CONTINUITIES AND DIVERGENCES IN BLACK AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

By

Ignatius Adetayo Alabi

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College of Graduate Studies and Research

SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION
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DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

I. ADETAYO ALABI

Department of English
College of Arts and Science
University of Saskatchewan

Fall 1998

Examinining Committee

Dr. M. Marino Dean's Designate, Chair
College of Graduate Studies and Research

Dr. R. Cooley Chair, Graduate Committee
Department of English

Dr. S. Gingell Supervisor, Department of English

Dr. C. Morrell Department of English

Dr. W. Bartley Department of English

Dr. M. Smith Department of History

External Examiner:

Dr. V. Ramraj
Department of English
University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4
Continuities and Divergences in Black Autobiographies of Africa and the Diaspora

This study investigates what continuities and divergences exist among selected Black autobiographies. The selected autobiographies of slaves, creative writers, and political activists are discussed both as texts produced by individuals who are in turn products of specific societies at specific periods and as interconnected books. The project pays particular attention to the various societies that produce the autobiographies directly to identify influences of environmental and cultural differences on the texts. To foreground the network these autobiographies form, on the other hand, the study adopts a cross-cultural approach to examine the continuities and divergences in them. The texts analysed are selected from Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean.

Chapter one discusses some previous studies in Black autobiographies, the comparative model for studying Black autobiographies, the choice of the term autobiography, what constitutes Black autobiographies, and the self-in-service-of-community pattern of Black autobiographies. Chapter two theorizes Blackness as one of the continuities in the texts studied and foregrounds its transformative capabilities. Since various Black societies have experienced one form of colonialism or another and are in one post-colonial stage or another, chapter three discusses the relevance of post-colonial theory to a transnational study of Black autobiographies. Chapter four discusses oral African autobiographies as parts of institutionalised autobiographical traditions in African societies and the ways in which features of orality influence the
written forms of the genre.

Chapter five situates slave autobiographies as counter-narratives to the colonial encounter in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Along with chapter five, chapters six and seven examine the continuities in Black autobiographies in terms of Blackness, resistance, the importance of naming, community, and rewriting history in the face of racist accounts of the past, and diversities in relation to concepts of Africa, religion, gender, and language. The concluding chapter summarises the continuities and diversities earlier discussed and suggests possible future directions in the study of Black autobiographies.

**BIOGRAPHICAL**

1967
Born in Ilawe-Ekiti, Nigeria

1988
B. A. (Hons.), Obafemi Awolowo University

1991
M. A., University of Ibadan

1993
M. A., University of Guelph

**HONOURS**

Hantleman Humanities Scholarship, University of Saskatchewan, 1996-1997

Graduate Teaching Fellowship/Assistantship, University of Saskatchewan, 1996-1998

Elmer Shaw Bursary, University of Saskatchewan, 1994

Thesis Scholarship, University of Saskatchewan, 1993-1996

Graduate Research/Teaching Assistantship, University of Guelph, 1992-1993

University of Guelph Admission Scholarship, 1992
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Head of the Department of English

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A5

i
Abstract

This study investigates what continuities and divergences exist among selected Black autobiographies. The selected autobiographies of slaves, creative writers, and political activists are discussed both as texts produced by individuals who are in turn products of specific societies at specific periods and as interconnected books. The project pays particular attention to the various societies that produce the autobiographies directly to identify influences of environmental and cultural differences on the texts. To foreground the network these autobiographies form, on the other hand, the study adopts a cross-cultural approach to examine the continuities and divergences in them. The texts analysed are selected from Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean.

Chapter one discusses some previous studies in Black autobiographies, the comparative model for studying Black autobiographies, the choice of the term autobiography, what constitutes Black autobiographies, and the self-in-service-of-community pattern of Black autobiographies. Chapter two theorizes Blackness as one of the continuities in the texts studied in this project and foregrounds its transformative capabilities to reclaim the idea from racist and stereotypical interpretations. Since various Black societies have experienced one form of colonialism or another and are in one post-
colonial stage or another, chapter three discusses the relevance of post-colonial theory to a transnational study of Black autobiographies. The discussion of post-colonial theory foregrounds not just the similarities but the differences in the colonial and post-colonial experiences of various Black societies. Chapter four discusses oral African autobiographies as parts of institutionalised autobiographical traditions in African societies and the ways in which features of orality influence the written forms of the genre.

In line with the comparative model, the autobiographies of slaves, creative writers, and political activists studied in chapters five, six, and seven are discussed as texts that write, re-write, and interrogate one another. Chapter five situates slave autobiographies as counter-narratives to the colonial encounter in William Shakespeare's The Tempest. Along with chapter five, chapters six and seven examine the continuities in Black autobiographies in terms of Blackness, resistance, the importance of naming, community, and rewriting history in the face of racist accounts of the past, and divergences in relation to concepts of Africa, religion, gender, and language. The concluding chapter summarises the continuities and divergences earlier discussed and suggests possible future directions in the study of Black autobiographies.
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Dedication

To my father, Prince Ajibade Alabi
Who reminds me of his story
Even after death

To my mother, Mrs. M.A. Alabi
Who keeps telling me her story
Even when so far away

And to you

For telling us your story
For asserting your right to be heard
Table of Contents

Permission to Use ...........................................................................................................i
Abstract..........................................................................................................................ii
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................iv
Dedication.......................................................................................................................v
Table of Contents.........................................................................................................vi
Chapter 1: The Autobiographical Genre in Black Societies.................................1
Chapter 2: Theorizing Blackness..................................................................................27
Chapter 3: Post-colonial Theory and a Transnational Approach to Black
           Literatures...........................................................................................................67
Chapter 4: African Oral and Written Forms of Autobiography.........................96
Chapter 5: Caliban, Is That You?: Equiano's The Interesting Narrative of
           Olaudah Equiano, Prince's The History of Mary Prince,
           Douglass's Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, and the
           Politics of Resistance........................................................................................112
Chapter 6: Different, Yet Related: Angelou's I Know Why the
           Caged Bird Sings, Soyinka's Ake: The Years of
           Childhood, Walcott's Another Life, and the
           Autobiographical Genre....................................................................................165
Chapter 7: Communal Resistance, Claiming Subjectivity, Moving
           Mountains: Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom, X's The
           Autobiography of Malcolm X, Sistren's Lionheart Gal, and the
           Autobiographical Genre ..................................................................................230
Chapter 8: Conclusion: Black Autobiographies: Continuities,
           Divergences, and Possible Future Directions..................................................299
Works Cited..................................................................................................................325
Chapter 1: The Autobiographical Genre in Black Societies

The popularity of autobiography as a genre in contemporary Black cultures can in part be accounted for by its prevalence in traditional African societies. There, the genre, like other literary genres, was oral, and it served several functions in the story-telling traditions of various African communities. It was a record of the struggles for survival by many African societies. The need to teach the history of African societies to younger generations and the importance of learning from the activities of Africans who shaped African history in various ways motivated the genre in the past. In contemporary African societies, the autobiographical genre still serves the same purposes it served in traditional Africa. In addition, it shapes accounts of African resistance to slavery, apartheid, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and sexism. African autobiographies also contain a record of independence struggles, post-independence disillusionment, and the articulation of hope for a better future.

As on the African continent, in the African diaspora,¹ autobiographies have been used as a form of counter-discourse to the dominant discourses of slavery, racism, colonialism, sexism, and classism. In the Black diaspora, as in Africa, the autobiographical genre is used by various writers to record their various activities towards the upliftment of Black people. Black
autobiographies, therefore, function not just as a record of individual activities in the various Black communities, but as a record of the struggle for survival and equality with other groups by the various communities themselves. In fact, Black autobiographies can be described as histories of Black societies in oral or written literary form created or narrated by some of the active participants in the events recollected.²

Despite the importance of the autobiographical genre and the various ways Black people all over the world have used it, it has not attracted its due attention from literary critics. Even when some attention is given to the form, it is usually to individual autobiographies, or autobiographies from a particular region, country, or continent. E. Kwadwo Opoku-Agyemang's (York University) dissertation, "The Wisdom of the Eye: A Theory of African Autobiography," Angelo Costanzo's Surprizing Narrative: Olaudah Equiano and the Beginnings of Black Autobiography, Joanne M. Braxton's Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition Within a Tradition, Sandra Pouchet Paquet's "West Indian Autobiography," and Helen M. Tiffin's "Rites of Resistance: Counter-Discourse and West Indian Biography" are recent studies in Black autobiography, which announce in their titles the limits of their coverage.

Opoku-Agyemang's study is of autobiographical African literature. He
approaches African autobiographies structurally and argues that since each autobiography shows a unique African vision, African autobiographies are particularly useful for studying African culture (i). Olaudah Equiano's The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself, which will be discussed in chapter five of this project, serves as the paradigm for Opoku-Agyemang's study of the structures of African autobiographies in terms of what he describes as "the Three Movements" (i). While the first movement is the childhood of the autobiographer, the separation from the childhood society constitutes the second movement, and the third movement concerns the reintegration of the autobiographer into the original society (i-ii). Other texts for his study include Wole Soyinka's Ake: The Years of Childhood, which will be discussed in chapter seven of this dissertation, Haile Selassie's My Life and Ethiopia's Progress, Charity Waciuma's Daughter of Mumbi, and Bloke Modisane's Blame Me on History.

Just as the context for Opoku-Agyemang's project is African literature, Costanzo's is African-American literature. His section on early Black autobiography traces the origin of Black autobiographies to the American slave narrative (2) and not to the several oral autobiographical forms available in various Black cultures. He does, however, acknowledge oral story-telling practices in his discussion of the ways early Black
autobiographers "took elements of Western autobiography and fused them with the practices of African storytelling" (6). Perhaps one reason why Costanzo's work traces the beginning of Black autobiographies to the written versions of the genre is the implication of writing in the word autobiography, an issue that will be addressed shortly.

Costanzo, however, argues that since some of the early autobiographers were taken from Africa, "it is important to know something about the nature of autobiography in the cultures that influenced the black narrators" (8). What Costanzo foregrounds in relation to the cultures that influenced the early Black autobiographers is based on James Olney's Tell Me Africa, in which Olney discusses reasons for writing autobiographies. According to Olney, Benjamin Franklin wrote his autobiography "[t]o satisfy for his descendants the same sort of curiosity he himself had about ancestors; to provide an example or a model for others; to relive an essentially enjoyable life by recreating it in narrative form; and to satisfy his vanity" (Costanzo 8, Olney 27). In addition to Franklin's reasons, Costanzo cites Olney's three additional reasons why Africans in particular write their autobiographies: "[t]o preserve a disappearing world; to describe the African milieu for outside readers; and, which is often closely related to the previous motive, to describe a representative case of a peculiar African experience" (Costanzo 8, Olney 27). Costanzo reiterates Olney's argument that "African autobiography imitates
African life in universalizing the individual experience: 'African life is marked, directed, and regulated by ritual repetition so that the description, like the experience, assumes a communal and archetypal quality" (Costanzo 9, Olney 39).

Adopting the same national focus as Costanzo, Braxton studies Afra-American literature in Black Women Writing Autobiography. She uses Afra-American "to designate the distinctively feminine aspects of black American literature and culture; the term is, by definition, feminist, or to use the word coined by Alice Walker, 'womanist,' in that it places the experience of black women at the center and speaks from that perspective" (211). Situating her study within Afra-American experience is crucial for Braxton because Black American women "have been as invisible to the dominant culture as rain; we have been knowers, but we have not been known" (1). Her study is, therefore, a counter-discursive study of African-American women's autobiographies that have not been given the recognition they deserve in American literature.

Although the texts Braxton examines, including Harriet Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself, Sojourner Truth's Narrative of Sojourner Truth, and Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, are written, she, too, traces the origin of Black women's autobiographies to the
oral forms of the genre. She criticises Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s foreword to "In Her Own Write" for defining literary traditions only in relation to writing (xviii). Braxton's argument is that "not all the texts in the literary tradition of black women were written down...and this 'unwritten literature' and the juxtaposition of literary and oral forms create a linguistic vitality that informs written literature on many levels"(5). She substantiates her claim about the oral antecedents of Black women's autobiographies by quoting Temma Kaplan, who argues that "[o]ften in the most oppressive situations, it is the memories of mothers handed down through the daughters that keeps a community together. The mother tongue is not just the words or even the array of cultural symbols available to a people to resist its tormentors. The mother tongue is the oral tradition" (Braxton 5).

The inclusion of Paquet's "West Indian Autobiography" in a collection of essays entitled African American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays is a recognition of the importance of border crossing in Black autobiographies. As William L. Andrews, the editor of the collection, asserts, [a]s criticism of African American autobiography continues to develop, its circle inexorably expands to include not only those North American voices hitherto muted but also pan-American and pan-African traditions from which we can learn much about what is African and what is American about African American
autobiography. (7)

As its title suggests, however, the context of Paquet's essay is solely West
Indian autobiography. Paquet describes West Indian autobiography as
"varied and complex [because it] includes slave narratives like The History of
Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself (1831). There are
letters, journals, diaries, and, most important to an understanding of the
region's cultural identity, oral histories" (196). One of her examples of oral
histories, Lionheart Gal: Life Stories of Jamaican Women, will be discussed in
chapter seven of this study. To approach self-representation in West Indian
autobiographies, Paquet differentiates between the autobiographies of
professional writers and of those in nonliterary occupations.3 Her
representative texts, George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin, C.L.R.
James's Beyond the Boundary, Derek Walcott's Another Life, and V.S.
Naipaul's Finding the Center, are concerned with
defining a West Indian cultural and political reality. In each of
these very different texts, issues of self-identity merge with
issues of West Indian identity. The individual predicament of
the writer as autobiographical subject illuminates the collective
predicament of an island community...self-inquiry is self-
imaging and self-evaluation, but it is also cultural
assessment...[as] the autobiographical self as subject is
transformed into a cultural archetype. (197-98)
Helen Tiffin's "Rites of Resistance" situates West Indian autobiography as counter-discourse to colonial discourse. She argues that since English and European autobiographies "(like historical accounts, fiction, drama) were part of the process of the 'othering' of the Caribbean by Europe, [West Indian autobiography] offers a particularly appropriate site of postcolonial resistance, since it is involved with 'the self,' and particularly the writing of that self" (30). According to Tiffin, her concerns follow Edward Said's notion of secular criticism articulated in The World, The Text, and the Critic (4-5), namely the idea of relating texts to human life, power, and authority.

The importance of the texts for Tiffin's analysis—Jean Rhys's Smile Please, George Lamming's The Pleasures of Exile, and V.S. Naipaul's The Enigma of Arrival—is "in the ways in which they function as sites for a semiotics of resistance to English textuality and not as simple extension of a European mode" (31). In the texts she describes as resistance autobiographies, "the unmasking of imperial fictions is important, not just in terms of specific texts, but through examination of the role of the book as fetish, dream, insignia of authority" (31). Tiffin problematises the traditional definition of autobiography as the story of an individual written by himself or herself by including for resistance purposes history, fiction, and drama in the category (30-31). She argues that this grouping is not "an echo of European post-Modernist fashion for boundary challenging... [but] a consideration of one
through the other, of the ways, for instance, in which European autobiographical fictions wrote the history of the Caribbean" (31). Her classification destabilizes the boundaries between history and fiction, and exposes the ideological function of colonial literature.

Despite the recent interest in regionally or nationally-based Black autobiographies, there have been few attempts to compare Black autobiographies from Africa and its diaspora. Two article-length comparative studies of Black autobiographies have, however, been published. They are Olney's "The Value of Autobiography for Comparative Studies: African vs. Western Autobiography" and his "Autobiographical Traditions: Black and White." While Olney compares Black Boy by African-American Richard Wright with L'Enfant Noir (The Dark Child) by Guinean Camara Laye in "The Value of Autobiography," he compares Black Boy with Eudora Welty's One Writer's Beginnings in "Autobiographical Traditions." Olney differentiates between features of African and Western autobiographies in the first essay and distinguishes characteristics of Black from White autobiographical traditions in the second.

William Andrews notes in his introduction to African American Autobiography, where Olney's "The Value of Autobiography" is reprinted, that
[w]hether Wright's Black Boy should be estimated in an exclusively 'Western' context, or whether it should be taken as representative of larger differences between African American and African first-person narratives are among the many provocative questions that Olney's essay, as well as others in this volume, are likely to stimulate for readers and students of black American autobiography. (7)

While Olney fruitfully compares Black Boy and One Writer's Beginning, it is more enlightening to discuss Black Boy and L'Enfant Noir as examples of Black autobiographical traditions because they are both historical, communally-based, and resistance autobiographies. Olney distinguishes between Black Boy and L'Enfant Noir in terms of community. While Camara Laye situates himself within a community, he argues, Richard Wright is more individualistic and runs away from community. What this argument does not acknowledge is that Wright chooses to join a community against racial discrimination, and this is why he flees from Jackson, Mississippi, to Chicago. The representation of the initiation ceremony that illustrates Laye's focus on community is appropriate to show the importance of community in his life, but the example of the account of Wright's unwilling baptism does not show anti-community. Instead, it shows Wright's desire to resist one aspect of Black community life. Religion, it must be acknowledged, is a communal enterprise for the Blacks in the South, as Maya Angelou demonstrates in I
Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. In *Black Boy*, those family members who want to baptise their children are invariably inviting them to join the Black community there because baptism is an integral feature of the religion that unites the community, even though that religion as practised by Whites has been an instrument of Black oppression. This is why Robert Philipson argues in "Images of Colonised Childhood: Abrahams, Wright, and Laye" that *Black Boy* is patterned by "communal submission and individual refusal to submit" (80). While the community requires Wright to submit to religion, to baptism, he refuses and ultimately flees from the society. The fact that he flees from the South to the North shows his desire to join a community that is less-discriminated against. As he puts it himself, as he departs from the South for the North, he leaves the South

full of a hazy notion that life could be lived with dignity, that the personalities of others should not be violated, that men [sic] should be able to confront other men [sic] without fear or shame, and that if men [sic] were lucky in their living on earth they might win some redeeming meaning for their having struggled and suffered here beneath the stars. (228)

Invariably, as Wright fights for himself, he fights for others like him; he fights for the larger Black community. This is why Olney himself argues in "Autobiographical Traditions," that "Wright testified, not on behalf of himself alone but on behalf of 'black boy' or 'black boys,' to what it was like living
the ethics of Jim Crow" (76).

Olney's discussion of *Black Boy* in "Autobiographical Traditions: Black and White" in relation to "a tradition of autobiography from the black community" (68) is compelling. His argument that *Black Boy* is a representative text for the generic continuity (69) in Black American literature is persuasive. As he asserts,

what sets it [*Black Boy*] apart from the story told in Yeats's *Autobiographies*, or from the story told in *One Writer's Beginnings*, for that matter, is that Wright's story is, *mutatis mutandis*, so very much like the story of Frederick Douglass in *Narrative* and also so very much like the story of the protagonist of *Invisible Man*. *Black Boy*, in other words, while being stamped throughout with Wright's unique character as a writer, is also and at the same time at the very heart of a tradition of autobiography that extends from the beginning of Afro-American literature right down to the present time. (72-73)

Similarly, that Olney discusses the generic continuity of Black Southern autobiographies with *Black Boy* and the lack of such continuity with its White counterpart, Eudora Welty's *One Writer's Beginnings*, (67-68) shows Wright as a product of a community, which is integral to Black autobiographies. Welty, on the other hand, illustrates the move to the
individual in typically Western/White autobiographies. As Olney argues, Black Boy is a generic Black story because "it is the story, oft repeated, of a group of people—and to suggest also that in the end that story discovers a form for telling that makes it virtually a genre of autobiography unto itself" (73).

Robert Philipson's "Images of Colonised Childhood" is another comparative but article-length study of Black autobiographies. Philipson's essay compares Peter Abrahams's Tell Freedom, a South African autobiography; Wright's Black Boy, an African-American autobiography; and Laye's L'Enfant Noir, a Guinean autobiography, in terms of the colonized childhood of the autobiographers and how they resist colonialism. Unlike in L'Enfant Noir, where transition from childhood to adulthood is smooth and planned by Laye's community (77), the transition to adulthood is more problematic in Wright's and Abrahams's autobiographies because "it is much more bound up with the political situation of a Black population oppressed by a white one" (77).

Françoise Lionnet's comparative study of African-American, Caribbean, and Francophone authors in Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture stresses not just the importance of orality for resistance purposes, but how race and gender combine to mediate autobiographies. The texts for
her analysis "interrogate the sociocultural construction of race and gender and challenge the essentializing tendencies that perpetuate exploitation and subjugation on behalf of those fictive differences created by discourses of power" (5). Since race and gender mediate autobiographies, Lionnet argues that the "human individual is a fundamentally relational subject whose 'autonomy' can only be a myth" (27). She reads Zora Neale Hurston and Maya Angelou, African-American women writers, Maryse Conde of Guadeloupe, Algerian-born Marie Cardinal, and Mauritian Marie-Therese Humbert against Saint Augustine and Nietzsche. Her comparative approach foregrounds what she calls "our differences as women which can ultimately unite us as a powerful force of resistance against all repressive systems of ideology" (xi).

Lionnet's resistance reading strategy is based on the principle of métissage "as a creative aesthetic practice and an analytical tool" (245). Her notion of métissage follows that of Martinican writer Eduard Glissant. According to Glissant, métissage aims at establishing "a cross-cultural relationship, in an egalitarian and unprecedented way, among histories which we know today in the Caribbean are interrelated" (Lionnet 4). Ultimately, métissage aims, according to Glissant, to reconcile "the values of literate civilizations and the long repressed traditions of orality" (4). As Lionnet interprets it, "the métissage or braiding, of cultural forms through the simultaneous
revalorization of oral traditions and reevaluation of Western concepts has led to the recovery of occulted histories" (4). The recovered histories become the basis of resistance for transformational purposes for female writers who "rewrite the 'feminine' by showing the arbitrary nature of the images and values which Western culture constructs, distorts, and encodes as inferior by feminizing them" (5). The recovered histories also serve as "the source of creative explosions for many authors, male and female, [including racialized writers] who are being nurtured and inspired by the phenomenon applauded by Glissant, the egalitarian interrelations in which binary impasses are deconstructed" (5).

Just as Lionnet puts into practice her belief "in the interconnectedness of the various traditions" she analyses in her study, in the spirit of métissage, my project discusses the continuities and divergences in Black autobiographies. My study is a reaction to the dearth of critical studies, especially extended studies, in comparative Black autobiographies. It sets out not just to read autobiographies of slaves, creative writers, and political activists as individual texts produced by individuals who are in turn products of specific societies at specific periods, but as related texts. The project pays particular attention to the various societies that produce the autobiographies directly to identify influences of environmental and cultural differences on the texts. To foreground the interconnectedness of the autobiographies, on the other hand,
the study adopts a cross-cultural approach to examine their interconnectedness. The texts analysed are selected from Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean.

Why Autobiography?

I chose the term *autobiography* for this study, and not others like life-writing, biography, faction, and autobiografiction, because my concern is with the power of the narrator as witness, what Opoku-Agyemang calls "the wisdom of the eye." While some of the texts that I study in the dissertation are long narratives about the self (autobiographies), others are not. For example, Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is a long narrative about her growth, but Sistren's *Lionheart Gal* contains shorter accounts by different women. The fact that the stories are narrated by those who experienced them directly makes them even more compelling and memorable. Also, that individuals narrate these experiences shows the power of individuals even when representing the collective in Black communal cultures.

Choosing the term *autobiographical* also limits the scope of the dissertation. A term like life-writing, for example, would expand the scope to include biographies as well as autobiographies. Biographies are not the focus of the
study because of my desire to listen to the participant-narrators themselves rather than how others see their experiences. Though I recognise the partiality probable in the narrative of the self, the possibility of conflating facts and fiction, and the likelihood of manipulating facts and fiction to serve specific purposes, I still see the autobiographical as a more reliable account of an individual's or a community's experience.

Moreover, despite my awareness of the constructedness of the genre, I prefer autobiographical to other terms, like autobiografiction (fictionalized narrative about the self, like George Lamming's In the Castle of My Skin), and faction (a mixture of fact and fiction, as in Wole Soyinka's Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years: A Memoir: 1946-1965). In Ibadan, Soyinka describes faction as "that much abused genre which attempts to fictionalise facts and events, the proportion of fact to fiction being totally at the discretion of the author" (ix). I prefer autobiography to the above terms because of the importance of the texts selected for this study in recreating the history of Black societies by their writers, who narrate their own stories and histories based on their own sense of the facts, which are collectively and connectedly, of course, in a counter-discursive relationship to colonialist history.

One thorny problem with the term autobiography is the part of the word that refers to writing, namely the morpheme graphy. The Oxford Reference
*Dictionary* defines autobiography as "the story of a person's life written by himself or herself" (55). This definition is Eurocentric, and it precludes the foundational examples of Black autobiographies: traditional African communally-centred individual and collective stories narrated orally by individuals or the community as a whole. James Olney's "The Value of Autobiography for Comparative Studies: African vs Western Autobiography" also implicitly excludes the oral in his refusal to interrogate the category "graphien," meaning "to write" (53), which he sets up in his paper. He does not explore how writing complicates the meaning of autobiography in oral societies and seems to take for granted that writing is a feature of autobiography. This perhaps explains why the representative African autobiography for his study, Camara Laye's *L'Enfant Noir*, is a written text.

Despite the problem of the term *autobiography* accounting for oral forms of African autobiographical practice, I still find it more adequate for my purpose here, relative to available alternatives, when modified to account for African oral autobiographical practices. My project is by no means restricted to oral forms of African autobiographies; hence the majority of the Black autobiographies studied here in fact fit "the Western definition" of the term, though they exhibit significant functional differences from the Western ones. My insistence on retaining the term *autobiography* for this study, despite its suggestion of the exclusion of the oral, is, therefore, my counter-discursive
method of writing back to the definition of the genre to show its colonizing aspects rather than discarding it altogether. It is when we redefine these words in non-Eurocentric terms that we can expose their colonising tendencies and extend their meanings in the spirit of métissage.

The Oxford Reference Dictionary's definition of autobiography is extended by Susan Anderson in "Something in Me Died; Autobiographies of South African Writers in Exile." In the essay, Anderson argues that

[the impulse to examine the history of the self, to turn]

systematic retrospection into art is a European one and the genre of autobiography is indigenous to Western, post-Roman civilization; only in modern times has it been produced in other civilizations. That more autobiographical writing appears in South Africa than in any other African country indicates the intense European cultural impact there.³ (398)

Anderson's assertions here cannot be justified. To argue, as she does, that examining the history of the self or turning systematic retrospection into art is European is highly Eurocentric. The process of analysing the history of the self has been going on in African cultures, like other cultures, since time immemorial. The examination process is particularly complicated because of the African's negotiation between the responsibility of the individual to the self and to the community as a whole.
As conceived in the West, an autobiography is usually the story of an individual because Western societies are typically organised around the notion of the individual. As a result of this individualistic tendency of the West, the Western autobiographer towers above all the other participants in the story, and is seen to do so. Thus in the West, many autobiographies function as stories of individuals, with others participating in the story to reinforce the prominence of the autobiographers. The situation is different in African contexts where even when an autobiography is the story of an individual, it is characteristically the representation of the individual in the service of a community. This is the result of African societies being commonly organised around the notion of the community. Even when individuals seem to be privileged by the community as a result of their achievements, the privileges have to be exercised with a high degree of responsibility and respect for the community. This level of responsibility is vital because it is generally believed that individual successes are strictly determined and made possible by the community. Since individual achievements are determined and enabled by the community, individuals normally recognise the community's role in their success and respect it. The life of an individual, as recorded in African autobiographies, ultimately becomes a way of discussing the community, especially the relationship between the individual and the community.
Olney differentiates between African and Western autobiographies in "The Value of Autobiography for Comparative Studies" by describing Western autobiographies as _autoautography_, citing C.G. Jung's _Memories, Dreams, Reflections_ as an example. Jung's _Memories_, according to Olney, is autoautography because it signifies "psychic development, or what Jung calls the story of the process of self" (53). He argues further that "[i]n Jung's autobiography, we find a typically Western way of conceiving of life or _bios_ with the single difference that Jung's psychiatric profession and his notion of 'individuation' rather intensified these general Western tendencies to take the life of the self to be the true life, the real life, the life about which an autobiography should be written" (53).

Since the focus changes from the individual to the community in the African context, Olney suggests that African autobiographies are _autophylography_. He replaces _bios_ with _phyle_ "which a Greek-English lexicon defines as 'a union among the citizens of a state, a class or tribe formed according to blood, a class or caste. 2. later, a union according to local habitation, a tribe" (57-58). Olney's use of a term modified to include the Greek root _phyle_ to refer to practices specific to the African context is questionable. Since his project in his paper is to differentiate between Western and African autobiographical practices, a word from an African language that has a closer link to the practice would be more suitable. Two of Chikwenye Okonjo
Ogunyemi's chapter titles in Africa Wo/Man Palaver illustrate a more relevant trend that could be followed. The underlined Igbo and Yoruba words in the chapter titles, "Kwenu: A Vernacular Theory" and "Aso Ebi: Textile-Textual Patterns," suggest the importance of community in an African context. In addition, the equation of "phyle" with "tribe" is Eurocentric, demeaning to Africans, and consonant with the colonial depiction of Africa as a jungle.7

Olney's explanation of the communal focus of African autobiographies is, however, forceful. He explains this focus in terms of "the notion that 'a person is what he [sic] is because of and through other people,' or in the notion that the Sonjo people (Tanzania) hold (as reported by John Mbiti, 152): 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.'" "An autobiography that takes its orientation in this premise," according to Olney, "will not say, as Jung's book says, 'I am as I am' but will say instead, 'I am as we are' " (57).

Anderson's opinion that autobiography is a Western genre not produced in other cultures until recently is also unfounded, as the forms of traditional African autobiographies that will be discussed in chapter four will show. Perhaps the difference between African and Western autobiographies, in production terms, is that while most Western autobiographies that Anderson alludes to are written, most traditional African autobiographies are oral. The differences in the medium of communication neither suggest that
autobiographies were produced only in the West nor that oral forms of the
genre were inferior to the written ones. Besides, Anderson's arguments do
not acknowledge one of the earliest written autobiographies in any culture,
Saint Augustine's Confessions (397-400 A.D.), written by an African.
Although Augustine is tutored both in African and Western traditions, his
autobiography clearly identifies him as an African and was produced long
before many of the written Western autobiographies to which Anderson
alludes. Merely acknowledging Augustine's Confessions shows that even
written autobiographies were produced by Africans long before the
contemporary forms of the genre. Since Anderson does not acknowledge St.
Augustine's Confessions, needless to say, she does not acknowledge the
several oral African forms of the genre that pre-date St. Augustine's
narrative.8

Like Anderson's other arguments, her opinion that the production of more
autobiographies in South Africa than elsewhere in Africa is the result of
intense European colonisation there is too unsubstantiated a speculation to
make. Autobiographies have been produced in various parts of Africa,
including South Africa, long before European colonialism on the continent, as
chapter four of this dissertation will demonstrate.

In sum, as it is used in this project, Black autobiography refers to life-stories
by people of African descent about their lives and their communities. They may be long narratives, like Wole Soyinka's Ake: The Years of Childhood, or short narratives, like those in Sistren's Lionheart Gal. The texts may be drama, like George Seremba's Come Good Rain; in prose, like Olaudah Equiano's Interesting Narrative; or in verse, like Derek Walcott's Another Life. They may be narrated orally by participants, like those discussed in chapter four of this dissertation; narrated to a scribe, like Mary Prince's The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave; or written by the authors about themselves and their communities, like Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.

I chose the autobiographies studied in this dissertation from the large number of other Black autobiographies that share the continuities and divergences discussed here. The selection of a particular autobiography affected the choices of others, and those choices were made to strike a balance between autobiographies that have attracted much attention from previous studies and those that have received less attention. Gender concerns and the overall contributions of the autobiographers to the genre were also major considerations.
Notes

1 As used in this project, the African diaspora refers to African descendants transplanted to North America and the Caribbean during slavery or living voluntarily in those regions after emancipation.

2 My approach in this dissertation is related to Paul Edwards and Pauline T. Wangman's in "Olaudah Equiano and Unfinished Journeys: The Slave-Narrative Tradition and Twentieth-Century Continuities." Edwards and Wangman's essay traces continuities between slave narratives and contemporary Black writing, while I discuss continuities and divergences in the autobiographies of Black slaves, creative writers, and activists across time and in transnational and cross-cultural contexts.

3 My classification of the autobiographies of slaves, writers, and activists in my later chapters follows Paquet's.

4 Poetry should also be included in the list because it features in the othering of the Caribbean by Europe. Also, Derek Walcott's autobiography, one of the most accomplished resistance autobiographies in the Caribbean, is a long poem.
5 In my attempt to question the exclusive definition of autobiography as a written genre and Susan Anderson's Eurocentric discussion of it, I acknowledge my indebtedness to Ngugi wa Thiong'o's discussion of the importance of orality and African languages for African literature in Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature.

6 Like phyle, auto, bio, and graphy come from Greek roots, but auto, bio, and graphy are more commonly found in English than is phyle.

7 See The Oxford Reference Dictionary's definition of tribe as "a group of families (especially in a primitive or nomadic culture)" (878).

8 Opoku-Agyemang identifies the "Nikki" tradition, a Japanese autobiographical form comparable to the contemporary diary (23). This tradition, which existed as far back as the 10th century in Japan, refutes Anderson's claim that autobiographies were until recently produced only in the West.
Chapter 2: Theorizing Blackness

I'm an Ibo writer, because this is my basic culture; Nigerian, African and a writer...no, black first, then a writer. Each of these identities does call for a certain kind of commitment on my part. I must see what it is to be black -- and this means being sufficiently intelligent to know how the world is moving and how the black people fare in the world. This is what it means to be black. Each of these tags has a meaning, and a penalty and a responsibility. And all these tags, unfortunately for the black man [sic], are tags of disability.

Chinua Achebe, Interview with Anthony Appiah et al. (209)

We must, I believe, analyze the ways in which writing relates to race, how attitudes towards racial differences generate and structure literary texts by us and about us. We must determine how critical methods can effectively disclose the traces of ethnic differences in literature.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. "Race," Writing, and Difference (15)
Black as what Carole Boyce Davies calls "a descriptive adjective" (5) for people of African descent became popular as a result of the Black Power Movements of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, the Caribbean, Britain, and South Africa. It is a resistance term functioning in oppositional relationship to racist namings like nigger, White namings like negro, or other descriptive terms like White. As Davies argues, "[i]t is that sharp, white background or 'whiteness,' then, that mandates, in African-American (US) or other sharply-polarized, racially-defined contexts, the tactical assertion of Blackness" (6). Chinua Achebe and Kwame Anthony Appiah make the same point as Davies. Achebe asks in an interview with Appiah, quoted by Appiah in Wole Soyinka: An Appraisal (98), that "[w]hen you see an African what does it mean to a white man?" Since what Achebe is stressing here is that the meaning of Blackness is partly conceived as a reaction to colonial images of Black people, the word Black can replace African. Appiah interprets Achebe's question as indicating "the presupposition that the African identity is -- in part -- the product of the European gaze" (110). African in Appiah's formulation can be replaced by Black and European can be replaced by White, since the focus of the argument is on self-defining Blackness as a resistance to White imperialist namings.

Sometimes, people have control over how they are named, or at least understand the names and can arrange them in order of priorities. Chinua
Achebe, in the interview from which one of the epigraphs to this chapter is taken, agrees that people have what he calls "the capacity for diverse identities" (209) and describes himself as an Ibo writer, Nigerian, African, and Black. He does not, however, identify himself as male. Although reasons for this refusal to acknowledge that he is male are not clear from the interview, it may not be unconnected with the privileges associated with this gender in Achebe's culture. A woman in that culture would likely identify herself as female to foreground the patriarchal exploitation that Achebe does not experience because he is male.

Achebe sees himself first as an Ibo writer because these two labels refer to his primary culture and profession. He sees himself as Black after seeing himself as Nigerian and African. If an African-North American or an African-Caribbean person of Achebe's status were to describe himself or herself, would such an individual see himself or herself first as African-North American, African-Caribbean, or Black? That Achebe sees himself as Ibo first is very instructive. He is Ibo first because that label distinguishes him from Nigerians of other ethnic groups. The African-American of Achebe's status would probably identify as Black before identifying as African-American because that label questions the Eurocentric assumption that all Americans are White unless the identification American is preceded by the adjective African.¹ It is similar in other societies too. A Nigerian will automatically be

29
taken to be Black unless the marker White or Indo precedes it. The category Black in racialized societies like North American and European societies, therefore, functions as a racial category vis-à-vis other racial categories like White and Asian. By identifying first with the label Black, Black people can on the first level relate to one another in terms of their experiences in racialized societies, a situation which Achebe describes as an understanding of the concept of Blackness and how Black people fare in the world relative to other groups. Moreover, such identification enables them to question their disenfranchisement collectively.

Like Achebe, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Davies support the notion of multiple identities. The potential for someone to be a member of different groups at the same time is what Spivak calls "subject-effect" (12). Spivak's notion of a subject effect is, according to "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," a product of the fact that "that which seems to operate as a subject may be part of an immense discontinuous network (text in the general sense) of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language, and so on" (12-13). It then follows that the individual occupying a subject position is made up of the different strands identified by Spivak, interwoven and working with others like age, race, ethnicity, and the society where the individual lives, to produce the end product that others see.
Like Spivak's argument, Davies's book *Black Women, Writing and Identity* is informed by the notion of multiple identities. She locates herself in "the context of migrations" (2) where identities are influenced and constituted by space. Her migrations to North America, various African and Caribbean countries, Europe, and Brazil "shifted, re-defined and reconstituted" (2) her identities.

The philosophy of negritude was one of the early methods for Black intellectuals to assert their identity. The ideology, which originated in French colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, became popular after the second world war, and Leopold Sedar Senghor from Senegal and Aimé Césaire from Martinique were two of its most long-standing advocates. The philosophy is a reaction to the dehumanizing and degrading effects of colonialism on Black people. It is a way of resisting colonial discourse as it affects Black people; hence it is in a counter-discursive relationship to colonial propaganda.

According to Abiola Irele, in his introduction to a collection of Senghor's poems, negritude can be understood from two perspectives. The first is that the movement is involved in the "awakening of the black consciousness to the realities of the black man's [sic] historical condition in the modern world, and in particular, of the colonial situation" (9). The second meaning of negritude, which stems from the first, is that it is a movement which presents
"a comprehensive view of African civilization and values, and ... relate[s] these to a unified conception of the black race" (11).

The philosophy of negritude is reflected in the literary practices of its time, particularly in the poetry of Senghor, Césaire, Leon Damas from Guiana, Jocelyne Etienne from Guadeloupe, René Depestre from Haiti, David Diop from Senegal, and Camara Laye from Guinea, among others.² According to Irele, "[t]he central motivation of this literature can be seen as the quest of a Westernized and alienated black elite for an identity, and in consequence their effort to affirm their racial belonging" (10). Some of the themes of the poetry of negritude are rejection of colonialism, assertion of Blackness, and the theme of exile and alienation of the Black intellectuals from their roots due to Western education and the French policy of assimilation.

The assertion of Blackness for negritude poets is generated by and generates a romantic and nostalgic view of Africa. As Irele argues in "Negritude – Literature and Ideology," "[a] myth of Africa developed in consequence out of literature of negritude, which involved a glorification of the African past and a nostalgia for the imaginary beauty and harmony of traditional African society" (15). This aspect of negritude gradually became the subject of criticism because it tends to equate Blackness with emotions and the West with reason. For example, Irele cites Senghor's "Psychologie du Negro-
Africain," where Senghor argues that "Emotion is Africa, as Reason is Hellenic." Senghor also argues in the paper, as quoted by Irele, that "[i]t is this gift of emotion which explains negritude ... For it is their emotive attitude towards the world which explains the cultural values of Africans" (Irele 23). Frantz Fanon in The Wretched of the Earth sums up the concern of negritude poets as an opposition of "the idea of an old Europe to a young Africa, tiresome reasoning to lyricism, oppressive logic to high-stepping nature, and on one side stiffness, ceremony, etiquette, and scepticism, while on the other frankness, liveliness, liberty, and – why not? – luxuriance: but also irresponsibility" (213).

Fanon explains the problem with negritude and its interpreters by arguing that though negritude sets out to assert Blackness, it adopts an approach formulated by the colonial ideology that it tries to subvert. In other words, since colonialism homogenises and discriminates against Black people, negritude's reaction homogenises the continent and people of African descent in relation to colonialism and the West. This homogenisation results in negritude defining Africa in terms of emotion, and the West in terms of reason, and explains why it is unable to subvert colonial historiography's opposing self-and-other binary. As Fanon puts it, "[c]olonialism's condemnation is continental in scope.... The efforts of the native to rehabilitate himself [sic] and to escape from the claws of colonialism are
logically inscribed from the same point of view as that of colonialism (212-13). Wole Soyinka agrees with Fanon on the shortcomings of negritude and argues in *Myth, Literature and the African World* that "[n]egritude adopted the Manichean tradition of European thought and inflicted it on a culture which is most radically anti-Manichean. It not only accepted the dialectal structure of European ideological confrontations but borrowed from the very components of its racist syllogism" (127). Despite the problems with negritude, it was an important movement in presenting another version of history to that presented in colonial discourse, and as Soyinka argues, its vision "should never be underestimated or belittled. What went wrong with it is contained in what I earlier expressed as the contrivance of a creative ideology and its falsified basis of identification with social vision" (126).

The name *Black* redefines who people of African descent are. Countering the imperial use of the term to identify a group of allegedly primitive people enslaved, transplanted, colonised, and deprived, the Black Power Movement deployed Blackness as a resistance symbol to the imperial discourses of slavery, transplantation, and colonialism. The term is, therefore, affirmed for the solidarity of all Black people (male and female) to fight against all levels of their oppression, even though, as Davies argues, gender oppression did not feature adequately in the early assertion of Blackness. As she puts it, "the tactical assertion of blackness in US contexts has been equated with Black
manhood and therefore has been at the expense of, but also with the participation of Black women"(6).³

One of the experiences shared by Black people all over the world, by virtue of their common denominator—their racialized group, or Blackness—is racism. Ordinarily, a Black person from Trinidad and Tobago will be discriminated against in many parts of the world, as would a Black person from Namibia, the United States, Canada, or England, simply because of skin colour. In other words, the race of the person will take precedence over the country of birth; hence though Blacks are from different places, they are likely to be treated the same way when they come into contact with Whites and even members of other racialized groups.

