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‘International Superstars’:

Negotiation and Contradiction in Paratextual Constructions of Sub-Saharan African Female Authors’ Identities

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Abstract

This thesis explores discursive constructions of Sub-Saharan African female authors' identities. Although the global publishing world brings local literature to a global audience, enabling local authors to profit from and operate within a larger market, it nevertheless creates a hegemonic understanding of local authors based on postcolonial ideas of the 'Other'. Considering colonial patterns of homogenizing people from the "Global South" and patriarchal structures that disregard women's voices in storytelling, this thesis examines Sub-Saharan African female authors, focusing on how their identities are constructed within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses and how they negotiate their identities while being represented as local authors within a global literary market. Paratexts contextualize a text within social practice, contributing to hegemonic discourses. Focusing on the discursive constructions of the identities of Zimbabwean author NoViolet Bulawayo currently based in the US, and Ugandan author Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi currently based in the UK, this thesis investigates the paratexts surrounding two fictional works by each author. The study employs a critical discourse analysis of paratexts, imbued with postcolonial scholar Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework and Spivak's theory of 'Othering'. The results of this study show that dominant discourses construct Sub-Saharan African female authors through hegemonic narratives concerning their 'global' literature, altering paratexts and representing them by centralizing their intersectional identities rather than their literature. Global literary prizes are seen through Foucault's discourse theory as institutions that play a large part in constructing the authors' identities, sustaining a controlled form of critique against dominant discourses. Additionally, by exploring paratexts in which the authors themselves construct their identities, this thesis centralizes negotiation of identity, which communicates a connection to the authors' home countries while gaining global recognition for their literature. Analyzing identity constructions through an antiracist feminist framework, this study distances itself from "Western feminism" and views the authors through a lens of agency.

Keywords: paratexts, postcolonialism, Sub-Saharan African female authors, negotiating identities, discursive constructions

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This paper stands in honor of the people of Palestine and their struggle for life, justice, and freedom in the ongoing genocide. I leave Lund University hoping that they end all collaboration that makes them complicit in this genocide.

Contents

1. Introduction

"*I cannot write about Africa, let alone the whole of Uganda, even the little space I occupy*".[1]

1.1 Research Problem

Sub-Saharan African female authors operate within a global literary system that shapes how audiences perceive their literary fiction and their identities. The global literary system is shaped by postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses that capitalize on a certain type of story from the imagined "Global South", disregarding oral traditions.[2] Through these discourses, Sub-Saharan African female authors' identities are often constructed in postcolonial narratives, such as local trauma ending in Western emancipation and representing "the Other".[3] Considering that identity is not something that one simply has, but something that is discursively assigned to an individual both internally and externally, it is evident that there are discursive processes in which identities are constructed, where they mean specific things that can be understood and interpreted in the social world.[4] Such constructions of identity happen in numerous parts of the social world through structural language, shaping what we understand as truth.[5] A female author of color cannot separate her subjective identity (woman of color) from her identity as a writer.[6] In this thesis, I focus on discursive identity constructions of female authors from, and whose literary works explicitly concern, Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the contemporary literary scene, paratexts are a vital part of a text because they contextualize the text to contemporary social settings.[7] Paratexts are everything surrounding a text; imagine your favorite book, you are not simply imagining the actual text, but perhaps its title, its illustrative cover, or a review you read about it. These are all paratexts, which help create an understanding of the text. A text cannot become a book without paratexts, as they are at the core of enabling a text to be more than simply a text.[8] Various kinds of paratexts serve the original text in different ways.[9] In this thesis, I explore paratexts surrounding Ugandan author Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi and Zimbabwean author NoViolet Bulawayo's literary works.

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[1] J. N. Makumbi. Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi: Uganda's First Woman of Fiction. [Video]. Edinburgh International Book Festival. (2020), 06:39-06-45. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7ogNomdnu0
[2] S. Brouillette. Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
[3] M. Lundahl, 2010. Kvinnor, vithet och de andras litteratur. *Tidskrift för genusvetenskap* 1-2 (2010): https://doi.org/10.55870/tgv.v31i1-2.3661
[4] N. Fairclough. *Discourse and Social Change*, p. 64. (Polity, 1992).
[5] M. Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. (Routledge, 1969).
[6] T. M. Trinh, 1989. *Woman, native, other: writing postcoloniality and feminism*. (Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 6.
[7] G. Genette. *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*, trans. by Lewin, J. L. (Cambridge University Press, 1997 [1987]).
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

It is important to emphasize that these authors are not simply passive victims of hegemonic discourse, but also creators of their own identities as Sub-Saharan African female authors.[10] Therefore, I examine both the discursive construction by external actors and the authors' discursive self-representation of their identities. Many authors claim agency by talking about their identity as women of color and as writers, both implicitly within fictional works and explicitly through paratexts.[11] However, this self-representation happens simultaneously as the dominant, discursive identity construction, implying that authors' self-representation is part of dominant literary discourses.

