’s marriage to Mwangi. The study finds that the men (represented by Mwangi) have lost the architecture of manliness and have tried to replace it with ‘ornamental masculinity’ Maathai acquires a new identity since as a divorcee, her previous identity as a married woman or as Mwangi’s wife having been shaded off. She demonstrates in the narrative that rather than wallow in the miasma of self -pity after her divorce, she curves a niche as a biological scientist, identifies environmental degradation and sets on the GBM as a solution to the problems. She uses the same GBM organ to upgrade the standards of living of women and to open up democratic spaces for them.

5.2.3 Objective Three

The third objective demonstrates how Maathai concretizes her subverted portraiture, using the autobiographical form effectively to demonstrate a transformed persona. She constructs and reconstructs her performances through a forced reiteration of norms. She uses a variety of techniques in concretizing her emergent portraiture. She is reconstructing her new identities, while telling her story. Of significance is the use of the art of Narratology through the first person narrative technique, journey motif. The journey motif that Maathai evokes in her autobiography allows the study interpret that she has regard for and recognizes the opportunity to stay and study in the US; and that she has acquired a subverted persona that allows her perform masculine roles even better than the male gender.

The use of the 1st person narrative technique and the journey motif, concretize Maathai as unbowed person and as being in full control of herself. Maathai uses this aspect of style to demonstrate her rise to hierarchal positions of power as a subverted persona, so to speak.

Other aspects of style used in concretizing Maathai's portraiture include use of fiction, experience, metaphorical frames of reference, truth and biblical references among others. Maathai's memoir emerges as authentic because she gives dates and historical events as well as historical parsonages, locality and pictures to substantiate her claims in the course of the narration.

5.3 Conclusions

In Maathai's *Unbowed*, the study concludes that the protagonist is preoccupied with bringing social change and transformation to the society by portraying self differently. The study notes that the autobiographer wants the society to change its attitude toward the women folk and demonstrates that, women are not as feeble and vulnerable as the society wants to view them. *Unbowed* is a blend of the intellect which articulates life into art. *Unbowed* explores the problematic issues of gender and the subversive woman who refuses to conform and chooses to remain unbowed.

The second conclusion is that by use of the metaphor unbowed, Maathai shows determination to destroy the male stereotypical portrayal of a woman, and explores what she is incapable of doing. The challenging process and dismantling of structures that suppress women demonstrates how language and literary imagination shape cultural value, belief and understanding; social distinction and interaction; political control and contestation. Thus, challenging the inherent patriarchal power structures which are key to the identity of Maathai's subversive self- portrait in *Unbowed*.

She raises issues with the patriarchal society's rejection of her nonconformity to their set gender rules. As a result, we see her depict a defined subverted normative gender portrait that she concretizes through the artistry of her autobiography.

We conclude that in a way Maathai indicates that she has dismantled patriarchal supremacy of power to rise to leadership and other positions of decision making. The study concludes that Maathai's self-portraiture suggests that literature should be a site for social reconstruction of identity, so that, male and female characters can accept each other on equal terms.

Lastly in the third objective the study concludes that Maathai reveals her artistry of the autobiographical form used effectively to demonstrate a transformed persona narrating her story about the subverted portrait. She uses a variety of such technique in concretizing her emergent portraiture. The use of the 1st person narrative technique concretizes her as unbowed person and as being in full control of herself. This aspect of style is used effectively in allowing a gender portrait rise to hierarchal positions of power.

5.4 Recommendations

In view of the above summary of findings and conclusions, the study makes the following recommendations:

1. The society needs to have both genders standing up against forms of societal injustices.
2. Power and those in power must be challenged to ensure the power from the people is used as appropriately expected.
3. Autobiographies are more authentic and true representation of the writer's observations. It should be encouraged as an avenue of expressing one's identity and contribution to the wider society.

5.5 Areas for Further Research

The present study focuses on the self - portraiture of a subverted normative gender identity. In the course of our study, the following gaps were identified:

1. A study on the comparative portraiture of identity in a male authored autobiography and a female authored autobiography would be necessary to see how either author handles the subject of subversion.
2. *Unbowed* discusses subverted normative gender identity but from a female perspective. It would be intriguing to study the same topic but from a male authored autobiography. As this would help reconstruct the attitudes about the female and male dichotomy so that relationships are respected and the institution of marriage safe guarded.
3. Use the autobiographical form in teaching the society about national development, environmental conservation and gender mainstreaming other than subversion.