Frantz Fanon argues in "The Fact of Blackness" (Black Skin, White Masks) that Black people are pre-determined by a society that judges them by looking merely at their skin colour. Using his own experiences as background, Fanon discusses how racism debases Black people. According to him, ".... it is not I who make a meaning for myself, but it is the meaning that was already there, pre-existing, waiting for me" (134). To Fanon, being Black in a racist society means that "everything takes on a new guise. I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance" (116). This
suffocating racist notion of Blackness, according to Bill Ashcroft et al., "forces on 'negro' people a heightened level of bodily self-consciousness, since it is the body which is the inescapable, visible sign of their oppression and denigration." (321). Ashcroft et al. extend Fanon's analysis of the "fact of Blackness" to include other post-colonial situations, where the "fact" stands metonymically for all the 'visible' signs of difference, and their varied forms of cultural and social inscription, forms often either undervalued, overdetermined or even totally invisible to the dominant colonial discourse. (321)

The readily-apparent options available to handle the conflict of what others think of Blackness with what Black people think of themselves, according to Fanon, are for the Black person to ask others not to pay attention to their skin or ask them to be aware of it. Fanon rejects both options, rising above what he calls an absurd drama and arguing for a common humanity. The respect that comes with this common humanity is achievable only if one is able to resist the racist notion of Blackness successfully. It is this pre-existing racist and colonial meaning about them that people of African descent resist in their counter-narratives.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., is one of the most prolific theorists of race and Blackness. In his "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man," he reports on
his interview with Angela Davis, in which she responds to Gates's question on the "talk of the 'race card'" (59) in the O.J. Simpson trial, by Davis arguing that "[r]ace is not a card...The whole case was pervaded with issues of race" (59). Davis's position on the race card issue is very instructive and provides a good starting point for discussing Gates's theory of Blackness and race. In a way, Angela Davis's declaration that race is not a card contrasts with Gates's earlier assertion in some of his works that race is a trope.

Gates's recollection of some of his experiences as reported in "'What's in a Name?' Some Meanings of Blackness" shows how people with different histories experience the world differently. As a child, Gates encounters the idea of races and racism through the concept of naming. In Piedmont, Virginia, where he lived with his parents as a little boy of five or six years old, his family was well respected because of their relative financial security. They could even eat at places in which no other Black person in town was allowed. The reality of racism sets in when Mr. Wilson "a very quiet white man" (136) called the older Gates George because to Wilson, every Black man was George.

In the context of the multiple Georges of the Mr. Wilsons, Black people start the fight for their own name by identifying with the name Black. Legitimising the name Black was a sign to Gates that they "would be free,
inside at least, and maybe from inside we would project a freedom outside ourselves" (137). Gates recognises the power in a name; hence he opens his "Personal Statement" for his Yale admission by writing:

My grandfather was colored, my father Negro, and I am black.

(137)

He wonders whether his daughters will parody his line, identifying themselves as "I am an African American." Perhaps they'll be Africans by then, or even feisty rapper-dappers. Perhaps, by that time, the most radical act of naming will be a return to "colored." (137)

The question of naming for Black people and the changes in their names is also interrogated by Tobagonian-born Marlene Nourbese Philip. Her poem "What's in a Name?" (Grammar of Dissent 123) questions the concept of naming and the purpose naming people serves for those who name them or themselves. She examines the changes in names for Black people from Negro to Coloured and more specifically the changes to naming for people in the Caribbean. She is named as a West Indian because of Columbus's error in naming the region, and then becomes Caribbean, in a resistant naming after the indigenous inhabitants of the region. By stressing the change in name from West Indian to Caribbean, she foregrounds how colonialism constructs people and names them in imperial terms. Just one person names a whole
region made up of different peoples, and this naming is picked up by other Europeans because it fits with their prime purpose of exploiting the peoples of the region. Philip, like other Black people, becomes Black and then African. The changes in the name show the resistance of Black people to being named by other people as another means of exploiting them. As long as people are named by others, their identities are partly constructed, often in stereotypical images, by those who name them. The change to the names Black and African (as in African-American, Afro-Caribbean etc.) shows the formation of a different identity by people of African descent, challenging colonial images of them as Negroes or Coloureds. By privileging the name Black, they unite with other Black people across the globe to fight exploitation. Similarly, they identify with their African roots that colonialism undervalues.

Gates's process of learning about "the meanings of blackness – or at least how to give voice to what I [Gates] had experienced" (137) started effectively at Yale, which was a "refuge from explicit racism" (137), and his Afro-American classes. Contemporarily, however, Gates argues that the meanings of Blackness are much more complex. They are so because Black people now have to name themselves. With this inward-looking approach, Gates suggests has come the birth of what he calls a "New Black Aesthetic' movement, comprising artists and writers who are middle-class, self-
confident, and secure with black culture, and not looking over their shoulders at white people, wondering whether or not the Mr. Wilsons of their world will call them George" (141). Gates seems to suggest that the meaning of Blackness for the contemporary generation is to study and understand it. As he argues,

[our next move within the academy, our next gesture, is to define the whole, simultaneously institutionalizing African-American studies. The idea that African-American culture was exclusively a thing apart, separate from the whole, having no influence on the shape and shaping of American culture, is a racialist fiction. For us, and for the students that we train, the complex meaning of blackness is a vision of America, a refracted image in the American looking glass. (149)

This view leads to his conclusion that the new project of understanding Blackness should involve writers and scholars "transcending the I-got-mine parochialism of a desperate era. Their story -- and it is a new story -- is about elective affinities, unburdened by an ideology of descent; it speaks of blackness without blood. And this is a story to pass on" (150). In other words, merely transcending what he describes in "The Signifying Monkey" as "the received idea of blackness as a negative essence, as a natural, transcendent signified" in colonial discourse is not enough. There has to be as well "an equally thorough critique of blackness as a presence, which is
merely another transcendent signified. Such a critique, therefore, is a critique of the structure of the sign itself and constitutes a profound critique" (315).

This critique of blackness as both absence and presence is crucial, according to Gates, because "[t]here can be no transcendent blackness, for it cannot and does not exist beyond manifestations of it in specific figures" (316).

The new way of understanding Blackness that Gates recommends is profound. Within the academy, "elective affinities, unburdened by an ideology of descent" [i.e. inter-racial co-operation] is necessary for the growth of Black studies, otherwise there will be no money and facilities to teach and study Blackness, since the control of the means of production is largely outside Black hands. The pertinent question, therefore, is how does a simultaneous critique of blackness as absence and presence affect the reality of the Black person? A critique of blackness as absence functions counter-discursively to posit blackness as a presence that has been ignored in colonial discourse. In this case, blackness is resistance to colonial inscriptions of the category. A critique of blackness as presence suggests that blackness is not an essence, but it is fluid and exists in specifics. Though this latter critique is important, it is the responsibility of the critic and the writer to ensure that the criticism is not allowed to undermine the resistance features of blackness as presence. At best, a critique of blackness as presence should be situated within the daily experiences of Black people, how they resist their
construction as absence, and not just in metaphors and signs.

It appears as if we have not reached the stage of "Blackness without blood." It is still a stage of the future. The inequality among racial groups has to be comprehensively addressed before we can get to this stage at which the discrimination and desperation of the past that Gates talks about would really be absent. Gates's stage of the future appears responsible for his assertion that race is a trope and his still acknowledging that race is none the less a formidable force in the life of Black people. The fact that we are not yet at this stage of racelessness forces Gates to sing or hum a tune to make the White woman he meets in a dark corner comfortable. The fact that we are not yet at this stage of racelessness is responsible for an experience like "the taxi fallacy" and other discriminations that Gates recounts in "What's in a Name?"

The reality of the desperate era is still around. This is why racism is still very flagrant in North American societies and why race relations are still so tense, as the reactions to the O.J. Simpson verdict illustrate. Blacks must name themselves. It is only when they continue to name themselves that they can determine who they are, and it is within this framework that they can question the colonial assumption that the coloniser has the authority to name and determine the identity of the colonised. Though it is an issue that
the academy can interrogate, it goes beyond the academy. The daily realities, meanings, discriminations, and deprivations that go with Blackness are all implicated and should be represented in the signification.

In his introduction to "Race," Writing, and Difference, Gates discusses the role race plays in the study of literature. He discusses the "implicit presence" of race (2) in literature, noting that, until the last decade, no serious attempt was made to discuss the relation of literature to race. He cites Practical Criticism and New Criticism as examples of critical methods that "bracketed or suspended" (4) issues of race in their framework, explaining that "[t]he citizens of the republic of literature ... were all white, and mostly male. Difference, if difference obtained at all, was a difference obliterated by the simultaneity of Eliot's tradition" (4). Eliot's tradition, according to Gates, is the simultaneous ordering of the texts that comprised the Western tradition [which] rendered race implicit. Once the concept value became encased in the belief in a canon of texts whose authors purportedly shared a common culture, inherited from both the Greco-Roman and the Judeo-Christian traditions, there was no need to speak of matters of race, since the race of these authors was 'the same.' One not heir to these traditions was, by definition, another race. (4)
Toni Morrison amplifies the same point as that made by Gates in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. She argues, like Gates, that "in matters of race, silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse" (9). She identifies the response to issues of race in American literature as a cosmetic solution and a rejection of the political from literature, a rejection that is too great a sacrifice to make. She asserts that the dismissal of the political from literature is a "trembling hypochondria always curing itself with unnecessary surgery. A criticism that needs to insist that literature is not only 'universal' but also 'race-free' risks lobotomizing that literature, and diminishes both the art and the artist" (12).

Following on their criticism of the exclusion of race in the study of literature, Morrison and Gates chart new responsibilities for literary criticism. Morrison suggests an interest "in how agendas in criticism have disguised themselves, and, in so doing, impoverished the literature it studies" (8). She also recommends an investigation of "the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it" to complement the study of its effects on its victims (11). Gates, for his part, as delineated in the second epigraph to this chapter, suggests an examination of the relationship between writing and race, racial differences and structures of texts by and about Black people, and how criticism can explain cultural variations in literature.
Despite Gates's very eloquent discussion of race, the word *race* is in quotation marks in his writings. He explains why he brackets race in "Talkin' That Talk," his response to Tzvetan Todorov's "Race,' Writing and Difference." Gates and the editors of *Critical Inquiry* decided to bracket race because "'race' is a metaphor for something else and not an essence or a thing in itself, apart from its creation by an act of language" (402). According to Gates, there is a danger in accepting that race is a thing or a category that is already in existence. This danger is in "generalizing about observed differences between human beings as if these differences were consistent and determined, a priori" (402); hence writers of African descent like Phillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equaino, Ignatius Sancho had to confront "a fixed racist subtext, or pretext" (403) about people of African descent in European texts. Gates continues by arguing that "'races,' put simply, do not exist, and that to claim they do, for whatever misguided reason, is to stand on dangerous ground" (403).

By declaring that races do not exist, Gates does a big disservice to a praiseworthy cause, the cause of racial equality, which he supports very passionately. This disservice is particularly damaging now when disenfranchised racialized and gender groups, like Black people and women, are redefining notions of them and concepts about them, and employing these concepts to talk back, as bell hooks's book *Talking Back* suggests.
Repudiating racial categories, as Gates does, undermines what has now become a resistance method for Black people. Perhaps the zealosity in Gates's declaration is a result of his and others' commitment towards eradicating racism and other forms of discrimination. The irony of it all is that racism cannot be eradicated on the premise that races do not exist. If races do not exist, why do writers of African descent from Phillis Wheatley to Olaudah Equiano to Maya Angelou to Chinua Achebe to Kamau Brathwaite have to literally write themselves and racialized others into existence through their creative works in reaction to colonial texts? Why do they have to prove their humanity rather than just taking it for granted? Why do they have to confront the already existing Western stereotypes of themselves?

Why do we have African-American literature or Black literature if there is no Black race? My understanding is that we have these namings of literatures partly because of the shared experiences of people who belong to the groups. We have the literatures because these people experience things differently from other people and their experiences have to be discussed and studied as what they are: experiences of unique groups of people relative to other groups. Also, with African-American or Black literatures, scholars have the opportunity of studying Black people and their literatures as people and literatures in their own right and not as appendages to others and their literatures.
Gates's notion of racism also underscores the existence of races. When he takes issue with Todorov on the meaning of racism, he argues that "'racism' exists when one generalizes about the attributes of an individual (and treats him or her accordingly). Such generalizations are based upon a predetermined set of causes or effects thought to be shared by all members of a physically defined group who are assumed to share certain 'metaphysical' characteristics..." (403-04). Gates's definition of racism is a reaction to Todorov's argument that "'[r]acism' is ... the display of contempt or aggressiveness towards other people on account of physical differences (other than those of sex) between them and oneself" (370). The fact that racism exists and is attested to by many people including Gates is a proof that races exist. Gates also admonishes the critic to examine the relationship between race and writing and how approaches to racial difference affect texts ("Race" 15). I do not think we can examine how race relates to writing or how racial differences affect literature if race does not exist. Arguing that race does not exist because we cannot identify essential qualities of any race is logical. The irony of the situation, however, is that the category has been both around for a long time and used negatively, so that denying its existence on the basis of an inability to isolate essential features of a people is not enough. The category has to be redefined and used differently, now for liberational purposes.
Putting "race" in quotation marks is in my view a defensible practice, though not for the same reasons adduced by Gates and the editors of Critical Inquiry. To me, putting race in quotation marks does not mean that race is not a thing; it doesn't mean that it is just a trope, albeit a dangerous one. Of course, it is neither a thing nor an essence. I agree with Gates that it is "a creation by act of language" by different societies and not in existence a priori. It is a lived experience; it is a sociological and political concept that has since its conception been used to stereotype and dehumanise people by enslaving, colonising, or discriminating against them in other ways. Putting the word race in quotation marks to foreground it as a term that has to be wrestled away from its negative sociological implications, which are largely in the realm of privileging Whites at the expense of others, seems defensible to me. What is equally important is to interrogate the term with the goal of removing from it the prejudicial meanings with which various societies load it. As Gates himself puts it, "our task is to utilize language more precisely, to rid ourselves of the dangers of careless usages of problematic terms which are drawn upon to delimit and predetermine the lives and choices of human beings who are not 'white'" ("Talkin' That Talk" 403).

Kwame Anthony Appiah, like Gates, does not believe that there are races. In "The Conservation of 'Race,'" he actually supports the non-existence of races by agreeing with Todorov that "the existence of racism does not require the
existence of races" (40). The contradictions in Appiah's arguments become clearer as he defines racialism and intrinsic and extrinsic racists. He defines racialism as "heritable characteristics, possessed by members of our species, which allow us to divide them into a small set of races in such a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any other race. These traits and tendencies characteristic of a race constitute, in the racialist view, a sort of racial essence..." (44). Appiah goes on to explain that while extrinsic racists differentiate between people because they "differ in respects that warrant differential treatment" (44), intrinsic racists "differentiate morally between members of different races, because they believe that each race has a different moral status, quite independent of the moral characteristics entailed by its racial essence" (45). The logic behind the existence of racism without races is unclear. My own understanding is that racism is based on the assumption that races exist before the fact (are not constructed socially) and when racists have the power to act on this belief, they discriminate against predetermined groups.

Appiah also takes issue with W.E.B. Du Bois, who describes his intellectual career in Dusk of Dawn as the "autobiography of a race concept." According to Appiah, "if any single person can offer us an insight into the archaeology of Pan-Africanism's idea of race, it is he [Du Bois]" (In My Father's House 28).
Du Bois in "The Conservation of Races" (Writings 815-26) declares that "human beings are divided into races.... When we thus come to inquire into the essential difference of races, we find it hard to come at once to any definite conclusion.... The final word of science, so far, is that we have at least two, perhaps three, great families of human beings--the whites and Negroes, possibly the yellow race" (815-16). Du Bois also argues that though races may not be defined scientifically, they can be discussed historically and sociologically. To Du Bois, therefore, "the history of the world is the history, not of individuals, but of groups, not of nations, but of races" (817). He defines a race as

a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life. (817)

According to Appiah, Du Bois rejects the scientific idea of two or three races for his sociohistorical framework that identifies eight races, namely "the Slavs of eastern Europe, the Teutons of middle Europe, the English of Great Britain and America, the Romance nations of Southern and Western Europe, the Negroes of Africa and America, the Semitic people of Western Asia and Northern Africa, the Hindoos of Central Asia and the Mongolians of Eastern
Asia" (817-818). This shift, according to Appiah (29), supports the idea that races cannot be scientifically determined, and he argues against Du Bois's definition. He suggests that a race cannot share a common language, citing the examples of both the Romance and Negro races. Also, "'common blood' can mean little more than 'of shared ancestry.'" The bedrock of Du Bois's argument, according to Appiah, therefore, is that a race is "a vast family of human beings, always of a common history [and] traditions" (31).

Appiah argues that "a family can have adopted children, kin by social rather than biological law" (31). Similarly, he argues that "a vast human family might contain people joined together not by biology but by an act of choice. But it is plain enough that Du Bois cannot have been contemplating this possibility: like all of his contemporaries, he would have taken it for granted that race is a matter of birth" (31). In "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," and in In My Father's House, Appiah uses what Gates calls "the most sophisticated biological theories of race, morphology, and difference" ("Writing 'Race'" 15) to show that races do not exist. He finally states in In My Father's House that "[t]he truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask race to do for us" (45).

Houston A. Baker, Jr., in "Caliban's Triple Play," responds to Appiah's, and
by implication to Gates's, notion of racelessness by arguing with them on the esoteric level to which they moved the argument and more importantly from a sociohistorical perspective like Du Bois's. Baker acknowledges the brilliance of Appiah's "The Uncompleted Argument," because according to him, in reading the essay, "one is patently aware ... that one is in the presence of eloquence—an elegant mind analyzing" (384). The irony of Appiah's eloquence is that it is irrelevant in the real world; it is only an academic exercise. Baker argues that what Appiah "in harmony with his privileged evolutionary biologists—discounts as mere 'gross' features of hair, bone, and skin are not, in fact discountable" (384).¹² Baker defends his position further by situating his argument sociologically, and he suggests that

[in a world dramatically conditioned both by the visible and by a perduring discursive formation of "old" (and doubtless mistaken) racial enunciative statements, such gross features always make a painfully significant difference — perhaps the only significant difference where life and limb are concerned in a perilous world. In short, Appiah's eloquent shift to the common ground of subtle academic discourse is instructive, but ultimately, unhelpful in a world where New York cab drivers scarcely ever think of mitochondria before refusing to pick me up (384-385).¹³

52
Baker further discusses his position on race by recalling two episodes that he experienced in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. The first one involved a Philadelphia taxi driver who yelled after seeing 'two black men dressed in handsome business suits emerging from the terminal, 'I don't go there! Wherever they're going, I don't go there'" (385). The driver would not take these Black men where they were going not just because he identified them as being Black, but because they did not fit into the stereotype of Black people as the wretched of the earth. The story would be different if the men were White. In the other episode Baker calls an anecdote, he writes:

    Not long ago, my family and I were in a line of traffic moving along Chestnut Street in Philadelphia. On the corner, six or seven cars ahead of us, was a deranged, shabbily clad, fulminating white street person shouting obscenities at passengers and drivers. His vocabulary was the standard repertoire of SOBs and sons and mothers directed at occupants of the cars ahead, but when we came in view (gross features and all), he produced the standard "Goddamned niggers! Niggers! Niggers!" Now, if even a mad white man in the City of Brotherly Love knows that race, defined as gross features, makes all the difference in this world, what is it that Professor Appiah and evolutionary biology have done? What are they teaching us? (385)
Appiah's response to Baker in "The Conservation of 'Race'" still attempts to justify his argument further, though he cannot of course disprove Baker's experiences. He argues that "the insults of a New York taxi driver and a lunatic in the City of Brotherly Love are really not the core of the issue" (43). Appiah is even willing to take more insults "if it would bring more justice in the world's dealings" (43). The irony here, which Appiah appears to have missed, is that people have been taking these insults for centuries now and still there is no justice. Appiah also claims that he sometimes experiences the insult, but that the insult predated the falsehoods he is trying to interrogate and reject (50). That Appiah experiences the insult occasionally seems to differentiate him from others, like Baker, who experience it regularly.

Just as Baker disagrees with Appiah and Gates on the race issue, Trinidadian-born Dionne Brand criticises Robert Fulford, whom she describes as "the doyen of Canadian culture," in "Notes for Writing Thru Race" (175). Brand's criticism is levelled against Fulford's opinion that colour is his least important feature. To Brand, a statement like Fulford's is disingenuous because the fact that Fulford is White opens up a lot of privileges for him, opportunities that non-White people do not have. To Brand, therefore, Fulford is in a privileged position as a result of his background, and he is determined to maintain that position by denying racialized people the opportunity to resist
racism. According to Brand, Fulford's defence of colourlessness is "the most important part of his job as a member of the white cultural elite by using all the discursive strategy—implying that race does not exist, emptying 'skin colour' of its acknowledged political meanings" (175). Other aspects of Fulford's job and that of others like him are to discourage racialized people from resisting racism by "paternalistically warning those whom racism affects most that they are going down the wrong path in how they choose to organise against it" (175), and that racialized people "view it too simplistically, warning that we [racialized people]re practising racism by mentioning it and organising around it (177). Brand's position is that Fulford's denial of the political implications of colour, refusal to accept that his colour plays any role in his achievements, and discouraging of racialized people from resisting racism are part of the racist discourse carefully organised to continue the propagation of racism.

Chinua Achebe's essay "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness" is an important essay in understanding the concepts of races and racism and the ways in which they work. Achebe starts the essay by referring to some of his sociological experiences. The first episode he recollects, in the fall of 1974, is with a man he describes as "an older man." During their conversation, the man gets to know that Achebe teaches African literature. He was surprised "because he never thought of Africa as having
that kind of stuff" (1). The other episode concerns a young resident of Yonkers, New York, who, after reading Things Fall Apart, was particularly happy "to learn about the customs and superstitions of an African tribe" (1) not acknowledging the existence of related customs among his own people in Yonkers. Achebe argues, basing his opinion on the utterances from these people (and apparently his other experiences), that if there is something in these utterances more than youthful inexperience, more than a lack of factual knowledge,... it is the desire — one might indeed say the need — in Western psychology to set Africa as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest. (2)

The Western tendency to set Europe as a foil to Africa in the kind of Manichean opposition Abdul JanMohammed has identified\(^4\) is due to the Western conception (stereotyping) of races, in this case the White versus the Black race. Since races exist within an oppositional framework in the Western agenda, White and Black races are depicted in stereotypical terms, as Joseph Conrad does in his Heart of Darkness.\(^5\)

The category Black to which all Black people belong means they experience racism in many parts of the world. It is also because of their membership in
this group that many were enslaved and transplanted to what Europeans call
the "New World" while others in Africa were colonised. Membership in the
category Black also provides Black people all over the world the opportunity
to present their own discourse of resistance in a counterdiscursive
relationship to the dominant and dominating discourses of enslavement,
transplantation, colonialism, and imperialism. Counterdiscourse or
counternarrative, as Gates calls it, remains, according to him, "the means by
which groups contest that dominant reality and the framework of
assumptions that supports it" ("Thirteen Ways" 57). He identifies a
relationship between Black history and counternarratives; hence he argues
that "[t]here's a sense in which much of black history is simply
counternarrative that has been documented and legitimized, by slow, hard-
won scholarship" ("Thirteen Ways" 57). These counternarratives from the
Black communities become part of the resistance strategy of Black societies to
the maintenance of their disadvantaged position.

bell hooks examines the notion of Black looks and suggests loving Blackness
as another resistance strategy. She interrogates "color-caste hierarchy"
(Outlaw Culture 180), which she interprets as the tendency for White
supremacists and Blacks who have internalized racism to judge Blacks in
terms of their looks, such that lighter people are more tolerated, when any
Black person is favoured, than darker people. She suggests a political
discussion to address this crisis, and drawing from the teachings of the Black
Power revolution of the 60s, she supports

a politics of representation which would both critique and
[interrogate] ideals of personal beauty and desirability informed
by racist standards, and put in place progressive standards, a
system of valuation that would embrace a diversity of black
looks ...[because] [u]ntil black folks begin collectively to critique
and question the politics of representation that systematically
devalues blackness, the devastating effects of color-caste will
continue to inflict psychological damage on masses of black
people. (Outlaw Culture 173, 181)

In other words, the ability of a lot of Black people to resist the representation
of anything Black as evil, a representation that her book title Black Looks
plays on, is part of their resistance strategy against White supremacy and
internalized racism. By accepting how they look, they accept who they are;
they accept their identities and thus are able to take the first step towards
self-reconstruction and resistance. hooks also argues in "Loving Blackness as
Political Resistance" that

black people and our allies in struggle are empowered when we
practice self-love as a revolutionary intervention that
undermines practices of domination. Loving blackness as

58
political resistance transforms our ways of looking and being, and thus creates the conditions necessary for us to move against the forces of domination and death and reclaim black life. (20)

Following James Cone, a Black theologian, hooks goes on to call for the interrogation of whiteness to divest it of the privilege it evokes and its power to institutionalise racism. Along with Cone, she argues that "the logic of white supremacy would be radically undermined if everyone would learn to identify with and love blackness" (12).

hooks discusses the postmodern focus on otherness and difference in "Postmodern Blackness," arguing for Black participation in postmodern discourses and the inclusion of Black literature, particularly Black women's writing, in postmodern studies. The message of Black liberation struggle must, according to her, be reflected in postmodern discourse "to enact a postmodernism of resistance" (426). She questions the postmodern critique of essentialism in relation to identity, asserting that "we cannot cavalierly dismiss a concern with identity politics" (423), especially when subjugated people are just finding their voices (425). She contends that postmodernist theory that does not want to end up "appropriat[ing] the experience of 'Otherness' to enhance the discourse or to be radically chic should not separate the 'politics of difference' from the politics of racism" (424). Radical postmodernism should also foreground what oppressed people share for
resistance purposes in spite of race, class, and gender boundaries (424).

hooks, however, acknowledges that a critique of essentialism allows the affirmation of multiple Black identities and experiences and that the critique challenges colonial monodimensional representation of Blacks to sustain white supremacy (425). Even if postmodern discourse criticises essentialism, according to hooks, it should stress "the authority of experience," arguing that "[t]here is a radical difference between a repudiation of the idea that there is a black 'essence' and recognition of the way black identity has been specifically constituted in the experience of exile and struggle" (426). The stress on "the authority of experience" for resistance purposes is a common feature of the autobiographies studied in this project.

Albert Mosley's discussion of racial categories in "Are Racial Categories Racist?" is particularly useful for discussing issues of race. Mosley interrogates the call for the abolition of racial categories by Yehudi Webster in The Racialization of America, Naomi Zack in Race and Mixed Race, and Anthony Appiah in "But Would That Still Be Me?" Mosley argues that abolishing racial categories would eliminate racism without eliminating its effects, but "would tend to perpetuate inequality under the guise of recognizing only individual merit. And it would undermine the deep personal satisfaction that so many derive from membership in a group that
continues to struggle against a history of racially justified exclusion" (109).
Mosley favours an anti-realist approach to racism; hence he argues that race is a social construct used to justify Western domination and exploitation of non-Westerners and to preserve privileges for white people (102, 105). Using racial categories for resistance purposes rather than discarding them altogether allows people previously exploited by the designation, like Black people, to write back for self-identification, self-empowerment, liberation, and restitution (108). As he succinctly argues,

[the term Negro or Black person was originally defined in such a way as to justify the exploitation of individuals so designated. That this meaning of the term is now rejected does not mean that there is no group of people designated by the term Blacks. People who use racial terms need not use those terms with the same intentions as those who originated them, even while referring to the same individuals. Ordinary racial categories may operate much like names that people have learned to use to refer to themselves and to refer to others. As Saul Kripke has argued in Naming and Necessity, often the beliefs and intentions originally associated with those words have been lost and new beliefs and intentions have taken their place. (102)
Notes

1 Black and African-American are often used as synonyms in the United States.

2 For some poems in the negritude tradition from Africa and the Caribbean, see Norman R. Shapiro, ed., Negritude: Black Poetry from Africa and the Caribbean and Ellen Conroy Kennedy, ed., The Negritude Poets.

3 For Carole Boyce Davies's full interrogation of the name Black, see the section "Re-Mapping and Re-Naming: On the Ideologies of Terminologies" in Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject, 5-8.

4 See Ashcroft et al.'s introduction to the section titled "The Body and Performance," where they reprinted Fanon's "The Fact of Blackness," in The Post Colonial Reader. It is ironic that Ashcroft et al. use the word denigration in their reference to the exploitation of Black people. According to Oxford Reference Dictionary, denigrate means "to blacken the reputation of; to defame" (222). The use of the word here shows how subtle racism can be and how easy it is for words that suggest racist tendencies to enter even anti-racist discourse.

5 "Thirteen Ways" examines the reactions of some notable African-Americans
to the non-guilty verdict at the 1996 O.J. Simpson criminal trial.

6 Gates describes Angela Davis in "Thirteen Ways" as someone "whose early-seventies career as a fugitive and a political prisoner provides one model of how to be famous and black" (63).

7 Examples are "What's in a Name," 147 and "Race," Writing and Difference, 5, 403, 404.

8 I interpret this stage as a stage of racelessness in which individuals' racialized identities do not influence what people think of them, what they can get from their societies, and how they are treated.

9 In "What's in a Name," Gates writes: "[e]ven I--despite a visible presence as a faculty member at Cornell--have found it necessary to cross the street, hum a tune, or smile, when confronting a lone white woman in a campus building or on the Commons late at night. (Once a white coed even felt it necessary to spring from an elevator that I was about to enter, in the very building where my department was housed.) Nor can I help but feel some humiliation as I try to put a white person at ease in a dark place on campus at night, coming from nowhere, confronting that look of panic in their eyes, trying to think grand thoughts like Du Bois but--for the life of me--looking to 63
them like Wille Horton. Grinning, singing, scratching my head, I have felt like Steppin Fetchit with a Ph.D. So much for Yale; so much for Cambridge" (138).

The taxi fallacy ("What's in a Name," 147) refers to the experience of Gates, Anthony Appiah, and Houston Baker, Jr. while waiting for a taxi. Successive taxis refused to stop to pick them up simply because of the colour of their skin.

Du Bois also argues that "[t]here are of course, other minor race groups, as the American Indians, the Esquimaux and the South Sea Islanders..." (818). Du Bois's basis for categorising some as minor and others as major races is not clear. To avoid privileging some races over others, we can simply classify all of them as races.

Du Bois argues in "The Conservation of Races" that races can also be differentiated on the basis of "color, hair, cranial measurements and language" (815), though these features have no bearing on the intellectual capabilities of those concerned. The snag with these categories, however, is that they are "exasperatingly intermingled" (816). Appiah argues against these features because their genetics are rather poorly understood (In My Father's House, 36).
bell hooks also recalls her friend's and her encounter with a taxi driver in New York City in *Killing Rage*. She says:

From the moment K and I hailed a cab on the New York City street that afternoon we were confronting racism. The cabbie wanted us to leave his taxi and take another; he did not want to drive to the airport. When I said that I would willingly leave but also report him, he agreed to take us. K suggested we just get another cab. We faced similar hostility when we stood in the first-class line at the airport. (9)

Coming from Boston, MA, to Providence, RI, on 7 April 1996 with Raphael Alabi, my cousin, we were also discriminated against by seven Providence taxi drivers who refused to pick us up despite the heavy snowfall of that evening. All the cabs left with passengers that came after us. Just as Baker would argue, they, most likely, were not thinking about mitochondria, evolutionary biologists, Harvard or Yale theorists, or even racelessness. They simply saw two Black men, and they didn't want to have anything to do with them simply because of their Blackness.

For details of the oppositional Manichean relationship between the colonized and the colonizers, see JanMohammed's "The Economy of Manichean Allegory," *Race, Writing, and Difference*, 78-106.
Achebe also argues that "Conrad did not originate the image of Africa which we find in his book. It was and is the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination and Conrad merely brought the peculiar gifts of his own mind to bear on it" (12). For details of the racist depiction of Africa and the manichean opposition between Africa and Europe--black vs white--in Heart of Darkness, see Achebe's "An Image of Africa" and Adetayo Alabi's "Africa Reconfigured Through Literary Criticism."

See also G.D. Killam's Africa in English Fiction 1874-1939.

Carole Boyce Davies also attests to the tendency in Latin American communities to discriminate against people on the basis of how light and dark they are. She argues that "'mestizo' or 'mestiza' can be used as oppressive separation in Latin American communities in order to distance one from darker-skinned peoples and others who identify as 'African,' 'Afro-' or 'Black'" (16).
Chapter 3: Post-colonial Theory and a Transnational Approach to Black Literatures

[W]e black Africans have been blandly invited to submit ourselves to a second epoch of colonisation—this time by a universal-humanoid abstraction defined and conducted by individuals whose theories and prescriptions are derived from the apprehension of their world and their history, their social neuroses and their value systems. It is time, clearly, to respond to this new threat, each in his own field.


... I should see what in the universalizing discourse could be useful and then go on to see where that discourse meets its limits and its challenge within that field. I think we have to choose again strategically, not universal discourse but essentialist discourse. I think that since as a deconstructivist — see, I just took a label upon myself — I cannot in fact clean my hands and say, "I'm specific." In fact I must say I am an essentialist from time to time.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic* (11)
A very significant percentage of the world population has experienced one form of colonialism or the other. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* (1) suggest that more than three-quarters of the world's people today have experienced one form of colonialism or another. Part of the colonised three-quarters of the world is the Black community. Various Black societies have experienced diverse forms of brutalization. While part of the Black world was enslaved, transplanted, and consequently colonised in Europe and the "New World," the remaining part was colonised in Africa. These experiences of deprivation and degradation are often foregrounded in Black literatures. Despite the fact that the experiences are varied, what Frantz Fanon calls "the fact of Blackness" is implicated in them. "The fact of Blackness" in Fanon's chapter with the same title in *Black Skin, White Masks* refers to Black people's experiences of discrimination and racism based on their physical features, features that racists use in pre-determining them. In Fanon's words, "[t]he evidence was there, unalterable. My blackness was there, dark and unarguable" (117). Along the same line, W.E.B. Du Bois in "The Conservation of Races" identifies "color, hair, cranial measurements and language" as some of these features from which racists stereotype others (815).

Since the fact of Blackness, which is implicated in the experiences of Black people, often features in Black literatures, it is useful to study Black
literatures transnationally and cross-culturally. This perspective is particularly important because it unites all Black cultures that have been divided into various groupings for the economic benefit and administrative convenience of various colonial powers. Although a transnational approach links various Black cultures on various continents, it sets out to stress the uniqueness of the various Black communities in relation to what they share with others. A transnational approach also questions and undermines the notions of boundary, space, dislocation, and transplantation that have already scattered Black people all over the world. As Carole Boyce Davies puts it, though in relation specifically to Black women's writings, Black literatures should be read as a series of boundary crossings and not as a fixed, geographical, ethnically or nationally bound category of writing. In cross-cultural, trans-national, translocal, diasporic perspectives, this reworking of the grounds of "Black Women's Writing" redefines identity away from exclusion and marginality. (4)

Davies's argument that "cross-cultural, transnational, translocal, diasporic perspectives" redefine Black identity from exclusion and marginality is similar to Dionne Brand's position in an interview that she does not write from the margins. Instead, she argues that she is "sitting right in the middle of Black literature, because that's who I read, that's who I respond to" (14).
There is a relationship between a transnational approach to the study of Black literatures and post-colonial theory. Since all Black societies have been previously colonised in various forms, a transnational perspective links the various places and foregrounds a post-colonial framework for studying these literatures. This Black transnational post-colonial method is particularly important because all Black societies are in one post-colonial stage or another. This approach, when properly theorized to focus on Black literatures, allows what Henry Louis Gates, Jr. calls a "turn to the black tradition itself to develop theories of criticism indigenous to our literatures" ("Race" 13).

Post-colonial literary theory (in English) is often interpreted as an attempt to grapple with the literatures of societies previously colonised by Britain (Ashcroft et al. 1) excluding the United States. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin argue that "[t]he literature of the USA should also be placed in this category. Perhaps because of its current position of power, and the neo-colonizing role it has played, its post-colonial nature has not been generally recognised" (2). Studying Black literatures transnationally allows Black American literature to be studied along with other Black literatures within a post-colonial framework. It is pertinent to study African-American, African-Canadian, and African-British literatures in a post-colonial context because of the roles played by the United States, Canada, and Britain in slavery and colonialism. Though the United States, Canada, and Britain are rich imperial powers,
what some people might call "first world" nations, the experiences of the Black population there—experiences like slavery, transplantation, racial segregation, economic deprivation, and racism—are very much related to those of Black Southern Africa, and of other African and Caribbean countries. Also, the literature produced by people of African descent in the United States, Canada, and Britain, from slave narratives to the autobiographies of civil rights activists, reveals a post-colonial content that links them with other Black post-colonial literatures.

Post-colonial literary theory situates post-colonial literatures within the contexts and conditions of their production. According to Stephen Slemon and Helen Tiffin in their introduction to After Europe, post-colonial writing "is grounded in the cultural realities of those societies whose subjectivity has been constituted at least in part by the subordinating power of European colonialism" (ix). Unlike what Said calls "the universalizing techniques of deconstruction, structuralism, and Lukacsian and Althusserian Marxism" (Culture and Imperialism 194), post-colonial theory sets out to be very specific. The specificity of this theory is foregrounded in Slemon and Tiffin's introduction to After Europe, where they discuss post-colonial theory as a reaction to the universalising/colonising tendencies of post-structural theories like deconstruction and new historicism.
Slemon and Tiffin argue that an ironic development in deconstruction and
ew historicism is that the theories that were originally based on
"revolutionary scepticism" (x) gradually became a forum for the
institutionalisation of some "ridiculously credulous readers—'critics' who
systematically shut out the world in order to practice what Frank Lentriccia
accurately depicts as a textual form of interior decoration" (x-xi). Slemon and
Tiffin argue further that the theories foreclose in their "anti-colonialist
vector...the social field as an extratextual arena of struggle and thus [inscribe]
what [Carolyn] Porter calls 'colonialist formalism' onto the terrain of neo-
colonial international relations" (xv).

The remedy for the universalising and containing tendencies of
deconstruction and new historicism, according to Slemon and Tiffin, is post-
colonial theory. They defend the claim by arguing that the new theory
represents the notion that "theory is always grounded to a cultural specificity,
and that both 'theory' and 'criticism'—in the first instance—are always material
practices that are ideologically motivated and historically positioned" (xix).
In other words, post-colonial theory and practice will position and discuss
texts in terms of their cultural and historical specificities rather than adopting
the universalising focus of the theories post-colonial critics like Slemon and
Tiffin react against.
The ironies of post-colonial theory as theorised by some scholars like Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, Diana Brydon, and Slemon become clearer with an evaluation of its techniques. One of the most important aspects of these ironies is that post-colonial theory in their formulation ends up like deconstruction and new historicism, losing its "revolutionary scepticism," in subscribing to the totalising core of its predecessors. Post-colonial theory as theorized by them often falls into the trap of colonialist discourse that, as Slemon and Tiffin illustrate by quoting Tzvetan Todorov, controls discourse by extending "the principle of equality only when it withholds from Others the principle of difference" (xiii). Post-colonial theory extends the principle of equality to all cultures and at once withholds from them the principle of difference. Since, as Gates argues, "we must analyze the language of contemporary criticism itself, recognising especially that hermeneutic systems are not universal, color-blind, apolitical, or neutral" ("Race" 15), it is pertinent to interrogate some aspects of post-colonial theory as they affect the discussion of Black literatures. This interrogation underscores Gates's idea that no critical theory can escape "the specificity of value and ideology, no matter how mediated these may be" ("Race" 15) and Edward Said's opinion in The World, the Text and the Critic that though theory is needed for various reasons, what is more important than theory is "the critical recognition that there is no theory capable of covering, closing off, predicting all the situations in which it might be useful" (241). For the purpose of this essay,
terminological issues, essentialism, language, and linguistic appropriation will be used to illustrate why even post-colonial theory, despite its relevance to Black literatures, has to be evaluated if it is to be used to come adequately to terms with the literatures under review.

In the now famous exchange between Fredric Jameson and Aijaz Ahmad on allegory and "Third World" literatures, Aijaz objects very convincingly to Jameson's unitary approach to heterogeneous literatures of at least three continents grouped under "Third-World literature." Ahmad argues against Jameson's totalising project because it homogenises the so-called Third World literatures and their "enormous cultural heterogeneity of social formations ... within a singular identity of 'experience'" (10).

In the Ahmad tradition of rejecting uniformity, Stephen Slemon ("Monuments") and Diana Brydon ("New Approaches") argue against Jameson's unitary approach. Ironically, however, in her introduction to a recent issue of Essays on Canadian Writing (Fall 1995) ("Introduction: Reading Postcoloniality, Reading Canada"), Brydon steps into the same trap that she criticises Jameson for falling into by using the term "Third World" in an unproblematically homogenising way. For example, she contrasts Third World with invader-settler societies (2), argues that Julia V. Emberley's Thresholds of Difference "assumes that postcolonial theory is exclusively
metropolitan and Third World in its origins, ignoring Canadian and Commonwealth contributions to its development" (3), and suggests that Arun Mukherjee argues "from a Third World position" in Towards an Aesthetic of Opposition and Oppositional Aesthetics (5). Brydon's earlier essay "New Approaches" shows some of the inconsistencies that resurface in "Reading Postcoloniality." In "New Approaches," she reacts against what she calls "American homogenisations of post-colonial differences, and against the continuing invisibility of Canada as itself an alternative North American culture," (93) but groups several countries together as Third World in "Reading Postcoloniality." Though she argues in "New Approaches" that "[f]irst world and third world are themselves imprecisely defined, with some now identifying pockets of third world culture within the United States"(94), she employs the designation "Third World" casually in "Reading Postcoloniality." She also homogenises several Canadian ethnic groups' experiences simply as "immigrant experiences" in "Reading Postcoloniality" (11).

As an alternative to homogenising reading practices, Slemon recommends a post-colonial approach to reading "the historical positionality of allegorical figuration" (9). Such an approach Slemon prefers to Jameson's, which in Brydon's words "exclude[s] the perspective of the colonized in order to focus on that of the imperialist" (94). It is profoundly ironic that post-colonial
theory as theorized and recommended by Slemon and Brydon to counter Jameson's untenable homogeneity is more totalising than Jameson's classification. While Jameson's Third World literatures cover three so-called "under-developed or developing" continents, Africa, Asia, and South America, post-colonial theory covers six "developed and developing" continents, Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe (Irish literature, for example), North and South America.

Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman question the homogenising tendency of post-colonial theory in their introduction to Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader. They reject the term "post-colonial" for Canada because of Canada's role in the development of international capitalism and its role in the colonisation of the indigenous population (4). Brydon disagrees with them in "Reading Postcoloniality" and argues that since "[c]olonialism and imperialism fuelled the development of capitalism; their relation requires examination to be understood." She argues further that "if postcolonialism does not investigate the range of historical relations of colonies to colonialism, it will never gain a full perspective on colonialism and how to counter its negative effects" (10). Brydon goes further by suggesting that Williams and Chrisman's act of "withholding the status of 'authentic' colonialism from countries such as Canada makes the editors complicit in the continuing denial and marginalization of [Canadian] Native people's
experience of colonialism as well as of the invader-settler and immigrant experiences" (11). The bedrock of Brydon's argument, therefore, is that Canada is post-colonial because of the experiences of colonialism of the Native population and of the invader-settler and immigrant experiences, though how the experiences of the invader-settlers and immigrants make Canada post-colonial is not explained. Since the colonial experiences of Aboriginal Canadians are very important in discussing Canada as a post-colonial state, they deserve more attention in a volume like the one Brydon edited. Some of Brydon's statements in the introduction are inconsistent with the way the volume is edited. For example, she argues that the strength of post-colonialism in theory and practice is, as Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge argue in "What is Post(-)Colonialism?", to stress "a stronger distinction between the postcolonialism of settler and non-settler countries" (288). She also states that "postcolonialism proves itself most useful as a locally situated, provisional, and strategic attempt to think through the consequences of colonialism and to imagine nonrepressive alternatives to its discursive regime" (10). I agree with both opinions, but if Brydon took them seriously, as I mentioned earlier, more attention would have been devoted to Canadian Aboriginal literatures and how its writers perceive themselves in relation to other Canadians. If there is no disjunction between theory and practice, the introduction to a volume like this and the volume itself ought to interrogate vestiges of colonialism which continue to have an impact on the Native
community. For example, one would expect that pertinent Native issues, like land claims, education, and the reserve system, which symbolises the incarceration of the Native population not on their own terms but on the terms of the invader-settlers, should at least be mentioned in the introduction to the volume.

Brydon's position that Canada is post-colonial seems valid from the perspective of a White Canadian, a perspective that grows from invader-settler experiences. First Nations, Black, Chinese, or Indian Canadians may actually describe Canada as more of a colonial than a post-colonial state because of their various ongoing experiences of colonialism and discrimination in Canada. While Brydon in her introduction to this volume discusses how "Canadian culture, despite its similarity in many ways to British and American cultures, does display many of the signs of a dominated culture" (13), she lumps together and homogenises the experiences of those who are colonised and discriminated against—excluding those of the Native population—under the category she calls "immigrant experiences" (11). All these "immigrant experiences" through which Canada can also qualify to be post-colonial are reduced to what Brydon herself, talking in Foucauldian terms, might call "subjugated knowledge" (7).² There is no mention of the many colonial atrocities that Canada either committed or participated in,³ like its role in slavery;⁴ its role in the destruction and killing of Blacks and Black
cultures, as in the destruction of Africville in Nova Scotia; and its role in the institutionalisation of apartheid in South Africa. It is only when these issues are discussed and there are more changes in the lives of the people that Canada can be a better post-colonial state. Right now, since the Native population and many immigrant groups can still feel the colonial yoke, Canada's post-colonialism needs further interrogation. Perhaps this is why some people withhold ascription of post-colonial status to Canada.

Though the post-colonial world is very large, Bill Ashcroft et al. see syncreticity as a "constitutive element" of all of them (Empire 15). They define syncretism as "the process by which previously distinct linguistic categories, and, by extension, cultural formations, merge into a single new form" (15). What results from this position is the attempt to justify the grouping of post-colonial literatures by arguing that they are all linked by their experiences of imperialism and the use of English. Here lies another irony in Ashcroft et al.'s formulation: because the territory is so large, the language of the universal resurfaces and people are forced into a tension-filled association. The hybridisation, as uneasy as it is, can only be defended if differences in the colonial encounter are marginalised. Furthermore, the elitist stature of the English language of many post-colonial societies that is the focus of the theory and how colonisers and their native stooges used the language to exploit the masses of the people are not emphasised. Besides, in
relation to Black literatures, the English language was traditionally a language of exploitation. It is only recently that people are talking back in the appropriated language formerly used to oppress them as enslaved and colonised people. In addition, only English is discussed while other languages of the so-called post-colonial world are neglected. For discussing Black literatures, post-colonial theory must come to terms with the various languages used in Black literatures, especially indigenous African languages and Nation or Creole-based languages of Africa, the Caribbean, and North America, how they are used, and how they influence writings in English.⁷

In The Empire Writes Back, Ashcroft et al. discuss the concept of "essentialism." Since their discussion of the concept is in relation to the use of language in African literatures, the issue is important here. It is also important to other Black literatures because of West Indian and North American Creole/Nation-based languages. One common denominator of the often by-the-way mention of the concept is the lack of clarity as to its meaning and the specific problems with it as a concept. For example, Ashcroft et al. sum up the resistance of African scholars to universal rather than local readings of their works with a passage from Achebe's "Colonialist Criticism" (Hopes 46-61). Achebe writes: "I should like to see the word 'universal' banned altogether from discussions of African literature until such a time as people cease to use it as a synonym for the narrow, self-serving
parochialism of Europe, until their horizon extends to include all the world" (Hopes 52). Ashcroft et al. respond to the resistance by arguing that "just and necessary as this stricture is, the stress on African context sometimes went too far, as, for example, when it was employed in attempts to ban any but locally informed readings of the work as 'inauthentic.' This was to answer universalism with a false essentialism, and to limit the idea of 'meaning' in a dangerously narrow way" (127). In Ashcroft et al.'s response, it is not clear who is being accused of essentialism, whether it is Achebe or somebody else. Also, those who attempted to ban some readings of certain texts because they were inauthentic remain unidentified. Similarly, whether Ashcroft et al.'s reference to a false essentialism implies a true essentialism that they endorse is not articulated. If they endorse any form of essentialism, it is not clear in Empire. What is apparent is that their discussion of essentialism concerns the use of other languages apart from English in the post-colonial world.

Essentialism, according to Diana Fuss, "is most commonly understood as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity" (xi). While essentialism is to some "the philosophical enforcer of a liberal humanist idealism which seeks to locate and to contain the subject within a fixed set of differences," to others, it has "a certain tactical or interventionary value, especially in our
political struggles and debates" (Fuss xii). It is this latter type of essentialism that Spivak calls "positivist essentialism" (Subaltern Studies 13). Within this framework of contrasting positions on essentialism, Fuss's argument that "there is no essence to essentialism, that (historically, philosophically, and politically) we can only speak of essentialisms" (xii) is forceful. Since we have essentialisms, to me, as to Fuss (xi), the challenging questions are not whether a text is essentialist or not, or whether essentialism is good or bad, but why a text is essentialist and its socio-political and textual effects.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (Empire 24-27) criticise D.E.S. Maxwell's postulations on language because Maxwell questions the "appropriateness" of an imported language to describe the experience of place in post-colonial societies" (24) especially in "the invaded societies like those in India or Nigeria" (25). They argue further that Maxwell's theory's "lack of linguistic subtlety risks encouraging a simplistic and essentialist view of the connection between language and place" (26). They conclude that Maxwell's theory "suggests an essentialism which, taken to its logical extreme, would deny the very possibility of post-colonial literatures in English" (27).

It follows from Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's argument that for differentiating between English and the indigenous languages of India and African countries and for questioning the appropriateness of non-indigenous
languages for communicating the differences between these societies and others, Maxwell's theory "lacks linguistic subtlety" and "risks encouraging a simplistic and essentialist view of language and place." The strength of Maxwell's argument is its focus on specifics and its acknowledgement of the importance of differences in various post-colonial communities as exposed by the different languages used in these places. Also, even if Maxwell's position is essentialist, this form of essentialism is positive and strategic. It is productive because its focus is on unique experiences or features of a place rather than the language of the universal. It is only if differences are acknowledged and seen in practice to be acknowledged, the way Maxwell does, that post-colonial literatures, like Black, First Nations, and Asian literatures can escape the second epoch of colonialism that Soyinka refers to in the first epigraph to this chapter.

To argue, as Ashcroft et al. do, that Maxwell's position on language and literature, "taken to its logical extreme" (27), suggests an essentialism that denies the possibility of post-colonial literature in English is totalising. In the first place, that Maxwell's position suggests an essentialist view does not deny the existence of post-colonial literature. What it does is to stress the different circumstances of these literatures, rather than grouping them together. Also, there is no good reason to take this essentialism to "its logical extreme," because it is a strategic use of essentialism, as noted earlier. In the
same way, since Ashcroft et al. do not theorise for other languages, particularly indigenous African languages and Creole/Nation-based languages of various Black communities, as they do for English, they seem to suggest that English alone can adequately convey the differences between African and other cultures. Another implication of Ashcroft et al.'s argument seems to be that since English is the language that unites post-colonial literatures, everybody in the so-called post-colonial societies can embrace English at the expense of their indigenous languages in the universal spirit of homogeneity that post-colonial theory is supposed to be fighting against.

From accusing Maxwell of fostering a limiting essentialism, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin move to levy the same accusation against Ngugi wa Thiong'o. They explain Ngugi's position in his linguistic manifesto, which argues the insufficiency of English for a decolonising purpose, stating that such a process

must involve a much more radical movement away from European values and systems, including the language which, as he [Ngugi] sees it carries these values. His development over the last twenty years culminated in his decision to write in Gikuyu or Ki-Swahili rather than English in order to address an audience other than foreigners and the foreign-educated new elite. (131)
Ashcroft et al.'s conclusion on Ngugi is that his position is "flawed by its embrace of an essentialist and representationalist view of language" (131). Although they do not explain what they mean by an "essentialist and representationalist view of language," I think it has to do with Ngugi's ideas about the relationship between language and culture.

Ngugi argues that there is an intensive relationship between African culture and African languages; hence language is culture, "the collective memory bank of a people's experience in history" (Decolonising 15). He explains that since African culture can best be taught and preserved in African languages and since language is tied to culture and communication, and is a vehicle for liberation, "African literature can only be written in African languages." To him, African literature in non-African languages "belongs to an Afro-European literary tradition" ...literature written by Africans in European languages in the era of imperialism" (Decolonising 27).

As culturally specific and carefully reasoned as Ngugi's argument, like Maxwell's, is, according to Ashcroft et al., it is essentialist. The theory is probably essentialist because it does not fit into the homogenising variety of post-colonial theory. It is essentialist since Ngugi argues that English is just one language, which should not be allowed to colonise all other languages, especially African, Asian, and other indigenous languages. Ngugi's linguistic
proclamation is dismissed as essentialist, yet these scholars study English and other European languages without even trying to study any African language. They still remain specialists in literatures from the continent and other non-European societies, as Ahmad (4-5) points out. Is it not apt, therefore, to argue, as Ngugi does (Decolonising 27-28), that the fact that people question the use of African languages for African literature—a match taken for granted in other cultures—is a reflection of the attempt to subordinate these literatures to European literatures in the interest of neocolonialism?

Battered and dispossessed societies, like Black communities, cannot avoid strategic essentialism. For these societies, progressive essentialism is one of their attempts to reconstruct their communities and foreground aspects of their cultures that will be useful for re-writing themselves into the world from which they have been literally excommunicated. In line with Gayatri Spivak’s recommendation, I will interpret this process as "a strategic use of positivist essentialism, in a scrupulously visible political interest" (Subaltern Studies 13).9

The recuperative trip "inside" or strategic essentialism is unavoidable if formerly colonised peoples are to compete and participate in the world economy. They have to start by being convinced that they are legitimate
candidates for the competition. After a successful transition from this recuperative stage to a situation in which all competitors in the world economy, in every dimension from commerce to cultural production, are accepted as equal participants, the essentialist stage may not be as important as it is now. As Spivak suggests,

[s]ince the moment of essentialising, universalizing, saying yes to the onto-phenomenological question, is irreducible, let us at least situate it at the moment, let us become vigilant about our own practice and use it as much as we can rather than make the totally counter-productive gesture of repudiating it. (Post-Colonial Critic 11)

One clear point made in Empire and some other works by Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, Slemon, and Brydon is the idea that English is an important uniting factor in post-colonial literatures. All post-colonial literatures, according to them, abrogate and appropriate "English" and opt for "englishes." The distinction between "English" and "english" is at best blurred. While the upper case of the letter "E" is retained for British English, the lower case is for other varieties, conveying the impression that "English" is superior to "english." Though they stress that their attempt at distinguishing between the two is not to give the impression that "English" is superior to "english," the result is that they undercut their position with the differentiation. They
undermine their case by keeping the space that the so-called metropolis reserved for the so-called margins earlier. Perhaps the current linguistic practice of referring to all varieties of English as Englishes is a more practical approach.

Ashcroft et al. argue against what they call "the fallacy of both the representationalist and culturally determinist views of language" (42) by citing Okara's English in The Voice. Their project is an attempt to legitimise the kind of English that Okara writes. Though many people from cultures like Okara's do not speak or write their English in the tradition of The Voice, their competence in English is still queried whether in Europe, North America, or Australia. Many universities from these continents still require people with degrees in English from other cultures like Okara's to write the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), an examination in English language competence, even when people whose first language is not English in a bilingual country like Canada are not required to take the test. Yet, everybody belongs to the same post-colonial world where Englishes are spoken.

As mentioned earlier, Ashcroft et al. justify the use of English with the Okara experiment. Before discussing the other repressed aspects of their argument, it is necessary to examine how Okara arrives at his variety of English in The
Voice. After discussing the problems of communication even in his own language before the same problems recur in a second language, Okara explains his very conscious and deliberate attempt at writing English. He writes:

I had to eschew the habit of expressing my thoughts first in English. It was difficult at first, but I had to learn. I had to study each Ijaw expression I used and to discover the probable situation in which it was used in order to bring out the nearest meaning in English. I found it a fascinating exercise. (15)

Perhaps only those who go through the pain of translating without creating an original text in the source language will understand easily the mental torture that goes with the process. My question is: must a writer go through this intellectual agony? Isn't it useful to have an original that other people can read and use before the "fascinating" translation exercise? Okara's argument is peculiar because he does not address the role of the mother tongue in African literature. Some other writers, like Chinua Achebe, recognise the importance of the mother tongue and write in it as well as rationalise their use of English differently.11

One of the limitations of English, at least for an African, is that though it can convey African views in an African way, its audience is still limited. Only a
very low percentage of the population can read the language; hence the elitist
gnature of the literature is reinforced. This elitism is unusual in an African
context where literature is traditionally communal. In the same way, the use
of English encourages the collusion between African rulers and Africa's neo-
colonial exploiters. Since the rulers do not communicate with the ruled in
the languages understood by them, the rulers operate on a level different
from the ruled, as the manipulation of the downtrodden who do not know
what is going on continues. Using English, the rulers cannot communicate
directly with many of the ruled; at best, they can communicate through
interpreters. If the communication gap between the rulers and the ruled is to
be bridged in Africa and if any meaningful change is to take place in the
community, the rulers have to talk with the ruled in the languages of the
ruled.

Despite the inadequacies of post-colonial theory, it can provide a useful
framework for discussing Black literatures, particularly when it is aware of its
weaknesses, some of which are discussed here. To be very relevant to Black
literatures, the theory has to recognise the decolonisation process that Black
literatures in African languages and Creole and Nation-based Caribbean and
North American languages perform and theorise these languages and
literatures. In addition, it has to recognise the importance of audience,
societal transformation, and translation in any discussion of these literatures.
Also, the theory should interrogate the tension-filled syncretism of the cultures of the so-called developing and developed nations. Paying more attention to the specifics of these societies will surely make the theory more relevant.
Notes

1 Exemplifying the translocal approach to writing, Davies refers to Mayra Santos Ferbes's dissertation at Cornell University, 1990, particularly the chapter presented at the "Decentering Discourses" conference at Binghamton in 1989. The chapter "articulates an understanding of Puerto Rican identities between the US and Puerto Rico as within the trans-local" (167). For another discussion of the Black writing model, see Ashcroft et al. The Empire Writes Back, 20-22.

2 See Brydon's "Reading Postcoloniality," 7.

3 The examples cited here to question the homogenising title "immigrant experiences" are from the Black community because this study is primarily about them. There are other equally important colonial experiences of other groups, like the exploitation of Chinese labour for building the Canadian Pacific Railway. For some details of discriminatory policies against Chinese Canadians, Japanese Canadians, South Asian Canadians, see Frances Henry et al., The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canadian Society 67-72.

4 On Canada's role in Black slavery, see Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis William Magill Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black
Community, particularly 40-41 and Frances Henry et al., The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canadian Society 64-65. Frances Henry et al. argue that "Black slavery was introduced into Canada by the French as early as 1608, and the first slave brought directly into New France from Africa came from Madagascar in 1629. In the St. Lawrence and Niagara regions of Upper Canada, slaves were brought by United Empire Loyalists during and after the American Revolution, and at least six of the sixteen legislators in the first parliament of Upper Canada owned slaves" (64).

On Africville, a Black Canadian community, see Donald H. Clairmont and Dennis William Magill, Africville: The Life and Death of a Canadian Black Community; and Donald Clairmont et al., ed. and sel. The Spirit of Africville.

The Canadian reserve system provided a framework for the South African government in institutionalising apartheid and creating Black homelands.

Just as I agree with Ngugi on the importance of African literatures in African languages, I think what he calls the "Afro-European" stage in African literature is very important because it marked the beginning of effective resistance to colonialism and slavery by people of African descent in English. What I think needs to be criticised is the uncritical use of English by any African writers. In this regard, Achebe's use of domesticated English should be differentiated from the non-domesticated variety. Achebe differentiates between the domesticated and non-domesticated varieties of English in "The African Writer and the English Language," *Morning Yet*, 55-62.

See also *Post-Colonial Critic*, 10-16.

Another experimentation with the English language related to Okara's is Ken Saro-Wiwa's in *Sozaboy*, a novel in what Saro-Wiwa calls "rotten English." Saro-Wiwa's experimentation with "rotten English" is the result of his interest in "the adaptability of the English Language and of [his] closely observing the speech and writings of a certain segment of Nigerian society." He defines this variety of English as

a mixture of Nigerian pidgin English, broken English and occasional flashes of good, even idiomatic English. This language is disordered and disorderly. Born of a mediocre education and severely limited opportunities, it borrows words,
patterns and images freely from the mother-tongue and finds
expression in a very limited English vocabulary. To its
speakers, it has the advantage of having no rules and no syntax.
It thrives on lawlessness, and is part of the dislocated and
discordant society in which Sozaboy must live, move, and have
not his being" (Author's Note).

For details of Saro-Wiwa's experimentation, see Charles Nnolim, (ed.), *Critical Perspectives on Saro-Wiwa's Sozaboy* and Adetayo Alabi's "Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Politics of Language in African Literature" in *Ogonis' Agonies*.

Chapter 4: African Oral and Written Forms of Autobiography

The autobiographical genre is a long-established and popular communication medium in Africa. Members of various gender, political, and socio-economic groups present through their oral autobiographies their sense of self, contest their representations by others, and teach their histories to younger generations. The need to teach African history through the autobiographical medium is corroborated by Djeli Mamoudou Kouyate, the griot in D.T. Niane's Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali. According to Kouyate, his responsibility as a griot, which includes narrating his and his community's autobiographies, requires him to teach communal history. Without his family of griots, otherwise described as "the memory of mankind" [sic], he argues that "the names of kings would vanish into oblivion." Through "the spoken word," his family "brings to life the deeds and exploits of kings for younger generations" (1).

African oral autobiographies (folktales, epics, witches' and wizards' confessions, religious testimonies, and praise poems) as a communication medium have received hardly any discussion by oral literature specialists. Even when they are discussed, they are not conceptualised within the life-speaking framework. Usually, trickster² and dilemma tales³ are more popular (Ruth Finnegan 315, 354). Human and animal stories are usually discussed
as folktales. While folktales are tales of and about people and animals, myths, like stories about human origin, are historical, and could be religious, with supernatural beings, like gods, as their characters. Legends are set not as far back in time as myths, and they are about people whose achievements are monumental. Sometimes, supernatural beings occur in legends. When legends are about people who have made significant contributions to human society, they are biographical. Myths can also be biographical when they are about specific gods.¹

Human folktales can be autobiographical or biographical. They are biographical when they are centrally about people other than their narrators, as for example the Kikuyu story titled "Wacici and her friends" (Finnegan 358). Sometimes, neither the narrator nor the audience knows the characters in the story because it may be one of the stories handed down from one generation to the next; and at other times, the narrator and or the audience may know the characters in the story. Autobiographical folktales are stories of individuals narrated by them following the same pattern as that of other folktales. The principal distinguishing factor is that they are narrated by those who experienced the events recounted in them. One very important aspect of autobiographical stories, like many African tales, is their didactic function. They are often used to teach social history, social control, morals, and responsibility to members of the community.
D.O. Fagunwa's novels are based on the Yoruba autobiographical folktale tradition. Fagunwa, however, restructures the tradition to reflect contemporary experiences, including writing and timing. Wole Soyinka's English translation of *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale*, *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*, is, for example, the fictional autobiography of Akara-ogun who instructs a scribe to write down his story for posterity. As he informs the scribe, there would have been no need for the story to be written down but for the fear of death and the possibility of his story dying with him (8). The difference between Akara-ogun's fictional autobiography and its fictional and non-fictional progenitors is that in the traditional setting of story-telling, there would have been no need for a scribe to write down the story. Instead, the autobiographer or narrator would have performed the story, narrating and singing it, and carrying the audience with him. In addition, unlike Akara-ogun's story that starts in the morning (8, 35), in the traditional story-telling tradition, it would have taken place in the evening, usually after supper. Individual stories that I will discuss as other autobiographical forms, like Djeli Mamoudou Kouyate's autobiography in *Sundiata*, Sade's testimony, and the stories in the praise-poems recorded by Karin Barber from the Elemeso Awo family of Okuku, Nigeria, are also examples of autobiographical folktales.

Oral African autobiographies can also take epic form. At the original time of
oral production, when the epics were narrated by their heroes, they were autobiographical. These communal stories are also autobiographical because they tell the stories of different communities and because they are narrated by members of the community who are participants in the stories, like Djeli Mamoudou Kouyate, the griot in *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*. Although Kouyate narrates the story of Sundiata and Mali, the introductory part of the text is clearly Kouyate's autobiography, including information about his family and training as a griot. African epics, however, become biographical when written down in contemporary circumstances by people who were not participants in the original story. For example, D.T. Niane's *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali* and the South African Mazisi Kunene's *Emperor Shaka the Great: A Zulu Epic* in South Africa are biographies of Sundiata and Shaka respectively. In the original context of oral production, when the epics were narrated by Sundiata, Shaka, and other participants in the stories, they were more evidently autobiographical. As Kwame Opoku-Agyemang argues, in *Sundiata*, "there is to be found a narrative text in which the basic requirements of both biography and autobiography are fulfilled" (435-436).

Since African epics narrate African history, they are communal. Kunene's *Emperor Shaka* is a historical account of Shaka, the Zulu society, their exploits, and rise to fame, and it is part of the Zulu's and South African history. Although Kunene's account is "as accurate a historical account as
possible" (xxvii), he rearranges some events in the story to make it more dramatic because his text is both history and literature. Kunene stresses the communal base of the epic and other heroic poems, what he calls poems of excellence, by arguing that "they do more than praise and are more complex. Rather they project an ethical system beyond the circumstances of the individual" (xxxix). As long as individuals follow rules and regulations of their societies, they can remain heroes; they become subjects of lampoons, however, when they go against the social order (xxix-xxx).

African epics participate in the resistance tradition of African literature. Emperor Shaka, for example, recreates historical Shaka against colonial accounts of the ruler. As Kunene argues, his "honest view of the achievements of Shaka" is important "to cut through the thick forest of propaganda and misrepresentation that have been submitted by colonial reports and historians" (xiii). Kunene's account also presents Shaka's story in contrast to stories about him by people and communities he conquered, like the Ndwandwes under King Zwide.

The witches' and wizards' confession is a traditional autobiographical form in Yoruba societies. The confessions are communal stories because they deal with the relationship between the witches, the wizards, and other members of the community; the witches' and wizards' attempts to disrupt the social
order; and communal resistance to the disruption. It is usually when this communal resistance is successful that the witches and wizards narrate their stories and confess their attempts to destroy individuals and the community as a whole. Among the Yorubas, the witch and the wizard had separate names – *aje* for the witch and *oso* for the wizard. Contemporarily, both *aje* and *oso* are often called *aje* because *aje* are usually more powerful and a lot of *oso* operate under them. Another reason for the change in name is the power women have in traditional Yoruba society, the power that often subordinates men to them.⁵

The witches' and wizards' confessions occur after the callous and inhuman activities of a witch or wizard have been exposed by the community. Usually, after a series of metaphysical manipulations, under rather tense conditions, the witch or wizard comes forward before the public to narrate his or her life story as a witch or a wizard, detailing all the atrocities committed. This confession often takes place at the peak of the career of the witch or the wizard. Sade's testimony as a witch, as witnessed and recorded by Lekan Oyegoke in "*Sade's Testimony*: A New Genre of Autobiography in African Folklore," is slightly different from the pattern described above because of the involvement of Christianity in the narrative. As Sade confesses, she becomes a witch because of her inability to have children. As a witch, she is still unable to have children. Her encounter with Christianity

101
proves more beneficial, as she becomes pregnant after attending Christian fellowships. Her attempts to disrupt the fellowships she attends are resisted by Christian ministers, including Evangelist Kayode Williams. She finally abandons witchcraft, subscribes to Christianity, and confesses her sins in an autobiographical narration during a Christian revival in 1989 in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Religious testimony as an oral autobiographical form is not restricted to African cultures, but the difference between how it is practised in African cultures and in other cultures is the drama, pomp, pageantry, and traditional rites that go with it in many African communities, and the fact that the narration is usually about other African characters, cultures, and sometimes some supernatural powers. The testimony takes the form of a convert coming forward to give his or her life to the community through a deity like a god or goddess or Jesus Christ within a Christian framework. Part of the procedure is for converts to tell their life stories, focusing particularly on aspects that have gone against the requirements of the community and/or the religion they now profess and how they refused the calling of the deity concerned. In some African cultures, the narration takes place in a non-religious setting, for instance during an evening of story-telling. Since religious confessions are factual accounts of individual life-stories, they, like witches' and wizards' confessions, form an important part of communal
history. As well, the reluctance or refusal of the narrators to submit themselves to the demands of the community and specific gods situates their narratives within a resistance framework, in that their final submission to the will of the gods and communities concerned shows the triumph of the resistance by the community and the gods to the will of the confessors. An example of a religious testimony is Sade's oral testimony, documented and discussed in Lekan Oyegoke's "Sade's Testimony."

The praise poem—oriki among the Yorubas and izibongo among the Zulus of South Africa, for example,—is another oral autobiographical form in traditional African societies, though not all praise poems are autobiographical. Karin Barber in *I Could Speak Until Tomorrow: Oriki, Women, and the Past in a Yoruba Town* defines oriki as a genre of Yoruba oral poetry that could be described as attributions or appellations: collection of epithets, pithy or elaborated, which are addressed to a subject.... They are composed for innumerable subjects of all types, human, animal and spiritual; and they are performed in numerous modes or genres. They are compact and evocative, enigmatic and arresting formulations, utterances which are believed to capture the essential qualities of their subjects, and by being uttered, to evoke them. They establish unique identities and at the same
In African societies, people commonly have both praise names and other names. Emperor Shaka is not only Emperor Shaka, but Nodumelezi, "one whose fame spreads while he sits unshaken, i.e. invincible; Mlilwana, a little restless fire, the name given to Shaka by his mother in his early youth to describe his aggressive temper; and Ndaba, a reference to one of the early famous ancestors" (Emperor Shaka xxviii). A more contemporary example is Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire. In changing his name from Joseph-Desire Mobutu, Mobutu added praise names from his community, and he became Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu waza Banga. A loose translation of the name, according to Associated Press, is "[t]he all powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake."

Oriki are not always praise poems in the sense of lauding their subjects. They are often very critical of their subjects. As Barber argues, "[i]f what makes a big man [sic] formidable is his [sic] violence, greed, or intemperance, these qualities will figure prominently in his personal oriki. In oriki orile [oriki of origin], whole populations may be hailed -- like the people of Ikoyi -- for their skill at theft, or --like the women of Oko -- for their rabid jealousy of their co-wives" (13). The history of various Yoruba communities is taught through the oriki of the town or those of its most prominent citizens. This
role of oriki is possible because oriki, according to Berber,
are valued, they are preserved, and transmitted for decades --
sometimes even for centuries. They are then valued all the
more for coming from the past, and bringing with them
something of its accumulated capabilities, the attributes of
erlier powers. In performance, they are recycled and
recomposed, but they also retain an essential core which is
preserved even when its meaning has been forgotten. Oriki can
thus be a thread that leads back into an otherwise irrecoverable
social history. (14)

Just as people can chant other people's oriki, individuals can chant their own
oriki. Usually autobiographical oriki describe those who chant them, identify
their lineage and communities, celebrate their achievements and those of their
ancestors, and present some of the important events in which they have been
involved. One goal of autobiographical oriki is to immortalise those they
praise in the people's folktale tradition, such that the poems become a record
of the legacies of those they praise. The most common examples of
autobiographical oriki are individual and communal oriki. Personal oriki, for
example, "are the means by which a big man's [sic] reputation is established.
Through them, we are afforded access to the dynamic process of self-
aggrandisement and the values it generates" (Barber 5). Powerful women's
reputations are also established by their oriki. Communal oriki, on the other
hand, differentiate communities from one another, narrate their origin, recall some of the events in the community’s life, and sometimes describe events in the community.

Barber records an example of a personal autobiographical ori ki during a performance in Okuku as follows:

_Emi naa lomo aruku ti i tori baso_

_Igba n mo yego nimbale_

_Oku yan hunyan o di gbongan_

_Idi n mo diru kale lAgure ....

I am also the child of one who dons the masqueraders’ costume

When I befit the costume in the sacred grove

A disruptive corpse was put a stop to

I tied my bundle up at Agure .... (29-30)

The above autobiographical or i ki by a member of the Babalola family of Elemoso Awo’s compound in Okuku identifies her through her family, and mentions some of the activities that she has been involved in. Barber also records an example of a communal autobiographical or i ki from the same family. It goes thus:
Ijesa ni mi, ile obi
Omo atEfon waa soogun
To lOyoo dun
Oun o tun rele mo
Aremo ni babaa wa waa se foba
Efon lo bi mi, Oyo wo mi E...

I am an Ijesa, land of kola
Child of one who came from Efon to make medicine
Who said Oyo was so pleasant
He wouldn't go home again
So our ancestor became the maker of child-birth medicines for the oba
I was born of Efon stock, brought up by Oyo people.... (20)

The above autobiographical oriki can be claimed by any member of the
Elemoso Awo's family, so the "I" does not have a single referent, as in
Western autobiography. It identifies them as Ijesa (a Yoruba community),
traces their origin, explaining how they came from Efon (another Yoruba
community), and how they settled in Oyo.6

The discussion in this chapter of various oral forms of African
autobiographies (folktales, epics, witches' and wizards' confessions, religious

107
testimonies, and praise poems) shows the autobiographical genre as a long established and important communication medium by various groups in African societies in contrast to Susan Anderson's Eurocentric ideas about the genre discussed in chapter one. Just as communal African oral autobiographies teach African history, culture, traditions, and morals, they belong to the resistance framework in African literature.

Although much work still needs to be done on oral Black autobiographies, Joanne Braxton's and Sandra Paquet's studies establish the primacy of the oral antecedents of contemporary African American and Caribbean autobiographies. Braxton argues that her fascination with autobiography started with oral autobiographical tales she heard at her grandmother's knee (4). She asserts that she learned from her female elders family history and genealogy and folk medical formulas; I heard prayers both poetic and newsworthy, also ghost stories and preacher tales, as well as lullabies and nursery rhymes. My grandmothers also related the struggles of black women to survive and raise their children, as can be seen in the words my father's mother, Emma Margaret Harrison, recorded for a student project in 1970.... (4-5)

In relation to the Caribbean, Paquet declares that oral histories are crucial to an understanding of West Indian cultural identity (196). An understanding
of written West Indian autobiographies will be aided by a knowledge of oral
versions of the genre that Paquet calls oral histories. One of Paquet's
which belongs to the oral-written interface, will be discussed in chapter
seven. Documenting these oral Black autobiographical practices before the
older versions are lost is urgent.

The communal basis of Black oral autobiographies and their functions as
history and resistance are carried over to the written versions of the genre.
Both versions are used to record the communal struggles for survival by
Black people. They are historical accounts of Black resistance to slavery,
apartheid, colonialism, neo-colonialism, sexism, and other oppressive forces.
Key examples of these written autobiographies are discussed in chapters five
to seven of this project.
Notes

1 Since oral forms of African autobiography have received little attention from oral literature specialists, most of the examples discussed here are from the Yorubas, the culture with which I am most familiar. The Yorubas of South Western Nigeria are one of the most populous ethnic groups in Nigeria. They also live in neighbouring countries like Togo and the Republic of Benin. Their language, Yoruba, is widely used for both oral and written literary activities, and it is spoken in those countries with large Yoruba populations. Since many of the slaves transplanted from the West African coast to the Americas were Yorubas, the Yoruba language and culture still survive in Brazil, Cuba, and Trinidad. For some details of Yoruba as spoken in Trinidad, for example, see Maureen Warner-Lewis's *Yoruba Songs of Trinidad* and *Trinidad Yoruba: From Mother Tongue to Memory*.

2 See Ropo Sekoni's *Folk Poetics: A Sociosemiotic Study of Yoruba Trickster Tales*.

3 See William Bascom's *African Dilemma Tales* where he defines a dilemma tale as a tale that "leave[s] the listeners with a choice among alternatives, such as which of several characters has done the best, deserves a reward, or should win an argument or a case in court. The choices are difficult ones
and usually involve discrimination on ethical, moral, or legal grounds. Other
dilemma tales, which border on tell tales, ask the listeners to judge the
relative skills of characters who have performed incredible feats. The
narrator ends his story with the dilemma, often explicitly stated in the form
of a question, to be debated by his listeners. Sometimes the dilemma is
resolved by the narrator after his listeners have argued their conflicting
points of view, but often it is not" (1).

4 For some studies of African myths, legends, and folktales, see Isidore
Okpewho, Myth in Africa; William Bascom, "The Forms of Folklore: Prose
Narratives;" Ruth Finnegan, Oral Literature in Africa; and Bernth Lindfors
(ed.) Forms of Folklore in Africa, particularly Ben Dan-Amos's "Introduction:
Folklore in African Society" (1-34), where he discusses how Bascom
differentiates between myth, legends, and folktales (3). My way of
differentiating between myths, legends, and folktales in this study is similar
to Bascom's.

5 Wole Soyinka demonstrates the power of women in traditional Yoruba
society with Iyaloja in Death and the King's Horseman.

6 For a detailed analysis of the cited examples of oriki, see Barber, I Could
Speak Until Tomorrow, 17-21, 29-34.
Chapter 5: Caliban, Is That You?: Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano*, Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince*, Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, and the Politics of Resistance

You taught me language, and my profit on't

Is, I know how to curse.

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (1.2.362-364)

I have been a slave myself -- I know what slaves feel -- I can tell by myself what other slaves feel, and by what they have told me.

Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related By Herself* (84)

William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has become a kind of touchstone in discussions of the colonial encounter, the meeting between the European imperial powers and the people Europeans colonised. Within this framework, many post-colonial scholars foreground the importance of Caliban in analysing the workings of colonialism in disempowering the colonised and the enslaved.¹ These scholars argue that the encounter between Prospero and Caliban favours Prospero, validating his power in his
role as coloniser and justifying the availability to him of what, in Althusserian terms, can be described as Repressive and Ideological State Apparatuses.

Since Prospero is the coloniser, he endeavours to guarantee Caliban's loyalty by encouraging him to internalise his master's colonial discourse and by forcing him with the repressive apparatuses at his disposal. Moreover, because of the power relations between Caliban and Prospero, Caliban's claim that the island he inhabits belongs to him by Sycorax his mother, though voiced in the play, is subsequently dramatically disregarded. This colonial trope of neglecting pre-colonial socio-political organisation underscores the master-servant relationship between Prospero and Caliban. Also, the disregard for pre-colonial systems is reinforced by Shakespeare's thematizing of the issue of language. Because pre-colonial achievements are disregarded by colonising forces, Miranda argues that she teaches Caliban language and not a language, since, according to her, what was language to him before her arrival on the island was "gabble" (1.2.355). Caliban's assertion that Miranda teaches him language and his gain from it is knowing how to curse in it must be understood in the context of the ability of the colonial discourse in the play to neutralise opposition.

Due to the contempt for the colonised by the coloniser, mutual
communication is impossible between Prospero and Caliban. The major
method of communication is physical, so that Caliban is ordered around by
Prospero, and when Caliban does not obey him, he is punished with aches,
cramps, and side-stitches (1.2.325-329, 4.1. 249-250, 259-262). As in slave
narratives, where the relationship between the slave and the slaveholder is
the encounter between the exploited and the exploiter, in The Tempest,
Caliban is oppressed, and his attempts to curse Prospero, slavery, and
colonialism in Prospero's language, the only language Prospero recognises, is
ineffectual.

Since Prospero controls the means of production, in materialistic and
linguistic terms, he describes or supports Caliban's depiction as an
uncultured rapist with no language. Caliban's attempts to resist this
depiction are not very successful because his voice is distorted by the
imperial politics of the play. For example, after Prospero accuses Caliban of
trying to rape Miranda, his misleading response is that he wants to people
the island with Calibans. By giving him those words, Shakespeare provides
an ideological justification for Prospero to take over Caliban's island. In line
with this justification, Caliban accepts Stephano as a kind of God and king,
when he is clearly a drunken clown. Further to this ideological defence of
colonialism, Caliban acknowledges that he is "a thrice-double ass" in need of
Prospero's forgiveness (5.1.294-297).
About a century after the publication of *The Tempest*, however, the resistance tradition prefigured in Caliban is developed by slaves on the sociological level and narrated in their autobiographies. It is in these slave narratives that Calibans contest their image, as it appears in *The Tempest*. It is in these slave narratives that they argue that they had a culture before colonialism and that the rapist is not the slave, not the Calibans, but the slaveholders, the Prosperos. They contest this image by providing different accounts of how slaves are raped by their masters. The slaves contest their representation successfully in their autobiographies because their voices, unlike Caliban's in *The Tempest*, are not mediated by an English playwright. In these slave narratives, the experiences of slaves like Olaudah Equiano, Mary Prince, and Frederick Douglass are comparable to those of Caliban, whereas Prospero's roles as slaveholder and coloniser are comparable to those of slaveholders like Captain Pascal in Equiano's narrative, John Woods in Mary Prince's, and Colonel Lloyd in Douglass's. It therefore follows that the resistance tradition that Caliban is unable to sustain in *The Tempest* is developed substantially in Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*, Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, and other slave autobiographies.
Not only are the slave narratives above counter-discursive to colonial discourse, they belong to the group of texts Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* describes as autoethnographic. Pratt identifies a discursive and counter-discursive relationship between ethnographic and autoethnographic texts. According to her, "[i]f ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations" (7). Within this context, *The Tempest* is ethnographic in its representation of Sycorax and Caliban, while slave narratives are autoethnographic.

One of the factors distinguishing autobiography from other literary genres is the power of the autobiographer as witness and participant in the events narrated in an autobiography. Though readers need to remain aware of the possibility of partiality in these narratives, the vantage point occupied by autobiographers provides them the advantage over other writers to write about and interpret events that they witnessed or participated in as a critique or support of contemporary discourses. This is why autobiographies, particularly the politically informed variety, can either support dominant discourses, or can be constructed in a counter-discursive relationship to them.
John Sekora in "Is the Slave Narrative a Species of Autobiography" argues that life-writing is disturbing to a number of critics because of its link to resistance. As he asserts, "[d]isturbance breeds resistance, and resistance provides more glib answers than articulated (and difficult) questions" (100). Sekora suggests that out of all varieties of life-writing, few forms are "more disturbing than the slave narratives. And few have met more resistance" (100). To buttress his argument, he refers to the cultural repression of slave narratives after the American civil war, a repression that is only now ceasing (100). He also illustrates the resistance to slave narratives by referring to the reception of two captivity narratives, both published in 1760, A Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprizing Deliverance of Briton Hammon, A Negro Man and Thomas Brown's A Plain Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Remarkable Deliverance of Thomas Brown, of Charlestown, in New England.

Unlike the account of the young White man, Brown, that was easily accepted as autobiographical (110) and was printed three times in 1760 (106), the narrative of the Blackman, Hammon, did not enjoy the same reception, apparently because of its resistance to slavery. African-American writers and critics, on the other hand, easily identify with the version of reality the slave narrative offers and see it as the progenitor of African-American writing in other genres. While Alice Walker argues that "[o]ur [African-American]
literary tradition is based on slave narratives" (Sekora 100), William Andrews argues that Hammon's narrative is the beginning of the history of Black American autobiography (Sekora 100), and Rampersad suggests that "no single genre holds sway over a culture as powerfully as does autobiography over Afro-American literary expression" (Sekora 100).

The counter-discursive force of slave narratives links them with women's writings. Just as slave narratives develop alternative constructions about slaves, women's writings chart different orders of women's realities from what patriarchy hands down. Marlene Kadar in "Women and Journals" describes the diary as a form of writing through which women and men can "rise up." The liberating quality of the diary results from its occupying "a relatively low place in the hierarchy of published genres, [and] it is already a subversive genre. If words subvert norms, they are already empowered and empowering," (4) according to Kadar. Women's diaries are revolutionary because they explore patriarchal oppression and how to overcome it. In addition, the fact that these diaries are written by people predetermined by patriarchal and racialized societies to be seen but not heard makes their publication empowering.

Like many women's diaries, journals and autobiographies by colonised, disenfranchised, and enslaved people are rebellious. Since slavery not only
brutalises, but exploits and devalues the enslaved, anti-slavery narratives are inherently subversive of slavery. Whereas colonial discourses, like *The Tempest*, naturalise slavery, distorting the voice of the enslaved when they represent that voice, in slave narratives, the resistant voices of slaves to the inhuman and callous institution of slavery are heard. Those most violently objectified by slavery insist, like Caliban, on their rightful status as speaking subjects.

William Andrews amplifies the resistance framework of Black autobiographies, slave narratives in this case, by arguing that early Black autobiographies were guided by the autobiographers' need to be politically free and the desire to express this freedom in "ways uniquely self-liberating" (*To Tell a Free Story* xi). By telling their story of emancipation and the struggle towards it, the autobiographers resist slavery and become anti-slavery activists. And since their subject matter is necessarily anti-hegemonic, the forms of the autobiographies question Euro-American models of autobiographical representation. As Sekora admonishes, in line with Mary Prince's epigraph to this chapter, "we must know what we do not know about the slave voice in the slave narrative" (101).

Structurally, Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*, Mary
Prince's *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself*, and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* follow the same pattern. They are organised, like most autobiographies, chronologically. They trace the development of the slave from birth to the time of their enslavement, if they were not born slaves, and record their experiences in slavery as well as those of other slaves. They intermingle their accounts of their experiences with their resistance to those experiences, ending with their escape from slavery, their life afterwards, and their relationship with anti-slavery movements. The most space is allotted to the slaves' description of their experiences and their fellow slaves and how they resist slavery. This emphasis in the narratives shows how devastating, brutalising, and violent slavery is, so that it can be rejected. The experiences also show the odds stacked against the slaves and why their attempts at resistance are laudable.