As the global literary system is shaped by postcolonial ideals, the discursive act of self-representation can be seen as a form of response to the often oppressive narratives of postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses, while also being a part of them.[12] I explore these discourses to understand how gendered and postcolonial hierarchies shape the global literary discourse and to see how Sub-Saharan African female authors navigate their identities from within these discourses. My focus on negotiation enables me to explore how Sub-Saharan African female authors both resist and comply with global literary discourses. This thesis contributes to an interdisciplinary field of studies, with gender studies as the main theoretical field, while having a geographical angle as the authors' identities are linked to their countries of birth, as well as where they currently live.

1.2 Purpose, Aim & Research Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how paratexts contribute to discursive constructions of the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses, and how these authors, exemplified by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi and NoViolet Bulawayo, negotiate their identities through paratexts.

The aim of this thesis is to carry out a critical discourse analysis of paratextual elements to understand how the authors are constructed and negotiate their identities. This is done by answering the following research questions:

1. How are the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors constructed in paratexts within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses?

[10] J-A. Mbebe. *On the postcolony*. (University of California Press, 2001), p. 1-5.; N. W. Thiong'o. *Decolonising the mind: the politics of language in African literature*. (Currey, 1986).
[11] A. A. Coly. *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*. (Lexington Books, 2010), p. xx, 28.
[12] C. A. Kapi. *Writing as a cultural negotiation: a study of Mariama Bâ, Marie NDiaye and Ama Ata Aidoo.* Doctoral thesis. (Louisiana State University, 2006). https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_dissertations/947

2. How do these authors negotiate their identities by discursively constructing themselves through self-representation?

1.3 Thesis Structure

Following this introduction, I introduce the selected authors and explain why I chose to focus on authors of fiction, and contextualize the political settings in the countries that the two authors are from. Then, I present the theoretical approaches that frame my study, focusing on postcolonial theory, theory of paratexts, and discourse theory. The following chapter synthesizes previous research in a literature review, presenting relevant existing research and identifying a research gap. I then develop the selected methodology, explaining how I conduct a critical discourse analysis, how I selected the paratexts, and discuss my subjectivity as a researcher and the limitations of my study. Before conducting the analysis, the four selected literary works, whose paratexts are the empirical material, are presented and contextualized. The analysis is divided into two chapters, one for each author. Finally, the study ends with a conclusion where my research questions are answered.

2. Authors and Political Settings

I have chosen two authors as cases for my thesis: Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi and NoViolet Bulawayo. Because of my linguistic limitation, I have chosen Sub-Saharan African female authors whose fictional works are originally written in English, and who have pursued their careers as authors in Western countries; the UK for Makumbi and the US for Bulawayo. Both authors are currently active as authors in Western countries and have large audiences there.

The reasons for choosing Makumbi and Bulawayo are several: they both explicitly question postcolonial narratives within their fictional works, which I see as a layer of identity negotiation, operating within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses, but questioning them from within. Furthermore, both authors write fiction that is imbued with political critique, both toward their country of origin and the country in which they currently reside. Bulawayo does this explicitly by writing fictional stories set in political crises, while Makumbi does it in between the lines as her books are inspired by Ugandan folklore. Moreover, both authors write fiction set in and/or about their respective home countries. The two authors are from different countries (Zimbabwe and Uganda) and currently live in different countries (the US and the UK). I chose them because of their identities and their similar contexts of being Sub-Saharan African female authors writing fiction in English; however, they are separate individuals, and their paratexts are analyzed separately. I focus on paratexts around fiction because fictional works generally have a broader audience than, for instance, scholarly texts that primarily have academics as intended receivers. Thus, paratexts surrounding fictional works reach the public in a more accessible way than paratexts around other, more specific kinds of texts, as they exist within a global literary market. Furthermore, authors of fiction are usually discussed in different contexts, implying that their identities are constructed by paratexts from different parts of social life, whereas authors of scholarly texts are usually primarily known within academic contexts, and theories tend to get more attention than authors.