REFERENCES

- AAWORD (1998) *Deconstructing Research and Development for Gender Equality*. Dakar; AAWORD.
- Abbs P. (1974) *Autobiography in Education*. London: Heinemann.
- Abrams M. H. (1999). *A glossary of literary terms 7th edition*. Fourth Worth Harcourt: College Publishers.
- Achebe C. (1962) *Things Fall Apart*. Nairobi: East African Educational publishers
- (1967) *A Man of the People*. Nairobi: East African Educational publishers
- (1987) *Ant Hills of the Savannah*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers
- (1988) *"The Truth of Fiction" Hopes and Impediments*. New York; Anchor.
- Adeola J. (1990). *In Their Own Voices Women Writers Speak*. London: James Curray Ltd
- Adichie C. (2009) *The Danger of a Single Story*. Vienna: Random House. New York
- Aidoo A. (1965) *In the Cutting of a Drink*. Accra: Nelson Publishers in the *Anthology of Pan African Short Stories*.
- Albrecht M. (1978) *The Relationship of Literature and Society*. Cambridge: Healey Ltd.
- Anderson L. (2001) *Autobiography: The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge
- Aristotle (2004) print. *Poetics* ED Raghu Kul Tilak. 24th Edition. New Delhi: Rama Brothers
- At lick R. D (1965) *Lives and Letters: A History of Literary Biography in England and America*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Ba' M. (1981) *So Long a Letter*. Trans Modupe Bode- Thomas: London Heinemann
- Bailey, C. A. (1996) *A Guide to Field Research*. Thousand Oaks, C.A: Pine Forge Press.
- Bamkhatko et al (1992) *Child development: A Logical Approach*, Boston; Houghton Mufflin Company.
- Bansky and Wall (2000) *Banging Your Head Against the Wall: Playful subversion* en.wikipedia.org>Bansky.Retrieved.20.dec.2020Of Art
- Barry K. (2003) *Desert Dawn*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Barry P. (1995) *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester, Manchester University Press
- Bem, S. L. (1980) a. *Gender Schema Theory*. New Haven: Yale University.

- (1981) b. *The BMRS index* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- (1995) c. *Dismantling gender polarization and compulsory heterosexuality: Should we turn the volume down or up?* *Journal of Sex Research*, 32, 329–334
- (1998) d. *An Unconventional Family*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Berryman J. (1999) *Critical Mirrors: Theories of Autobiography*. Winnipeg: Mosaic Press
- Besserman, L. (1996) *The Challenge of Periodization: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*. New York: Garland Press.
- Bloom L. (1987) *The Autobiography and Audience*. University of Connecticut. *Journal of advanced Composition*, Vol.IV
- Boehmer E. (2005) *Stories on Women: Gender and Narrative in Post Colonial Nation* Manchester; Manchester, UP
- Boserup C. (1970) *Women's Role in Economic Development*. London: George Allan and Unwin
- Brodie D. (2000) *A Man's Memory: Subjective vs Objective Memory*. England: CUP
- Bryson V. (2007) *Women Citizenship and Time*. Huddersfield University: The Policy Press
- Bradley A. C. (1984) *The Paralytic Inaction: Disparity between the Ideal and the Real* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Butler J. (1999) a. *The Gender Trouble*. London: Route ledge.
- J. (1990) b. *Doing Gender*. London: Routledge
- & Butler J. PhD and Vasu R. (2004) *Troubling genders, subverting identities: interview with Judith Butler*
- Carlos L. (2012) *Obama's Autobiographical Writing- affirming the Hope*. England: Cambridge Scholars.
- Chang J. (1991) *Wild Swans: Three daughters of China*. China: Harper Collins
- Charlton S.E (1984) *Women in Third World Development*. USA: West View Press
- Clinton H. (2003) *Living History*. USA: Simon & Schuster
- Coates J. (2001) *Identity: The Space Metaphor*. New York: Alfred A. Knorf.
- Cockburn, C. (1991) *In the Way of Women/men's Resistance to Sex Equality*: Macmillan Education LTD.
- Cockshut A. O. J. (1984) *The Art of Autobiography in 19th and 20th Century*. England: Yale University press.