While Olaudah Equiano was born in the Igbo-speaking part of Nigeria in 1745, Mary Prince was born in Bermuda in the Caribbean about 1788, and Frederick Douglass was born in Maryland, in the United States in 1818. Unlike Equiano and Douglass, who are only witnesses to the sexual exploitation of female slaves, Prince is sexually exploited by her masters. Also, unlike Prince and Douglass, who were slaves right from birth because at least one of their parents was a slave, Equiano was born free but later
captured and sold into slavery. He lived his first decade as a free person, and this early experience allowed him to situate his life at this time in contrast to his life as a slave.

Since Equiano was free at birth, the early part of his narrative describes his place of birth, the customs, traditions, and institutions of his people, like their marriage customs, religion, economy, and justice system. His recollection of his home is graphic and detailed, despite the fact that he was captured and enslaved at eleven. Catherine Obianuju Acholonu in "The Home of Olaudah Equiano–A Linguistic and Anthropological Search" traces his place of birth based on the information he provides in his narrative, even though the names of some of the Igbo towns and some of the Igbo words in his narrative are not exactly what they are today, probably because Igbo was not a written language when he was captured. According to Acholonu's findings, Essaka, Equiano's home town, is Isseke in present-day Anambra state in Nigeria. Equiano's painstaking description of Essaka contrasts with his sketchy account of his experiences as a slave in the Caribbean, Britain, and America. Similarly, Equiano's focus on the cultures and traditions of his people is resistant to the colonial construction of Africa as having no history and no culture before European colonialism. In this regard, Equiano's autobiography provides the groundwork for later autoethnographic texts by writers of African descent.
Seeing African cultural production in contrast to colonialism, Chinua Achebe, two centuries after Equiano, argues that the African writer has to show that "African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans; that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity" ("The Role of the Writer" 88). Further to Achebe's contention in "The Role," he maintains in "The Novelist as Teacher" (Morning Yet), that he would be quite satisfied if his novels only teach his readers that the African past "with all its imperfections—was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them" (45).

Equiano adopts a critical vision of African societies in his narrative by his discussion of slavery among his people before his transplantation to the Caribbean. He prefers this local variety of slavery because, going by his description, the slave is integrated into the household of his or her master, unlike on the ship and in the Americas and Britain where the slave is dehumanized and made into a work-horse and beast of burden, exploited in every possible way. Equiano's description of slavery among his people foregrounds European slavery as savage. As he asserts, when comparing European slavery with the African variety, "I would have freely parted with them all [his European slave masters] to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country" (55).
Equiano recalls the horrors of slavery.² As he journeys through Britain and the Americas, he reports that he is abused, tied, and flogged severely on the ship, the cruelty against him and other slaves being so extreme that he describes the slave masters as savages (56). He offers many examples of the dehumanizing treatment of slaves, among them the following observation about the time when he was Quaker Robert King's slave. He remembers that it was

almost a constant practice with our clerks, and other whites, to commit violent depredations on the chastity of female slaves; and these I was, though with reluctance, obliged to submit to at all times, being unable to help them.... I have even known them gratify their brutal passion with females not ten years old....

(104)

In Montserrat, he sees a negro-man "staked to the ground, and cut most shockingly, and then his ears cut off bit by bit, because he had been connected with a white woman who was a common prostitute..." (104). Other examples of brutality he recalls are that a slave was "half hanged, and then burnt, for attempting to poison a cruel overseer" (105) and that Mr. Drummond offered information that he had sold 41,000 negroes, "that he once cut off a negro-man's leg for running away" (104), and had "a negro beaten till some of his bones were broken, for only letting a pot boil over" (107). The examples of the callous treatment of the slaves are so many and
overpowering that Equiano suggests that if he has "to enumerate them all, the catalogue will be tedious and disgusting" (113). Equiano's and other slaves' exploitation is comparable to Caliban's by Prospero in *The Tempest*. Just as slaves are regularly punished, even when not at fault, Caliban is castigated whenever he questions Prospero, refuses to obey him, or attempts to develop his counter-narrative.

Slave exploitation is complicated by the gender of the slaves; hence there are important differences in the representation of slaves when the autobiographer is a woman. Like Equiano's, Prince's experiences as a slave are very grim and catastrophic. Her mother being a household slave belonging to Mr. Charles Myners, on whose farm she is born, and her father being "a sawyer belonging to Mr. Trimmingham, a ship-builder at Crow-Lane" (47), Mary's experience of slavery's cruelties is part of her childhood memories. After Mr. Myners's death, she and her mother are bought by Captain Darrel and she is "given to his grand-child Miss Betsey Williams" (47). She is later sold successively to Captain I, Mr. D, and Mr. John Wood. Since she is a woman, she experiences slavery differently from Equiano. She, therefore, suffers from what Abena P. Busia in "Silencing Sycorax" calls "two paradigms of alienation and otherness...that of femaleness and that of blackness" (84).

Unlike Equiano and Douglass, who are only witnesses to the sexual
exploitation of female slaves, Prince is sexually exploited by her masters, and both masters and mistresses maltreat her in a variety of ways. Just like Miranda, whose power over Caliban comes by virtue of being Prospero's daughter, Prince's mistresses' power over her comes by virtue of their being the wives of her masters. Prince is, however, unable to paint her sexual exploitation very graphically because her autobiography was published by anti-slavery crusaders who were also involved with the church. Thomas Pringle, her editor, for example, was also her employer and the Methodist Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. As Moira Ferguson suggests in her introduction to Prince's autobiography, "[g]iven Mary Prince's economic dependence and the fact that her narrative was intended as propaganda for the anti-slavery campaign, she would presumably have constructed what she wanted to say very carefully in accordance with what she knew of the aims of the Anti-Slavery Society" (10). Painting graphic pictures of sexual exploitation could easily have been discouraged by her editors and publishers because they could have considered such descriptions corrupting of their idea of Christian virtue, no matter the circumstances of the events. Despite this problem, Prince, through a veiled style and economy of words, is still able to point the readers' attention to her sexual exploitation. For example, when she is Mr. D's slave, she maintains that he "has often stripped me naked, hung me up by the wrists, and beat me with the cow-skin, with his own hand, till my body was raw with gashes" (63, emphasis added). Prince also describes
her sexual exploitation by Mr. D:

He had an ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked and ordering me then to wash him in a tub of water. This was worse to me than all the licks. Sometimes when he called me to wash him I would not come, my eyes were so full of shame. He would then come to beat me. (68)

Apart from being sexually exploited, she is continually brutalised, severely flogged, and otherwise maltreated. When she is Captain I's slave, because an already cracked jar finally breaks in her hand, Mrs. I "stripped and flogged me [Prince] long and severely with the cow-skin; as long as she had strength to use the lash, for she did not give over till she was quite tired" (58).

Captain I continues the punishment when he gets home. The following day, he ties her on a ladder and inflicts on her "a hundred lashes with his own hand, and master Benjy [his son] stood by to count them for him" (58).

Shortly after this, a cow gets loose and eats a sweet-potatoe slip. When Captain I discovers what has happened, he strikes her so severely with his heavy boot that she shrieks in agony, thinking she had been dealt a mortal blow. She is also regularly flogged and maltreated when she is Mr. John Wood's slave. Both Mr. and Mrs. Wood often abuse and swear at her.

Although Mr. Wood refuses to sell her to somebody else, he finally asks her to look for another master because she resists her vicious ill-treatment,
arguing openly that she does not deserve to be exploited and given so much washing to do.

Mary Prince's recollections of the experiences of other slaves, both female and male, are as horrific as her memories of her own. As she declares, "[i]n telling my own sorrows, I cannot pass by those of my fellow-slaves—for when I think of my own griefs, I remember theirs" (65). Like Prince, Hetty, another female slave whom she calls Aunt (57) "led a most miserable life, and her death was hastened (at least the slaves all believed and said so,) by the dreadful chastisement she received from my master during her pregnancy" (57). Because a cow drags the rope away from the stake where Hetty fastened it, Captain I flew into a terrible passion, and ordered the poor creature to be stripped quite naked, notwithstanding her pregnancy, and to be tied up to a tree in the yard. He then flogged her as hard as he could lick, both with the whip and cow-skin, till she was all over streaming with blood. He rested, and then beat her again and again. (57)

Hetty eventually delivers a dead baby prematurely and, after regaining her health, she is persistently flogged until "her body and limbs swelled to a great size; and she lay on a mat in the kitchen, till the water burst out of her body and she died. All the slaves said that death was a good thing for poor
Hetty" (57).

Mr. D exploits his slaves no less than Captain I. Mr. D locks Ben up all night and keeps him hungry for stealing a little rice because of extreme hunger. The following afternoon, he hangs Ben up by his hands and beats him mercilessly until there is "a pool of blood beneath him" (64). Ben tries to excuse his act by arguing that Master Dickey, Mr. D's son, also does the same thing. Dickey denies the charge and is so enraged that he runs a bayonet through Ben's foot. Dickey's authority over Ben, like Miranda's over Caliban, is by virtue of being the child of the slave-owner. Daniel who is old and lame in the hip also suffers similar abuse for his inability to keep up with the other slaves. He is usually beaten until his skin is red and raw, after which his master pours salt on the raw flesh to increase his suffering (64). Mr. D never allows Daniel's wounds to heal; they are always full of maggots, which makes the pain unbearable.

Douglass's experiences as a slave are the basis of tales of woe, just like Prince's and Equiano's. Like Equiano, he is not exploited sexually, but he is a witness to this exploitation right from birth. Since his mother is a dark Colored and his father is White, he is a mulatto. Many mulatto children, according to his account, are products of rape of Black women by White men. He is separated from his mother as a child, and she dies when he is only a
small boy. He is, therefore, unable to ascertain from her his father's identity. He is also aware that his father could be his master, though he is unable to check whether this is true or not (21-22). Since rape of Black women by White men is rampant, according to Douglass, "[e]very year brings with it multitudes of this class of slaves [mulattos]"(23-24).

Even though his father is White, because his mother is a slave, Douglass is born into slavery. His masters are successively Captain Anthony and Colonel Lloyd. Douglass reports his experiences when hired out to Mr. Edward Covey, the "nigger-breaker" (70) by Thomas Auld, Captain Anthony's son-in-law, in St. Michael's as follows:

I lived with Mr. Covey one year. During the first six months, of that year, scarce a week passed without his whipping me. I was seldom free from a sore back. My awkwardness was almost always his excuse for whipping me. (72)

Douglass's experiences at Mr. Covey's reach a climax when Douglass is sick and unable to perform his job of fanning wheat(77). Mr. Covey kicks and beats him mercilessly, leaving him in a pool of blood after heavy blows on his head. Douglass's resistance to Covey is significant. Douglass finally decides to report the case to Mr. Thomas Auld but is unable to get any help from him. Sandy Jenkins, another slave, gives him a root that, carried on the right side, Jenkins says will prevent Douglass from being flogged (80).
Finally, when Mr. Covey attempts to flog him, he refuses to let him, and they fight each other, with Douglass gaining the upper hand, and he is never whipped by Mr. Covey after this incident. His resolution from this episode is that the White man who will succeed in whipping him will also succeed in killing him (83).

Just as Douglass fights Mr. Covey, he also fights some other White men, his fellow calking apprentices, when he is back in Mr. Hugh Auld's service and learning to calk at Mr. William Gardner's ship-yard (103). Since he fights his White colleagues individually for exploiting him, they combine to beat and injure him. Neither he nor Hugh Auld is able to get help because no White man will testify against the White mob, and no testimony from a Black person will be accepted.

Like Prince, Douglass reports that the experiences of his fellow slaves are as bad as his. They often go hungry, and are frequently callously whipped and brutalised. They are regularly sold and resold. Those who are more resistant are sold into slavery in the South, where their lives will be more miserable, so that others can learn a lesson from them. For complaining that he is not treated well by Colonel Lloyd, following Lloyd's own inquiries, for example, a slave, two or three weeks after the incident, "is informed by his overseer that, for having found fault with his master, he was now to be sold to a
Georgia trader” (35). Douglass asserts that "killing a slave, or any colored person, in Talbot county, Maryland, is not treated as a crime, either by the courts or the community” (41). Mr. Thomas Lanman kills two slaves, one "with a hatchet, by knocking his brains out" (41); Mr. Plummer "cut[s] and slash[es] women's heads" (24); Mr. Gore shoots Demby for running away from his whipping and plunging himself into a creek (40); and Mrs. Giles Hicks murders a girl, "mangling her person in the most horrible manner, breaking her nose and breastbone with a stick" (41) for falling asleep when tending Mrs. Hicks's baby. Even old slaves do not escape the brutality inflicted on the younger ones. Douglass's grandmother, after serving her master all her life is, as a great grandmother, left a slave and taken by her new owners into the woods to fend for herself (61-62), and Mr. Beal Bondly shoots an old slave belonging to Colonel Lloyd for fishing beyond his master's property (42).

Unlike *The Tempest*, where Caliban is not liberated, Equiano buys himself out of slavery for forty pounds from Robert King (135), and Prince escapes slavery in England when Mr. Wood returns to the Caribbean without her, after refusing several times to either sell or manumit her. Douglass, on the other hand, escapes slavery by running away from slaveholding Maryland to New York in the North. For security reasons and for the benefits of others still trying to escape slavery, Douglass does not give an account of how he
escaped either in his Narrative or his second autobiography, My Bondage and My Freedom. 3 The different methods of their emancipation from slavery nonetheless show Equiano, Prince, and Douglass's common commitment to resisting slavery and fulfilling their ambition to be free and regain their humanity.

Caliban experiences his slavery in isolation, never forming an alliance with Prospero's other source of coerced labour, Ariel, choosing Stephano and Trinculo as co-conspirators against Prospero. On the other hand, Equiano, Prince, and Douglass are able to resist slavery by forming a community against the institution. Apart from writing or narrating their autobiographies to oppose racist propaganda and prove their humanity, Equiano's, Prince's, and Douglass's autobiographies are written to resist slavery by exposing the evils and brutality associated with the institution so that it can also be opposed by other humane individuals, and finally abolished. In his foreword "To the Reader," Equiano offers his autobiography to "the candid reader" and "friends of humanity" to show "the enormous cruelties practiced on my sable brethren, and strengthening the generous emulation now prevailing in this country [England], to put a speedy end to a traffic both cruel and unjust" (5). In his preface to Prince's autobiography, Thomas Pringle, her editor, discusses the purpose of writing the narrative. He asserts that "[t]he idea of writing Mary Prince's history was first suggested by herself. She wished it to be
done, she said, that good people in England might hear from a slave what a slave had felt and suffered" (45). Like Equiano and Prince, Douglass emphasises the communal purpose of his autobiography as he hopes it "may do something toward throwing light on the American slave system, and hastening the glad day of deliverance to the millions of my brethren in bonds" (126).

The organisation and operation of the slave trade is designed to destroy any meaningful community among slaves even before it can be successfully formed. Slaves from the same parents or ethnic group are sold to different people so that they can neither speak the same language nor plan to resist slavery collectively. The last that Equiano hears of his family is after his separation from his sister before his final trip to the Caribbean; hence his description of his Essaka home and culture is nostalgic. Since Prince's family lives in Bermuda with her, she sees them occasionally, though she has a different owner and is separated from them (53, 66). Douglass, on the other hand, does not know his father; all he knows about him are rumours. He also cannot recollect seeing his mother during the day; hence, when he finally hears of her death, it is like hearing of the death of any stranger (22-23).

Despite the anti-communal basis of slavery, Equiano, Prince, and Douglass are able to counter slavery by forming a community against the trade.
Although they are the authors of their narratives and they are the principal characters in them, the narratives are communal partly because the authors devote space not just to their experiences as slaves but to the experiences of other slaves discussed earlier and because the narratives serve the communal goal of abolishing slavery. It is only because of the communal nature of the narratives that we hear in Equiano's narrative of Emmanuel Sankey, who was burnt by his master for trying to escape (106), of Bemby in Douglass's, and Hetty in Prince's. Since these slaves die in slavery, they cannot write their own stories. Since they cannot write their own stories, we can only hear of them in communal narratives, as the slaves form communities that write and rewrite one another by recalling the experiences of their dead friends.

The relationships formed between Prince, Douglass, and Equiano and their fellow slaves show not just the communal nature of their narratives but the attempt to subvert slavery collectively. Equiano forms a community with his countrymen (205) as Dr. Irving's overseer on his Musquito shore plantation. By buying people from his community and treating them sensitively, he is able to identify and sabotage slavery with them, even though he is a free man at this point. That after Equiano's departure from Dr. Irving's employment the slaves revolt, and unfortunately lose their lives, shows the importance of the community formed earlier.
Like Equiano, Prince is able to form a community with other slaves, and she categorically states that she remembers her fellow slaves in recollecting her own sorrows (65). Even after leaving the various places where she was enslaved, she remains in touch with the different communities she has been able to form. By doing so, she knows of events in the various locations. For example, after leaving Turk's Island, she is told by her contacts there of their attempt to establish a place of worship "but the white people pulled it down twice, and would not allow them even a shed for prayers" (67). The slave masters destroy the place of worship to deny them their humanity and so that the slaves cannot form a community to resist slavery together.

Just as the White slave owners destroy the community formed on Turk's Island, they destroy the sabbath school that Douglass forms when working for Mr. William Freeland in St. Michael's to teach his fellow slaves to read and write. The school once serving over forty scholars is located in a free Colored man's residence. Douglass is particularly excited to form a community with the other slaves because it is a very rewarding exercise. He asserts that "[t]he work of instructing my dear fellow-slaves was the sweetest engagement with which I was blessed" (90). The community members love one another; hence parting every Sunday is very difficult. Douglass enjoys teaching his colleagues because he is able to improve their lot and that of his race (90). The year goes by really quickly, and he gives credit to his loving
and brave colleagues. He describes their relationship as strongly affectionate:

We are linked and interlinked with each other. I loved them with a love stronger than anything I have experienced since...I never loved any or confided in any people more than my fellow-slaves, and especially those with whom I lived at Mr. Freeland's. I believe we would have died for each other. We never undertook to do any thing, of any importance, without a mutual consultation.... We were one...." (91)

Their community is so strong that they resolve to run away together and do so, but, unfortunately, they are caught and imprisoned, and Douglass is sent back to live with Hugh Auld in Baltimore.

In their quest for freedom and after they are finally free, Equiano, Prince, and Douglass also succeed in forming a community with other abolitionists, anti-slavery societies, and crusaders. They all speak against the slave trade and influence parliamentarians and other people in authority to support the anti-slavery league. Equiano works regularly with Granville Sharp, a famous abolitionist (x, 180, 287). He also works with the Quakers and presents a letter of thanks to them when in Philadelphia (224-25). Thomas Pringle, Mary Prince's employer and the editor of her History, is the secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, and the preface to Douglass's Narrative is written by W.M. Lloyd Garrison of the Anti-Slavery Society.
The unstable alliance between Caliban and the pair of Stephano and Trinculo is comparable in instability to the relationship between the freed slaves and anti-slavery groups. Equiano is dismissed from his position as Commissary for Provisions in the Sierra Leonian Resettlement Program for complaining about the high-handedness of the agent making the purchases for the programme. There is also a clash of interests between Douglass and Garrison because of Douglass's more independent approach to anti-slavery activities with his newspaper *North Journal.*

Just as Equiano, Prince, and Douglass resist slavery by forming a community against it, they interrogate the Christian discourse that supports the institution and the brutal practices associated with it. Equiano is converted to Christianity while at the Guerins; he is baptised (78), and tries to convert others like George, the Indian Prince (203), and Father Vincent (200). He officiates as a parson at a funeral in Georgia (160), and wants to be a missionary to Africa but is not ordained (220-223). Though many Quakers, like Robert King, from whom Equiano buys his freedom, are slave owners, many of them are sympathetic to the anti-slavery movement. Equiano allies with these Quakers who help in "freeing and easing the burthens of many of [his] oppressed African brethren" (224). While in Philadelphia in October 1785, he writes to thank them for their support for the anti-slavery community (225).
Despite his overwhelming acceptance of Christianity, Equiano criticises the religion for supporting slavery. He opposes Christians who participate in the slave trade because they operate against their religion, which argues for equality for everybody before God. He refers to these Christian exploiters sarcastically many times in the text. For example, after condemning the theft of a poor Black man's boat by the governor of Montserrat, Equiano sarcastically refers to the governor as a "Christian master" (102) to underscore the ironic disjunction between the exploitative tendency of this so-called Christian and the egalitarian doctrine of his religion. He also describes the crimes committed by Christian slave owners as a disgrace "not of Christians only, but of men" [sic] (104).

In London, he compares hypocritical Christians to Turks and prefers the Turks. To him, "those, who in general termed themselves Christians, [are] not so honest or good in their morals as the Turks" (179). Vincent Carretta explains the relationship between Turks and Christians at this time. According to him, "since the Turks were conventionally seen as brutal infidels, comparing hypocritical or false Christians unfavorably to them was a common rhetorical ploy used by satirists" (287). While at the Musquito shore, Equiano also compares Musquito Indians to Christians, and again expresses a preference for the Indians. He maintains that "there was not one white person in our dwelling, nor anywhere else, that I saw in different places I
was at on the shore, that was better or more pious than those unenlightened Indians..." (206). Although Equiano participates in the colonial project by calling his hosts "unenlightened Indians," he prefers them, despite their colonised space and state, to hypocritical Christians who argue for equality before God and at the same time enslave others.

Like Equiano, Prince is converted to Christianity. While at Date Hill for Christmas, she attends a Methodist prayer meeting at Winthorps' plantation where she understands prayers for the first time and subsequently asks God for forgiveness of her sins. The meeting makes a great impression on her, and she becomes a Moravian when she gets back to town, following the church instructions as much as she can. Moravian ladies, Mrs. Richter, Mrs. Olufsen, and Mrs. Sauter, teach her how to read. She learns very fast and is baptised by the Reverend Mr. Curtin of the English church in 1817.

Prince is introduced to and fights religious hypocrisy early in her conversion. Mr. Curtin, for example, does not allow her in his Sunday School without written permission from her master, permission she is sure her master will not grant her (74). Also, she cannot get married to Daniel James, a free Black man, in the English church because "English marriage is not allowed to slaves; and no free man can marry a slave woman" (74). She resists this stipulation, however, by getting married by Reverend Mr. Olufsen at the
Moravian Chapel of Spring Gardens. Just as many Christian slave owners disobey the teachings of their religion by keeping and exploiting slaves, some other Christians like the Moravians and Quakers are kind to Prince. The Moravians are kind to her in England and allow her to keep her luggage with them when trying to get away from Mr. Wood (79-80). Like Equiano, she also encounters the Quakers and some Quaker ladies are able to help her with good winter clothes and money (81). Prince's indictment of religion is not as sharp as Equiano's and Douglass's perhaps because her editor and employer, Thomas Pringle, is a Christian.

Douglass, by contrast, is very critical of Christianity. In his appendix, he recognises the possibility of his readers' interpreting him as an opponent of religion; hence he differentiates between Christianity and the religion of the slaveholding South. According to him,

between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference – so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. To be friend of the one, is of necessity to be the enemy of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land.
Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity. I look upon it as the climax of all misnomers, the boldest of all frauds, and the grossest of all libels. (120)

Douglass's point is that his experiences as a slave under Christian slavemasters show that these people are not Christians because they disobey the teachings of their religion, particularly freedom and equality for all. Since they insist on exploiting others, they are nothing but hypocrites. An example of this group is the very mean Mr. Covey, the "nigger-breaker" whom Douglass describes ironically as "a professor of religion--a pious soul--a member and a class-leader in the Methodist church" (70). Another example is Mr. Thomas Auld, who becomes a worse slave master after his conversion to Christianity and even defends slavery by referring to Biblical prescription for recalcitrant servants. To justify tying up a lame young woman and whipping her with heavy cowskin upon her naked shoulders so that blood drops, he quotes the Biblical passage: "He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes" (68). Basing his conclusion on his own experiences and those of others around him, Douglass declares that next to enslavement,

I should regard being the slave of a religious master the greatest calamity that could befall me. For of all slaveholders that I have ever met, religious slaveholders are the worst. I have ever
found them the meanest and basest, the most cruel and cowardly, of all others. (87)

Like Equiano, to show Christian hypocrisy, Douglass adopts an ironic tone to depict many Christian slave owners and settlements. Due to the dangers of a slave learning to read and write, Douglass affirms, ironically, that "it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country" (54). Still being ironic, he describes St. Michael's, where he and his fellow slaves are not allowed to go to their sabbath school, as "the pious town of St. Michael's" (68). He also describes Baltimore as "the Christian city" (103) after he is mobbed by a group of White men, and he and his master are unable to get redress anywhere. Similarly, he describes Mr. Weeden, who ensures that the back of a particular slave is kept perpetually raw from flogging, as a "religious wretch" (87), and refers to another particularly callous slave master Reverend Rigby Hopkins, as the "reverend slave-driver" (88). What all their criticisms of Christianity boil down to for Equiano, Prince, and Douglass is that Christianity has to be functional. It has to practice its ideology of liberation for all human beings. It also has to sustain the fight for equality and salvation of all souls before God by renouncing its investment in the slave trade.

Like Christianity and community, naming functions counter-discursively in
Equiano's, Prince's, and Douglass's narratives. Unlike Caliban, who is unable in *The Tempest* to question his name, a modified version of cannibal, Equiano, Prince, and Douglass are able in varying degrees to resist being named by their masters. Early in Equiano's narrative, Equiano locates himself within his pre-colonial society by identifying himself as Olaudah, his traditional Igbo name. He explains the meaning of the name as "vicissitude, or fortunate...; one favoured, and having a loud voice and well spoken" (41). The appropriateness of the name is corroborated by the fluency, effectiveness, power, and creative ingenuity of his *Interesting Narrative.* Also, Equiano's identification with his original name shows his recognition of the importance of asserting his original identity in resisting slavery.

Equiano identifies a relationship between himself and Jews in terms of culture and experiences (43-44). According to Adam Potkay, Equiano prefers "to be read into a sacred Hebrew script; it is with some dramatic irony that the young Equiano demands to be called Jacob, accepting the name Gustavus Vassa under duress" (685). He is called Jacob on a Virginia plantation (63) and is later renamed Gustavus Vassa by Captain Michael Henry Pascal (64). Although Pascal's act of renaming Equiano fits into the colonial practice of annihilating pre-colonial identity, the name itself is very significant because it is the name of a Swedish liberator (1496-1560) who freed his people from Danish rule in 1521-23 (252). Despite the history of the man for whom Pascal
names Equiano, Equiano prefers to be called Jacob (64), but later accepts Gustavus Vassa reluctantly. Potkay explains the significance of the name Jacob for Equiano's identification with the Jews: "Jacob, as 'Israel,' is the eponymous patriarch who descends into Egypt – the land of wonders that turns into the land of bondage" (683). Equiano also identifies himself with Moses when another enslaved Black man tells him his story of exploitation by his master and his colleagues in Montserrat (110). Like Vassa and Moses, Equiano champions the cause of the liberation of his people, but like Moses who leads the Jews to the promised land but does not himself get there, Equiano neither gets back to Africa nor is alive when slavery is finally abolished.

After Equiano takes up the name Gustavus Vassa, it is the only name that he uses for all his private and public activities (ix). He uses his Igbo name, Olaudah Equiano, however for the cover of his Interesting Narrative. On the cover, Equiano identifies himself as Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa. This identification shows his determination not to obliterate his pre-colonial identity and his approval of the name of the Swedish liberator that people have come to recognise as his. He also identifies himself as "The African" on the cover to show his allegiance to his roots.

Like Equiano, Prince takes up different names in her History. She is called
Mary Prince after her father (47, 74); Mary James after her husband, Daniel James (74,116); and Molly Wood after her master, John Wood. Both her mistress (69) and her husband call her Molly (75). Because of her different names, she refers to herself in her petition⁹ to parliament concerning her release from John Wood as Mary Prince or James, commonly called Molly Wood. From her petition, we can see that just as Equiano equates Gustavus Vassa with Olaudah Equiano, she equates Mary Prince with Mary James and implicitly gives more power to these names than to her slave name Molly Wood.

Reverend Mr. Curtin also calls Prince "Mary, Princess of Wales," when he writes on a copy of Mrs. Trimmer's Charity School Spelling Book that he presented to Prince on August 30, 1817 (74). According to Prince, she got the name from her owners. Thomas Pringle, editor of Prince's History explains the naming of Prince as "Mary, Princess of Wales" as

\[
\text{a common practice for the colonists to give ridiculous names of this description to their slaves; being in fact, one of the numberless modes of expressing the habitual contempt with which they regard the negro race. (74)}
\]

The naming of Equiano as Gustavus Vassa is similar to that of Prince as "Mary, Princess of Wales" though the explanations given by their editors are different.¹⁰ What seems to be clear, however, is the contempt for the slaves
as they are renamed. This process can also be discussed as part of the colonial attempt to obliterate the pre-colonial. That Prince does not use the ridiculous name "Mary, Princess of Wales" is another way by which she counters slavery and domination.

Like Equiano and Prince, Douglass has multiple identities in his *Narrative*. He is originally named Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey by his mother, Harriet Bailey (21,113,114). Before leaving Maryland, he is effectively known as Frederick Bailey. On his escape route to the North, probably to avoid being linked with his previous name, he starts from Baltimore as Stanley, and, perhaps still to avoid been traced by any slave master, he changes his name to Frederick Johnson when he arrives in New York. Douglass has to change from Frederick Johnson on arriving in New Bedford because there are too many Johnsons in the city. He then asks his host Mr. Nathan Johnson to choose a last name for him, and having been reading *Lady of the Lake*, Nathan Johnson suggests Douglass as his last name (114-115).¹¹ The changes from Frederick Bailey to Stanley and later to Frederick Johnson can be rationalised very easily in terms of security concerns. Similarly, the need for a name change in New Bedford is plausible enough. What is strange is Douglass's invitation to his host, Nathan Johnson, to name him. This act, probably designed to show some gratitude to Mr. Johnson, since Douglass describes it as a privilege for Mr. Johnson, compromises Douglass's identity.
and suggests a departure from his pattern of resistance.

Other counter-discursive elements of the narratives become clear upon consideration of their identification of who wrote or related these life stories, their style, and identity. The titles of Equiano's, Prince's, and Douglass's autobiographies identify not just their authors' names and locations, but foreground their identity in relation to their various places of birth and the circumstances surrounding the publication of their autobiographies. Equiano and Douglass identify themselves as an African and an American respectively and state that their narratives were written by them. Like Equiano and Douglass, Prince identifies herself by place of origin, saying she is a West Indian, and though she cannot claim that she wrote her life story, her title claims her autobiography was related by her. By identifying their various locations in the Black world, the autobiographers foreground their relationship with their societies and draw attention to the fact that to be Black was a reason to be enslaved at the time of their birth.

A slave who learns to read and write under difficult circumstances and then writes an autobiography to resist slavery is performing an inherently counter-discursive act. To write well is even more empowering because it counters racist propaganda that the reason for Black people's enslavement was that they were not as developed intellectually as their enslavers. Prince and
Douglass are exposed to the English language as children, and they grow up speaking the language, but writing it is a different story. Prince learns to read while hired out to Mrs. Pruden through her daughter, Miss Fanny, who makes her repeat her lessons after her such that she is quickly able to say some letters and spell some words (49). However, this luck does not last long before she is sold to Captain I. The Moravian ladies—Mrs. Richter, Mrs. Olufsen, and Mrs. Sauter (73)—and Mrs. Pringle (82) also teach her to read. Douglass, on the other hand, learns to read and write from his mistress Mrs. Sophia Auld, Hugh Auld’s wife. Auld is angry about this education; hence he instructs his wife never again to teach a slave to read and write because it is unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read.... If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master — to do as he is told to do. Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world.... if you teach that nigger ... how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. (49)

From the above exchange and from reading the dialogue between the master and the slave in The Columbian Orator, where the slave argues against slavery and he is ultimately emancipated (54), Douglass learns that to be free, he has to learn to read and write. To do this, he makes friends with White boys on the street and learns to read and write through them (53). He also
learns by copying labels on timber at Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard (57-58).
He not only succeeds in learning to read and write, but in teaching other
slaves in the sabbath school (89). He is even able to write the pass for their
escape from St. Michael's, even though they are finally caught (94).

Equiano does not have formal training in English until he gets to England.
His knowledge of the language prior to his arrival in England is gleaned
from interacting with English speakers who are either his friends or masters.
By the time Captain Pascal buys him, he can "smatter a little imperfect
English" (64), but his proficiency in the language is much better three or four
years after his arrival in England. Then, he is able to speak English "tolerably
well" and according to his report, "perfectly understood every thing that was
said." He also claims that he "not only felt ... quite easy with these new
countrymen, but relished their society and manners" (77). He starts his
writing by keeping journals, and nearly burns down the ship they travel in
when trying to write his journal on the expedition with Dr. Irving to the
North Pole (173).

The circumstances of slavery and the location of Equiano, Prince, and
Douglass determine their linguistic choices in their autobiographies. These
autobiographers' choices are crucial because for African writers, the choice of
language for their writing is a highly political issue. Douglass and Prince are
born into slavery in the United States and Bermuda; hence their exposure to language as children is to the English language. Since they are native to the United States and Bermuda respectively, they do not have access to indigenous African languages the way their progenitors did. They, therefore, have no choice but to narrate or write their stories in English. Since Equiano is Igbo-born (Nigerian), his situation vis-a-vis language in one respect is different from that of Prince and Douglass. Since he is free for his first decade, he is exposed to Igbo, his mother tongue, as a child. The question then is what choices did he have in terms of language for his autobiography?

Equiano's situation made it impossible for him to write in Igbo, his mother tongue. He was enslaved when he was eleven years old, and his narrative was published three decades later. His recollection of Igbo, given that he did not speak it for three decades, must have been very limited; hence his narrative could not have been written in it. Besides, Igbo was not a written language when Equiano wrote his *Interesting Narrative*. Also, he wrote during the slave era and his autobiography was supposed to function as part of the increasing resistance to slavery. For his autobiography to be relevant to the anti-slavery movement, it must be accessible linguistically to the influential people who could make a difference in the community. They must be able to read it, and the language in which they could have read it was English. Therefore, to make an impact on slavery, the book was written
in English.

By writing their autobiographies, or parts of them like Mary Prince's petition to parliament, Equiano, Prince, and Douglass show that their intellectual development despite slavery is as sophisticated as their masters'. The point of the autobiographers is related to that of many abolitionists who argued against slavery because Blacks were different from brutes due to the intellectual capability displayed in their writings. An example is Reverend Robert Boucher's *Letter to the Treasurer of the Society Instituted for the Purpose of Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade* where he argues that

> [t]he stupidity of negroes is ... urged by the friends of slavery as a plea for using them as brutes; for they represent the negroes as little removed above the monkey, or the orangoutang, with regard to intellects. But I am very certain, nothing has been written by the late defenders of slavery, that discovers [displays] half the literary merit or ability of two negroe writers. Phillis Wheatley wrote correct English poetry within a few years after her arrival in Boston from Africa; and there is a Latin ode of considerable length written in classic language by Francis Williams .... I never heard of poems by a monkey, or of Latin odes by an orangoutang. (46)\(^2\)
The facts that Prince's narrative was related by her and Equiano's and Douglass's were written by them have an impact on the style of the narratives. Prince's narrative follows the pattern of a tale with the purpose of informing her listeners or readers about slavery, so that they too can speak and otherwise work against the institution. It is emotional, like Equiano's and Douglass's narratives, and it is narrated in simple syntactic structures that can be followed easily. Because of the role of the church in publishing her narrative, Prince uses a veiled style and economy of words to describe her sexual exploitation at the hands of her masters.

Though Prince's autobiography is written in English, an unexplained word **Buckra** occurs in the narrative:

> Oh the Buckra people who keep slaves think that black people are like cattle, without natural affection. But my heart tells me it is far otherwise. (61)

Though **Buckra** is not explained in this instance, it is understood contextually to refer to White slave owners. Another occurrence of the word is glossed in the footnote to the page. Here, the editor's note refers to **Buckra** as a "Negro term for white people" (67). Some other occurrences of **Buckra** (72,84), like the first, are directly included in the text. In addition, when narrating Hetty's story, slave of Captain I, Prince reproduces one of Hetty's sentences when her master flogs her:
Oh, Massa! Massa! me dead. Massa! (55)

Hetty's sentence above is not in the standard English of Prince's text perhaps because Hetty's exposure to the language was limited. This variety of English much later develops into what Edward Kamau Brathwaite calls nation language.¹³

The code-switch out of British English marked by the inclusion of the non-standard lexical item Buckra, the elliptical syntax, and use of an objective form in a subjective role in Hetty's statement show that there is a distinct, though suppressed, Black culture in the Caribbean, even during slavery. The culture is sufficiently vibrant to have terms for people and other things. Maureen Warner-Lewis's Yoruba Songs of Trinidad and Trinidad Yoruba: From Mother Tongue to Memory also attest to the fact that despite the suppression of Black cultures in the Caribbean, many aspects of African cultures still thrive. It is, therefore, possible that a word like Buckra is from one of the African or other suppressed languages of the region.¹⁴

Equiano's style, on the other hand, is that of a conversion narrative. The difference between his narrative and other conversion narratives, like Saint Augustine's Confessions, is that while a narrative like Augustine's aims at converting people to Christianity, Equiano's aims at not only converting people to Christianity but at converting slave traders to the anti-slavery
coalition.

Though Equiano's narrative is written in English, he cleverly describes his Igbo background from his recollection of the culture. This discussion in the early part of the book refers not just to the Igbo culture but to the Igbo language. Equiano recollects and explains events in his childhood in ways suggestive of an Igbo speaker at that time. He code-switches from English to Igbo and glosses Igbo words to explain his childhood. For example, he explains the culture and significance of naming in traditional Igbo society by glossing his first name Olaudah (41, 245). Similarly, he explains aspects of the political and justice systems by glossing the word Embrenche (32), and he explains the religious system by glossing Ah-affoe-way-cah and Ah-affoe (42).

Just as Prince's use of Buckra and Hetty's sentence show that there is a distinct Black culture in the Caribbean, even during slavery, Equiano's description of Igbo culture and his use of Igbo words\(^\text{15}\) situate his childhood within the Igbo social system. Since this section of his \textbf{Interesting Narrative} shows him as a product of a thriving socio-political system that was disrupted by slavery, his description of Igbo society stands in a counter-discursive relationship to the colonial construction of Africa as a cultureless continent. Prince's use of Buckra, Hetty's statement, Equiano's use of Igbo words, and his description of Igbo culture in texts written in English install
what William Ashcroft calls alterity (70) and "the 'truth' of culture" (71) in his discussion of post-colonial writing, "Constitutive Graphonomy: A Post-Colonial Theory of Literary Writing." What Prince and Equiano succeed in doing, like later post-colonial writers referred to in Ashcroft's analysis, is to use "language to signify difference while employing a 'sameness' which allows it to be understood. Such difference is signified by language 'variance,' the part of the wider cultural whole which appropriates the language of the centre while setting itself apart" (70). In other words, Prince and Equiano are able to show their difference from what Ashcroft calls the metropolitan centre (England) by their use of glossing and the untranslated lexical item, some of "the devices of otherness" he identifies (72). These devices of otherness "are specifically utilised to establish the difference and uniqueness of the post-colonial text" (72). It is important to note, as Ashcroft suggests, that "[s]ignifiers of alterity are not necessarily inaccessible; rather they explicitly establish a distance between the writer and reader functions in the text as a cultural gap" (72).

Douglass's style is distinguished from Equiano's and Prince's by his use of parallel grammatical structures. This strategy allows him to communicate graphically the differences in the realities of the slave in relation to the master. The method also makes the sufferings of the slaves vivid and effective in raising anti-slavery consciousness. Furthermore, the strategy
allows him to show how callous the slaveholders and their overseers are. For example, to show the relationship between Mr. Gore, a particularly ambitious, vicious, and mean overseer, in relation to the slaves under him, Douglass describes him, using parallel structures as follows:

He was just proud enough to demand the most debasing homage of the slave, and quite servile enough to crouch, himself, at the feet of the master. He was ambitious enough to be contented with nothing short of the highest rank of overseers and persevering enough to reach the height of his ambition. He was cruel enough to inflict the severest punishment, artful enough to descend to the lowest trickery, and obdurate enough to be insensible to the voice of a reproving conscience... he dealt sparingly with his words, and bountifully with his whip, never using the former where the latter would answer as well. (39)

Equiano's, Prince's, and Douglass's autobiographies diverge in terms of language, gender, and geographical location. While Equiano's and Douglass's autobiographies are written by them, Prince's is narrated by her. Since Equiano knew Africa before the Atlantic Slave Trade, he recreates this society as he knows it, using and then glossing Igbo words in the process. Prince's reference to Hetty and Buckra suggest that there is a growing, but suppressed, alternative language and culture to those of the British in the
Caribbean, and Douglass's predominant use of parallel grammatical structures allows him to communicate vividly the sufferings of his fellow slaves relative to the inhumanity of the slaveholders. The fact of gender further differentiates the narratives. While Douglass and Equiano can only sympathise with and protest against sexual exploitation of women, Prince experiences sexual exploitation directly because she is a woman.

Though the autobiographers are born in and travel through different Black societies and describe their experiences in these communities, an important continuity in their narratives is what Frantz Fanon calls "the fact of blackness."\(^{16}\) It is "the fact of blackness" that all the three share that leads to their enslavement either in Nigeria, Bermuda, Antigua, England, or the United States. Since they are all slaves, their experiences of brutalisation and deprivation and those of their fellow slaves are comparable. Resistance to slavery is another continuity in the autobiographies. By writing their autobiographies to expose the evils of slavery and intervening in the anti-slavery discourse of their times, by interrogating the Christian discourse that supports slavery, by forming a community against the trade, and by naming themselves counter-discursively, Equiano, Douglass, and Prince situate their autobiographies within an anti-slavery framework.

Despite all the odds that are against their literacy, they become literate in
English, and, like Caliban in The Tempest, they learn the language and are able to curse slavery and its advocates in English. The fire of resistance that Caliban cannot maintain in The Tempest is rekindled in these narratives. Unlike The Tempest, in which discourses are controlled by Prospero, the counter-discursive force of the slave narratives is triumphant, and the freedom that Caliban gets because of Prospero's return home in The Tempest is nominally won by the slaves when slavery is finally abolished. Also, real world "Calibans" can recognise themselves and their experiences in the autoethnographic slave narratives, but can hardly find themselves and their experiences in their ethnographic description in The Tempest.
Notes

1 See, for example, Chantal Zabus's "A Calibanic Tempest in Anglophone and Francophone World Writing;" Edward Kamau Brathwaite's "Caliban," The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy, 191 (Brathwaite's "Caliban" was originally published in a collection of poems titled Islands); Diana Brydon's "No (Wo)man is an Island: Rewriting Cross-Cultural Encounters within the Canadian Context," "Sister Letters: Miranda's Tempest in Canada," and "Re-Writing The Tempest;" George Lamming's The Pleasures of Exile; Peter Hulme's Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797, particularly chapter three, "Prospero and Caliban" 89-134; and Max Dorsinville's Caliban Without Prospero: Essay on Quebec and Black Literature.