As I focus on the identity construction of Sub-Saharan African female authors, fictional literary works provide me with a great number of paratexts, as fictional works always have physical paratexts (peritexts) that other texts do not always have, such as book covers with institutional quotes. Paratexts around fictional works are also preferred in terms of exploring the negotiation of authorial identities, as authors of fiction are often invited by dominant voices within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses to express their own voices in relation to their literary works and themselves as authors.

What follows is a short description of the two chosen authors, and a brief historical and political context through which their fiction is written. The reason for this is to contextualize the analysis further, as their fiction is essentially commenting on the political climate of their respective home countries.

2.1 Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi (Uganda/UK)

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi was born in 1967 in Kampala, Uganda, five years after independence in 1962.[13] She currently lives in the United Kingdom where she teaches creative writing as well as works on her own texts. In 1998, she started writing fiction while teaching at an international school in Uganda, and moved to the UK in 2001 to pursue doctoral studies.[14] Makumbi grew up during Idi Amin's dictatorship in Uganda, which has permeated her fictional writing.[15] Amin came to power through a military coup in 1971, bringing an optimistic feeling of hope after the previous president who had divided the country into North and South by driving an ongoing fight against feudalism in the South.[16] However, that hope disappeared quickly, as Amin forcibly removed some ethnic groups from the military and declared Kiswahili as the national language, mostly because it was the language of the military.[17] This was met with resistance from the tribal Buganda kingdom, which wanted to see the Indigenous language Luganda as the national language.[18]

Makumbi's literary works are originally written in English, but have elements from Luganda that are not translated into English directly but are understood by the context of the story.[19] Her most recent novel, *The First Woman*, addresses Amin's dictatorship, as well as the war that broke out between Uganda and Tanzania in 1978 when Tanzania's president refused to recognize Amin's regime because of how it came into power.[20] The President of Tanzania at the time of Amin's military coup and throughout his presidency was an ally of the former president of Uganda, whom Amin forced to leave office.[21] This war imbues the narratives in Makumbi's *The First Woman*.[22]

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[13] H. B. Hansen. Uganda in the 1970s: A Decade of Paradoxes and Ambiguities. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7 (1) (2013). https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2012.755315
[14] Makumbi. *Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi: Uganda's First Woman of Fiction, 06:09.*
[15] J. N. Makumbi. *The First Woman*. (Oneworld, 2020).
[16] Hansen. Uganda in the 1970s: A Decade of Paradoxes and Ambiguities, p. 83-84.
[17] Ibid., p. 88-89.
[18] Ibid., p. 88-89.
[19] Makumbi. *The First Woman*.
[20] George Roberts 2014 p. 692; Hansen 2013 p. 92
[21] G. Roberts. The Uganda–Tanzania War, the fall of Idi Amin, and the failure of African diplomacy, 1978–1979. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, *8*(4) (2014), p. 693. https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2014.946236
[22] Makumbi. *The First Woman*.

2.2 NoViolet Bulawayo (Zimbabwe/US)

NoViolet Bulawayo was born in 1981 in Tsholotsho, Zimbabwe, only one year after Zimbabwe had gained official independence from colonial powers.[23] She grew up and lived in the city of Bulawayo in Zimbabwe until she moved to the United States at 18 years old to pursue an education in creative writing.

During Bulawayo's upbringing in Zimbabwe, the country was under the rule of the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), a party that has made several efforts to install a one-party state.[24] Despite their failure to do so, the party is considered authoritarian and militarized, and has been accused of manipulating votes and using violence to ensure its power.[25] From the year of independence, 1980, until 1987, Robert Mugabe, leader of the ZANU-PF, was the prime minister, until he made himself president in 1987. He remained in office until 2017, meaning that he was in power for 37 years. During his presidency, poverty in the country increased, which led to people increasingly working in the informal sector and living in 'illegal' shacks.[26] As a response to this, in 2005, Mugabe and the military ZANU-PF created 'Operation Murambatsvina', translated as 'restore order', which forcibly and violently destroyed the homes and livelihoods of over 700 000 people directly, and affected over 1.7 million people indirectly.[27]