- Col, Jean-Marie (1992) *Women in Bureaucracies, Putting public policy to work*. Cracia: INSTRAW NEWS.
- Conway J.K. (1980) *When Memory Speaks: Reflections on Autobiography*. New York: Alfred A. Knorf.
- C.O.K (2010) *The Constitution of Kenya with Authority*. Nairobi: Published by the National Council for Law Reporting with the Attorney General
- Damasio, A. (1999). *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. New York: Harcourt Brace
- D'Eaubonne F. (1974) *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* . New Haven: Yale University Press.
- DEsalvo L. (2002) *Writing as a way of Healing*. New Jersey: Cleis Press.
- Dirie, W. (1998) *Desert Flower*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- DukuleA. (2010) *The Perspective: Maternal body in Militant Protest*. New York: Harper Collins publishers.
- Eakins P. J. (1999) *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Egan S. (1984) *Patterns of Experience in Autobiography*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press.
- FedewaF. (2007) *Gender Roles as Perceived in Their Societies*. New Haven: Yale University
- FIDA (2002) *Broadening the Stakeholder Base*. Nairobi: FIDA
- Frank A. (1952) a) *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Trans. B. M Moyaart. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Frank A. (1987) b). *The Wounded Story Teller: Body Illness and Ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Freire P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Herder and Herder
- Forster E.M. (1927) *Aspects of the Novel: lectures on the English language novel, Trinity College*. London, Cambridge.
- Foucault M. (1970) a.) *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Random House.
- Foucault, M. (1979)b.) *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan*. New York: Vintage Press.
- Gathoni W. (2008) *Mandela's Image; from a Gender perspective*. Project Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfilment for MA in Literature: University Of Nairobi.

- Gates M. (2011) *Great quotes About Women: Management on Heels East Africa's Premier Business April Magazine*, Nairobi, KIM.
- Gayatri S.(1980)a. *Feminization and globalization of the philosophy of subversion*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheat sheaf
- Gayatri S. (1994) b. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheat sheaf
- Gayatri S. (2008) c. *Seeinside the Teaching Machine*. London: Route ledge
- Glotflety F. (2006) *Putting a New Definition of Ecocriticism to the Test; The Case of the Burning Season*.New York, Macmillan
- Greenblatt S. (1991) *Marvellous Possessions: the Wonder of the New World*. University of Chicago Press
- Greenblatt S.(1980)*Renaissance Self- Fashioning*. Chicago Publishers
[Http://:www.wipsnews.net/2013/01](http://www.wipsnews.net/2013/01)
- Gilbert C. and Guber C. (1979). *The Woman Writer and the 19th Century Imagination*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Graham M. And Erik R. (2004) *Guide to International Relations and Diplomacy*. Consortium International Publishing Group.
- Grambs J. D. (1978) *Women and Administration*. The Educational Digest: 42(7)
- Guerin, C. et al (1992) *A Hand Book of Critical Approaches*. London: CUP
- Guerin N. (2013) *An analysis of SteinBeck's Grapes of Wrath*. USA: The Viking Press-James Lloyd
- Gusdorf G. (1980) *Conditions and Limits of Autobiography*. Princeton: Princeton University
- Hacking M. (1999) *The Social Construction of Theory in Research*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- Hamaron G.(1975) *Influence in Art and Literature*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press
- Hamerow, T.S (1987) *Reflections on History and Historians*. University of Wisconsin Press
- Hand F. (2011) *The Subversion of Class and Gender Roles in the Novels of Lindsey Collen (1948): Mauritian Social Activist and Writer*. Edwin Mellen Press, Newyork
- Harrison L. (1985) *Gender Images*, London: OUP.
- Hay M. and Sticher S. (1995) *African Women South of the Sahara*. London: Longman
- Hedges, W. (2000) *New Historicism Explained*. Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers.
 Feminist Press at City university of New York.[view date:15 Sep 2016]