2 Carretta remarks in his footnote 111 to Equiano's Interesting Narrative that [t]he privy council in 1789 estimated that the average mortality rate for slaves during the middle passage was 12.5 percent. Modern estimates of the mortality rate of 15 percent for slaves meant that of the approximately 10 million Africans taken to the Americas between 1600 and 1900, about 1.5 million died at sea. More than twice that number of African slaves died during the same period either while still in Africa or on their way to the Orient. The mortality rate of the much smaller number of
marine slavers is estimated at about 20 percent. For both slaves and enslavers, the death rate varied with length of voyage, time, and age. (250)

3 In his preface to the first edition of Mary Prince's History, Thomas Pringle writes of the woman who wrote Prince's story: "[t]he narrative was taken down from Mary's own lips by a lady who happened to be at the time residing in my family as a visitor" (45). The "lady" who wrote Prince's story was Susanna Strickland. Susanna Strickland, who later became Susanna Moodie and an established writer, immigrated in 1832 to Canada, where she continued her writing. Roughing it in the Bush: Or, Forest Life in Canada is one of her popular books. For further information on Strickland, see Michael Peterman's entry "Moodie, Susanna" in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, 2nd Edition, 763-765.

Given the notably powerful sense of voice evident to so many readers of Roughing it in the Bush, it is significant to note Strickland's erasure from Prince's narrative, which is in marked contrast to the distinction Alex Haley enjoys in The Autobiography of Malcolm X for which he was the scribe. It is conceivable that Strickland's effacement in Prince's text and Haley's prominence in X's are due to the gender of both scribes, their different classes, reputation as writers when the autobiographies were published, and
the periods they wrote in.

Hetty's is similar to the sexual exploitation Prince suffers, which I discussed earlier.

William L. Andrews's footnote to Douglass's escape from slavery in Douglass's second autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, is as follows:

[w]ith money borrowed from his fiancee, Anna Murray, a free black woman of Baltimore, Douglass, masquerading as a sailor with "sailor's protection" papers borrowed from a friend, journeyed by train, ferry, and steamboat from Baltimore to New York City, where he arrived on the morning of September 4, 1838. (202)

Douglass's account of the clash between him and Garrison occurs in *My Bondage and My Freedom*, and Andrews discusses the clash in his introduction to the text (xxii, xxvii).

Adam Potkay makes the same point in "Olaudah Equiano and the Art of Spiritual Autobiography," 683.
Carretta's endnote 129 suggests that

Pascal probably renamed Equiano to hide his status as a slave: Some British officers went so far as to carry their own slaves to sea in the king's ships, but this was best done under disguise, for naval opinion in general and the Admiralty's in particular inclined to regard a man-of-war as a little piece of British territory in which slavery was improper (N.A.M. Rodger, The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy [London: Fontana Press, 1990], 160), 252.

In his footnote, Pringle describes Prince's petition as another successful element in Mary Prince's ultimate ability to turn the tables on the Woods. In the petition-exposé as in the narrative, she is a public spokeswoman for all slaves against all slavemasters, impugning their reputations in the very society in which they seek to vindicate themselves and slavery. (116)

See my endnote 7 to this chapter for Carretta's explanation for Equiano's name, Gustavus Vassa.

Andrews's footnote to Douglass's new name in My Bondage and My Freedom explains that "Douglass is named after the wrongfully exiled Lord
James of Douglas, a Scottish chieftain revered for his bravery and 'native virtue great,' in Sir Walter Scott's narrative poem *The Lady of the Lake* (1810)" (209).

12 Boucher's letter is quoted in Vincent Carretta's introduction to Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, xi.


14 According to *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, the origin of Buckra, though uncertain, is "often alleged to be < Efik" (271). The Efiks live in Southern Nigeria.

15 For a detailed discussion of the differences between the Igbo used by Equiano in his *Interesting Narrative* and contemporary Igbo, see Catherine Acholonu's "The Home of Olaudah Equiano."

16 See Frantz Fanon's "The Fact of Blackness" (*Black Skin, White Masks*), where he argues that Black people are predetermined negatively by a racist society just because they are Black. As he asserts, "it is not I who make a meaning for myself, but it is the meaning that was already there, pre-existing,
waiting for me" (135).
Chapter 6: Different, Yet Related: Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Soyinka's Ake: The Years of Childhood, Walcott's Another Life, and the Autobiographical Genre

On August 28, 1963, over a century after Frederick Douglass's autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written by Himself, was published, Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his speech entitled "I Have a Dream." That speech has now become a classic in American, indeed world, oratory, but many defining events happened in the over-a-century gap between the publication of Douglass's autobiography and King's speech. Slavery, the dominant institution in Douglass's autobiography, was already abolished, and Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863,¹ what King describes² in his speech as "a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice" (102). Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation liberated slaves only in areas not controlled by the Federal Government; hence it neither ended slavery nor other injustices in America. As King asserts in "I Have a Dream," one hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation, "the Negro is still not free" (102).

Since Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation did not end discriminations and injustices against African-Americans, the struggle to end these deprivities
that Douglass's autobiography foregrounds continues and is led on the socio-political level by activists like Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Maya Angelou.¹ One difference between them is that while King's and X's energies are almost completely channelled towards a socio-political resistance to racism, Angelou resists this injustice not just on the socio-political, but on the literary, level with her writings, one of which is *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

This chapter discusses the continuities and divergences in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Wole Soyinka's *Ake: The Years of Childhood*, and Derek Walcott's *Another Life*. The chapter foregrounds the creative continuity among the individual writings of these autobiographers and in their writings as Black writers. How they continue the communal and resistance traditions already discussed in relation to slave narratives and how they diverge in relation to religion, Blackness, gender, and language are foregrounded in this study. An overriding principle that informs this chapter is the fact that Black professional writers, like those discussed here, grow up as writers within Black communities. They are part of these communities and their activities, as children and later as writers, are tied to the resistance traditions of their various societies, as the autobiographers influence the directions of these traditions both intellectually and sociologically.
Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*⁴ can be situated within the resistance tradition of which the slave narratives discussed earlier are the foundation. However, one difference between Angelou's autobiography and slave narratives is that while the slave narratives discussed earlier were written during slavery to raise consciousness and public opinion against the institution, her autobiography was written after slavery to confront post-slavery injustices, some of which African-Americans suffered during slavery. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, therefore, accentuates the centrality of slave narratives in African-American and other Black literatures.⁵

In *Caged Bird*, Angelou's preoccupation is the condition of the Black female in America. According to her, "[t]he Black female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice, white illogical hate and Black lack of power" (231). What Angelou does in *Caged Bird* is demonstrate how the Black woman confronts and survives that "tripartite crossfire." Her argument is that the Black woman's survival should be seen as "an inevitable outcome of the struggle won by survivors and deserves respect if not enthusiastic acceptance" (231).

Wole Soyinka is one of Africa's most prolific writers and autobiographers, the number of his autobiographical volumes showing the importance of the
genre. Since autobiographies mirror realities directly, it is easier for an activist like Soyinka to make maximum political intervention with the genre. It is this attempt to influence the socio-political realities of his society with this genre that has led to the major differences among his autobiographies.

Soyinka discusses the differences between *Isara: A Voyage Around Essay* and *Ake* in his "Note" to *Isara*. While he describes *Ake* as a childhood biography, a biography because it is the narration of another life, his childhood life, from the point of view of the adult Soyinka, he creates *Isara*, a tribute to his father and his age, "on a very different level of awareness and empathy from that of *Ake.*" He summarises some of the differences between *Ake* and *Isara* as follows:

> I have not only taken liberties with chronology [in *Isara*], I have deliberately ruptured it.... My decision not to continue with real names as in *Ake*, except in two or three cases, is to eliminate all pretence to factual "accuracy" in this attempted reconstruction of their times, thoughts and feelings. (vii-viii)

By rupturing chronology and using substitute names in *Isara*, Soyinka is able to avoid some of the criticisms brought against *Ake* and *The Man Died*. Since both *Ake* and *The Man Died* use real names, and events are narrated as closely as Soyinka could render them, he has been challenged in court and by a number of critics, including Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, whose criticism I will
be discussing later in this section. This type of challenge is avoided by the changes in the mode of representation in Isara as compared to Ake.6

Soyinka's preoccupation in Isara is close to his focus in Ibadan, a faction, where he "fictionalises facts and events" (ix). His adoption7 of this genre for Ibadan "stops short of the actual invention of facts or events ... or the deliberate distortion of the history or character of any known figure" (ix). Some of the differences between Ake and Isara are also true of those between Ake and Ibadan. In Ibadan, while dislocating some real names, events, and time, Soyinka retains others because "[e]ven total faction must be anchored in some recognisable historical reference points" (xiv).

The significance of the period covered in Isara is political. According to Soyinka, Isara demonstrates the influence of his father's generation on the development of contemporary Nigerian minds. Also, it covers a period of "the uneasy love-hate relationship with the colonial presence and its own ambiguous attitudes to the Western educated elite of the Nigerian protectorate" (vii). Just as Isara is important for its political intervention, so is Ibadan. Soyinka had to suspend other projects to complete Ibadan because of politics, the unfinished business of that political entity, Nigeria into which I happen to have been born, its sociology and political pathology, especially as the last relates to my primary
constituency—the university—with which I still retain a love-hate relationship. The immediate triggering event was the Nigerian 1993 democratic venture and its aftermath. (x)

As noted earlier, Ake is Soyinka's childhood story. It narrates the growth of a privileged boy in a Yoruba community in South Western Nigeria. Since it is a story from the perspective of a child, it shows the childhood influences on Soyinka, including his encounter with African traditional religion and with Christianity, family and communal support as he grows up, exposure to Western education, his first lesson in political activism, the influence of women in his life and community, and the linguistic versatility of his society. All these influences, along with later ones, combine to form Soyinka the writer, and the basis for some of his writings, including the basis of some of his most memorable characters.

In relation to the Caribbean, there is a close link between Derek Walcott's works, like the essay "What the Twilight Says: An Overture" and the published Nobel address The Antilles: Fragments of an Epic Memory, and Another Life, his autobiography, in terms of the focus on a new beginning for people of the Caribbean. The tasks of starting afresh in the Caribbean and making the landscape serve the people's needs are what Walcott describes in "What the Twilight Says" as the performance of Adamic functions in the
Caribbean, since Africa is "no longer home, and the dark, oracular mountain [is] dying into mythology" (38). Walcott's focus is on the Caribbean where West Indians have to "walk, like new Adams, in a nourishing ignorance which would name plants and people with a child's belief that the world is its own age" (6). Walcott argues further that "[f]or imagination and body to move with original instinct, we must begin again from the bush. That return journey, with all its horror of rediscovery, means the annihilation of what is known" (26). It is only when what is known already about Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean is annihilated that a new beginning that allows the performance of Adamic functions is possible.

In The Antilles: Fragments of an Epic Memory, Walcott recognises the power of Caribbean history in shaping the lives of its people, arguing that they cannot be subdued by slavery and indenture (11). Accordingly, to him, the foundation for the Antillean experience is "this shipwreck of fragments, these echoes, these shards of a huge tribal vocabulary, these partially remembered customs, and they are not decayed but strong" (11). At the same time, his focus is not just on history but the reality of the new home for West Indians; hence he argues that since "the original language dissolves in the exhaustion of distance like fog trying to cross an ocean," the available alternative is "this process of renaming, of finding new metaphors" (11). He asserts that the poet is also involved in this renaming process, as he makes "his own tools
like Crusoe, assembling nouns from necessity, from Felicity, even renaming
himself" (11).

As in "What the Twilight Says" and Antilles, the performance of the Adamic
function of naming is central to Another Life. According to Walcott in
Another Life,

    We [West Indians] were blest with a virginal, unpainted
    world

    with Adam's task of giving things their names...

    ... with nothing so old

    that it could not be invented.... (152)

Section two of Another Life, "Homage to Gregorias" discusses Walcott's
arguments concerning artists and their Adamic role in the Caribbean, and the
chapter's epigraph from Alejo Carpentier's The Lost Steps sets the tone for
the presentation of the role of the artist in the new society. The epigraph
identifies artists, namely the Indian "turning green," the Negro without a
smile, and the more perverted white man, all "more and more forgetful" of
their origins, "of the sun they had left behind." The task in their new location
is to "imitate what came naturally to those whose rightful place was in the
net." Although these people are not named in the epigraph, it is obvious that
they are the original inhabitants of the island. After the unsuccessful process
of imitating the old inhabitants by the new or people of the old by the new

172
world, the West Indian discovers "the only task appropriate to the milieu [is] Adam's task of giving things their names" (47). In *Another Life*, this task is championed by the artist, symbolised by Harry Simmons, the teacher, and his students, Gregorias (Dunstan St. Omer) and Walcott.

The communal nature of Wole Soyinka's *Ake* is symbolised by its title: *Ake: The Years of Childhood*. Ake is the part of Abeokuta where Soyinka grows up. By naming his narrative after that community and not himself, he shows the importance of the community in his development. The Yoruba community where he grows up is strictly communal. Despite the privileges of the members of Soyinka's family because of their education, many of their neighbours have relatively free access to their family, with some coming to live permanently with them. The communality of the society also allows for the direct influence of the neighbours on the growth of the children. For example, whenever Soyinka plays any of his pranks, Mrs. B is always there to save him from being punished by his mother (15), and after his adventurous trip from Ake to Ibara following a parade, it is Mrs B. who takes him home to rest in her house (49-50).

Soyinka's parents are very well respected in their community. While the father is the headmaster of a primary school, the mother is a business woman. Soyinka names his father "Essay" from his initials S.A. in his
narrative and his mother Wild Christian from her fervent religious commitments. Essay is usually involved in several arguments with his friends, and Wild Christian enjoys the role their house plays "as the intellectual watering-hole of Ake and its environs" (19). Wild Christian exerts a lot of influence on Essay such that she intercedes between him and others who have problems with him. Soyinka's parents approach Soyinka's penchant for arguments differently. While Essay condones it, Wild Christian censures it (55). For example, the sexton accuses Soyinka of talking during service, and Soyinka's response is that he cannot prove the misdemeanour, since there were several people singing and praying (56). When Wild Christian reports the case to Essay, Essay supports the young Wole, arguing that it will be a difficult thing to prove.

Just as Soyinka contextualises his narrative within a community, Maya Angelou in *Caged Bird* situates herself within the Black community of Stamps, Arkansas, a community that is racialized and exploited in its interactions with the White members of the society. Angelou's grandmother, Mrs. Annie Henderson, with whom she and her brother, Bailey, live as children in Stamps, is a symbol of the communal basis of the Black society. Her shop is a rallying point for members of the community, and she is active and respected in the Christian community that Blacks form in the society. Mrs. Henderson's reputation stems partly from being "the only Negro woman
in Stamps referred to once as Mrs" by a judge who initially thought she was White (39). Mrs. Henderson, whom the children call Momma, is one of the strongest characters in Angelou's life. She is an overwhelmingly positive role-model for Angelou, and her experiences are partly instrumental in effecting Angelou's transformation from longing for Whiteness to appreciating Blackness.

Compared to other Blacks in Stamps, Henderson is a wealthy woman. Her wealth is a result of her business ventures, her Store, and her land on which some White people live (22). She is sufficiently wealthy that she aids her community significantly in surviving the Depression. She even lends money to Dr. Lincoln, the White dentist in Stamps. Although the dentist can ask for financial assistance from her, she is still Black, and he is still White; hence they both start by playing the roles expected of them by their society when Henderson requires attention on the young Maya's tooth. Since what is important to Lincoln at this point is that both Henderson and Maya are Black, he insists on his policy not to treat coloured people. As he puts it, "I'd rather stick my hands in a dog's mouth than in a nigger's" (160). Henderson veers off from the subservient role expected of her by resisting Lincoln's discriminatory policy. Though she is unable to force Lincoln to treat her granddaughter, she demands and collects interest on the money earlier lent to Lincoln and already paid in full. Like her grandmother, Angelou
undermines the dentist's blatant racism by constructing the encounter between her grandmother and the dentist differently than her grandmother's account to show Momma's resiliency and power even when in confrontation with a formidable symbol of their segregated society.

Unlike Soyinka and Angelou, Walcott situates himself specifically within a community of artists with the joint responsibility of performing the Adamic function of naming the Caribbean. Walcott's rhetorical strategy for presenting his apprentice artistic self is in relation to other artists like Harold Simmons and Gregorias. As Walcott recalls in the autobiographical essay "Leaving School,"

Harold Simmons had been my father's friend. It was my father who had interested him in painting. My father had died in his thirties, when my twin-brother and I were a year old, my sister three, but on the drawing room walls of our house there were relics of his avocation: a copy of Millet's The Gleaners, a romantic original of sea-birds and plumbing breakers he had called Riders of the Storm, a miniature oil portrait of my mother, a self-portrait in water colour, and an avenue of pale coconut palms. These objects had established my vocation, and made it as inevitable as that of any craftsman's son, for I felt that my father's work, however minor, was unfinished. (9)
Walcott's professional aspirations were divided between being a poet and a painter, and his venture into visual art is his way of completing what his father had started. The complementary nature of the professions is shown in his discussion of Gregorias and how Walcott opts for poetry. His attempt at painting is shown first at the beginning of Another Life, when he tries to capture Vigie at sunset. He starts capturing the image at twilight, as a sun, tired of empire, declined.

It mesmerized like fire without wind,

and as its amber climbed

the beer-stein ovals of the British fort

above the promontory, the sky

grew drunk with light. (3)

He foregrounds the amber colour mentioned in passing earlier by describing Vigie as "a landscape locked in amber" (3). This description collocates with twilight, decline, tired of empire, and sunset. These images, which are central to the poem, show the transition that is taking place in the society that was once ravaged by fire. Amber light, twilight, and decline show the transition between the once glorious city and its burnt remains. They also suggest a possible rejuvenation because, despite the interval between amber and red, the coming of the green light, a sign of renewal, is certain. Edward Baugh argues that the amber image is implicated in the nature of the poem to transfixed and to transfigure, which is in the nature of memory
as well as art.... The amber/glaze imagery will blend meaningfully not only with all the variations of yellow/gold/flame imagery throughout the poem, but also with other images from the arts, such as 'frame' and 'print,' which will express the notion of preserving the beautiful and beloved from time and decay. (20)

The rest of the subsection discusses the features of Walcott's painting, like the harbour, a girl's figure (presumably that of Anna of Book Three), Saint Antoine Hotel, and Government House, until his painting teacher, Harold Simmons, "wafted the drawing to his face/as if dusk were myopic, not his gaze. Then with slow strokes the master changed the sketch" (5).

Like Walcott, Gregorias is another artist under Simmons. Chapter eight of Another Life introduces Gregorias's house, which Walcott describes as "[a] gaunt, gabled house, / grey,fretted, soars above a verdigris canal which sours with moss."  Walcott's description of the house sets the tone for his consistent concern with his island's landscape and the overall idea of renaming, in this case by the artist who inhabits the house. The house is so dilapidated that the floor collapses and ultimately kills Gregorias's father. Walcott's description of this bungalow shows the poverty-stricken conditions under which the artist has to perform his duty of naming aspects of the island.
Gregorias and Walcott swore never to
leave the island
until we had put down, in paint, in words,
as palmists learn the network of a hand,
all of its sunken, leaf-choked ravines,
every neglected, self-pitying inlet.... (52)

Walcott differentiates between his style and Gregorias's:
while Gregorias would draw
with the linear elation of an eel
one muscle in one thought,
my hand was crabbed by that style,
this epoch, that school
or the next.... (59)

Through his comparison of romantic and classic, Walcott shows that unlike
the originality of Gregorias and what he calls his "aboriginal force" (59), his
own painting exemplifies "this classic / condition of servitude" (59). Because
of Dunstan St. Omer's success as an artist, Walcott names him Gregorias in
the poem:

Gregorias,

I christened you with that Greek name because
it echoes the blest thunders of the surf,
because you painted our first, primitive frescoes,

179
because it sounds explosive,

a black Greek's!

Walcott suggests that since Dunstan St. Omer is an accomplished artist, he must have a European antecedent; hence the Greek name Gregorias.

Unlike Gregorias's realized creativity, Walcott's produces only the stalling attempts of an apprentice. Gregorias's art is accomplished, possessing "aboriginal force" which manifests itself in a way comparable to that in which "the carver comes out of the wood." Since Gregorias is successful in performing the Adamic function of painting the previously unrepresented Caribbean landscape, Walcott concludes that "every landscape we entered / was already signed with his name" (59). He finally recognises that he himself lives "in a different gift, / its element metaphor" (55) as "painter [Gregorias] and poet [Walcott] walked / the hot road, history-less" (76). Since painter and poet are shipwrecked with only fragments of their epic memories, the remedy for their historylessness is the successful performance of Adamic functions in painting and poetry, as they become the light of their world.

Despite Walcott's optimism about the role of the artist in leading the reconstruction process in the Caribbean, he demonstrates V.S. Naipaul's argument that the Caribbean is a society that denies itself heroes (Another Life 130). Since the artists are not respected and do not have any economic
clout, despite their sacrifices for their communities, they are wretched, "driven deep in debt" (130), like Gregorias, or lonely and dejected, like Harry Simmons (132). They are "the saints of self-torture" (128) because of their disenchantment with their society, the reason for Gregorias's suicide attempt (130) and Simmons's successful suicide (132).

The question that arises from the destruction of the artist by the society is how the society can grow if it destroys its artists. Since no society can grow by destroying its best, it must return to where it was before the artist, the arrival point of slaves and indentured labourers in the Caribbean. Consequently, what has been achieved in the Caribbean is nothing more than a cyclic continuity that does not necessarily equate with progress. Also, by arguing that the Caribbean landscape is unpainted and unnamed, Walcott subscribes to an important aspect of colonial discourse, which is the callous and unsustainable argument that the colonised was without history before colonialism. For there to be significant progress in the Caribbean, the histories of the various peoples that inhabit the region now and before European imperialism in the area must be invoked towards uplifting the psyche of the inhabitants and waking them up to the realities of their new home. Also, Walcott does not account for the gendered aspects of the Adamic responsibility he recommends for the artist. His focus is on Adam and not Adam and Eve. If Gregorias, Walcott, and Simmons perform
Adamic jobs of painting and writing, what are Eve's tasks and who performs them? Perhaps one of the reasons for the failure of the artist in *Another Life* is the fact that the roles of women in performing the task of naming are relatively unstressed. Even Anna who is linked with this role (as muse) later in the poem does not occupy the same status as Walcott, Simmons, and Gregorias. She is only a lover, not a writer or painter.

Anna and Walcott's mother are also important members of the community Walcott focuses on in *Another Life*. Walcott relates the personal to the public in his celebration of his first love, Anna, the most positively described character in the poem. As he recalls in "Leaving School,"

> [l]ove of that kind never returns. It contains, because of its innocence, its own extinction. It is so self-content, so assured of immortality that it radiates not only the first-loved but her landscape with a profound benediction. (11)

Walcott introduces Anna in Book Three. To foreground his attempt to form a community with her, through a vivid and dramatic description, Walcott takes his readers on a journey to Anna's house via the harbour in a rented boat, recalling several seaside images that are unique to the Caribbean, and more importantly to his trip that night:

> the one sound was the plump plash of the oars
> each stroke concluding with the folded gurgle
of an intaken breath... Halfway across
the chord between the downstroke of the oar
and its uplifted sigh was deepened
by a donkey's rusty winch, from Foux Lachaud,
a herring-gull's one creak, till the bay grew
too heavy for reflection. The rower veered
precisely, triangulating his approach,
headed for an abandoned rocky inlet
that reeked of butchered turtles, then the shallop
skimmed shallow water, the coast sliding....(85)
The donkey's "rusty winch" contrasts with the excitement of the sound of the
oars, showing that everything cannot remain positive. The image of the rusty
winch foreshadows his departure from Anna, the ideal that represents
innocent love and his affection for his island, to join another community.

Walcott returns to the subject of Adamic responsibility and the community
responsible for this job during his actual meeting with Anna in section IV.
Here, they are first guests on earth with the responsibility of naming things
(89). Walcott suggests that the artist's muse, Anna in this case, and the
community around the artist share with him the unique task of naming
things. Since he and Anna now have the Adamic responsibility of naming
things, Anna becomes the centre of the world:
The disc of the world turned
slowly, she was its centre.... (87)

The image of Anna as the centre of the world, Walcott's world, is developed further in chapter seventeen when Walcott leaves St. Lucia for Jamaica. Walcott is nostalgic about the trip to Jamaica for school, to join an academic community, and he compares himself to the seasonal ducks that always return to the island after their migration:

I looked for them flying, stupidly, at daybreak

I felt the instinct of their passage. (112)

The instinct of their passage that he feels is their ultimate survival and return to the community, despite their migration away from the island. Just as the ducks always survive and return to the island, he will survive and return to his community, Anna, and his friends, Harry Simmons and Dunstan St.

Omer:

The house would survive, my brother would survive,
and yet how arrogant, how cruel
to think the island and Anna would survive
(since they were one), inviolate, under
their sacred and inverted bell of glass,
and that I was incapable of betrayal...
The three faces I had most dearly loved...
three lives dissolve in the imagination

184
three loves, art, love and death,
fade from a mirror clouding with this breath,
not one is real, they cannot live or die,
they all exist, they never have existed
Harry, Dunstan, and Andreuille. (115)

Since Anna is inviolate, equal to the island, and compared to Harry Simmons and Dunstan St. Omer (Gregorias), his love for the island and his community of artists will survive, just like art, love, and death. Anna is love and art; Gregorias and Harry are love and art, and death foreshadows the destruction of Gregorias and Harry by their society and Walcott's physical separation from the island and Anna. It is significant to note Walcott's emphasis on his romantic love for Anna (which is only implied or absent in slave narratives) as a reflection of the greater degree of Western influence on his autobiography. Walcott's Another Life is comparable to a Western autobiography like Wordsworth's Prelude in terms of the focus on the growth of the artist's mind, an issue discussed in chapter one in relation to Olney's characterisation of Jung's autobiography as tracing the psychic development of the autobiographer.9

Walcott's mother is another symbol of his love and the community he adores in Another Life. As he recalls in "Leaving School," she is the headmistress of
the Methodist Infant School. She also sews to make ends meet and to pay for her children's education. She is so hardworking that "only on Sundays was the Singer [her sewing machine] silent" (11), as his uncles visit them. Even after his father's death, his mother is still enamoured of the older Walcott, as she sits silently as if her "husband might walk up the street" and their black maid "polished and repolished" his father's painting. Gradually, his mother's description turns to a description of the house as both of them are equated: "[o]ld house, old woman, old room" (13), foreshadowing his equation of Anna with their island in Book 3. It shows, as Baugh argues, quoting Walcott in "It Sees History as Endeavour," that "[o]bjects and furniture and landscape exist to strengthen the meaning of human existence" (26).

From a description of his mother and their house, chapter three introduces us to some other members of the community in Castries. Everybody counts in the community because of the Adamic responsibilities that have to be jointly performed, and they should all be represented in a communal autobiography like Walcott's. Some of the characters are the dead, the derelicts, and the stars of his mythology (22). Walcott's discussion of these characters, who are listed in alphabetic order, is dramatic. As in a play, after they are introduced and discussed, they leave, giving way to others. They include Ajax, the stallion; Berthilia, the "crippled crone;" Helen, the whore; and Weekes, the Marcus Garvey disciple.
There is an intensive relationship between religion and community in the narratives examined here. The various Black people in the different stories form important communities through religion, and the bond in the communities is strengthened by the institution. However, the autobiographers differ in relation to the religions in their societies. While Christianity is prominent in all the three autobiographies, African traditional religion is foregrounded only in Soyinka's and Walcott's autobiographies. Christianity, as reported by Angelou in *Caged Bird*, has a superordinate influence on Southern Black communities, whereas it shares its influence with African traditional religion in the Yorubaland of Soyinka's narrative and Walcott's St. Lucia.

Christianity plays a very important role in Angelou's childhood. Her society in Stamps is deeply religious, and her grandmother is a "super-religious Southern Negro grandmother" (140), who answers direct questions only about religion (38). The Black population is able to form a community against racism through the church, and this is perhaps why the opening episode in the narrative occurs in a church. The church also provides stress-relief, even if indirectly, for the Black community. The relief sometimes comes from the typically dramatic preachers, like Reverend Howard Thomas, who "jumped into the sermon, determined,... to give the members what they came for" (34), or overzealous members like Sister Monroe.
Sister Monroe demonstrates that the church is not always peaceful. After getting the spirit (32), she attacks Reverend Taylor when he is preaching in the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (32), and the pandemonium spreads to include other members of the congregation, like Deacon Jackson and Sister Willson, attacking Reverend Taylor. The stress-relief aspect of the church confrontation comes after the episode. As Angelou recalls, "for weeks after, all we needed to send us into violent outbursts of laughter was a whispered 'Preach it'" (which was originally said by Sister Monroe before she attacked Reverend Taylor) (34). A similar confrontation occurs when Sister Monroe attacks Reverend Howard Thomas during another service. The episode is so funny that Bailey and Maya cannot resist laughing, and they are later whipped by Uncle Willie.

Due to the overwhelming influence of religion in the community, it is unusual for members of the community not to go to church or be religious. One of the few people able to resist the influence of religion in the community is Mr. McElroy who never laughed, and seldom smiled, and to his credit was the fact that he liked to talk to Uncle Willie. He never went to church, which Bailey and I thought also proved he was a very courageous person. How great it would be to grow up like that, to be able to stare religion down, especially living next
door to a woman like Momma. (16)

Unlike Angelou's community, Soyinka's is torn between two powerful religions, traditional Yoruba religion and Christianity. While Soyinka's immediate family resides within a Christian community, his grandfather in Isara and his family represent the traditional religion. There is no clear line of demarcation between the traditional religious system and the political system. The king who heads the pre-colonial political system is also an important religious figure, leading the community in the most important sacrifices and religious activities. An important aspect of the traditional religion is managed by the *ogboni* who "slid through Ake like ancient wraiths, silent, dark and wise, a tanned pouch of Egba history, of its mysteries, memories and insights, or thudded through on warriors' feet, defiant and raucous, broad and compact with unspoken violence" (203). The force behind the king in the Yoruba socio-political system is the *ogboni*. This is not the power which seemed to be manifested in the prostration of men and women at the feet of the king, but the real power, both supernatural and cabalistic, the intriguing, midnight power which could make even the king wake up one morning and find that his houseposts had been eaten through during sleep. (203)
As a symbol of the traditional religion, Soyinka’s Father (grandfather) is able to doctor and initiate him into the mysteries of traditional Yoruba religion during one of Soyinka’s visits to Isara. At the end of the initiation ceremony, his grandfather is so confident that he instructs Soyinka as follows:

"[w]hoever offers you food, take it. Eat it. Don’t be afraid, as long as your heart says, Eat. If your mind misgives, even for a moment, don’t take it, and never step in that house again" (147). Soyinka understands the differences between Christianity and his people's traditional religion so well that while comparing both religions he concludes that his grandfather belonged in the same province of beliefs as the oghoni of Ake, as the priests and priestesses of various cults and mysteries against whom Wild Christian and her co-religionists sometimes marched on some special week-end of the year, preaching the word of God to them in market-places, on the streets, in their homes. (139)

Soyinka recalls regular clashes between proponents of both Christianity and the traditional religion. His Grand Uncle, Reverend J. J. Ransome-Kuti "had actually ordered back [to the forest] several ghommids in his life-time" (5). On one occasion, however, he is not that lucky. He is asked not to preach on a certain day because of an egungun outing, but he refuses. When the egungun procession passes, Reverend Ransome-Kuti is asked to disperse his
followers and show respect to the *egungun*, but again, he refuses. The *egungun* departs, but taps on the congregation's door thrice on his way, and the building later collapses (9).

Unlike Ransome-Kuti, Soyinka's Uncle Sanya is "an *oro*, [tree daemon] which made him at home in the woods, even at night" (5-6). As children, during Sanya and Wild Christian's visit to the forest in search of snails, they reach the *oro* grove and an *oro* emissary reports them to Reverend Ransome-Kuti who warns them never to go there again. They go a little farther on another occasion, however, and they are chased home. Sanya falls sick, and only the traditional sacrifice performed by an elderly Christian, who is also tutored in the traditional religion, saves him (10-12).

Like Soyinka, Walcott is exposed to both Christianity and African traditional religion, as practised on his island. Though the Methodist faith to which he is introduced in his infancy is passionate and pragmatic (24), he is fascinated by the Catholic religion whose liturgical practices he celebrates (34-36). Some of his teachers at school, as he recalls in "Leaving School," are Catholic brothers (7), and Anna, his friend, was "a schoolgirl at the convent" (11). He foregrounds poverty on the island with the encounter between a Catholic priest, a "rum-eyed romantic" (36), and some "pot-stomached, dribbling, snotted, / starved, fig-navelled, mud-baked" (36) children. The priest's
conversation with the children shows the church as complicit with the
dilapidation and poverty of the island. While the church teaches that hell is
an isolated place to which non-Christians will go after death, the children respond:

Why, Father, on this coast

Father, hell is
two hundred shacks on wooden stilts,
one bushy path to the night-soil pits.
Hell is the hole where the devil shits ... (37)

By placing hell on earth, on the island, the children move religion from a
transcendental realm to the physical world, arguing for a human face to it.
Also, by seeing hell on earth, the children repudiate the Christian teaching of
obedience, faith, and acceptance of God-given human conditions. They
suggest that if hell is not desirable and it is on earth, they can abandon it and
move to heaven on earth. Heaven on earth will, of course, be an
improvement in their lives, unlike the results of the mechanistic faith-oriented
approach of Catholicism to inequality.

Although over 90% of the St Lucian population is Catholic (Baugh 7), there is
still a strong presence of traditional African religions brought over to the
island by slaves, and this presence is more powerfully felt even than
Catholicism. The syncretic African traditional religion is, therefore,
an atavism stronger than their Mass,
stronger than chapel, whose
tubers gripped the rooted middle-class,
beginning where Africa began:
in the body's memory. (24-25)

The traditional religion still has an important grip on the society because
people can relate to it directly, and its practitioners cure diseases with it (25).
Walcott also illustrates both the effect of the traditional religion on the
community and the fact that many Christians still live under the shadows of
tradition by representing the pact between Monsieur Auguste Manoir, "pillar
of the Church" (26) and "first black merchant baron" (28) with the devil.
Although this is a popular story in the people's folklore, by relating this
negative story to the traditional religion in one breath and discussing its
usefulness in another, Walcott shows his ambivalent position on religion.

One crucial divergence between Angelou, Soyinka, and Walcott in relation to
community is the idea of Blackness. While Soyinka and Angelou accept it
and contextualise themselves strongly within and in support of Black ideals
and resistance, Walcott repudiates the idea of Blackness. Since he is biracial,
he campaigns for a new beginning through the image of his grandfather. As
in "A Far Cry from Africa," (Collected Poems 17-18) where he discusses his
bi-raciality and his division right to the vein, in Another Life, he identifies his racial identity through his "white grandfather's face" and his "black grandfather's voice" (66). From identifying these heritages, he questions and attempts to transcend them:

But I tired of your whining, grandfather,
in the whispers of marsh grass,
I tired of your groans, grandfather,
in the deep ground bass of the combers,
I curse what the elm remembers,
I hoped for your sea-voices
to hiss from my hand,
for the sea to erase
those names a thin,
tortured child, kneeling, wrote
on his slate of wet sand. (67)

By arguing that he is tired of the whining and groans of his grandfather, he suggests his distaste for complaints from his community. By cursing what the elm remembers, and by hoping for an erasure of names, perhaps names of his grandfathers, he is hoping to put their history behind him and start afresh by performing his Adamic function. As Edward Baugh argues, [t]o make peace with history and to find oneself was also a matter of confronting the lost ancestor, whether he be Prospero
or Caliban, Crusoe or Friday, of making peace with white
grandfather and black grandfather alike and, by so doing, of
resolving for oneself the painful clash of ancestries which
produced West Indian society. (43)

Resistance and the recovering of Black history are also major continuities in
the autobiographies of Black creative writers. In writing about their personal
experiences of and resistances to colonialism and racism, they invariably
write the histories of their societies, and describe how their societies react to
these histories. Early in Caged Bird, the young Maya recognises the racial
and economic differences between the Whites and the Blacks in her society;
hence she internalises the colonial discourse of Whiteness as a synonym for
prosperity. When getting ready for her recitation at the Colored Methodist
Episcopal Church, her determination is "to look like one of the sweet little
white girls who were everybody's dream of what was right with the world"
(1). Her concern is for her dress to hide her Blackness, and she longs to
wake up from her "black ugly dream" and be changed to a White girl. From
a child longing for Whiteness at the beginning of her autobiography, Angelou
changes to a critical and politically conscious person, as she grows up and
more fully encounters her segregated and racist society. She argues that
what she needs to learn about her society are not things she will learn from
the American educational system, which does not serve her needs as a Black
Without willing it, I had gone from being ignorant of being ignorant to being aware of being aware. And the worst part of my awareness was that I didn't know what I was aware of. I knew I knew very little, but I was certain that the things I had yet to learn wouldn't be taught to me at George Washington High School. (230)

Angelou's representation of her high school graduation exemplifies Frantz Fanon's argument in "The Fact of Blackness" about Black pre-determination in a racist society. The Black students at the graduation ceremony show that a community needs to be self-defining and to resist derogatory and colonial expectations. One of the early indications that things were not going well at the ceremony was the order from the choir director and the principal that singing should stop after the American National Anthem, thereby excluding the pledge of allegiance and the Negro National Anthem that customarily followed. This disturbing trend is continued by the invited speaker for the ceremony, Mr. Edward Donleavy, when he sets out differing plans for Angelou's school, Lafayette County Training School, and the Central School, which is for White children. While science and art will be developed at the Central School, Lafayette school for Blacks will continue to produce good sportsmen. While the White students were predetermined scientists and
artists, controllers of the developmental aspects of their society, the Blacks can only attempt to make headway in sports. Angelou's interpretation is that [t]he white kids were going to have a chance to become Galileos and Madame Curies and Edisons and Gauguins, and our boys (the girls weren't even in on it) would try to be Jesse Owenses and Joe Louises.... We were maids and farmers, handymen and washerwomen, and anything higher that we aspired to was farcical and presumptuous. (151-52)

The students and staff of Lafayette resist Donleavy's remarks by concentrating on other things than his speech. The disappointment is total: "[i]t was awful to be Negro and have no control over my life. It was brutal to be young and already trained to sit quietly and listen to charges brought against my colour with no chance of defense" (153). Angelou's sentiments here echo Fanon's:

I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality. I am laid bare. I feel, I see in those white faces that it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro! (116)

Despite Donleavy's discriminatory remarks, the mood changes when Henry
Reed, the valedictorian whose speech is titled "To Be or Not to Be," takes over the stage. The question for Angelou is what Reed will say: "Hadn't he heard the whitefolks? We couldn't be...." Reed takes a different approach to the question and reminds his audience that they can be. Unlike the earlier meaningless recitation of "Invictus," a poem about people being the controllers of their destinies which is recited by Elouise, a fellow student (154), Reed reminds his audience that the only path to go is that of resistance, as he leads his class in the Negro National Anthem, "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," that they were prevented from singing earlier. The mood becomes electric and happy as they sing "the hymn of encouragement" (155). The song takes on a new meaning and gives new hope for triumph over discrimination. Angelou's concluding remarks about their graduation experience show the students' scorn for and triumph over the system that pre-determined them:

We were on top again. As always, again. We survived. The depths had been icy and dark, but now a bright sun spoke to our souls. I was no longer simply a member of the proud graduating class of 1940; I was a proud member of the wonderful, beautiful Negro race. (156)

Angelou also illustrates the tendency to pre-determine and underestimate African-Americans by considering the issue of naming in her encounter with
Mrs. Viola Cullinan. Since Cullinan is White, she renames her Black servants. She changes Hallelujah's name to Glory (91), and attempts to change Angelou's to Mary because Margaret, not even Marguerite her real name, is too long. Angelou resists the new name because of the implications of naming from without in her cultural experiences:

    [e]very person I knew had a hellish horror of being "called out of his name." It was a dangerous practice to call a Negro anything that could be loosely construed as insulting because of the centuries of their having been called niggers, jigs, dinges, blackbirds, crows, boots and spooks. (91)

Angelou's resistance to being named by Cullinan is to break some of the White woman's dishes. Significantly, the ones she breaks are Cullinan's mother's china from Virginia. Perhaps breaking the dishes as her sign of resistance is not as important as breaking those from Virginia, one of America's original slaveholding Southern states. By breaking these dishes, Angelou symbolically destroys a vestige of slavery and exploitation. It is only after breaking the dishes that she reclaims her name, as Cullinan informs her friend that the young Maya's name is Margaret, not Mary.

Angelou's job-search demonstrates that race is more important than ability in determining whether a person gets a particular job or not, but her job options are also restricted because of her age. Since she is only fifteen, jobs in
defence, war plants, and shipyards are not options. Similarly, office work is
out of the question, since her intellectual pride prevents her from studying
typing, shorthand, and filing at school. She ends up applying for a job as
what was then called a conductorette on San Francisco's streetcars. When she
informs her mother, Vivian Baxter, of her decision to apply for the job, the
race question is raised in her mother's response: "They don't accept colored
people on streetcars" (225). Despite Angelou's disappointment, she forms
"the noble determination to break the restricting tradition" (225). With her
mother's encouragement, she sets out to confront the odds that are against
her in the job market.

Angelou's first visit to the Market Street Railway Company shows how
resistance can propel a determined individual. Since she discovers "the
interior dingy and the decor drab" (225), unlike the "waxed surfaces and
carpeted floors" she expects, she is disappointed. As she records, "[i]f I had
met no resistance, I might have decided against working for such a poor-
mouth-looking concern" (225). As soon as she informs the receptionist of
why she is there, the receptionist starts playing the racial card, refusing to let
her see the manager. Angelou recognises that both the receptionist and she
are victims of the same system; hence "the whole charade we had played out
in that crummy waiting room had directly to do with me, Black, and her,
white" (227).
Angelou appeals to Negro organizations for help, even though they prove not really helpful. Some even question her determination to get the conductorette job when there are other jobs that pay more. To Angelou, it is a question not of money but of pride; it is a question of breaking down the barriers that hold her back. As a tribute to her perseverance and her frequent trips to the streetcar office, she is eventually "hired as the first Negro on the San Francisco streetcars" (229). Even after getting the job, the discrimination process does not end. Despite the fact that her shifts "were split so haphazardly," she perseveres on the job.