- Heeh, P. (2013) *The History of the Self*. Lulu online Publishers.
- Helga S. (2014) "Autobiography". In: Hühn, Peter et al. (eds.): *the living handbook of narratology*. Hamburg: Hamburg University. URL = <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/autobiography>
- Hennessey, R. (2010) *Feminist Perspective on Class and work*. Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy.<http://www-english.tamu.edu/fac/myers/historicism.2012/04>
- <http://p:wwwipsnews.net/2013/01>
- Heron G. (1976) Research Academy of Social Sciences, Journal of Language and Communication, Vol. 1, No. 1, <http://www.rassweb.com> 2014.
- Hewett D. (1975) *Rapunzel in Suburbia*. Sydney UWA Publishers.
- Horchschild A.(1999)*King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Post-Colonial Africa*. USA: Marine Books
- Horace (2005) print. *The Satires, Epistle and Ars Poetica*. Trans. A. S. Kline.n.p Web. 4thjuly 2013.
- Huxley E. (1953) *White Man's Country*. London: Chato&Windus.
- Imbuga, F. (1976) *Betrayal in the City*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- (1988) *Aminata*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.
- Indangasi H. (1993) *The autobiographical Impulse in African and African American Literature*. Kampala: USIS.
- Ireli A. (1970) *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora*. London:UK Macmillan.
- Kabaji E. and Masinjila P. (1997) *Towards Gender Responsiveness*. Kenya Centre for Gender and Development. UON.
- Kabaji E. (2016)a. Gender Battles. Daily Nation, 16th December.
-(1997)b. Women in Development. Eldoret: Zaff Chancery
- Kabira W. and Wasamba P. (1998) *Reclaiming Women's Space in Politics*. Nairobi: English press.
- Kabira W. (1994) Celebrating Women's Resistance. Nairobi: New Earth publishers.
- Kabira W. (1992) Towards Gender Responsive Politics. Nairobi: English Press
- Kalonzo M. (2010) *Women Decade Celebrations*. Nairobi, Daily Nation Monday October. 11th. Kenya.

- Kathrada A. (2013) *Midikizela Winnie Mandela 491 Prison No.1323/69* Jo'burg: Piccador.
- Kenneth W. (1979) *Theory of International Politics*. London: OUP.
- Kinyanjui, T. (1995) *Effects of SAPS on Women and Autonomy in Kenyan Policy and Legal Framework*. Nairobi: Clarion Press.
- Kinoti, H. (1998) *Some Principles of Man/woman relationship: Traditional Gikuyu Community*, Wajibu Vol. 3
- Kothari, C. R (2009) *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. 2nd edition. New Delhi, New Age International Publishers.
- Lejuene P. (1975) In *Le Pecteaubiographique*. New Haven: Yale University Press
- Letemendia V. C. (1992) *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Winter, 1992), pp. 127-137 Indiana University Press
- Likimani M. (1995) *Women and Mau Mau in Kenya*. London: James Carrey
- Maathai W. (2006), *Unbowed*, London: William Heinemann.
- Magak K. and Kilonzo S. (2014) *Gender, Vulnerability and Social Protection*. Ethiopia: OSSREA
- Mason, M. (2000) *A memoir of Healing and Discovery*. New York: Feminist Press at City university of New York
- Mbulinya M. (1985) *Women in Development Ideology in Africa*' Review vol. 2
- Maathai W. (2005) *Unbowed : A Memoir* New York: Knopf Publishers
- Mandela N. (1994) *Long Walk to Freedom*. London: Abacus.
- Mandela W.(1998) *Part of my Soul Went with him*. New York City: WW Norton and Company
- Matiangi O. (1999) "The Treatment of the Theme of Identity and Self -Definition in the Fictional Works of Bessie Head, Mariama Ba and BuchiEmecheta." Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Nairobi.
- Mbeo O. and Murungi I. (1984) *Discriminatory laws in the statute*. Nairobi: Law Institute
- Merriam-Webster(2000)*Subversive Literature*.Massachusetts:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merriam-Webster>
- Miles M. B. and Huberman A. M. (1994) *From QuMalitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- MigunaMiguna (2012) *Peeling Back the Mask: A Quest for Justice*. Nairobi:GilgemeshaAfrica

- (2013) *Kidneys for the King*. Nairobi: Integrity Books Ltd.
- Montrose L. (1996) a. *Purpose of playing: Shakespeare and the cultural politics of Elizabethan Theatre*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- (1996) b. *New Historicism*. Chicago. Chicago Publishers
- Mugenda A. And Mugenda M. (2003) *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. Nairobi- Kenya. Acts Press.
- Mugo, M. (1982) *Written Literature and Black Image*. Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau
- Muhoma C. (1999) A Comparative Study of the Treatment of Race and Gender in Selected Works of Nadine Godimer and Majorie Oludhe. Unpublished M.A. Thesis., Maseno university.
- Murungi K. (2000) *In the Mud of Politics*. Nairobi: Acacia Stantex Publishers.
- Musisi N. (1991) Women 'Elite Polygamy' and Buganda State Formation Signs Vol.16 no.
- Musyoka K. (2010) Experts meeting on the launch of African women decade at KICC: Nairobi.
- Muthoni L. (1998) Pass Book Number F. 47927. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Myers D. G. (1989) *The New Historicism in Literary Study: Academic question*
- Nachmias C. F and Nachmias D. (2009) *Research methods in the Social Sciences*. 5th Edition. New York. St. Martin's Press.
- Nahumindah (2014) Nurture Nature: Environmental Conservation: Wangari Maathai's Use of Mottainai in Kenya [digitalcommons.csbsju.edu > cgi > viewcontent](http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/cgi/viewcontent)
- Natasha T. (2010) Nurture-K-8 Students. Error! Hyperlink reference not valid. Review
- Ndeda M. (1994) The Contribution of State to the Subordination of Women, A case study of Women Self- help Groups in Siaya, District. Unpublished MA Thesis in Literature: Kenyatta University.
- Ndegwa S.(2013) Women Must Start Thinking of the Gender Perspective, the Bigger Picture to Get Power, Daily Nation Newspaper. 28th April.
- Newton L. (1972) *Role Models in Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Njogu S.(2012) Power concentrated in the hands of men. Nairobi: Gender Institute.
- Ng'ong'a P.(2002) A Comparative Study of the portrayal of the female Character by a Male Author and a Female Author. Unpublished Thesis, Maseno University

- Ngozi L.(1981) *Tasks and Masks: Themes and Styles of African Literature*. Essex: Long man group.
- Ngugi W. (2019) <http://maseno.ac.ke/Promote> Dialects Ngugi Wathiong Urges Counties.
- Ngugi W (1986) *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*. Kenya: Heinemann
- Ngugi W. (1972) a. *Homecoming*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- (1965) b. *The River Between*.Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers
- (1967c) *A Grain of Wheat*. Kenya: Heinemann
- (1964) *Weep Not Child*. Kenya: Heinemann
- Nzomo A. (1997) The Gender Dimension of Electoral Politics in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. International conference held in Dar es salaam
- Obianuju, A. C. (2002) *Mothering: The Afrocentric Alternative*. Ismael Reeds Konch Magazine, (March – April).
- Ochieng W.(2005) *Place of Biography in Kenyan History: 1904- 2005*. Kisumu: Mountain View Publishers.
- Odhiambo M. (2013) *Experience- Sharing on Gender and Politics*. Stability, Democracy and Rights; Colloquium on Democracy, Governance and Leadership: Gender Perspective. 26th April: Kisumu Hotel
- Oduor A. (2011) *We Have Been Ignored*, Daily Nation Newspaper 25th May.
- OduolJ.(1992) a. The Socio- Cultural Aspects of the Gender Question; A Paper Prepared for the Review on the Gender Question. Safari Park Hotel, 5th November.
- (2002) b. *Women and Law in Kenya*. Nairobi: Law Institute.
- (2013) c. Reflections on Women and Leadership Identity. Stability, Democracy and Rights; Colloquium on Democracy, Governance and Leadership: Gender Perspective. 26th April: Kisumu Hotel.
- Ogola M. (1994) *The River and the Source*. Nairobi: Focus Publications Press.
- Ogundipe L. (1974) a. *African aesthetics... Journal of the African Literature and the Arts*. Vol.16 London: Heinemann Publishers
- Ogundipe L.in Jones et al (1987) b. *The African Female Writer's Commitment*. African Literature Today vol. 16, New York, Heinemann Publishers.