Just as Angelou asserts herself in the face of various attempts by her society to dehumanise and hold her down, she rises above patriarchal exploitation. She is raped by her mother's boyfriend, Mr. Freeman, who threatens to kill her brother Bailey if she informs anybody about the incident. She is, however, forced to tell when her semen-stained underpants are discovered when Bailey is changing her sickbed. Although Mr. Freeman is given a year and a day, somehow he is released later that day and later discovered dead. According to the report by the policeman who informs Mrs. Baxter, her grandmother, of his death, it appears that Freeman "was kicked to death" (72). Although it takes Angelou a long time to transcend the trauma of rape, her struggle to rise above it shows her determination to succeed against all odds.\textsuperscript{11}
In *Ake*, Soyinka recounts how he and his family are involved in a women's movement against taxation and colonialism. This movement, under the auspices of the Egba Women's Union and later the Nigerian Women's Union, is one of the most important resistance movements of their time. Soyinka is involved in the movement because his mother is part of the group, and he has to wait for her when she is at its meeting. Founding members of the group are Christian wives of teachers, pastors, and pharmacists. Their initial concerns are about sanitation, availability and price of commodities, the plight of newly married women, problems of infant deaths, post-natal clinics, and philanthropic work. The demography of the group changes after Reverend Ransome-Kuti's recommendation that they include others from a different social class in their group. Following this intervention, membership in the group grows to include wives of professionals and non-professionals. Ransome-Kuti continues to advise the women on their plans, and other advice from him leads to the educated women teaching the non-educated ones how to read and write. Like Ransome-Kuti, Essay is also involved in advising the women. Soyinka actually gets some of his information from the discussions between Essay and Wild Christian on the activities of the Women's Union (185-86).

Soyinka becomes involved with the movement by teaching some of the women how to read and write. They start as very keen pupils, learning and
encouraging one another until they stop coming or start coming late to meetings because of arrests and intimidation by the market wardens over taxation. Kemberi (Madame Amelia), a "highly feared, fearless and voluble woman" (182) articulates the concerns of the women:

[w]hat you are all saying in so many words, is that the women of Egbaland are no longer free to walk the streets of their own land, or pursue their living from farm to home and farm to market without being molested by these bloodsuckers.... It is time we told them, No more taxes. They want to bleed us dry, let us tell them, No more Taxes.

A tumult of approbation overspilled the courtyard. Order was resumed. Mrs. Ransome-Kuti was empowered to give notice of a demand for the abolition of tax for women, both to the District Officer and the Alake of Abeokuta and his Council of Chiefs. (184-85)

The resistance movement develops with Mrs. Kuti’s trip to England, where she canvasses for support for the union: "[o]ne morning the newspapers were filled with denunciations of her activities in England. At a conference—or a public lecture—she had claimed that the women of Egbaland led a pauper's existence. They were wretched, underprivileged and ruthlessly exploited" (192). Of course, a public relations war ensues, as supporters of the colonial
government issue their own statements, denying the allegations in Mrs. Kuti's. Replies and counter replies follow.

The climax of the activities of the resistance movement comes with a march on the King's palace. The immediate event that leads to this march is the report of harassment and exploitation to the women's union by an unnamed elderly woman who is solely responsible for raising her thirteen grandchildren. Following this report,

[t]he women rose in a body. Hands flew to heads and off came the head-ties, unfurling in the air like hundreds of banners. The head-ties flew downwards, turned into sashes and arced round the waists to be secured with a grim decisiveness. Kemberi leading the way, they poured out of the grammar school compound, filled the streets and marched towards the palace at Ake. (201)

Kemberi explains the women's demands at the king's palace, but the negotiations with the king and the District Officer yield no changes. Even members of the Ogboni cult who support the status quo are manhandled by the women. The ultimate symbol of the women's resistance is their "appropriation of the man-exclusive cult—oro" (213) to mobilise their colleagues against their male exploiters. The fact that the concerns and demands of these African women are related to those of their male
counterparts is demonstrated by the male support they do get:

[the] men became more fully involved. At every step, they had shouted their encouragement of the women's actions and even in some cases, driven their hesitant wives from the home, angry that such wives did not know that the cause concerned them also, and that its victory would bring them much-needed relief. One physically dragged his wife to the palace one morning, gave her money to spend on food and assured her that he would look after the children until the strife was over...the movement of laden lines towards the Aafin now included men. They stopped by on the way from their farms; many had even journeyed to the farm to bring the women yams, fruits, palm wine. A hunter or two stopped to drop the day's catch of bushmeat and share jokes with the women. (219)

Mrs. Ransome-Kuti's encounter with the District Officer, a young Englishman (210), demonstrates the anti-colonial dimensions of the women's struggle. She asserts the rights of the women to participate in the negotiations at the Alake's palace after the District Officer asks her to caution her women against disturbing the peace. Her response to the District Officer, "You may have been born, you were not bred. Could you speak to your mother like that?," is popularly described "as the 'grammar' which hammered the ill-starred

205
District Officer into submission.... It was undeniable that the District Officer was rendered speechless by Mrs. Ransome-Kuti's angry riposte which rang through the hush" (211). Following the display of disrespect for Mrs. Ransome-Kuti and the women, an act that is abominable in Yoruba culture, the officer is forced to vacate the premises "as his very presence was an abomination not merely to the women but to the palace which belonged to the people of Egbaland" (212).

Mrs. Ransome-Kuti's encounter with the District Officer who replaces the rude one also shows the women's resistance to colonial discourse. In her telephone conversation with the new District Officer, Mrs. Ransome-Kuti situates women's taxation in Nigeria and the colonial administration's refusal to abolish it within the British government's overall insensitivity to issues outside Britain. This she does by questioning the rationale behind the nuclear bombing of Japan, not Germany, during the second world war. As she puts it, "I know you, the white mentality: Japanese, Chinese, Africans, we are all subhuman. You would drop an atom bomb on Abeokuta or any of your colonies if it suited you!" (224). Following Soyinka's question after the telephone conversation, Mrs. Ransome-Kuti explains her anger about the allies bombing Japan, linking the destruction to the slave trade and the racist ideology of seeing Black people as beasts of burden while seeing Asians as a grade above Blacks. From this counter-colonially discursive position, the
book shifts to a discussion of the lapses and discriminatory policies of the British-run Government College that Soyinka is to attend shortly.

In Re-Creating Ourselves, Molara Ogundipe-Leslie criticises Soyinka for his representation of the women's war. She interprets Soyinka's description of Essay's role in the war as "marionetting—or more contemporaneously, tele-guiding Wild Christian with his notes from a distance" (107) and Reverend Ransome-Kuti's advice for the women as "telling the incapable and non-plussed women at their meeting what to do" (102). The roles of Essay and Reverend Ransome-Kuti in the war, advising and offering suggestions on some of the developments, do not necessarily mean tele-guiding or telling the women what to do. The women are, of course, very organised, and they articulate their concerns and demands very clearly. What they get from their male colleagues, as Soyinka demonstrates, is the typical support that people offer one another in traditional Yoruba society. This is why although the women are in the forefront of the war, they get more and more support from their male counterparts as the war progresses. The men's support, therefore, shows that they share the concerns of the women.

Ogundipe-Leslie also argues that Soyinka portrays the women's war as an "unplanned, impulsive, gut reaction to contemporary maladministration" (106). Contrary to Ogundipe-Leslie's argument, Soyinka depicts the
confrontation as an organised encounter. Mrs. Kuti's meeting with the District Officers earlier discussed and her lectures in England (192) show how versatile and organised the movement is from Soyinka's perspective. Besides, since *Ake* is Soyinka's autobiography, his account of the movement understandably has to be how he remembers it. The spontaneous march on the king's palace is a product of several discussions among the women. As Soyinka recalls, before the march, the women typically devote several sessions of their meetings to discussing the tax problem (199). As a matter of necessity, they must have been considering their options during those sessions.

In addition, Ogundipe-Leslie argues that historically, "[t]he movement used modern methods: petitions, propaganda, the legal process and the press—letters to the editor, articles and press conferences—as well as marches, demonstrations and vigils" (106). The above historical account is supported by Soyinka's description of the movement. A substantial part of chapters XIV and XV shows the use of marches, demonstrations, and vigils during the war. Also, there are examples of the use of what Ogundipe-Leslie calls modern methods in Soyinka's description of the war. The women meet to discuss their reaction to developments in relation to the war (193), and they print leaflets for their propaganda (198).
Another of Ogundipe-Leslie's criticisms against Soyinka's description of the women's war is that it is "chronologically and factually confused and obscure" (105). Ogundipe-Leslie's argument does not account for the fact that Soyinka as an autobiographer is a writer who has the responsibility for narrating events in as memorable and as stylistically sophisticated a way as possible, even if the events are not chronological. Chronology per se is perhaps the territory of the historian, not of the autobiographer. In addition, as I argued at the beginning of the Soyinka section of this chapter, his note to Isara and Ibadan discusses his style of manipulating events and chronology to make the maximum impact possible. This is what Soyinka does in Ake, though there is no express note to tell the reader.

Walcott's approach to resistance is ambivalent, perhaps because he is biracial. He records episodes in both Black and White histories to show how both histories have shaped him. At school, courtesy of his headmaster, "a lonely Englishman who loved parades, / sailing and Conrad's prose" (70), he is exposed to history from the perspective of the colonising forces. In addition, in "Leaving School," he recalls that the headmaster, T.E. Fox-Hawes, is also proud of "the benignity of his Empire" (5); hence "[h]e left the names of battles drumming in us." In Another Life, Walcott claims that the battles are not for the exploited. The history he is exposed to is one of "ennui, defence, disease" (70).
Preceding his encounter with history from the perspective of his English headmaster, he discusses another encounter with history through art, "a large tapestry of, was it Waterloo," in one house he visits on errands for his mother. This tapestry shows terrifying British soldiers leaping over dying people. While British soldiers suggest that what they are involved in is an exciting and innocent game, the dying people show who suffers. The dying people also parallel the destruction of the indigenous Caribbean population by the forces of empire. When recollecting this art in another life, his adult life, he argues that it is empire at its best teaching its discourse, and he is critical of his earlier admiration of its glory.

Walcott's encounter with Williamson's History of the British Empire and his record of the battles with the Fighting Fifth at Vigie also celebrate the forces of the British empire at the expense of the destroyed indigenous population, the captured slaves, and indentured Indians. Unlike the British empire's representative, the victorious Fighting Fifth, "who wore the feather [white plume] without stain" (71), West Indians and their landscape, represented by the Morne, "a hill and erstwhile military fortress which overlooks the town of Castries and which has been a commanding height of St Lucian landscape and history" (Baugh 1), "hummed like a hospital" (Another Life 71), following the destruction of the area by the colonising forces. Walcott's conclusion during the "leisure of recollection" is that the battles are "[t]he fiction / of
rusted soldiers fallen on a schoolboy's page" (70).

To demonstrate the bias of colonial history and indigenous resistance to it, Walcott recalls a very important incident in the history of the indigenous population of Grenada in 1651:

The leaping Caribs whiten,
in one flash, the instant
the race leapt at Sauteurs,
a cataract! One scream of bounding lace. (71)

According to Baugh, "[t]he Carib Indians, who inhabited the island, had been tricked into selling it to the French Company of the Islands of America 'for a collection of trifles'" (45). Baugh further explains the circumstances of the episode at Sauteurs by quoting Allister Macmillan. When the Caribs realised their mistake, they fought the French bravely. They were brutally massacred, and their houses and properties were burnt. Instead of surrendering to the French, according to Macmillan,

[a]bout forty who escaped the weapons of the French
precipitated themselves over the cliffs to the rocks below, from which their bruised corpses were floated away on the surges of the Atlantic. The scene of this, one of many tragedies enacted in Grenada by the early French settlers, was named by them 'Le Morne des Sauteurs.' (408)
Sauteurs, one of the most important symbols in Another Life, represents the resistance of the indigenous Caribbean population to European colonising forces. Rather than die at the hands of their colonisers, they willingly commit suicide. Their suicide is, therefore, comparable to that of Harry Simmons, who instead of allowing his society to destroy him completely destroys himself. As Baugh explains, both suicides have

the same paradoxical quality of defeat and victory, pride and humiliation. Both deaths are also moments of glory, or illumination ('their leap into the light'). As the Caribs hurl themselves over the cliff, they literally emerge into the light of the sky and the reflected light of ocean, and so into the light of history. (47)

Walcott identifies with the plight of the Carib Indians, as he evokes another set of images to show his support for their cause. "I am one with this engine which is greater than victory," he claims (72). Just as he identifies with the Caribs, he quickly reminds the reader of his divided loyalty by recalling the battle at Thermopylae where Spartans defended themselves against the Persian army of Xerxes (Baugh 46). He identifies with them as well:

...I am one

with the thousand runners who will break on loud sand

at Thermopylae, one wave that now cresting must bear
down the torch of this race, I am all, I am one
who feels as he falls with the thousand now his tendons
harden
and the wind-god, Hourucan, combing his hair .... (72)

Walcott foregrounds two important aspects of European and Caribbean
history as discussed above, but ultimately identifies with a third aspect of
history, a fresh beginning that allows the performance of Adamic
responsibilities. This he does in his discussion of Rampanaglas.

Rampanaglas is so isolated that "the historian can go mad there from thirst"
(141). What we find here is the "child without history, without knowledge of
its pre-world" (143). Despite the fact that the child is without history, he can
hear what the historian cannot hear: "the howls of all the races that crossed
the water.../and the crossing of water has erased their memories"(143).
Consequently,

        [a]ll of the epics are blown away with the leaves,
        blown with the careful calculations on brown paper;
        these were the only epics: the leaves. (142)

Since everything has been blown away except the landscape that is
symbolised by leaves, "we begin again,/from what we have always known,
nothing." It is within this framework of beginning with nothing that, to
Walcott, Caribbean people are Adams with the task of naming things.
In terms of language, the autobiographies studied here share some features and diverge in relation to others. Although all three autobiographies are in English, they reflect the peculiarities of their various societies. Angelou’s language in *Caged Bird* is vivid and dominated by striking images that have a particularly memorable effect on the reader. For example, Angelou uses the colours of chocolate and vanilla ice cream to show how desperately segregated her society is at the expense of African-Americans. The situation is so appalling that "[p]eople in Stamps used to say that the whites in our town were so prejudiced that a Negro couldn't buy vanilla ice cream. Except on July Fourth. Other days he has to be satisfied with chocolate" (40). By using the colours of vanilla and chocolate ice cream to describe her society, Angelou conveys very clearly how divided the society is and how devastating the effects of racism are on racialized people. If some people cannot even get common vanilla ice cream because they are Black, what can they get out of their society? The fact that ice cream is very common also makes it particularly easy for her readers to relate to her predicament and that of others like her.

The caged bird is another central image in Angelou’s narrative. Angelou demonstrates in her autobiography that the caged bird sings because of a strong and resisting Black community represented by Maya and her grandmother. Like her poem "Still I Rise," *Caged Bird* is a celebration of
Angelou's ability to rise above her discriminatory society, and to argue convincingly for a subject position for herself and others like her in a society that has reserved the object position for them. As she puts it in "Still I Rise,"

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave
I rise
I rise
I rise
I rise. (The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou 164)

In many parts of Caged Bird, especially when describing events, Angelou combines a vivid description with her poetic abilities to convey information about her segregated society. An example is her description of the Black man's corpse that Bailey sees when on an errand for Uncle Willie (167). In addition, her use of language shows how African-Americans resist exploitation by using a variety of English that can carry their experiences. This variety of English is related to what Edward Kamau Brathwaite calls nation language in the Caribbean. As Brathwaite argues, "English it may be in terms of some lexical features. But in its contours, its rhythm and timbre,
its sound explosions, it is not English" (13). Some features of this language include using the present tense instead of the past: "my mistress give me 'Glory'" and subject-verb disagreement: "I pays you" (107). By disregarding the linguistic rules laid down by their racist society, African-Americans are at the same time resisting their exploitative society. This variety of English, what some others have described as Ebonics, a language on its own, is used to convey their own order of reality. An interesting aspect of this variety of English is that even highly educated African-Americans can use it and take it seriously as a cultural marker. An example is Henry Louis Gates's "Talkin That Talk," where he argues that if non-African-American scholars do not understand African-Americans and still erase their voices even when they use the same academic variety of English, what will happen when they use the Black idiom?:

Todorov can't even hear us, Houston, when we talk his academic talk; how he gonna hear us if we "talk that talk," the talk of the black idiom? Maybe you think we should give up, but I am still an optimist. Things is just gettin' interestin', as LeRoi says. (409)

In terms of language in Ake, Ogundipe-Leslie argues that the prose of the autobiography

is of high quality, subtly interlaced at points with wit and
humour which occasionally broaden into admirable and hilarious slapstick, as in the scene of the schoolboys and the stolen chicken. From time to time, however, Nigerianisms slip in; unconscious usages not perhaps intentional and certainly not artistically functional.... (108)

Ogundipe-Leslie's argument regarding the high quality of Soyinka's prose is convincing. Her criticism of Soyinka's use of Nigerianisms (language use peculiar to Nigeria) as unconscious, unintentional, and not artistically functional, however, cannot be sustained. Soyinka demonstrates the linguistic vitality of Yoruba society during his childhood with the use of different languages and varieties of English. Although Ake is written in high quality English prose, it shows the use of English along with other Nigerian languages like Pidgin and Yoruba. There is, therefore, a lot of code-mixing and code-switching between the languages.

The narrative idiom is standard Nigerian English, the variety of the language that formally educated Nigerians use. Usually, most people who speak English have some level of Western education or the other. People with limited exposure to English use broken English; hence this variety is an amalgamation of words from English and other Nigerian languages. Speakers of this variety are usually people whose exposure to the language comes through their contacts with their English-speaking employers, friends,
or relatives. Pidgin, like broken English, resulted from the contact between English and other Nigerian languages. While the beginning of Pidgin was unsystematic, or its early forms could be described as broken English, it has now developed into a language of its own. Yoruba, on the other hand, is Soyinka's mother-tongue and the most widely used language, usually under informal circumstances, in the Yorubaland of Soyinka's childhood. By using all these languages in Ake, Soyinka shows their influence on his society and his childhood.

Pa Adatan's use of language shows a combination of Yoruba, Pidgin, and broken English. Sometimes, he uses just a word or two from one language and then switches to another, as the following example demonstrates:

Ah, Mama Wole, this English people just wan' the glory for den self. Den no wan' blackman to win dis war and finish off dat nonsense-yeye Hitler one time. Hitler dey bombing us for Lagos already and they no fit defend we. (110)

Some of the words in such speech are words that can be used in any standard variety of English, but the combination process adopted by Pa Adatan is arbitrary; hence some of the constructions are in broken English. His use of the singular form "this English people" instead of the plural form "these English people," for example, is not an error in broken English. Yeye is a Yoruba word meaning nonsense, and the pidgin aspect of the speech is
marked by the use of words like den (they), dis (this) and dat (that).

Standard British English is used in *Ake* by the Britons, like the District Officers in the narrative. Soyinka attempts to represent this variety by reproducing the conversation with the officer he encounters during his sightseeing tour of Ake. Soyinka differentiates between the variety of English that he is used to and the officer's by representing the latter's speech phonologically in a way that departs from standard orthography: "That is venhrry clenver.... What can I doon for you" (46). Since Soyinka's family is formally educated in Western-style schools, they use the standard variety of Nigerian English. However, they use Yoruba along with English, since both languages are used side-by-side in their linguistic community. Some of the examples of Yoruba in the text occur when members of the family are trying to recreate an episode as it happened. For example, when Wild Christian narrates Sanya's encounter with the spirits in the forest, she switches from English to Yoruba and back to English to recreate the story as accurately as possible and to show the tension of the whole encounter: "Sanya wo ni yen? He was the first to break and run. Bo o lo o ya mi, o di kitipa kitipa" (7). There is always code-switching from English to Yoruba during the women's war to recreate the mobilisation songs of the period (198, 213, 218, 220, 223). English translations of the songs that are unavoidably in Yoruba because this is the language most, if not all, the women use, follow their Yoruba originals.
Soyinka also uses Yoruba to represent terms and phenomena that are not either easily translatable into English or do not have direct English equivalents. Some of these examples are glossed (64, 71), others are explained in footnotes (178, 179), and still others are understandable contextually (10, 26).

There are also examples of transliteration and words that are either specific to the Nigerian locale or their semantic qualities have been extended to convey meaning in a second language situation. "You are going to eat the cane tonight" (65) is a direct transliteration from Yoruba: "Wa je egba loni." This statement means that you will be caned or flogged today. "Bushmeat" (219) refers to wild meat and house helps (25) is "a vague expression for something between servant and family appendage" (64).

In relation to Walcott's use of language, there is a gulf of difference between his drama and his poetry. His play Dream on Monkey Mountain fulfills his linguistic manifesto of "forging ... a language that went beyond mimicry, a dialect which had the force of revelation as it invented names for things, one which finally settled on its own mode of inflection, and which began to create an oral culture of chants, jokes, folk-songs and fables" ("What the Twilight Says" 17). But Another Life can be broadly situated within the framework of the romantic ideal of the poet as an inspired individual, which
is part of Walcott's overall indebtedness to Western literature. While the English in certain sections of Another Life is standard, in some others, it is much more innovative.

The tone and style of the last stanza of chapter 11, sections III and IV (71-72) on the Sauteurs contrast with the early part of section III and section IV on European battles. As Baugh explains,

[t]he heroism of the Caribs and the importance of the moment for the poet, are highlighted by the sharp contrast both in tone and style between section IV and the adjacent sections. In contrast with the ironic and relatively 'dry' style in which the textbook saga of British imperial victories is presented, is the formal, solemn, and celebratory style of section IV. It is significant that this is the only passage in the poem which uses traditional or 'true' epic style. The long, breath-stopping periods, characterised by run-on lines, often with the metrical foot itself being carried over from one line to the next, combine to evoke all the terror, speed and urgency of the running and the leap, as well as the exhilarating sense of being transfigured by the action, by the 'leaping to the light.' (45-46)

In section V, European victory is celebrated only from the innocent
perspective of a child. The lines, like the images they contain, are standard, especially at the beginning, with nothing extraordinary to them. The image of the "dead fellaheen" is compared to "piles of laundry," and the child from whose perspective we hear the story is compared to a mongrel (with no fixed identity), as he follows prescribed standards "singing in his grandfather's company" (72). Even in this section, the irony of the battles and the sarcasm with which the child is described, as without his own initiative and therefore following others, is conveyed in standard English. The latter part of the section becomes a lot more powerful as the ironic image of peace is foregrounded in relation to the Fighting Fifth. The repetition of the word peace in relation to the Fighting Fifth is quickly undermined with a reference to the Caribs:

Deep in the trees a glow-worm army haunts

with haunted eyes, their mouths

as soft as moths crying for their lost countries. (73)

Like section V, the style of section I is very dry and standard, in fact, decidedly prosaic, except for the patterns of alliteration in the poem:

In one house where I went

on irritable sewing errands for my mother,

there was a large tapestry of, was it Waterloo?

a classically chaotic canvas ...(68)
Comparatively, the language of the section on the Carib Indians is more memorable:

I am pounding the faces of gods back into the red clay they
leapt from with the mattock of heel after heel as if heel
after heel were my thumbs that once gouged out as sacred
vessels for women the sockets of eyes, the deaf howl.... (71)

He uses vivid, violent verbs completed by objects which are vulnerable body parts to show the carnage at Sauteurs. The lines are longer, the syntax uninterrupted by punctuation, and the description more vivid, as images of battle, horses, mattock, and creation are piled on one another. Walcott enhances the effects of these images with the alliterating.hs of the second and third lines, the anaphoric "I am" in the lines below, the repetition of "one" in lines two and three below,

I am no more...

I am one with this engine...

I am one with the thousand runners...

I am all, I am one (72),

and the onomatopoeia of "scream" in "one scream of bounding lace." These figures of speech stress the speed, continuity, emphasis, seriousness, and urgency of the battle at Sauteurs, as well as the paradoxical aspect of the battle: victory and defeat in one.
Although Angelou, Walcott, and Soyinka are Black creative writers, their autobiographies show how different Black autobiographies can be in terms of form and content. In terms of form, Walcott's autobiography is a long poem, and this makes it relatively less accessible to people who are not trained literary scholars or artists. Soyinka's and Angelou's autobiographies, on the other hand, are written in prose, and they are relatively more accessible to readers in general. An understanding of the background of these writers makes the autobiographies even more powerful. It is when we contextualise the autobiographies within the societies that produce them and within Black societies in general that we can appreciate more the need for these writers to write themselves and their communities into existence through the genre, and the ways they do so.

The texts are accomplished stylistically, and they share some thematic concerns, including resistance against several levels of exploitation and the importance of community and different religions in their authors' childhoods. However, they differ in terms of visions for their societies. While Soyinka and Angelou situate their texts within the resistance trend in Black history, Walcott identifies this approach and attempts to transcend it by recommending a new beginning for Caribbean people. Their differences are in significant measure a result of the societies that produce them, and this ultimately affects even the thematic similarities that they share. While
Soyinka grows up in a relatively peaceful and supportive community, Angelou grows up in the racist, segregated, and violent South, a society that requires her consciously to assert her humanity always. Walcott, like Soyinka, grows up in a relatively peaceful society, but has to grapple with the facts of his ancestry. While Soyinka grapples with the colonisation of his society by the same forces that dispersed the Angelous and the Walcotts to other parts of the world, Angelou and Walcott struggle with the effects of slavery in their autobiographies. Apart from sharing the same concerns with her male colleagues, since Angelou is a woman, she asserts herself against patriarchal exploitation, including rape. All these factors operate in the background of these writers, and they ultimately affect not just their autobiographies but their humanity and careers as creative writers.
Notes

1 Slavery became illegal in Britain in 1772, but was not abolished there until 1807 and throughout the Empire until 1833 (1838 in all British colonies in the Americas, according to Vincent Carretta, xxviii). In the United States, while the Thirteenth Amendment (1865) abolished slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) extended American citizenship to former slaves. See the Oxford Reference Dictionary, 777, 162; Paul Edward’s edition of The Life of Olaudah Equiano, vii; Robert A. Goldwin’s 100 Years of Emancipation, particularly page 25; Henrietta Buckmaster’s Let My People Go, 326; Martin Luther King, Jr.’s I Have a Dream, xvi, 195, and C. Herman Pritchett’s The American Constitution, 683-84.

2 I chose to use the present tense in this dissertation despite the fact that some of the events I discuss are past events. The use of the present tense stresses the contemporary relevance of the events discussed in this work. It also suggests that the structures, which the autobiographies attempt to protect or to fight, still have important contemporary effects on the various Black societies that produced the autobiographers. Similarly, the use of the present tense suggests a discussion of the texts here first and foremost as literary texts despite their relevance as historical and sociological books.

3 Angelou’s first volume of autobiography, I Know Why the Caged Bird
Sings, refers to some of her socio-political activities: "In the sixties, at the request of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., she became the Northern Coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.... She was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year, and was appointed by President Gerald R. Ford to the American Revolution Bicentennial Advisory Council" (247).

1 Angelou and Soyinka have produced several autobiographies, including I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Gather Together in My Name, Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas, The Heart of a Woman, and All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes; The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka, Ake: The Years of Childhood, Isara: A Voyage Around Essay, and Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years: A Memoir: 1946-1965 respectively. I, however, chose I Know and Ake, the childhood autobiographies of both writers, to correspond to Walcott's childhood autobiography, Another Life. I also discuss Ake and not Soyinka's other autobiographies because Ake's autobiographical features are closer to Walcott's and Angelou's, unlike Soyinka's later autobiographies, where he tends to take more liberties with the genre.

5 See John Sekora, 100.
6 The challenge to the accuracy of Soyinka's narratives is similar to that of the accuracy of Mary Prince's autobiography by supporters of slavery, like John Woods.

7 Kole Omotoso's Just Before Dawn is perhaps the most well known faction in Nigerian literature. According to Omotoso, Just Before Dawn is "a documentary narrative about Nigeria, Nigerians and those who have made Nigeria what it is. Most of the characters and incidents in the book are real. The narrative is conceived as a novel and written as such" (xi). The blurb on the back of the book describes it as "a lively blend of fact and fiction."

8 See my comments on tribe in chapter one.

9 See Ashton Nichols's "Colonizing Consciousness: Culture and Identity in Walcott's Another Life and Wordsworth's Prelude."


11 For a detailed discussion of the rape episode and attempts to ban the book because of it, see Opal Moore's "Learning to Live: When the Bird Breaks from the Cage," 309-312.

Whereas the social and the personal have tended to displace the political in western literary and cultural studies, the emphasis in the literature of resistance is on the political as the power to change the world. The theory of resistance literature is in its politics.

Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (30)

The Black autobiographies studied so far in this dissertation belong to the resistance framework. The autobiographies of political activists that will be discussed in this chapter also belong to this classification. Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* is particularly relevant to the autobiographies of political activists because of her discussion of "Narratives of Resistance" and "Prison Memoirs of Political Detainees." Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (South Africa), Malcolm X's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (United States), and Sistren's *Lionheart Gal* (Jamaica) are narratives of resistance against apartheid, racism, and patriarchy. In addition, Mandela's autobiography is the prison memoir of a political detainee because a substantial part of the book is an account of
Mandela's life in prison and the activities of the anti-apartheid struggle during that time. Although X is not imprisoned for his political beliefs like Mandela, he serves a prison term for burglary. Since his resistance is substantially developed in prison, part of his autobiography can be classified as the prison memoir of an activist. The women activists in Lionheart Gal, like Malcolm X, are not imprisoned for their political beliefs, but they, like Mandela, suffer from brushes with the law due to their resistance against patriarchy. As Harlow would argue, these women "are singled out by the radical changes in their social positions and relations, and their life histories recount not only their personal itinerary but also the historical agenda in which they participate" (181).

Resistance literature is "a political and politicized activity" (Harlow 28). This is necessarily so because "cultural production plays a decisive and critical role in the activation of what Edward Said has referred to as 'repressed or resistant history'" (Harlow 28). To foreground and argue for repressed or resistant histories and literatures, these counterdiscursive histories and literatures have to be politicised, just as the versions they resist were politicized, to show that they are human-made and not natural. By doing so, resistance literature is made part of the "struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production" (Harlow 28-29). As Harlow argues further, "[e]ssential then to the narratives of resistance is the
demand they make on the reader in their historical referencing and the burden of historical knowledge such referencing enjoins" (80).

Resistance features prominently in the histories of various Black communities; hence Black autobiographies, including the autobiographies of political activists, contain historical accounts of the various struggles in which the societies have been involved. Mandela's autobiography records many defining events in Black South Africans' anti-apartheid struggles, including the Sharpeville massacre (238-39), the Rivonia trial (351-78), the Soweto riots (483-85), the attaining of Mandela's freedom, and the end of apartheid (561-625). Even Mandela's first section on the African pre-colonial system is his attempt to question colonial history as the beginning of South African history. This section of the narrative discusses the pre-colonial system that apartheid attempts to dismantle. Like Mandela's autobiography, Lionheart Gal contains historical accounts of Jamaican women's fight for gender equality (like "Ava's Diary"), of Jamaican labour unions (like "Red Ibo"), and of the Michael Manley government (like "Veteran by Veteran") from the perspectives of the working women. In the same way, X's autobiography contains historical records of the civil rights movement of the 1960s in America. Many of the important developments of the period, including the rise of the Nation of Islam as a Black resistance movement (see the chapter titled "Savior"), the Montgomery bus boycott (269), and the 1963 march on Washington (278) are
recorded in the narrative.

The resistance tone of Sistren's, Mandela's, and X's autobiographies is epitomised in Mandela's autobiography. In the spirit of this resistance, Mandela concludes his very moving and powerfully written autobiography by arguing that despite the fact that the African National Congress (ANC) has been able to win equality for all races via an all-race general election in South Africa, after several decades of fighting apartheid, what they have won is just the opportunity to be free. As he puts it, "[t]he truth is that we are not yet free; we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed... I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended" (624-625). The assertive, defiant, and courageous tone of the conclusion of Mandela's autobiography symbolises the resistance trend in not just his autobiography, but also Sistren's and Malcolm X's. Mandela's conclusion pays tribute to the lives of Black activists on behalf of their various communities to win the right to be free, the right to be regarded as human beings, what Malcolm X calls human rights (179). Like the slave narratives and other Black autobiographies earlier discussed, Mandela's, Sistren's, and X's autobiographies chart the attempts of South African, Jamaican, and American Black communities to be treated equally to members of other racial groups. Michael Chapman's interpretation of the quoted passage from Mandela's autobiography (624-625) is also very important in discussing new directions
for Black societies, as envisioned in the autobiographies of Black leaders. Chapman argues that Mandela's position that his "long walk is not yet ended" links him [and by extension other progressive Black leaders] with third world theorists like Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, and Ezekiel Mphalele who argue that "once independence is gained, new and imaginative reconceptions of society will be required in order to avoid the old orthodoxies and injustices recurring under a new dispensation" (51).²

Mandela and his colleagues in the African National Congress (ANC) recognise the important role Mandela's autobiography can play in the South African struggle for emancipation. As a matter of fact, Mandela's autobiography is written as an anti-apartheid strategy. The writing process starts when he is on Robben Island after a discussion with two of his fellow inmates, Ahmed Kathrada and Walter Sisulu. The argument in favour of the autobiography, which was originally to be published on Mandela's sixtieth birthday, is that it will add another dimension to the struggle, especially after the government clampdown on anti-apartheid activists. According to Sisulu, Mandela's autobiography "if told truly and fairly, would serve to remind people of what we [anti-apartheid activists] had fought and were still fighting for. He added that it could become a source of inspiration for young freedom fighters" (477). Although the autobiography was published after Mandela became the president of South Africa, it effectively plays the role envisaged for it by Sisulu, Kathrada, and Mandela himself. It has become a

234
bestseller, a Bible for freedom fighters, and a symbol of resistance; moreover, it enjoyed very wide and positive reviews.³

Like Mandela's autobiography, Malcolm X's plays a formidable role in the struggle for the emancipation of African-Americans. X devotes so much time to his autobiography because, as he declares, "I feel, and I hope, that if I honestly and fully tell my life's account, read objectively it might prove to be a testimony of some social value" (378). The significance of X's autobiography lies in its social value. Like Mandela's autobiography, it has become a Bible for many people of African descent fighting racism. Since X's autobiography details his descent to "the very bottom of the American white man's society" (150) and his transformation from this abysmal pit to the rank of an internationally known human/civil rights leader, it is not just a testimony to racism's despicable process of dehumanising racialized individuals, in this case, African-Americans, but also a source of inspiration to racialized people. It teaches them that they can fight racism too, and, of course, learn from X's mistakes and inadequacies as well as from his anti-racist strategies.

Like X's and Mandela's autobiographies, Sistren's Lionheart Gal marks an important intervention in the lives of its subjects, in this case working-class Jamaican women. Its aim is to inspire other working-class women to fight
patriarchy and other exploitative discourses that the women encounter in their daily activities. By recording their experiences and attempts to fight exploitation, they give other women a way to relate to the events in *Lionheart Gal*. So far as other women can relate to these experiences, Sistren's success at fighting patriarchy will encourage others to fight and succeed. As Doreen argues in "The Emancipation of a Household Slave," "I like to put grass roots reality on stage because it can help young working class people become aware of their potential. Before me know bout people like Marcus Garvey, I used to look up to black entertainers. Dey were among di first to teach me dat black people are not born to be poor and exploited. I hope my work can do di same" (108). Similarly, the autobiography aims to encourage other women not just to learn and fight their exploitation, but to learn from the experiences and mistakes of these women as they fight injustices in their communities. Betty, in "Rebel Pickney," after narrating her negative activities and the violence around her when growing up, specifically urges parents to avoid raising their children in a turbulent environment (17).

Mandela's resistance pre-dates his involvement with anti-apartheid struggles. In fact, it is his anti-authoritarian disposition that leads him to anti-apartheid struggles. When studying for his Bachelor's degree at Fort Hare, he is involved in student politics and is elected to the Students' Representative Council along with five others. Due to grievances with university authorities,
students vote to boycott the SRC elections, but some still participate in the
election and Mandela and others are elected in absentia. When all the elected
students resign their positions because of the student boycott, another
election is conducted. Only Mandela resigns after the new election because
the majority of the students have not voted. Due to his resignation, he is
confronted by university authority and expelled by Dr. Kerr, the school
principal. His guardian, Chief Jongintaba Dalindyebo, acting regent of the
Thembu people, is unsympathetic towards his decision, and orders him to
return to Fort Hare in the fall. Before the fall, the regent instructs Mandela
and his son, Justice, to get married, providing both the women and the
dowry. Mandela and Justice not only reject the marriage arrangements, but
decide to run away from Mqhekezweni to Johannesburg, where Mandela
becomes involved with the anti-apartheid struggle.

Some of the initial tasks of activist autobiographers are to make clear the
nature and history of the problems they are battling and to detail the ways in
which the problems are confronted, and these Mandela does in his
autobiography. Mandela's account of apartheid and resistance to it reinforces
the importance of Black autobiographies as communal documents, though
written by individuals. Since apartheid and its resistance, as championed
particularly by the African National Congress, are very important aspects of
South African history, Mandela's autobiography is an eloquent record of
South African history.

Apartheid becomes the official South African government policy in 1948, with the victory of the National Party in that year's white-only general elections. With the National Party's victory, Dr. Daniel Malan becomes the country's prime minister. According to Mandela, the National Party is "animated by bitterness—bitterness toward the English, who had treated them as inferiors for decades, and bitterness toward the African, who the Nationalists believed was threatening the prosperity and purity of Afrikaner culture" (111). Apartheid or apartness "represented the codification in one oppressive system of all the laws and regulations that had kept Africans in an inferior position to whites for centuries.... The premise of apartheid was that whites were superior to Africans, Coloureds, and Indians, and the function of it was to entrench white supremacy forever" (111). Apartheid manifests itself in various legislative acts that guarantee discrimination against non-whites. The government creates homelands for non-white people, disallows them from sharing anything, including riding on the same buses or using the same hospitals.

Long Walk documents resistances at many levels, from coalition politics to that of smaller groups. Apartheid is resisted by many organisations, including the African National Congress (ANC), Pan-African Congress (PAC),
South African Communist Party (SACP), South African Indian Congress (SAIC), and the Black Consciousness Party (BCP). As Barbara Harlow argues, "[r]esistance organizations and national liberation movements represent a collective and concerted struggle against hegemonic domination and oppression" (29). Since the goal of the parties and organisations is resistance to apartheid, Mandela and the ANC forge a link between them so that they can resist their common enemy together. Sometimes they are able to resist together, while they resist separately on other occasions, depending on who is directly affected. The Coloured people, for example, demonstrate against the Separate Representation of Voters Act (122) while the ANC is involved in national civil disobedience campaigns, following the government's refusal to abolish apartheid's draconian acts (128). On the diplomatic front, the ANC creates the Freedom Charter, which is "a mixture of practical goals and poetic language. It extols the abolition of racial discrimination and the achievement of equal rights for all" (174). The communal composition of the Charter provides a model for grassroots involvement in politics. The ANC and the Pan-African Congress together participate in anti-pass demonstrations, the most famous of which ended in the massacre of sixty-nine Africans at Sharpeville (238). The ANC Women's League is also involved in anti-pass demonstrations and many of the female demonstrators, including Winnie Mandela, are arrested. Mandela and the ANC are also involved in other resistance activities, including protests against the destruction of Sophiatown
and Bantu Self Government (230). Eventually, the ANC and other anti-apartheid organisations are banned, and Mandela goes underground to form the Umkhonto we Sizwe, the ANC military wing in 1961. Following the failure of peaceful means of dismantling apartheid, armed struggle and violence against the state under the military wing of the ANC become unavoidable. Mandela internationalises the struggle by campaigning against apartheid all over Africa, is arrested, tried, and subsequently jailed for 27 years before he is finally released.

The length of the struggle, the variety of means employed in resisting, the admission of setbacks and occasions for despair, and the need to continually educate the masses all feature in Mandela's autobiography. In and out of prison, Mandela and his colleagues continue to campaign against apartheid by preparing cases for and bailing out political prisoners, going on hunger strikes in prison, and fighting for better prison conditions. At his 1962 trial (324-333), Mandela's campaign against apartheid takes on the additional form of dressing in African clothes. In this way, he specifically identifies with the African community and is able to mobilise his supporters with clothing shared by the community. Like her husband, Winnie Mandela is dressed in African clothes—"a traditional beaded headdress and an ankle-length Xhosa skirt" (324). Mandela rationalises the importance of the African clothes worn to the trial as follows:
I had chosen traditional dress to emphasize the symbolism that I was a black African walking into a white man's court. I was literally carrying on my back the history, culture, and heritage of my people. That day, I felt myself to be the embodiment of African nationalism, the inheritor of Africa's difficult but noble past and her uncertain future. The kaross was also a sign of contempt for the niceties of white justice. I well knew the authorities would feel threatened by my kaross as so many whites feel threatened by the true culture of Africa. (324-25)

The government recognises the mobilisational power of Mandela's clothing and attempts to seize it, later allowing him to wear it only in court and neither to nor from the trial "for fear it would 'incite' other prisoners" (325). Winnie Mandela is allowed to attend Mandela's Rivonia trial only in non-African clothes. The irony of the government's insistence on non-African clothes for Winnie Mandela, according to Nelson Mandela, is about government hypocrisy: "the same government that was telling us to embrace our culture in the homelands forbade Winnie from wearing a Xhosa gown into court" (353). The government's refusal to allow the Mandelas to freely wear African clothes shows the contradiction in oppressive power's rhetoric and practice.

The anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa is comparable to the Civil Rights
struggle in the United States within which Malcolm X's autobiography can be contextualised. The resistance tradition in African literature, which Mandela's autobiography represents, is also comparable to a similar tradition in African-American literature, as discussed earlier with Maya Angelou's *Caged Bird.* Black South Africans and African-Americans are both discriminated against by Whites and treated as their inferiors. Despite crucial differences between South Africa and the United States, Black people were formally enslaved in the United States while they were literally enslaved in South Africa with apartheid. It is important to note the reality of legally sanctioned and widely practiced discrimination against Black people in both places. In addition, the goal of both the anti-apartheid and civil rights crusaders is equality. The literary representation of racial discrimination against people of African descent in the United States, South Africa, and other African countries is an important link between African and African-American literatures. It is, therefore, apt, as I argued in chapter three, to discuss African-American literature as post-colonial literature.

X's background within the racist and segregated society of which he is a product and his family's experiences of racism and other negative forces provide a context for him to join the human/civil rights movement of the 1960s. His father and many family members are violently killed by White people, and his mother is separated from her family and confined to an
institution by an employee of the White-controlled system. His ambition at school is to become a lawyer, but Mr. Ostrowski, Malcolm's English teacher, discourages him. Mr. Ostrowski's urging Malcolm "to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer—that's no realistic goal for a nigger" (36) and his recommendation of carpentry to him function like Mr. Donleavy's predetermination of Angelou's class discussed in chapter six.

Following the encounter with Mr. Ostrowski, X who has been successful at school, even elected as class president, succumbs to the realities of the racist system, and starts to change, getting involved in a wide range of illegal activities, including burglary and drug addiction and peddling. As he recalls, "I drew away from white people. I came to class, and I answered when called upon. It became a physical strain simply to sit in Mr. Ostrowski's class" (37). Following repeated racial insults, insensitivity, and discrimination, X sums up his experiences with the White people he had encountered as follows:

it just never dawned upon them that I could understand, that I wasn't a pet, but a human being. They didn't give me credit for having the same sensitivity, intellect, and understanding that they would have been ready and willing to recognise in a white boy in my position. But it has historically been the case with white people, in their regard for black people, that even though

243
we might be with them, we weren't considered of them. Even
though they appeared to have opened the door, it was still
closed. Thus they never did really see me." (27)

He is jailed not just because of the robberies that he is involved in, but
because of his involvement with White girls (150). Ironically, it is in prison
that he becomes converted from his past drug-related activities.

Like other revolutionary leaders, X recognises the importance of education in
developing his consciousness. Like Mandela who was formally educated
(363), studies in prison, and encourages other prisoners to do so (411), urging
that political prisoners and freedom fighters should study to improve and
strengthen themselves (411-412), X becomes fervently committed to
developing himself intellectually and reading virtually whatever he gets in
prison. He starts correspondence courses in English and Latin (154-155), and
like Equiano who learns to read and write partly by copying labels at Durgin
and Bailey's shipyard (57-58), X copies the whole dictionary in his attempt to
learn and improve his English (172) for effective communication.

X develops his resistance to racism through his involvement with the Nation
of Islam. Family members introduce him to this Black organisation whose
declared aim is to fight for equality for Blacks, and he subsequently contacts
the leader, The Honourable Elijah Mohammed, becoming not just a member,
but later the national minister of the organisation. Just as Mandela joins the ANC for resistance, X joins the Nation of Islam for cooperative political action. Following the teaching of the Nation of Islam, he abandons smoking, taking drugs, and eating pork.

Women's roles in the Nation of Islam's activities include giving lectures on hygiene and medicine, Muslim Girls' Training, and General Civilization Class (227). Much of the instruction at these classes are, however, still domestic. At one of their rallies, Sister Tynetta Dyneear speaks about the women's contributions in raising "the physical, mental, moral, social, and political condition of America's black people" (251). The Nation teaches that the Black man can only be respected after respecting the Black woman (221). "The Black man needs to start today to shelter and protect and respect his black women" teaches Elijah Mohammed, and "[a]ny domestic quarreling, any discourtesy, especially to women was not allowed" (221). Although mutual respect is an important foundation for gender balance and equality, the Nation's teaching is patronising, especially when it requires the Black man to shelter and protect his Black women. To achieve gender equality, as a matter of fact, one gender exclusively cannot depend on the other. Recognising interdependence is crucial. Moreover, that the Nation's teachings on women and gender issues are not followed to the letter is illustrated by the relationship between Elijah Mohammed and his secretaries, many of whom
he impregnates, as X recalls from his interview with some of the women (295, 297). X is also accused by some of the women in his congregation of talking too hard against women in his teachings (225).

X's misogyny can be tied to his pre-prison experiences. As a pimp, he sees women largely as sexual objects and status symbols for the male to display (49, 92). He argues, in relation to Sophia, his White girlfriend, that "to have a white woman who wasn't a known, common whore was—for the average black man, at least—a status symbol of the first order. And this one [Sophia], standing there, eyeing me, was almost too fine to believe. Shoulder-length hair, well built, and her clothes had cost somebody plenty" (67). That Sophia's clothes "cost somebody plenty" implies, from X's perspective, that she is dependent on somebody else to pay for the clothes. X justifies his position on women, as a Nation of Islam minister, by Islamic teachings and laws that teach that unlike the man who is strong, the woman is weak, and can be controlled by man to get her respect (226). His teaching also has to do with his experiences of betrayal by women during his street days and his own inability to be in a productive relationship with a woman. Things start to change in this regard, however, when he meets Sister Betty X. About her, he later tells Alex Haley that "[a] home is really the only thing I've ever provided Betty since we've been married.... I can't keep on putting her through changes, all she's put up with... I've got to love this woman!" (421).
He also declares that she is the only person he can trust with his life (Gallen 130).

The resistance philosophy of the Nation of Islam rests on what X in his autobiography calls "the true knowledge of the black man" (162). Some aspects of this knowledge, like "Yacub's History" (164-167), what X calls "Elijah Mohammed's tales" (168), infuriate orthodox Muslims (168). A more sociologically sustainable aspect of the Nation of Islam's teaching argues that through colonial discourse's whitening of history, Blacks, like other non-White races, have been exploited, enslaved, and brainwashed to accept an inferior position relative to Whites. The Nation queries this whitening of history by pushing a counter discourse that extols the dignity of the Black race, Black achievements, civilizations, and cultures (162). The Nation identifies some of the most important strategies of colonial discourse in relation to Blacks, including a divorce from "any knowledge of their own kind, ... any knowledge of their own language, religion, and past culture, until the black man in America was the earth's only race of people who had absolutely no knowledge of his true identity" (162). X corroborates the sense of painful loss and helplessness that comes with the inability to speak the language of the region of his origin when visiting Africa. As he recalls, "In Africa, I heard original mother tongues, such as Hausa, and Swahili, being spoken, and there I was standing like some little boy, waiting for someone to
tell me what had been said; I never will forget how ignorant I felt" (380).

The Nation also criticises Christianity, arguing that unlike other religions that teach people of a God who looks like them, Christianity teaches Blacks to "worship an alien God having the same blond hair, pale skin, and blue eyes as the slave-master" (163). The Nation questions some of the tenets of Christianity, like turning the other cheek and looking towards heaven for salvation "while right here on earth the slavemaster white man enjoyed his heaven" (163). Countering Christianity's promise of a paradise after life, the Nation of Islam preaches resistance, argues for Black dignity, and protests against racial discrimination wherever it appears. An example presented in the autobiography is the Nation's protest against police brutality to Brother Johnson Hinton, whose skull policemen break with nightsticks (233). The Nation, under X's leadership, mobilises their members on a short notice, and they appear at the police station. X demands to see Johnson, but is refused. He insists that they are not going to leave until they can see Johnson and guarantee proper medical attention for him. Eventually, the police allow X to see the semi-conscious Johnson, who is later taken to the hospital, followed by X and other Nation of Islam supporters. The police become nervous and order the crowd to disperse, but X argues against the instruction, since the Nation's members were peaceful and orderly. They eventually leave after being assured of proper care for Johnson. After his release from the hospital,
the Nation continues its support for Johnson, helps him to sue the police, and he is awarded over $70,000, "the largest police brutality judgement that New York City has ever paid" (234).

Another level of resistance that the Nation of Islam supports is Black separation from White America. X argues that since Blacks can only achieve token integration in America and that since American diplomats, legal experts, sociologists, and civil leaders have failed to solve the problem of White racism, the solution remaining to be tried is Black separation from White America (246). Following the teaching of Elijah Mohammed, X asserts that the only way for Black people to be saved from the deterioration and destruction of immoral America is "not to integrate into this corrupt society, but to separate from it, to a land of our own, where we can reform ourselves, lift up our moral standards, and try to be godly" (246). Contrasting himself to White racists, X argues that he rejects segregation completely and differentiates between separation and segregation. Segregation occurs when one's life is controlled by someone else, when a superior forces a solution on the inferior. Separation, on the other hand, is voluntary, a solution devised by equals (246).

X, however, breaks away from the tenets of the Nation of Islam after his official suspension from the organisation for commenting on President J.F.
Kennedy's assassination (301-302) and his experiences in Mecca. In Mecca, for the first time in his life, he is treated as a responsible and dignified human being, and not as a Black man who is inferior to the White man, even by people who would be described as White in America. As a result of this treatment, he questions his previously held positions on the racial issue and adopts what Michael Eric Dyson calls his "latter day humanistic philosophy" (90). As he argues, "in the land of Muhammad and the land of Abraham, I had been blessed by Allah with a new insight into the true religion of Islam, and a better understanding of America's racial dilemma" (339). In his letter home to America from Mecca, he recalls meeting several people belonging to various racial classifications "participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my [X's] experiences in America had led me [him] to believe never could exist between the white and the non-white" (340). He also declares that the American Negro can never be blamed for racial animosities because he only responds to centuries of American racism (341). It is the society that encourages racism; hence that is what should be criticised (424). His recommendation on the racial issue is that: 

America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, and even eaten with people who in America would have been considered 'white'—but the 'white' attitude was removed
from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen sincere and true brotherhood practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color...perhaps if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps, too, they could accept in reality the Oneness of Man—and cease to measure, and hinder, and harm others in terms of their 'differences' in color.

(340)

From his letter, it becomes clear that "whiteness" to X is an attitude, a discriminatory behaviour based on skin colour. Since it is an attitude, it is curable in the American society, just as Islam has cured it among its adherents. The cure from his own point of view is an acceptance of a common humanity by people of all races. Although he still does not agree that White people should join his Black nationalist organisation, the Organisation of Afro-American Unity (376), he moves from his initial argument to that young White college girl that White people cannot do anything to support Black struggles (286). He now accepts that White people can make financial contributions to his organisation (316) and can form their own anti-racist groups in their communities because it is in their communities that they can fight racism more effectively (376). By fighting racism in their communities and his supporters resisting it in the Black communities and preaching equal opportunities and equal responsibilities,
anti-racist Black and White crusaders will be working independently of one another, not controlling one another, but at the same time, working together (377).

Violence features in X's teachings. His position on violence, according to Dyson, has been largely distorted (93). X situates his approach to the question of violence in terms of resistance and Black self-defence against White aggression. This is similar to Mandela's campaign for the necessity of armed struggle against White minority government in South Africa (270-274). X argues against wanton violence but insists that if the law does not protect Whites against Black violence, Whites should defend themselves, using arms if necessary. Similarly, if the law does not protect Blacks against White violence, Blacks should use arms to defend themselves, if necessary. When accused of inciting Blacks to violence, he asserts that what stirs Black people to violence is their inferior condition in the ghettos, a condition that "needs no fuse; it fuses itself; it spontaneously combusts from within itself" (366). He states further that "it's a crime for anyone who is being brutalized to continue to accept that brutality without doing something to defend himself. If that's how 'Christian' philosophy is interpreted, if that's what Gandhian philosophy teaches, well, then, I will call them criminal philosophies" (366-367). According to Dyson, "[t]he rhetoric of violence for Malcolm X became a way of playing on a trope of American self-definition and identity" (94). He
argues further that X "emphasised resistance to oppression through war. Malcolm was saying that if what it means to be an American is to participate in democracy, then we have to talk about the consequences of blacks being denied democracy and how black Americans should defend themselves in the face of that denial(94)."  

As in X's and Mandela's autobiographies, resistance is the cornerstone of Sistren's *Lionheart Gal*. The book is informed by a feminist consciousness that allows Jamaican women to describe their experiences of exploitation in their home and family contexts and in the paid workforce, and to situate these experiences within the political and public spheres. In other words, their experiences of exploitation either at home or outside are political experiences. In relation to these experiences, Ava in "Ava's Diary" argues that Sistren's aim "is to make the private area of women's life a matter of political concern" (274). Foxy in "Foxy and the Macca Palace War" criticises supporters of the patriarchal establishment for using "the word 'private' fi buy pass and cover up all kind a slackness" (254), and defines politics from the women's perspective. To her,

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di little day-to-day tings dat happen to we as women, is politics too. For instance, if yuh tek yuh pickney to hospital and it die in yuh hand—dat is politics. If yuh do something to yuh own child dat damage him or her future, dat is politics too. If yuh
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253
man box yuh down, dat is politics. But plenty politicians don't
tink dose tings have anything to do wid politics. (253)

The collection shows the women drawing from Caribbean feminist legacies of
resistance, particularly, as Honor Ford Smith asserts in her introduction to the
book, "the image of the warrior woman as typified by Ni (Nanny), the
Maroon leader of the eighteenth century" (xiii). Ni's power is derived from
and sustained by oral story-telling traditions. Her power "drew on the
tradition of the Ohemaa (the Ashanti Queen-Mother); on the control which
African women had over agriculture in Maroon society; on the specific needs
of the war effort as well as the circumstances of sexuality which existed in
the rebel communities of the time" (xiv). It is the same oral story-telling
traditions that preserve Ni's image of resistance and Caribbean history that
sustain the collective experiences and resistance of the women in Lionheart
Gal. As Ketu H. Katrak argues, "[t]he question of selection from the oral
tradition is crucial in order to recreate empowering figures from the past,
such as the many stories of Ni, rather than negative, sexist images of women
that are also prevalent in oral tradition" (176). Even when the image is that
of the domestic female worker, "the proverbial black mammy, nanny of the
Great House, instinctively maternal, perpetually self-effacing, kind-hearted
and loving, the complacent servant who loved her oppressor' (xiv), deep
down there is Ni's image just waiting for the right opportunity to reappear.
To recognise this warrior, there is the need to "readjust one's sense of the rules of resistance and the limits of power. It may be necessary to seek her out over the years in odd places—beside the stove, sweeping the yard or crouched over a pan of clothes...[and] these discoveries may suggest ways of re-inventing the terms of struggle and the strategy itself" (xiv-xv).

The resistance framework of *Lionheart Gal* cuts across race, class, and gender issues from women's perspectives. Some of the autobiographical stories in the collection, particularly "Red Ibo" and "Grandma's Estate" adopt a comprehensive approach to the question of exploitation by examining how the narrators or those they know have suffered racial, class, and gender discrimination. Ella surveys the history of four generations of women in "Grandma's Estate" and the ways each generation suffers and fights to improve living conditions for subsequent generations. The story examines the lives of Ella, her mother, grandmother, and great grandmother, Mammee. The intersections of race, class, and gender in the story are symbolised in the character of Bertha Mason, the imprisoned woman in the attic in *Jane Eyre* that Ella studies at school. Like Mason, Ella's grandmother's generation is imprisoned in exploitative patriarchal, class, and racist ideologies. Mammee is exploited because she is black, poor, and a woman. Because of these factors and because of Mammee's relationship with Mr. Morris, her employer and baby's father, Mr. Campbell, her husband, after manipulating and
abandoning her, threatens to sue Mr. Morris for three thousand pounds for himself and not Mammee.

Ella's grandmother's ambition is to live up to the racial and class privileges conferred on her, the same privileges that disallow her from finishing school. She always questions Ella's company for fear that she may bring the family down from the racial and class privileges that being partly white confer on them. As she admonishes her grand-daughter, "All my life... ah try my best to be a respectable person. A lady. Ah had ambition. Ah look up. Yuh doan know what I go through to reach where I am today...so nobody can't say ah not a respectable person. And now yuh come and yuh just want to throw it away. I tell you ah could hardly sleep last night when ah see the people yuh come in with" (193).

While Ella associates with Rastas for preaching peace and love, her grandmother is "convinced that they were the souls of violence and if she saw one passing on the road, she vacated the verandah and locked the front door of her house" (189). Ella's identification with Rastas differentiates her from her grandmother's class and racial obsessions. It shows her support for Black activists working against the perpetuation of racist, class, and colonial doctrines. Her support for Rastas is not just a resistance against racism and class discrimination; it reveals her identification with the Back-to-Africa
Movement. Her support for the Back-to-Africa Movement links her with Malcolm X's acceptance of the movement. It also links Ella, X, and their societies with Mandela's anti-apartheid campaigns in Africa, as they all argue for Black dignity. Similarly, the common position on the Back-to-Africa movement forges another link between African, African-American, and Afro-Caribbean literatures.

Identity issues that feature in autobiographies also feature in "Grandma's Estate." Ella is caught in the middle of the conflict between her parents, "the brown woman" and "the white man" (177). At four, she is rescued by her mother from her father who tries to take her away. After recognising his inability to separate her from her mother, he eventually abandons the family and leaves for London. Progress in women's emancipation is aided significantly by formal education. The fact that Ella's mother is a medical doctor demonstrates how far some women have resisted patriarchal domination and serves as a definite source of education and inspiration for people like Ella. As Ella recalls, "I not only had history to draw on, I had my mother's life too as an independent working woman" (197). Ella breaks away from the cycle of oppression in her society by situating herself within a communal discourse of egalitarianism, after being influenced by the progressive teachings of Mr. Philips, one of her sixth-form teachers. She challenges race, class, and gender exploitation, and she and her generation
are finally liberated from the attic.

Ella's life is substantially influenced by the various women in her life, including her mother, grandmother, great grandmother, and Belle "who they said was hiding from her husband because he beat her" (177). Although she does not develop Belle's story, Belle's approach to resisting patriarchal exploitation is by running away from it. Like Belle, Carmen, their maid at Beverley Hills, fights patriarchy in her own way. She owes "no obligation to her former baby-fathers and cussed them because they didn't support their children" (188). Carmen's attempts to question patriarchy are, however, undermined by her class and financial status, being only a maid. She earns little and has to take care of her children by herself.

At Ella's school, education is about Europe with bare mention of the Caribbean. Although the educational system prepares the students for financial independence, it does not educate them about class, gender, and racial relations. The system does not encourage her to question, for example, why the seating arrangement at school is colour coded (185). However, she thoughtfully questions the description of Bertha Mason as "inferior, blueskinned" (185) and her confinement in the attic in *Jane Eyre*, looking for "a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence that might redeem the insane animal inferiority of the Caribbean" (185). Her encounter with Mason forces her
away from her fantasies so that she "vaguely glimpse[s] the possibility of a richer literature that revealed and illuminated the aspects of life that seemed forever covered in the unspoken" (186).

Mr. Philips's social criticism also influences Ella, as she becomes a more inward-looking person (191), abandoning her old middle-class status, and getting involved in community liberation efforts. Ella's mother, like her grandmother, does not support her association with the peasantry and the working class. She does not stop Ella, however, because "she was liberal enough because of her professional exposure, but she was rigidly class bound" (193). Despite her grandmother's and mother's resistance to her association with the working class, she resolutely supports resistance to all levels of exploitation, questioning the society and the system that have forced her grandmother to struggle for approval from her father and his class.

From her grandmother's story, Ella understands "more keenly than a thousand books the vital role that the control of women played in the maintenance of power," and she is angry that her grandmother does not question her father's control of "his" estate when it was built by her mother and others (196). Her grandmother represses not just her sexuality but her intellect, and sees her only option as seeking solace in alcohol and pills (196). Ella reports that "[f]or both grandma and me, the meaning of her experience
was to heighten the relationship between race, class and sex in our history, but in the sixty years or so between her birth and mine, history had given me the space to be angry about her subservience to an unjust system... I thought that in my future I would never be the victim of family duty" (197).

"Red Ibo" also illustrates the Jamaican woman as activist. Red Ibo sets out, even at her school, to fight racial segregation in the classroom. As she recalls, "I remember I led a protest and what I guess I could now call a propaganda campaign against the racial division. Some teachers became more sensitive to it and tried to break up the segregation, but mostly they didn't want to talk about it" (224). She also fights her racist teacher for insulting not only her students but Jamaica, "telling her [the teacher] to go back to Scotland if she didn't like it here [Jamaica] because we could do without her and that she herself must have come from the worst part of the slums of Scotland or she would have better manners" (225). Red Ibo's resistance pays off substantially when the teacher leaves the school because of her (225-226). Her resistance is helped by her university education in England, after which she returns to work in Jamaica, believing that "changing the political structure was the only way of changing the fate of the poorer classes" (228). She supports Walter Rodney, sells Abeng, goes Afro and works in building the Voluntary Organisation of Women (228), Teachers for a Democratic Jamaica Teachers' Association (TD-JTA), and the National Union
of Democratic Teachers (NUDT) (231). In these associations, her efforts and those of other women are supported by some men like T and Negus (229). Red Ibo and her associations challenge very conservative ways of life, including patriarchy and heterosexism, arguing that the "issue of sexuality is crucial to a re-adjustment of male-female relations" (234). She asserts that "[o]nce we accept that 'maleness' and 'femaleness' are not rigid, fixed concepts, we have to accept variety in sexual relations" (234). She argues that since heterosexual relationships are regarded as normal, heterosexuality becomes "the cover for a host of crimes—rape, physical violence of all types, mental torture and repression, and the denial of basic human rights...based on the authoritarian power of the male which is entrenched to the point where the males have a right to abuse women by virtue of the superior power assigned to them within these 'normal' heterosexual relations" (234-235). To question the violence that is rampant in many heterosexual relationships, she argues that "[a]n 'abnormal' homosexual couple who are loving and considerate to each other are ... superior and much to be preferred to a 'normal' heterosexual couple where the woman is being subjected to all manner of humiliations on a daily basis because of the entrenched power of the male" (235).

As in Mandela's and X's autobiographies, violence features in Lionheart Gal. Unlike Mandela's and X's autobiographies, where violence is political and
directed against racist establishments, violence is political, patriarchal, and
directed against individual women and children in *Lionheart Gal*. Political
violence between rival political camps like Cyclops's and Spangler's is
recorded in "Foxy and di Palace Macca War." Cyclops, with guns, terrorises
people to vote for him (244), and violence between his supporters and
Spangler's is intensified (247-48). On patriarchal violence, Honor Ford Smith
recalls in her introduction to *Lionheart Gal* that the Sistren group
had some violent confrontations with people who didn't
understand what we were trying to do or who found it
threatening. Often this kind of response came from individual
men. Some members have been 'disciplined' violently by
partners who find their activities interrupting their primary
responsibility as housewives and mothers. One woman, locked
into the bathroom of her house after a bad beating, made a
dramatic escape through the window and down a drainpipe for
a performance of *The Case of Iris Armstrong*. Another, beaten
up before a major tour, spent the night locked out of her house
sleeping on the dirt floor of the kitchen. (xxv)

Other examples of violent confrontations include Belle's husband who beats
her (177) and Bertie, Ava's children's father, who, reports "Ava's Diary," beats
her. Ava records Bertie's violence towards her in her diary entry for
November 1970 as follows:
Bertie love to lick me. Him always a find some lickle stupid reason fi lick me in me face or in me belly. Fi-him friend do it too and him follow fashion. Is a style wid dem. Some a dem love talk about how dem a 'control dat dawta'.... (265)

Ava resists Bertie's violence and irresponsibility by suing him on two occasions (271, 281), but later drops the suits. On another occasion, she reports him to his parents (277) and the police (278), and Bertie spends the night in jail (279). Ava also writes about another violent patriarchal confrontation in her journal entry for February 1978 (272).

Violence directed against children is illustrated in "Rebel Pickney" where Betty's father believes in "[j]ust pure beating." According to Betty, "[w]hen him beat, him beat deadly. Since me come big me realise is direct ignorancy mek him beat so. He was one a dem man weh directly ignorant to di fact of certain tings" (5). The result of this beating is violence between children, as illustrated in Betty stabbing Howard (13), the whole family beating Betty for stabbing Howard (15), and either Aston (Howard's brother) or Dinis (Betty's brother) hitting Betty in the head with a hoe (15-16). Betty realises the problems beating and violence can cause; hence she argues that though beating is a legacy of slavery, children should not be raised so violently (17).

Naming is an important resistance strategy in the autobiographies of Black
political activists as it is in other kinds of Black autobiographies. The very title of Sistren's autobiographical collection, *Lionheart Gal*, situates it within a resistance framework. By naming the collection *Lionheart Gal*, the autobiographers are compared to lions in terms of their bravery in confronting the various injustices of their societies. The title suggests that the problems of their community are sufficiently daunting that only the fearless can be audacious enough to challenge them. Some of these problems include patriarchal exploitation of women, racism, and class oppression. That the lion is commonly called the lord of the jungle also translates to the success of these women in not just forming a support group for one another, but in writing their experiences to inspire others to fight in a hostile world. That the collection is titled *Lionheart Gal* and not *Lionessheart Gal* is disruptive of power relations in their community. It shows the women's determination to appropriate for their own purposes patriarchal notions that the male is the brave one. Sistren's appropriation of the patriarchal notion of manhood is comparable to Yoruba women's appropriation of the "man-exclusive cult—*oro*" for resistance during their war as reported in *Ake* (213). Since one of the aspects of male "bravery" is the exploitation of women, with the title of Sistren's collection, the group succeeds in turning the tables around to claim what has been used to exploit them. Also, the combination of lionheart, male, and gal, female, suggests that it is a unity of the characteristics of both gender groups that can successfully fight different levels of exploitation in the
community. Also, *gal* is informal, unlike *female* and *women* that are formal. The use of *gal* instead of *female* or *women* is a faithful representation of how the women are likely to be referred to in their society. It is also a way of questioning formal English words for the purpose of resistance. That Sistren uses *gal* and not the plural form, *gals*, suggests the unification of the women's community under Sistren as a single entity representing the collective. The singular *gal* also suggests that their experiences are comparable; hence pluralising their name would not be as effective as using the singular.

Malcolm X's autobiography records the way names are used in Black communities and movements to signal resistance. Malcolm X's birthname is Malcolm Little, but he changes it to Malcolm X, after joining the Nation of Islam. According to the teachings of Elijah Mohammed, *X* as the last name for his followers symbolises a resistance strategy against racism in America (199). It represents the unknown family name of formerly enslaved African-Americans. By taking *X* instead of their slave names, followers of the Nation of Islam identify themselves with the aspect of their heritage that slavery expunged. It foregrounds their pre-slavery history, asserting that their history does not start with slavery. In addition, Malcolm X signs his letter from Mecca El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, and his grave is marked Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Goldman 405). Elijah Mohammed explains during one of his
lectures that Shabazz is a tribe of the Asiatic nation, the proper name for Black people and not negroes as they are called by the slave masters (254). Taking up the name Shabazz corresponds to the change in X's ideological outlook from separation to integration. In Nigeria, during his attempt to internationalise the struggle of the African-American, the Students' Union of the University of Ibadan names him Omowale, which in the Yoruba language means "the son who has come home" (351). Although he does not explain why he appreciates the honour, I think it has to do with the fact that he is being accepted back into the part of the world where his ancestors are from, where he is obviously treated as a dignified human being, the status he and other people of African descent have been fighting for in the United States. Peter Goldman sums up the name changes in X's life of resistance as follows:

He had been born Malcolm Little, a kid baptised into blackness when they killed his daddy for it; had come up Detroit Red, fleeing blackness in a street world where you never thought about yesterday and never knew if there was going to be tomorrow; had become Malcolm X, a minister of Allah preaching blackness with a fury as intense as the shame of blackness had always been; and at the end was still becoming El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, Muslim and revolutionary, prophet and demagogue, a decent and supremely gifted man who was martyred by his past and never got to see his future as an
authentic black American hero. His life had been a series of contingent lives—a procession of changes that was broken, not completed, by his death in his fortieth year. (278)

In Mandela's autobiography also, naming reflects opposition and how Black individuals are interpellated by the discourse of resistance even early in life. At birth, Mandela is named Rolihlahla, which means "pulling the branch of a tree" or colloquially "troublemaker" (3). Although he does not believe that "names are destiny" or that his father at birth divined his future, friends and relatives ascribe to his birthname his role in the South African struggle for racial equality (3). Like her husband's, Winnie Mandela's name, Nomzamo, can also be situated within the South African anti-apartheid struggle. Its meaning, "one who strives or undergoes trials" (214), accords with her suffering under apartheid and involvement with the liberation struggle.

Just as their names presage their involvement with the South African struggle, their children's names can be contextualised within the same framework. Mandela names his first son, with Evelyn Mase, Makgatho Lewanika. As Mandela explains, Makgatho "was named for Sefako Mapogo Makgatho, the second president of the ANC, from 1917 until 1924, and Lewanika, a leading chief in Zambia. Makgatho, the son of a Pedi chief, had led volunteers to defy the color bar that did not permit Africans to walk on
the sidewalks of Pretoria, and his name for me was an emblem of indomitability and courage" (119). The namings of one of Mandela's daughters and his granddaughter illustrate the African communal role in naming. It shows that along with the biological parents of a child, members of the community can also give names to children. Mandela's relative, Chief Mdingi suggests Zenani for his daughter (226) and Mandela names Zenani's daughter Zaziwe when he is a prisoner on Robben Island (495). Zenani, which means "What have you brought to the world," invites a child to aim high. It is "a poetic name that embodies a challenge, suggesting that one must contribute something to society" (226). Zaziwe, on the other hand, means Hope. This name has a special meaning for Mandela, because he is always hopeful during his prison years. He is convinced that Zaziwe "would be a part of a new generation of South Africans for whom apartheid would be a distant memory" (496).

Mandela uses details and an emphasis on memory as rhetorical strategies in his autobiography. He supplies a lot of information about the events in his story, particularly apartheid, to show how demeaning the system is and how important resistance to it is. He also uses this strategy in relation to the people he encounters throughout the text. He does not just narrate the circumstances of his meeting with these people but supplies some biographical information about them. Along with this biographical
information, he refers to letters exchanged between him and many of the people he meets, the speeches at his trials and other people's, and his photographs with some of them. Some of the photographs in the text show him with many of the leading anti-apartheid crusaders. That they fight as a community is also foregrounded by recording the various racial categories to which the activists belong, as is evident from the photographs. The biographical information he supplies and the photographs he displays show Mandela's attempt to reinforce the communal basis of his text and the fact that the autobiography is as much the story of a community which suffers and resists together as it is his own story.

Mandela's use of details is also a resistance strategy. He holds on very tenaciously to whatever information he has, and seems to remember everything to protest apartheid's attempt to undermine him. He seems to suggest that one thing apartheid cannot wrestle away from him is his memory, his ability to remember. Just as he narrates in detail his and others' encounter with apartheid policies, he narrates his own relatively personal affairs. Though these personal affairs are still political, he is able to present them in a rather humorous way to lighten the narrative and provide the reader a breathing space from the horror that comes with apartheid. For example, after narrating some devastating changes brought on South Africa by apartheid and resistance attempts (110-124), he reduces the mounting
tension in the text by switching to the personal story of how he obtains his driver's license (124-126). This personal story quickly becomes political when he collides with a white boy, and he is harassed by the police. He later runs out of petrol, and has to pretend to be a white man's driver to get help. It is important to note that despite Mandela's very detailed account, he is sometimes not forthcoming with information on some issues, especially his marital life. His divorce from Winnie Mandela, for example, is not presented in detail. Perhaps this has to do with the personal nature of the problem, the embarrassment that comes with it, and the fracturing of community under the stress of apartheid and other forces.

Like Mandela, Sistren and Malcolm X use details as a rhetorical strategy in their narratives. They use this method to supply information about the discourses and material practices they are fighting. X supplies information about his childhood days to demonstrate how he is a product of racist America and why he does not have a choice but to situate himself against the institution that dehumanises him and the people around him. Although this strategy is also used by Sistren, it is not as overwhelmingly employed as in X's or Mandela's narratives. This is because unlike X's and Mandela's narratives that are long accounts, Sistren's is a collection of short life-stories. Therefore, there is a limit to the information the stories can supply about the institutions they are fighting against. Taken together, however, the collection
supplies extensive information about gender inequalities, class, and racial problems as they affect women in their communities, and this information is corroborated from story to story.

Along with the use of details by X and Sistren is their employment of direct commentary in their narratives. They do not just tell the stories but intervene to add their own personal views and analyses. This is particularly important in fulfilling the didactic function of the autobiographies. An example of direct commentary in Lionheart Gal is Sistren's "Rebel Pickney," where Betty admonishes parents as follows: "Me would a like mek a plea to parents dat dem no grow dem children as me grow.... Me no beat my pickney. Me may " give dem a one lick once in a while, but me no waan grow dem like me—wild" (17). In X's autobiography, an example of direct commentary is his comments about his straightened hair, known as conk:

How ridiculous I was! Stupid enough to stand there simply lost in admiration of my hair now looking "white".... This was my first really big step toward self-degradation: when I endured all of that pain, literally burning my flesh to have it look like a white man's hair. I had joined that multitude of Negro men and women in America who are brainwashed into believing that the black people are "inferior"—and white people "superior"—that they will even violate and mutilate their God-created bodies to

271
Just as Sistren's, Mandela's, and X's autobiographies are narratives of resistance, they are alike in being community-based texts. Writing in this communal tradition, or practicing what Mary Louise Pratt calls autoethnography, allows the autobiographers to situate their texts within specific Black communities. The effect is that the autobiographies function counter-discursively to colonial and other exploitative discourses, including twentieth century ethnographic accounts, that have had and continue to have serious debilitating effects on Black societies. Since the autobiographies function counter-discursively to colonial discourse, they represent the various attempts by different Black communities to assert their humanity. By setting up the autobiographers to claim an identity within a community, the communal tradition in Black autobiographies allows the narrators to reclaim not just their subjectivities as autobiographers, activists, and citizens of different Black societies, but also to redefine their community from an object to a subject position.

Mandela situates his autobiography within his communally-based society, and he defines himself in relation to the community. By doing so, he succeeds in claiming his individual subjectivity within the framework of the collective. That claim allows him later to champion the attempt of the
community to assert a collective subject position in contrast to the object position the community is reduced to by apartheid. For counter-discursive purposes, he identifies pre-colonial features of the community and examines how members of the society are introduced to these features and integrated into the community. He identifies his lineage, the Thembu royal house, and how royalty, which used to be a highly respected institution in the community, is undermined and controlled by the colonial government (3-7).

As a child, he spends most of his time in the veld, looking after cattle and sheep. At home, he listens to and learns Xhosa history from his parents through didactic tales that stimulate his imagination (11), and he participates in communal rituals, including circumcision. As he recalls, "[m]y life, and that of most Xhosas at the time, was shaped by custom, ritual, and taboo.... I soon assimilated the elaborate rules that governed the relations between men and women.... I also learned that to neglect one's ancestors would bring ill-fortune and failure in life" (11). At Mqhekezweni, after his father's death, Mandela learns more about other aspects of African history, including histories of the Basotho and the Zulu, and the colonisation of South Africa (22). Chief Zwelihangile Joyi, one of the most accomplished story tellers of his time, tells tales of the arrival of the colonisers in South Africa. Chief Joyi's stories directly contest the standard British textbook version of history that, as Mandela comments, "claimed South Africa began with the landing of Jan Van Riebeeck at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652" (24).
One of the most influential aspects of the communal ethos for Mandela and one that is to influence his own leadership style is the democratic decision-making process at the various council meetings called to discuss communal issues at the regent's court. The political hierarchy is headed by the regent, who is assisted by the amaphakathi. Mandela describes the amaphakathi as "a group of councilors of high rank who functioned as the regent's parliament and judiciary. They were wise men who retained the knowledge of tribal history and custom in their heads and whose opinions carried great weight" (21). The meetings, according to Mandela's account, were "democracy in its purest form [because] everybody who wanted to speak did so ... without interruption" (21). Within the traditional political system, according to Mandela, "[m]ajority rule was a foreign notion. A minority was not to be crushed by a majority" (22). Mandela sums up the importance of this principle for his leadership style as follows:

As a leader, I have always followed the principles I first saw demonstrated by the regent at the Great Place. I have always endeavoured to listen to what each and every person in a discussion had to say before venturing my own opinion. Oftentimes, my own opinion will simply represent a consensus of what I heard in the discussion. I always remember the regent's axiom: a leader, he said, is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead,
whereupon the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind. (22)

Despite the democratic nature of Xhosa's pre-colonial political system, it discriminates against women. According to Mandela, "[t]he foundation of self-government was that all men were free to voice their opinions and equal in their value as citizens. (Women, I am afraid, were deemed second-class citizens") (21). In later years, Mandela shows he has learnt from this inadequacy of the Xhosa pre-colonial system by including women in his government and foregrounding their very significant roles in anti-apartheid struggles (220-222).

Just as Mandela claims his subjectivity through his community, members of the Sistren collective in Lionheart Gal claim their subjectivities within their organisation. In the composition of their autobiographies and in their real lives, the focus for the women is a union of women where the individual is part of a supportive group. As Frantz Fanon argues, the experience of the individual, in this case the individual autobiographers in Lionheart Gal, "because it is national and because it is a link in the chain of national existence, ceases to be individual, limited, and shrunken and is enabled to open out into the truth of the nation and of the world" (200). The Sistren group is formed by women working together in the emergency employment programme of Michael Manley's government. The organisation "offered a
space within which the women could begin to organise around their own concerns" (Lionheart Gal xxii). Sistren's work is based on the individual experiences of its members and is committed "to the collective process of artistic production" (xxiv). This approach does not necessarily silence the individual, but as Honor Ford Smith explains, it aims to place that individual within a community which will lay bare the contribution of social processes to his or her way of thinking and to his or her final product. Placing the artist in a community also demystifies the process of artistic production. Working collectively involves the articulation of the stages of work so that the whole community can understand what is going on. (Lionheart Gal xxiv)

By providing a community to support their yearnings and aspirations, as well as their artistic development, Sistren is in the forefront of the struggle for Jamaican women's rights. In the spirit of community, though the stories in Lionheart Gal are life-stories of individuals, they are collectively discussed and edited for publication. The identities of the authors of stories are not revealed to protect individuals and families who appear in the narratives (xxx). Just as Sistren represents a group of women asserting their rights collectively against patriarchy, the stories in the collection "are representative experiences of ordinary women speaking about the effort of making
something of their lives and reflecting concerns which are common to many women in their society" (xxx).

Evelyn O'Callaghan argues in her review of Lionheart Gal entitled "Lionheart Gal" that Lionheart Gal stands between fiction and research data because of the editorial process involved in its production, and, following Joycelin Massiah, she compares the representations of women's lives in the collection to Olive Senior's fictional Summer Lightning and Other Stories. Unlike Massiah who argues that Lionheart Gal corroborates the fictional Summer Lightning, O'Callaghan's position is that the text is to a large extent as fictionalised as Senior's materials. The fact that the stories in Lionheart Gal were jointly discussed and edited by their authors does not make the stories less autobiographical and more fictional than autobiographies produced by individuals or as fictionalised as fictional narratives. That the stories of Lionheart Gal are corroborated by one another suggests a preponderance of facts rather than fiction. It is more helpful to situate the text within the African and Jamaican communal traditions of production where literary output is not the result of the efforts of an individual but of the collective. As Honor Ford-Smith of the Sistren Collective asserts in "Notes Towards a New Aesthetic," what Sistren does is to transform European notions of art. Part of the transformation process is her preference for the term cultural worker rather than artist "because it seems to me that the idea of the artist as
it has been imported into our societies carries within it a very specific cultural ring" (27). It is, therefore, the responsibility of the cultural worker "to find new forms—not simply new ways to package ideas, but rather to discover ways of challenging perception, validating new forms and laying down new boundaries around our experience" (29).

The way Sistren functions as a support group for its members and works to clarify women's issues is demonstrated in "Ava's Diary." Ava is in an abusive relationship with Bertie, her children's father. Bertie is not only a gambler but very quarrelsome (268) and irresponsible (271, 274). His ambition is to control not just Ava but also another woman in Franklyn Town (274). Despite living with the woman in Franklyn Town, he still wants to control Ava physically and sexually. Ava's response to this is that Bertie is not alone; he is a product of a patriarchal society where "[w]hole heap a dem no feel seh women are human beings with flesh and blood and feelings" (274). It is the responsibility of the women, according to her, to "mek society see dem tings tru our own efforts. We can talk fi weself, after all!" (274). Efforts by the women to resist patriarchy are coordinated and encouraged by the Sistren community. In asserting her independence from Bertie, for example, Sistren members are very supportive of Ava's struggle, and they encourage her to report the abuse to the police. Members of the group do not just give suggestions; they are with her at the police station and court.
hearings. Bertie recognises the power of the collective and attempts to resist them by threatening that "anybody come inna my argument between me and yuh, dem going get same treatment like yuh" (278). Also, with support from Sistren, Ava and other women, like Didi in "Ole Massa and Me," are able to discuss their problems in a very friendly atmosphere. In fact, Foxy in "Foxy and di Macca Palace War" asserts that seeing people like Didi discuss their objectification by their men encourages her to talk about her own experiences (253). As Ava contends, "If people know what dem a face dem can start look for a way out. Being with Sistren is beginning to release a lot of tension in me" (274).

Like Lionheart Gal and Long Walk to Freedom, The Autobiography of Malcolm X is a community-based narrative. It is a narrative about the attempt of the African-American community to assert itself collectively against racism in America. Just as the community suffers the effects of racism individually and collectively, it resists it as a body as well as individually. Though the autobiography is Malcolm X's, in real terms, it is an account of others as well as his efforts to mobilise the African-American community against racial oppression. The desire to improve the community transforms X from a drug-peddler and dope-addict to a minister in the service of the community. This is why he claims that "[y]ou will never catch me with a free fifteen minutes in which I'm not studying something I feel
might be able to help the black man [sic]" (179).⑨

Another aspect of X's community-based narrative relates to the Back-to-Africa Movement, initially championed by Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey.⑩ X contextualises himself within the framework of the Back-to-Africa Movement through his father's involvement in the group. His father, the Reverend Earl Little, argues, following Marcus Garvey, that the African-American community cannot, while in America, achieve "freedom, independence and self-respect... and that therefore the Negro should leave America to the white man and return to his African land of origin" (2). According to X, his father's support for the Back-to-Africa Movement is a product of his own experiences in America, including the violent death of some of his own brothers. Participating in the Back-to-Africa Movement, therefore, functions as a resistance strategy for African-Americans. It is an anti-racist strategy of embracing their heritage in contrast to their dehumanisation in America. Following in his father's footsteps, X encourages a cordial relationship between African and African-American communities to resist their mutual oppressors. He differs from his father, however, in that he supports not necessarily a physical but a mental encounter with the continent. As he argues in Nigeria, in the spirit of the Back-to-Africa Movement,

Africa's independent nations needed to see the necessity of helping to bring the Afro-American's case before the United

280
Nations. I said that just as the American Jew is in political, economic, and cultural harmony with world Jewry, I was convinced that it was time for all Afro-Americans to join the world's pan-Africanists. I said that physically we Afro-Americans might remain in America, fighting for our constitutional rights, but that philosophically and culturally we Afro-Americans badly needed to "return" to Africa—and develop a working unity in the framework of Pan-Africanism. (350)\textsuperscript{11}

There are continuities and divergences regarding language in the autobiographies of Black activists. Code-switching, domination through language, and resistance to such language-based domination are continuities, while the geographical location of the autobiographers determines the discontinuities in the manifestation of these features. Language in South Africa, like other aspects of life, was controlled by apartheid. With the victory of the Nationalists in the 1948 White-only election, Afrikaans takes precedence over English. As Mandela remembers, "[t]he Nationalists' victory was the beginning of the end of domination of the Afrikaner by the Englishman. English would now take second place to Afrikaans as an official language. The Nationalist slogan encapsulated their mission: 'Eie volk, eie taal eie land'—Our own people, our own language, our own land" (111). Since English and Afrikaans are the official languages, code-switching from one to the other and code-mixing of both languages are common in the
speech community. For example, although Mandela's narrative idiom is standard South African English, he switches between this idiom and Afrikaans when he encounters a speaker of the language or when he is spoken to directly in it. In prison, many of the warders speak Afrikaans to Mandela and his co-prisoners. When reporting events at the Robben Island prison, Mandela code-switches from English to Afrikaans and back to English for the English translation of the warders' Afrikaans (405). Mandela also code-mixes Afrikaans and English to report the request by some warders to Ahmed Kathrada to push a wheelbarrow. Again, an English translation follows the warders' order (386). As he records it, "[t]he warders always spoke in Afrikaans. If you replied in English they would say, 'Ek verstaan nie daardie kafferboetie se taal nie.' (I don't understand that kaffir-lover's language)" (341).