- Ogundipe L. in Jones et al (2007) c. *Recreating ourselves; African women and critical transformations*. African Literature today vol. 25 New York, Heinemann Publishers.
- Okot p' Bitek (1967) *Song of Lawino and Ocol*. Nairobi: East African Educational publishers
- Olney J. (1980) *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*. Princeton: Pinceton University Press.
- Ombaka C. (2013) Experience- Sharing from the 2013 General Elections. Stability, Democracy and Rights; Colloquium on Democracy, Governance and Leadership: Gender Perspective. 26th April: Kisumu Hotel.
- Omuteche J. (2004) “ Mediated Plot in the Construction of the Theme of Struggle in Nelson Mandela’s Autobiography; Long Walk to Freedom.” Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Nairobi.
- Orwell G. (1946) print *Animal Farm*. England: Harcourt Brace
- Othman L. (2002) *Laila Othman Found Herself*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheat sheaf
- Othman L. (2002) *Laila Othman Found Herself*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheat sheaf
- Owuor S. (2017) *Beyond the Tirade of Masks The Portrayal of the Kenyan Historical Process*. URI: <https://repository.amaseno.ac.ke/handle/123456789/901>Date 2017
- Paine T. (1995) *Of Design of Government*. London: Baynerd Press
- Perrine L. (1966) *Structure and Story 2nd Edition*. New York: St. Martins Press.
- Peters C.B (2002). *A Guide to the Academic Writing*. Eldoret: Zapf Chancery.
- Peterson D. (2006) *Casting Characters: Autobiography and Political imagination in Central Kenya*. Celwin College: University of Cambridge.
- Piatek C. (1996) *Subjectivity: An asset in Autobiography*. London: OUP
- Plato (1961) print. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato, including the Letters*.(eds.) Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns. New Jersey; Princeton University Press.
- Pope Francis xvi (2015) *Dangers of the Gender Theory*. WorldPress.com site
- Porter, J. and R. Wolf (1973) *The Voice Within: Reading and Writing Autobiography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.,
- Quigley R. (2002) *The Grammar of Autobiography*. London: Routeledge
- Rice C. (2012) *A Memoir of My Extraordinary Family and Me*. Birmingham. Randostones Trade Paperbacks