The official language policy under apartheid accommodates only English and Afrikaans at the expense of indigenous Black South African languages. Just like their speakers, the languages are discriminated against and relegated to the background. Even in prison, "[r]egulations dictated that conversation had to be in either English or Afrikaans—African languages were forbidden—and could involve family matters only" (402). Also, the Afrikaner government discourages non-White South Africans from learning English because, according to Mandela, "English was a foreign tongue to the Afrikaner and the
language of emancipation to us" (166). This official language policy is translated into the educational system that transfers the control of African education from the Department of Education to another organ of apartheid, the Native Affairs Department, through the Bantu-Education Act (167). This anti-Black education policy continues, and the government orders that "half of all classes in secondary schools must be taught in Afrikaans" (483). Both the students and the teachers resist the instruction because it means teaching the exploited Black South Africans in the language of their oppressor (483). This leads to the Soweto massacre of the protesting students (483). Despite the fact that the government's language policy does not recognise African languages, Mandela brings the languages to life in his autobiography. He shows South Africa's complex linguistic situation by mixing and switching from English, his narrative idiom, to South African languages. He mixes English and Xhosa to record as accurately as possible his circumcision (27) and some Xhosa sayings (85), and English and Zulu to record Masabalala Yengwa's use of Zulu as a resistance tactic during his lecture to his fellow prisoners in prison (202).

Lionheart Gal is narrated largely in nation language, but "Grandma's Estate" and "Red Ibo" are narrated in predominantly acrolectal English because the narrators are formally educated middle-class women. Nation language in the Caribbean resulted from the encounter between the languages of the different
peoples that populated the region. Before the encounter with Columbus in 1492, the Caribbean islands were inhabited by the Taino, Siboney, Carib, and Arawak, and each group spoke their own language. Some of the results of the encounter with Columbus were the destruction of the indigenous cultures and languages and the importation of European cultures and languages, like English, French, Dutch, and Spanish, to the area. Following the fragmentation and suppression of the cultures and languages of the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, slave labour was imported from Africa to the region. Despite the inhuman conditions of the slaves, including the deliberate breaking-up of linguistic communities among them, they brought into the region their languages and cultures. After emancipation, indentured labourers were brought with their languages from India and China to the Caribbean islands.

The encounter between all the languages of the peoples in the Caribbean was not that of equality. While European languages were the official languages of the region, all other languages were literally exterminated from the official public sphere. According to Edward Kamau Brathwaite, what the various non-European languages of the area had to do

was to submerge themselves, because officially the conquering peoples -- the Spaniards, the English, the French, and the Dutch -- insisted that the language of public discourse and
conversation, of obedience, command and conception should be English, French, Spanish or Dutch. (7)

Since the various indigenous nation languages were submerged, their status was inferior compared to English and other colonial languages. The status of the various languages was, therefore, a direct reflection of the power relations between their users, masters on the one hand and slaves on the other. Ironically, the submergence of the various nation languages in the Caribbean performed what Brathwaite describes as "an interesting interculturative purpose" (7). Although people continued to use English as used in Elizabethan times and on through the Romantic and Victorian ages, that English was, nonetheless, still being influenced by the underground language that the slaves had brought. And that underground language was constantly transforming itself into new forms. It was moving from a purely African form to a form which was African but which was adapted to the new environment and adapted to the cultural imperative of the European languages. And it was influencing the way in which the English, French, Dutch and Spaniards spoke their own languages. (7-8)

The result of the complex process that took place during the encounter between the various languages of the Caribbean was the formation of nation
languages, also called Patwah (or Patois), Creole, or Dialect. According to Brathwaite (8), the new languages were not recognised by the Caribbean education system after emancipation and up until the present. What the system did instead

was to recognize and maintain the language of the conquistador – the language of the planter, the language of the official, the language of the anglican preacher. It insisted that not only would English be spoken in the anglophone Caribbean, but that the educational system would carry the contours of an English heritage.... People were forced to learn things which had no relevance to themselves. (8)

Since nation language is mainly oral, it is closer to the use of language by the majority of Jamaicans than English. The written version of the language is not standardised yet, so there is no universal spelling for it. This stage of the written version, as Sistren argues, undermines the richness of the oral version (xxix). Apart from campaigning for the use of nation language for creative writing, by collating written and oral stories, Sistren campaigns for equality for all languages and the fact that they can exist side by side without dominating one another. Despite the problems with the development of nation language, West Indians are able to form in it an identity different from what the slave masters handed to them in English. Just as Sistren argues for
the use of nation language for prose writing, the group submits that for the language to be respected, "a conscious decision would have to be taken to treat it as a language, probably by a state body. Such a decision would mean that Patwah would then be able to evolve without being limited by arguments demanding its perpetual reduction to its relationship to English" (xxix).

The imbalance between English and nation language has been addressed in various ways, including through re-naming. A leading scholar in this regard is Edward Kamau Brathwaite who renames the Caribbean languages nation languages in his *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* in contrast to other names like "dialect". According to him, the renaming process is crucial because of the pejorative connotations associated with some of the names. Dialect, for example, is thought of as "bad English." Dialect is "inferior English". Dialect is the language used when you want to make fun of someone. Caricature speaks in dialect. Dialect has a long history coming from the plantation where people's dignity is distorted through their language and the descriptions which the dialect gave to them. (13)

Various Caribbean writers ranging from Sistren through H.A. Vaughan, Frank Collymore, Louise Bennett, and Derek Walcott, to Edward Kamau
Brathwaite also address the imbalance by writing many of their works in nation language. Some, like Louise Bennett, use mainly nation language in their work, while others, like Derek Walcott, write in both nation language and English.

Sistren adopts a political approach to the language issue. The group argues that "the development of Patwah expresses the refusal of a people to imitate a coloniser, their insistence on creation, their movement from obedience towards revolution. Not to nurture such a language is to retard the imagination and power of the people who created it" (xxix). Except in "Red Ibo" and "Grandma's Estate," nation language is the narrative idiom of most of the stories in Lionheart Gal because most of the narrators are working class women. Despite the fact that Red Ibo and Ella in "Red Ibo" and "Grandma's Estate" respectively are middle-class members of Sistren, their choice of language reflects not just their class and educational achievement but the fact that both nation language and acrolectal English are used side-by-side in Jamaican society. The narrators, however, use nation language to report conversations and their encounters with speakers of the language. Ella reports her grandmother's speeches, for example, in nation language. In many of the stories, the narrators code-switch from nation language to English when reporting the speeches of English speakers, for narrative purposes, or code-mix the languages.
In "Ava's Diary," Ava switches from the acrolectal English of the first four sentences to nation language to report her father's statement on her education in the next two sentences. She then switches back to acrolectal English. The next paragraph is reported in nation language while she switches to acrolectal English for the following paragraph. She starts paragraph four in nation language, but later mixes nation language and English. In her attempt to convey her lack of interest in a relationship with Bertie, she switches from nation language to formal English, thereby mixing both codes: "Sometime me haffi tell him, 'Leave me alone'" (263). After this, she returns to the use of nation language until she mixes both codes again: "Di conversation always end up being a sexual conversation for is dat him a try fi get over" (264). Some other features of the language when compared to English include the use of the singular verb instead of the plural, like "If you don't have a mule cart, you is nobody;" use of the objective case for the subjective, like "Me going back in now" (115); and use of English words but nation language spelling to reflect local pronunciation, like "Miss Ursie is di one who always keep di community going" (21). The various languages and varieties in Lionheart Gal show the interactions between the speakers of these languages and varieties, their class positions, the political power the languages have, and group solidarity.

Malcolm X's autobiography is written in standard American English. Since
Malcolm X narrates it orally to Alex Haley, it can be situated within the African oral autobiographical tradition where the narrator narrates his or her story to an audience to teach them their history and or aesthetics. It is also comparable to D.O. Fagunwa's novels where the narrator tells his story to a scribe who is instructed to write it down. Since Malcolm X spends a lot of time on the street before being converted to the Nation of Islam, he understands the language of the street and uses it to his advantage in his mobilisation efforts (199, 261). Because of his understanding of the language of the street, many people believed that he was the only African-American who could either start a race war or end one during his time. Of course, his response to this assertion was quintessential X: "I don't know if I could start one. I don't know if I'd stop one" (396).

X's understanding of the language of the African-American working class, a language comparable to Jamaican nation language in terms of users, origin, and group solidarity, is demonstrated during his encounter with an African-American hustler after a rally in Harlem. There is a switch from the acrolectal English of X's narration to nation language as X's interlocutor speaks to him as follows:

Hey baby! I dig you holding this all-originais scene at the track...I'm going to lay a vine under the Jew's balls for a dime—got to give you a play...Got the shorts out here trying to scuffle
up on some bread...Well, my man, I'll get on, got to go peck a little, and cop me some z's--. (311)

Of course, X understands the hustler's language and would not have thought about it but for a Blackman whom he calls "one of these 'downtown' leaders" (Black bourgeois leader) who does not understand what the hustler said. X explains to him, translating the language of the led to the leader, as follows:

[t]he hustler had said that he was aware that the Muslims were holding an all-black bazaar at Rockland Palace, which is primarily a dancehall. The hustler intended to pawn a suit for ten dollars to attend and patronize the bazaar. He had very little money but he was trying hard to make some more. He was going to eat, then he would get some sleep. (310)

Although the words the hustler uses are English words, as Edward Kamau Brathwaite argues in History of the Voice (13), it is not acrolectal English because of lexico-semantic shift. The English-speaking bourgeois leader with X is excluded from the conversation. The encounter between X and the hustler shows the importance of language and class solidarity. Although X does not belong to the same class as the hustler, by being a minister competent in his language, he is able to communicate with him. It is the trust that a common language engenders that allows X to mobilise the working class better than any African-American leader of his time.
Although Sistren, Malcolm X, and Mandela belong to different Black societies, their autobiographies do not show just the differences among their societies, but also the similarities. The peculiarities of the different communities determine the focus of the autobiographies. Since the dominant discourse in South Africa during the period covered in Mandela's autobiography is apartheid, the institution and the resistance to it feature conspicuously in the autobiography. Just as Mandela's concern in South Africa is about the disenfranchised Blacks and other non-White groups, X's concern in his narrative is about civil/human rights for African-Americans. Sistren's *Lionheart Gal* is also a narrative of resistance. Resistance concerns in the text include racial, class, and gender issues. Unlike resistance in Mandela's and X's autobiographies that are from male perspectives, resistance in Sistren is not just from female perspectives but against male domination and other exploitative institutions that both the male and the female in the society suffer from.

Just as resistance is common to the autobiographies studied here, they are all community-based narratives. They are histories of various Black communities from the perspectives of some of the active participants in the events recollected. They are stories about the yearnings and aspirations of various Black communities, their sufferings together, and their collective attempt at resistance. The texts are also the attempts of the autobiographers
to claim their individual subjectivities through and in the service of their communities. By situating their reclaimed subjectivities counter-discursively to their lack of them in the colonial discourses they fight, they succeed in claiming not just a dignified subjectivity for themselves but for their various communities.

Language in the texts reflect the linguistic complexities of the various speech communities that produce the autobiographies. While English is common to all of them, the various autobiographers switch between English and other languages available to them, like indigenous African languages and the nation languages of America and the Caribbean. Since these indigenous and nation languages are the languages commonly used by the various communities, the autobiographers are able to situate themselves within the resistance tradition with which these languages have come to be associated. By identifying with and foregrounding these languages, the various writers succeed in identifying with and developing their various linguistic heritages, heritages against which the colonial discourses of the various texts have fought.

In terms of form, while Mandela's autobiography is a long autobiography written by him with assistance from Richard Stengel, X's questions the dividing lines between biography and either written or oral autobiography.
Narrating the text to Alex Haley, who wrote it down, situates it within the oral autobiographical form, and Haley's epilogue to X's narrative is essentially X's biography. We, therefore, have a text that cuts across the written and the oral, the biographical and the autobiographical. Sistren's Lionheart Gal, on the other hand, is a collection of various women's autobiographies in English and nation language, collectively written and edited by the women. It cuts across various autobiographical traditions, including the prose narrative, poetry, and the diary. All the stories are in prose. They use poems for effect, rhythm, or to record their stories faithfully (28, 31, 136, and 140), and Ava's Diary employs the form of the diary for resistance.
Notes


2 Frantz Fanon's "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness" (Wretched of the Earth, 148-205) examines how new nations can avoid the pitfalls of colonial ideas of the nation and nationalism.

3 For excerpts of some of the reviews of Mandela's autobiography, see the opening pages of the 1995 edition.

4 X's position on violence is different from that of Martin Luther King, another important African-American leader. While X supports violence as resistance, King preaches non-violence. For a comparative discussion of their approaches to violence and Black emancipation in America, see Alex Haley's epilogue to X's autobiography, 417, Dyson's interview 93-94, Dan Georgakas's "Who Will Speak for El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz?: Hagiography and a Missing Identity in Malcolm X," Kenneth B. Clark's King, Malcolm, Baldwin : Three Interviews, and James H. Cone's Martin & Malcolm & America : A Dream or a Nightmare.

5 A Rasta or Rastafarian is, according to Sistren's note, "[a] member of a
religious group which takes Ras Tafari, Haile Selassie, the former Emperor of Ethiopia, as a deity. The group developed in the 1930s, inspired by Selassie's struggle against the Italians for control of Ethiopia. Rastas, or Dreads as they are also called, avow a desire to return to Africa, physically and spiritually by establishing an African society where they live. This includes a rejection of the European cultural values that are remnants of colonialism in Caribbean societies. There is a wide range of thought among Rastafari. Some place great emphasis on the Bible, which they interpret in the fundamentalist tradition. For others the cultural and political aspects of the African outlook are more important. The culture has influenced many who are not believers in Selassie to adopt elements of the Rasta way of life such as vegetarianism, locked hair (as is worn by the Masai warriors of Kenya), and the use of words developed within the group e.g. irie - all right. Herb smoking (smoking of marijuana) is a religious rite among Rastafari" (294).

6 Abeng is, according to Sistren's note, "a musical instrument made from cowhorn and used by maroons to send messages. In the late 1960s a radical newspaper" (283).

7 Throughout Mandela's and X's autobiographies, the men refer to various African/Black ethnic groups as tribes. I interpret their references to tribe to mean various Black/African ethnic groups rather than the derogatory
meaning of the word in terms of primitive and nomadic cultures.

8 Sistren's gloss on Michael Manley explains the principles behind Manley's employment programme that materially enables the birth of the Sistren Theatre Collective. Manley was a "[t]rade unionist and leader of the People's National Party.... Prime Minister of Jamaica 1972-80, advocate of a policy he named Democratic Socialism, which was characterised by social reform, gradual state-purchasing of national resources and a foreign policy emphasising alliances with third world and socialist countries" (291).

9 X's use of man to represent male and female in his narrative is part of the patriarchal way of seeing the society as male. The feminist critique of the patriarchal nature of contemporary English discourse was just beginning when X's autobiography was published. Using gender-neutral terms like people, human beings, or even women and men are some contemporary alternatives commonly used.

10 Sistren's gloss describes Marcus Garvey as "Jamaican national hero, black nationalist and founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, which in the first half of the twentieth century organised millions of black people around the world in favour of African independence and black self-reliance and dignity" (288).
On some approaches to the Back-to-Africa-Movement, especially by Caribbean writers, see my "Recover, Not Discover: Africa in Walcott's Dream on Monkey Mountain and Philip's Looking for Livingstone."
Chapter 8: Conclusion: Black Autobiographies: Continuities, Divergences, and Possible Future Directions

Writing this dissertation has been a journey of self-discovery for me. In preparing my dissertation proposal, one of the research areas I seriously considered was working on Wole Soyinka's autobiographies because Soyinka lately has concentrated on writing non-fiction, perhaps to make a direct intervention in Nigerian and by extension African politics. By focusing on non-fiction, Soyinka draws attention to the power of experience to encourage communal resistance. As I thought of Soyinka and read other Black autobiographies, I became more curious about studying not just Soyinka but other autobiographers of African descent. Despite my awareness of some of the issues raised in Soyinka's autobiographies and the fact that I either lived through some of the episodes recollected in the texts or have heard other versions of the stories, my purpose was to discover whether I could understand Soyinka better by examining what he shares with other Black autobiographers. I have found this research to be most revealing. It has substantially enlightened me not just about Soyinka's society (which I share) and his concerns as an autobiographer, but those of other Black autobiographers, and, of course, how these autobiographers differ, despite their common Black ancestry.
My introduction sets the counter-discursive approach of the dissertation. It describes the research as a reaction to the dearth of comparative critical studies of Black autobiographies, and is an attempt to begin seriously to compare Black autobiographies, regardless of the several cultures the texts cut across. Apart from re-defining what constitutes the autobiographical, particularly within Black cultures, and discussing some recent works on regional Black autobiographies, the introduction contextualises the study as a counter-view of the Western notion of autobiographies as stories of individuals written by themselves. I also discuss James Olney's "The Value of Autobiography for Comparative Studies," where he argues that while Western autobiographies are typically *autoautography*, Black autobiographies could be called *autophylogy*. Western autobiographies are *autoautographies*, according to Olney, because of the focus on the individual, while Black autobiographies are *autophylographies* because of the focus on the community. Discussing Black autobiographies in a comparative context advances what we know about these works when discussed regionally. What the autobiographies share and how they differ are foregrounded clearly with a comparative approach. The approach also stresses the relationship among various Black histories, and it encourages communality and unity of the dispossessed across regional boundaries to fight racism, colonialism, apartheid, and patriarchy.
My attempt to theorize Blackness in chapter two is to identify one of the continuities in the autobiographies studied and the basis for studying these autobiographies comparatively. The chapter interrogates the idea of Blackness and how this notion has been used to exploit people of African descent. Just as it has been used for exploitative purposes, I argue that it can be used positively and for purposes of resistance, as I attempt to do in this study. By discussing comparatively a number of works written by Black people, what the Black autobiographers say about themselves questions and rewrites what others say about them as Blacks.

The notion of Blackness changes over time, historical circumstances, and texts. In colonial discourse, it is deployed negatively as absence or lack. To legitimise slavery, apartheid, racism, and colonialism, colonial discourse sees Blackness as devoid of reason, morality, and any traits of humanity. Black autobiographies react to this inscription and foreground Blackness as presence through resistance and intellectual sophistication. It is, however, instructive to heed Gates's caveat to the idea of Blackness as presence because, as he argues in "The Signifying Monkey" (Black Literature and Literary Theory), it is not sufficient to transcend "the received idea of Blackness as a negative essence, as a natural, transcendent signified" (315). Blackness as presence also has to be examined. Mandela's humanistic philosophy of extending a hand of fellowship even to his jailers suggests a
profound critique of Blackness as presence. By working together with those
who inscribed his community as absence to foreground both Black and White
communities as presence in South Africa, Mandela not only transcends what
Gates in "What's in a Name" (The Intimate Critique 150) calls "the i-got-mine
parochialism of a desperate era," but argues for a common humanity where
all is presence. The argument for a common humanity is also central to
Malcolm X's post-Mecca philosophy. While it is possible to argue that the
idea of Blackness in itself is essentialising, I contend that to deploy such an
idea is strategic essentialising and constitutes a necessary resistance to engage
with a body of texts written by a group of people about themselves in
counter-discursive relationship to texts written by others about them.

The comparative basis of the chapter on theorizing Blackness is extended in
the following chapter, as I examine the relevance of post-colonial theory for a
transnational approach to Black autobiographies. Since various Black
societies have suffered one form of colonialism or another and are in one
post-colonial stage or another, a post-colonial theoretical framework is useful
for discussing what these literatures share and, at the same time, how they
differ. This approach is also particularly useful in questioning divisions that
do not allow unity of all Black people against their exploitation.

Helen Tiffin's post-colonial approach to West Indian life-writing in "Rites of
Resistance" is very useful in contextualising Black autobiographies as narratives of resistance. Although Tiffin's focus is on the Caribbean, her arguments in relation to Caribbean life-writing are relevant to Black autobiographies in general. Tiffin's post-colonial reading of Caribbean life-writing situates those autobiographies [and by my extension other Black autobiographies] as counter-discourse to colonial discourse. Tiffin's persuasive argument is that since European narratives helped colonial discourse in institutionalising and rationalising colonialism, "resistance autobiographies" (31) produced by the formerly colonised are sites of "postcolonial counter-discursive resistance" (30). The new narratives are concerned with the self, the postcolonial subject rewritten in a counter-discursive relation to the object of colonial discourse.

Tiffin's counter-discursive position is similar to Edward Said's. In fact, Tiffin claims (5) that her approach follows Said's concept of secular criticism, relating texts to the societies that produce them, power, and authority. Said's development of his notion of secular criticism to include history has been very useful in examining how autobiography is history in my study. Said's argument in Culture and Imperialism that "resistance, far from being merely a reaction to imperialism, is an alternative way of conceiving human history" (216) informs my discussion of the re-writing of history as resistance by post-colonial writers in this dissertation.
The focus of chapter four is oral forms of Black autobiographies. By concentrating on examples from Africa, I suggest that the attempt to define the autobiographical as written is Eurocentric, and this does not acknowledge the various, though oral, autobiographical practices in non-European societies. Although most of my examples are from the Yoruba-speaking people of Nigeria, these autobiographical practices persist in various African societies and some non-African communities. The functions of oral African autobiographies in terms of creating and maintaining group cohesion and solidarity, acting as resistance, and writing and re-writing history are also performed by the written versions of the genre.

In my study of the autobiographies of slaves, writers, and activists in chapters five to seven, several continuities and divergences in Black autobiographies are examined. While the continuities include a focus on Blackness (earlier discussed); resistance to slavery, racism, apartheid, colonialism, and patriarchy; education; naming; community; and history, the texts are different in their attitudes to Africa; religion, whether it be African traditional religion, Christianity, or Islam; geography; gender; and language. All the autobiographies studied are resistance literature in Barbara Harlow's sense in Resistance Literature, and Mandela's and X's autobiographies can be classified as prison memoirs of activists. They, in various ways, interrogate and expose the racist, discriminatory, and exploitative discourses that have
had debilitating effects on Blacks over the years, and offer alternatives to them. In their autobiographies, Olaudah Equiano, Mary Prince, and Frederick Douglass interrogate the discourses that sustained slavery, including the racist idea of Black inferiority to Whiteness in terms of culture and writing. They are also very critical of Christianity. While Equiano buys his freedom, Prince gets hers when in England, and Douglass secures his by running away from the South to the North. They all work actively to abolish slavery, and Equiano recommends an alternative trade between Africa and Europe.

Wole Soyinka's *Ake* situates itself within a resistance framework with its criticism of colonialism and its recreation of the Egba women's war, which was a fight against the colonial government of the time and its native stooges. By discussing the organisational and political power of Yoruba women in *Ake*, Soyinka also questions patriarchal notions of African women and gender inequalities in the society. *Ake*, therefore, establishes itself as resistance literature by situating itself within the Yoruba culture as an alternative to the colonial culture of Soyinka's generation.

Unlike *Ake*, which situates itself solidly within a culture, Derek Walcott's *Another Life* is resistance literature because it goes beyond racialized origin and encourages a fresh beginning that seems to erase history, but favours the
performance of Adamic functions in the Caribbean. What Soyinka embraces, therefore, Walcott repudiates. Since he is biracial, Walcott claims to be divided to the vein, and resists both his White and Black origins. Despite his rejection of origin, Walcott remains an admirer of resistance, including that of the indigenous peoples of Grenada. Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is also resistance literature in that it interrogates various aspects of gender, class, and racial exploitation of a Black female growing up in the Southern United States and recounts the fight against all odds to win several battles for herself and her community.

The autobiographies of political activists discussed in chapter seven also belong to the resistance tradition. While Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom* is a recollection of the long and arduous fight against apartheid in South Africa, Malcolm X's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is a recreation of African-Americans' civil rights movement of the 1960s. Sistren's *Lionheart Gal*, on the other hand, is a collection of several women's testimonies against racial, gender, and class exploitation in Jamaica. Unlike Mandela's and X's autobiographies that are individual accounts, *Lionheart Gal* belongs to a continuum, from the individual to the collective. The stories are individual stories, but they are jointly discussed and edited. One of the common features of these political activists' texts is their inspirational qualities. Apart from recording Black people's struggles for the upliftment of their societies,
these autobiographies have the quality to inspire others to continue the resistance tradition and fight for their rights.

Mandela's and X's autobiographies illustrate the link between resistance literature and armed struggle. As Barbara Harlow argues in *Resistance Literature*, following Ghassan Kanafani "in his second study of the literature of occupied Palestine" (10), there is an "integral relationship between armed resistance and resistance literature" (10). Harlow quotes Kanafani who argues that "[i]f resistance springs from the barrel of a gun, the gun itself issues from the desire for liberation and that desire for liberation is nothing but the natural, logical and necessary product of resistance in its broadest sense: as refusal and as a firm grasp of roots and situations" (11). Both Mandela's and X's autobiographies are narratives of resistance against racism, whether it assumes the institutionalised form of apartheid in South Africa or segregation in the American South, and they both favour armed struggle because of the failure of a peaceful solution to apartheid and the American race problem. Mandela forms the military wing of the ANC to resist apartheid, while X argues that African Americans should carry arms to defend themselves against White aggression because of the failure of the American legal system to provide justice to Blacks.

Education as resistance also features in Black autobiographies. In slave
narratives, Equiano, Douglass, and Prince recognise the importance of writing and publishing their autobiographies to persuade people to fight slavery. As Joanne M. Braxton remarks, "the early autobiographical writings of black Americans linked the quest for freedom with the quest for literacy. To be able to write, to develop a public voice, and to assert a literary self represented significant aspects of freedom" (15). Soyinka, Angelou, and Walcott, as professional writers, continue the tradition of writing as freedom in Black autobiographies. As creative writers, they are all formally educated and use their writing to contribute to the resistance framework of Black autobiographies. For activists, education is important for liberation. In Lionheart Gal, women's liberation is aided by formal education. In "Grandma's Estate," Ella's mother's education as a medical doctor shows the educational progress of some women, and it inspires Ella. Ella's own formal education also helps her in challenging race, class, and gender exploitation. The process of editing the book and generally being a part of Sistren were also educational, according to several contributors. As well, X and Mandela recognise the importance of education for liberation even in prison; hence X starts correspondence courses and copies the dictionary while Mandela encourages other prisoners to strengthen themselves by being formally educated.

Another level of continuity in the autobiographies studied is in terms of
naming, which functions as part of the counter-discursive trend in the texts. Equiano is named Gustavus Vassa by Captain Pascal, and, like the original Swedish owner of the name, fights for the liberation of his society, differentiating himself from the European Gustavus Vassa by referring to himself as Gustavus Vassa, the African in the subtitle of his book. He, however, primarily identifies with his pre-colonial society by reclaiming his name, Olaudah Equiano. Just as Equiano equates Olaudah Equiano with Gustavus Vassa the African, Mary Prince equates that name with Mary James, thereby resisting Molly Wood, her slave name. Frederick Douglass adopts different names on his escape route to the North, but, strangely, allows Nathan Johnson, his host, to name him in New Bedford.

As in slave autobiographies, naming is a resistance strategy in the narratives of Black political activists. The title of Sistren's Lionheart Gal compares the autobiographers to lions because of their bravery in confronting the problems of their societies. Malcolm X takes up different names in his fight against racism in America, and each name corresponds to a change in his ideological position in terms of race relations in America. As in X's autobiography, naming is part of the resistance framework of Mandela's autobiography. Names of members of Mandela's family situate them within the anti-apartheid struggle.
Unlike European autobiographers who focus primarily on the individual, the community is another important continuity in Black autobiographies. All the autobiographies discussed in this study take their bearing from the Sonjo proverb (Tanzania) "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am." Slavery was an institution that was suffered collectively as well as individually and resisted together and individually by people of African descent and their allies. In their attempt to destroy tightly-knit societies, slave masters separated slaves from their communities, and forbade slaves from forming new communities. What these autobiographies show is that the underground cultural, religious, and linguistic communities formed by the slaves were very important in their collective fight against the institution. Also, the slave narratives available today are the accounts of relatively privileged slaves; most of the others were neither literate nor able to get others to write their stories for them, and their histories often have violent endings, unlike the more positive conclusions to slave narratives that reach written form. It is in the written accounts that we learn about the sufferings and the resistance of other members of the slave communities.

The community is also a very important aspect of the autobiographies of creative writers. Angelou situates herself firmly within both religious and cultural communities in Stamps, Arkansas. Like the slaves in slave narratives, Angelou's community suffers together and resists collectively.
Soyinka situates himself within the Yoruba community of his childhood. As Angelou's community experiences racism together, Soyinka's experiences colonialism collectively, and the women in his community fight not just colonialism but its indigenous collaborators. Unlike Soyinka and Angelou who contextualise themselves within cultural and religious communities, Walcott situates himself primarily within a community of artists. It is within this community that he enunciates the idea of a fresh beginning for West Indians.

The interest of the community is the basis for the struggle documented in the autobiographies of political activists. Sistren's fight against gender, class, and racial inequalities is carried out through a community of women who are exploited because they are mostly racialized working-class women. The community encourages and supports its members in their collective fight. The struggle against apartheid in Mandela's autobiography is also communal. Since the community suffers together, it resists the system collectively, supporting its members throughout the struggle, and the African National Congress (ANC) becomes the rallying point for many anti-apartheid activists. Similarly, X's autobiography documents the Nation of Islam and later the Organisation of Afro-American Unity as the organisations that unite the African-American communities in their collective struggle against racism.
Rewriting history as resistance is another feature common to the autobiographies studied in this project. The texts engage the history of various Black societies either by rewriting it from the perspectives of the communities or transcending it. The attempts of the autobiographers in relation to history as resistance follow Eric Wolf's injunction, as reported by Barbara Harlow, that "European history must be rewritten to include 'the people without history'" (4). Since, to legitimise colonialism, European colonial discourse denied the history of achievements of people of African descent, Black autobiographers rewrite history to show these achievements for resistance purposes and to argue that slavery, apartheid, and colonialism are only phases in Black history. Equiano's, Prince's, and Douglass's autobiographies rewrite the history of slavery from the perspectives of the slaves, and they discuss not just the monumental suffering of their societies through the trade but how the societies resist the institution. The autobiographies of creative writers write various aspects of the histories of their communities. In Ake, Soyinka writes the history of his childhood in Nigeria, the beginning of anti-colonial struggle in his community, and the history of the women's resistance movement. History in Angelou's autobiography is that of a community fighting against racial and gender discrimination in America.

Like Soyinka and Angelou, Walcott writes the history of his childhood in St.
Lucia, the history of resistance by the indigenous community at Sauteurs, the history of the various battles fought in the Caribbean, and his attempts to transcend these histories to campaign for a fresh start in the Caribbean. Mandela discusses the history of pre-colonial South Africa, how apartheid disrupts it, and how the community rises up against the institution. X's autobiography is an account of Black resistance against racism in America and the way the Nation of Islam becomes an important organisation in the fight against White supremacy in the society. Lionheart Gal records the history of the rise of Jamaican women against patriarchal exploitation and internalized racism, the role of women in the formation of trade unions, and the political developments in Jamaica under Michael Manley's government.

The autobiographies studied in this project diverge in the way they envision and represent Africa. While Africa features in varying degrees in the autobiographies of Equiano, Soyinka, Walcott, Mandela, and X, it is hardly mentioned in the works of Prince, Douglass, and Angelou. Perhaps it is not stressed in their autobiographies because the narratives are situated within the immediate cultures of the autobiographers. Since Soyinka and Mandela were born and remained Africans, their autobiographies are set principally in Africa, and the continent is the centre of their worlds. While Soyinka recalls his growth in Nigeria and resistance to colonialism in his narrative, Mandela discusses traditional socio-political African systems and how they are
undermined by apartheid. Mandela documents his campaigns against apartheid all over Africa, and writes about the support for the anti-apartheid crusade by other Africans.

As an adult, Equiano recreates the Africa he knew as a boy, focussing on the socio-political, economic, and religious aspects of the society to counter racist propaganda about the continent. He attempts to return to Africa as a missionary and with the Sierra-Leonian resettlement project but is in each case unsuccessful. Unlike Equiano's embracing Africa counter-discursively, Walcott acknowledges not just his African but his European heritage and transcends them both. Unlike Walcott but like Equiano, Sistren embraces Africa for resistance. The group traces the power of Jamaican women to their African ancestors, and sustains this power through the oral story-telling traditions of the community. Like Equiano and Sistren, X sees Africa as counter-discourse to the injustices of the American system against African-Americans. X visits several African countries to forge an alliance between Africans and African-Americans, stressing their common destiny and the need to unite to fight common enemies like racism, apartheid, and colonialism. X is accepted back into the African community, as he is named Omowale in Nigeria. X represents the "negro" who was taught by the slavemaster that Africa "was peopled by heathen, black savages, swinging like monkeys from trees" (The Autobiography of Malcolm X 162), but now
recovers Africa and rewrites its history for resistance through the Back-to-
Africa ideology.

Black autobiographies also diverge in their representation of religion, be it
Christianity, African traditional religion, or Islam. In Equiano's, Prince's, and
Douglass's narratives, though the autobiographers are helped in one way or
another by individual Christians, the religion as practised by other Christians
supports slavery, and this is criticised by the autobiographers. Just as
Christianity supports slavery, it supports apartheid in South Africa. The
Dutch Reform Church actually provides the religious basis for apartheid with
the racist argument that "Afrikaners were God's chosen people and that
blacks were a subservient species. In the Afrikaner's worldview, apartheid
and the church went hand in hand" (Long Walk 111). In Mqhekezweni,
where Mandela spends part of his childhood, however, Christianity and
African traditional religion exist together for Mandela who participates
actively in the religious practices of the society, including circumcision rites.
He also recognises the help of the church in training Africans (19).

Walcott criticises Christianity because of its exploitation of its followers and
the refusal to accept responsibility for the poverty of people in St. Lucia.
Despite the fact that Christianity is the institutionalised religion in St. Lucia,
Another Life shows that remnants of African traditional religious practices

315
are still present in the community. Black St. Lucians still relate to African traditional religions directly. Religion in St. Lucia and other Caribbean islands becomes syncretic as people are exposed to various religious practices because of the legacies of slavery and indentured servitude.

African traditional religion and Christianity also affect the lives of the autobiographers in *Lionheart Gal*. Some of the writers identify with aspects of African traditional religion. Ella, for example, identifies with Rastafarians whose religious doctrine combines a focus on Ras Tafari, that is Haile Selassie, former Ethiopian emperor, as deity, with aspects of Christianity. A brand of Christianity that appears in the text is the revivalist version embraced in "Country Madda Legacy" by Cammy's stepmother and resisted by Cammy and her father because of how it is used to exploit its believers. Cammy and her stepmother particularly resent the beating of Zipora by Mass Sam, the preacher (67).

As in *Lionheart Gal* and *Another Life*, aspects of Christianity and African traditional religion are represented in *Ake*. In fact, Soyinka's society is torn between Christianity and Yoruba traditional religion as religious syncretism becomes popular in the community. While Soyinka's immediate family resides within a Christian community, his grandfather in Isara and the political system headed by the king represent the traditional religion. The
tension between the religions results in clashes between proponents of both systems, including the confrontation between Reverend Ransome-Kuti and some egunguns.

Whereas Christianity is a primary basis for solidarity in Angelou's autobiography, Islam is a unifying factor for African-Americans in X's narrative. Both religions function counter-discursively to racism in the texts in the struggles of African-American communities for equality. Christianity in Angelou's autobiography and Islam in X's narrative show that these religions are not stable for good or ill. While some Christians support slavery in Douglass's narratives, the religion serves a resistance purpose in Angelou's text. Angelou's autobiography shows that the community that slavery, racism, and poverty attempt to destroy in Stamps is sustained by the Black church as the congregations gather together and draw strength from one another. The community in X's autobiography is aided by the Nation of Islam, a social and religious umbrella organisation for coordinating the struggles of African-Americans.

Geographical locations, gender, Blackness or bi-raciality, and social status as slaves, activists, or privileged professional writers determine and mediate the subjectivities of Black autobiographers. Blackness, however, takes precedence over geography in the autobiographies of slaves. Though Equiano is born in
Nigeria, Prince in Bermuda, and Douglass in America, they are all enslaved because they are Black. Their autobiographies therefore necessarily become the narratives of anti-slavery activists, whether they finally settle in England or America or try to return to Africa. Blackness also takes precedence over geography in the autobiographies of creative writers and activists because all the autobiographers focus on resistance and the community. Irrespective of their locations, the autobiographers are of African descent, and as a result, they have to resist various racial injustices. As well, wherever they are located, the narratives are communally-based. The autobiographers all write about their communities and how these societies resist discrimination as a group, not just as individuals.

Autobiographers studied in this project approach gender issues differently largely because of the gender categories to which they belong. Even when men like Equiano, Soyinka, Walcott, and Mandela have powerful women in their lives and represent the exploitation of women and their struggles in their narratives, the representations are not as compelling as women's. Even Soyinka, who devotes a substantial part of his narrative to the Egba women's war, has been elaborately criticised by Molara Ogundipe-Leslie for inconsistencies and inaccurate representation. The representation of women by some of these male autobiographers may be contested because they do not experience first-hand the gender exploitation they describe. Prince, Angelou,
and the Sistren Collective, as female autobiographers, on the other hand,
experience gender exploitation first-hand and are privy to how other women
are exploited because of their gender. They are, therefore, able to represent
gender exploitation from the vantage point of the narrators as participants.
The female autobiographers not only represent sexual exploitation that their
male counterparts do not experience, but they resist it.

In addition, Black autobiographies differ in terms of language and style. All
the written autobiographies except Lionheart Gal are written in English.
Despite this fact, they draw attention to the other languages in their different
societies by code-switching between or among them and English and code-
mixing them. The advantage of this element of their style is that the
autobiographers acknowledge that Black people have appropriated English
for their own purposes, abrogating in significant ways its colonising power
and that they use English along with indigenous African languages for
communication. The situation is different in Lionheart Gal where language is
presented clearly as a contested territory. Some of the stories are written in
acrolectal English while others are written in nation language to represent
faithfully the linguistic complexity of Jamaica.

There is a link between my discussion of oral forms of Black autobiographies
and language in Lionheart Gal. Lionheart Gal illustrates the connection
between the oral and the written, and it belongs to the oral-written interface. Most of the stories in the collection are written as spoken in Jamaican nation language. The use of nation language shows not just the presence of a vibrant oral culture, even contemporarily, but that there is still a strong link between what used to be exclusively oral and writing. The use of nation language also shows that Black autobiographies are produced in different languages. Equally important, *Lionheart Gal* confirms that African oral storytelling traditions are sustained by other cultures of African descent, even when those traditions are modified in the syncretic circumstances of post-colonial and polylinguistic cultures.

Like *Lionheart Gal*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and *The History of Mary Prince* can be situated within the oral-written interface. Since X narrates his story to Haley, it is essentially X's oral account of his life written down by Haley, just as Prince's autobiography is the oral account of her story written and edited for her by Thomas Pringle and the Anti-Slavery Society. Both X's and Prince's texts can be situated within the African story-telling practice of a narrator inviting a scribe to write down his or her story. In Prince's case, however, the fact that her editors are Christians influences what is published and what is not. For example, Moira Ferguson, the editor of my version of Prince's narrative, argues that Prince does not mention clearly Bermudian slave resistance or discuss explicitly her sexual exploitation (3, 4).
This "pattern of omissions" (3), according to Ferguson, occurs because Prince's narrative is "sponsored by the anti-slavery society who won public support by detailing atrocities and portraying female slaves as pure and Christian-like, innocent victims and martyrs.... Women whose cause they sponsored could not be seen to be involved in any situation (even if the women were forcibly coerced) that smacked of sin and moral corruption. Christian purity, for those abolitionists, overrode regard for truth" (3-4).

For slaves who become literate under difficult circumstances, to write autobiography is an act of resistance against the racist propaganda that they were enslaved because of relatively low intellectual development. Through their language, the slave autobiographers show they take responsibility for educating people about slavery and fighting it. Equiano's language is that of a conversion narrative with the goal of converting people to Christianity and the anti-slavery coalition. The use of parallel grammatical structures distinguishes Douglass's language, and Prince's use of non-English grammatical structures shows the presence of suppressed Black languages in the Caribbean.

Unlike other autobiographies studied at length here, Another Life is written in verse. The implications of this form include the facts that Black autobiographies are available in different forms and that Walcott's
autobiography is less accessible to ordinary readers. While his verse is conventional in his representation of the British battles he recalls in the poem, his verse is more innovative in his representation of the mass suicide at Sauteurs. Angelou's language is full of striking images, including the memorable contrast between vanilla and chocolate ice-cream to show how firmly her society is segregated. Soyinka's prose in Ake shows a range of languages including Yoruba, West African Pidgin, Nigerian, and British Englishes that are available in his society. Like Soyinka's use of language in Ake, Mandela's use of language in Long Walk is marked by code-mixing and code-switching between various South African languages, and both autobiographies demonstrate the power relations between the languages.

Due to the scope of this dissertation, problems of funding for research in oral literature, and neglect of African oral autobiographies by oral literature scholars, most of my examples of African oral autobiographical practices are taken from the Yorubas. Although these autobiographical practices are common in other African and Black societies, documenting them is crucial. There is also the urgent need to collect, collate, and edit Black oral autobiographies in comparative anthologies before many of the older versions of the genre disappear. Putting these autobiographies in comparative anthologies will show the variety, strength, and breadth of the oral foundation of contemporary Black autobiographies. Such anthologies will be

322
particularly useful for students of comparative literature as well as for Black and interdisciplinary studies.

Obvious transformations resulted in the identities of slaves due to slavery, the need to survive in powerful slaveholding cultures, and the overall contact with the West. This process of identity transformation is a crucial research area.

Although my dissertation focuses on comparative Black autobiographies, I discuss the centrality of the individual and the community in Western and Black autobiographies respectively. In future researches, these different ways of conceiving the self should be discussed elaborately with a comparative study of several autobiographies from various Western, Black, and other non-Western societies to explore further how this conceptual difference affects other facets of life. Such a focus will also be useful in discussing other crucial differences in Western and non-Western autobiographies and the roles of ethnic backgrounds in shaping the differences and similarities in the autobiographies of Western and non-Western societies.

Another area for further research is a comparative study of Black autobiographies with other post-colonial autobiographies. A research with this focus will be useful in discussing other links between these
autobiographies apart from colonialism and post-colonialism. In addition, my study compares Black women's autobiographies to those of their male counterparts. This focus should be extended in other projects to include an extensive comparative study of women's autobiographies across ethnic and geographical backgrounds. This approach will be useful in showing the various strategies women across cultures have used in resisting not just patriarchy, but other injustices that both women and men suffer. Also, an interdisciplinary approach to Black autobiographies is a useful way of using the various analytical tools of different disciplines to study the genre. A linguistic approach, for example, will demonstrate the relationship between the various languages used by people of African descent and their cultures as well as the relationship between languages and identity in Black autobiographies.
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