- Rice P. And Waugh, P. (1996) *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*.3rd Ed. London: Arnold Publishers.
- Ray W.(1983) *An Analysis of Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Publishing Press.
- Roy P. (1960) *Design and Truth in Autobiography*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Ruerket W. (2020) *Faith for Earth: A Call to Action/ UNEP-UN Environment*
- Ruganda J. (1996) *Telling the Truth Laughingly: The Politics of Imbuga's Plays*. Nairobi: EAEP
- Ruth, S.(1995) *Issues in Feminism: An Introduction to Women Studies*.California: Mountain View, Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Ruthven K.K. (1984) *Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction*. New York: OUP.
- Said E. (1978) a. *Orientalism*. A Paper presented at the University of Columbia, Columbia
- (2003)b. *Orientalist, Painting and Napoleon's Exploration*.
<http://mashrabiyyawordpress.commay23rd,2011.20,42>
- (2001) c. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. India: Penguin Books
- Saran M. (1994) *Study Summary Jung Chang's Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*.Harper Collins: London
- <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazine/Three-Daughters-from-China>.Saran
- Sapsford, R. and Jupp, V (eds) (1996) *Data Collection and Analysis*. London: Sage.
- Schumacher S. et al (1997) *Research in Education: A Conceptual Introduction*. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers
- Scuuchi J. (2015) *The Voice inA Place for the Personal*. Utah University Logan; Utah.
Digitalcommons.usu.edu/document/view/content.cgi/articles
- Schipper M. (1987) *Mother Africa on a Pedestal: The Male Heritage in African Literture and Criticism*. London: James Curray.
- Sedehi K. (1994) *An analysis of Walkers: Colour Purple*.<https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/Sedehi/color-purple>
- Shakshaft E. (1989) *Women in Third World Development*. New York: West view Press.
- Sharp, J. *Geographies of Post Colonialism:Spaces of Power*. Tokyo: Nigensha publishing
- Sidone S. (2001) *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for interpreting life Narratives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Simon and Schechter (2010) 'Mama Miti-' .. Ebony Magazine, April
- Sirleaf E. J. (2009) *This Child will be Great*. New York: Harper Collins publishers
- Siundu G.(2009) *Beyond Autobiographies: Power, Politics, and Gender in Kenyan Asian Women Writings*. Nairobi: UoN
- Siundu G.(2016) *Promoting a balanced society; Gender Parity in Politics*. Daily Nation November 19th. Kenya, Nairobi.
- Smith S. (2012) *A Review of Hillary Clinton's: Living History; America's Exhibit 'A'*.London: OUP.
- Smith and Watson (2001) *The 'Ideological Self' mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounters*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- (2010) *The Political persona Authenticated: A Study of Hillary Clinton's Living History*
- Spengeman W.C.(1980) *Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of Literary Genre*. New Haven& London: Yale University Press.
- Spretnak C.1993) Essay "*Ecofeminism: Toward Global Justice and Planetary Health*"Plato.Stanford.edu
- (1992) *Our Roots Flowering, Reweaving the World: Lost Goddesses of Early Greece, a Collection of Early Pre Hellenic Myths* www.Amazon.com.
- Steedman C. (1986) *Landscape for a good woman*. London: Virago Press.
- Steedman C. (1992) *Past Tenses: Essays on writing Autobiography and History*. London: Rivers Oram Press
- Stegeman B. (1974) *The Divorce Dilemma: The New Woman in Contemporary African Novels. Critique; studies in Modern Fiction*. London: OUP.
- Steinbeck J. (1939) *Grapes of Wrath*. California: The Viking Press, James Lloyd
- Supryia M. And Ross M. (1997) *A Teleological Demands: Auto transforms empirical facts artefacts*. London: Rivers Oram Press
- Styan J. L (1960) *Two Elements of Drama*. London: OUP.
- Swati M. (2014) *Weiner, creator of the Divorce Busting Centre*. Nairobi: Communication concepts.
- Uchendu P. K. (1993) *The Role of Nigerian Women in Politics, Past and Present*. Lagos. Fourth Dimension Publishing Company.

- Umeh M. (1980) *African Women in Transition in Novels of Buchi Emecheta*. Presence Africaine.
- (1982) *Joys of Motherhood: Myth and Reality*. Colby Quarterly.
- Waigeyo S.M (2004) Women's Political Participation in Kangema, Muranga District from 1963-2002, Unpublished Thesis, Kenyatta
- Walker A. (1982) *The Colour Purple*. Encyclopaedia.britannica.com/topic/The-colour-purple
- Wanjama L.N. (2002) Factors affecting Gender Mobility at the Top Unpublished PhD Thesis, Kenyatta University.
- Warah R. (1998) *Triple Heritage: A Journey to Self-Discovery*. Nairobi: Communication Concepts.
- Wanyande P. (2006) Civil Society and Transition Politics in Kenya and Contemporary Perspectives. Nairobi: Henrich Boll Foundation.
- Weintraub K. (1978) *Working with Autobiography*. England: Wells.
- West and Zimmerman (1987) *Doing Gender "as Cause or Agenda": A Symposium on West and Zimmerman*. Gender and Society 23. Wikipedia: Free encyclopaedia
- Woolf, V. (1929) *Reading History in Early England*. England: CUP
- Wrong M. (2003) *It is Our Time to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle Blower*. London: Harper Collins Publisher
- (2002) *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurz; Living in the Brink of Disaster: Mobutu Congo*. London: Harper Collins Publisher
- Yaú Y. (1997) In Jibrin Ibrahim, *Expanding Democratic Space in Nigeria* CODESRIA, DAKAR
- Yee K. (2013) *Analysis of Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath: A Call to Action*. Arizona: Routedledge.
- Yelfin W. (1990) *Factors influencing Access for women in Technical Education, Ethiopia*. Unpublished MA thesis, Victoria University of Manchester.
- Zabus C. (2003) *"Acquiring Body: New developments in African Self-Writing."* Nairobi. French Cultural Centre.