Around the time that Bulawayo left Zimbabwe for the US, an opposition party was formed: the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The MDC grew significantly between 2000 and 2013, but ZANU-PF, with the resources at its hands, kept weakening the opposition with military violence and manipulation.[28] In the election of 2008, five years before the publishing of Bulawayo's debut novel *We Need New Names*, ZANU-PF lost the presidential election, leading to a violent run-off and eventually the formation of a unity government between ZANU-PF and the MDC, however with Mugabe still as president.[29] In 2013, ZANU-PF's representative won the presidential election, followed by a military coup in 2017 when Mugabe was forced to resign and was replaced, but still with a representative of the authoritarian ZANU-PF.[30]

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[23] C. Dendere & M. Tendi. *Understanding the Evolution and State of Democracy in Zimbabwe*. (Africa Growth Initiative, 2025). p. 4 https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/alikhani/Dendere-Tendi-July2025-1.pdf
[24] Dendere & Tendi. *Understanding the Evolution and State of Democracy in Zimbabwe*, p. 5.
[25] Ibid.
[26] D. Potts. 'Restoring Order'? Operation Murambatsvina and the Urban Crisis in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32(2). (2006). https://www.jstor.org/stable/25065092
[27] Dendere & Tendi. *Understanding the Evolution and State of Democracy in Zimbabwe*.
[28] Ibid., p. 6.
[29] Ibid., p. 6.
[30] Ibid., p. 7.

3. Theoretical Approach

This section discusses the theoretical approaches through which the analysis is made. First, I discuss Chandra Talpade Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework and postcolonial theory,[31] followed by Gayatri Spivak's theory on the process of Othering.[32] Then, Gerard Genette's theoretical framework for analyzing paratexts[33] is discussed, closing this section with Michel Foucault's discourse theory[34] to contextualize the analysis.

I am aware that there are other discussions and perspectives on the theories I adopt, however, in relation to researching how the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors are constructed and negotiated in paratexts within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses, these theories have shaped my academic perspectives the most.

3.1 Mohanty – Antiracist Feminist Theory & "Western feminism"

This thesis uses an antiracist feminist theoretical perspective as its framework, based on Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of "Western feminism". Mohanty argues that what she refers to as "Western feminism" discursively colonizes the experiences and identities of women in the "Third World".[35] She criticizes Western feminist perspectives on women in the Third World[36] for homogenizing heterogeneous experiences and discursively constructing the hegemonic identity of "Third World women".[37] The analytical principles of "Western feminism" that discursively construct the identity of an "average Third World woman" toward which Mohanty is aiming her critique, are: the assumption that women are a homogenous group regardless of class or ethnicity; the uncritical way that imagined "universality" is adopted; the political model of power and struggle that is underlying in "Western feminist" methodologies and analyses.[38] This thesis explicitly distances itself from a "Western feminist" type of analysis.

Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework highlights the importance of understanding subjectivity and looking beyond "Western feminism".[39] Furthermore, and especially important for this thesis, Mohanty underscores the tendency of "Western feminism" to victimize all "Third

[31] C. T. Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. (Duke University Press, 2003)
[32] G. C. Spivak. Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (University of Illinois, 1988).
[33] Genette. *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*.
[34] M. Foucault. The Order of Discourse. In Young, R. (ed.). *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader*. (Routledge, 1981); Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*.
[35] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*, p. 19.
[36] *I am using the term "Third World women" when discussing Mohanty's theory as this is what she uses. However, I am aware that it is outdated and I only use it in this thesis in relation to Mohanty's theory. I illustrated this by putting the term in quotation marks.*
[37] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity,* p. 19.
[38] Ibid., p. 21-22.
[39] Ibid.

World women" based on hegemonic and racist stereotypes.[40] She argues that the construction of the identities of "Third World women" is a result of "Western feminism's" tendency to homogenize these women as victims of different socioeconomic systems, such as victims of the colonial process or victims of male violence.[41] To avoid victimizing Bulawayo and Makumbi, I not only apply the theoretical approach of Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework, but also actively contextualize the paratexts in question to be transparent with all of the different parts of the authors' identities. Mohanty exemplifies this in the context of women in India working as lace-makers; they "are not mere victims of the production process, because they resist, challenge, and subvert the process at various junctures."[42] Thus, it is also important to understand that the different parts of the selected authors' identities might be contradictory, considering the postcolonial context and the literary works being parts of a Western capitalist market.

When analyzing the identities of female authors from Sub-Saharan Africa, considering their political status in the global literary system as "Third World female authors" and the stereotypical assumptions that follow, an antiracist feminist perspective highlights that the interpretations of "Third World women's" political position/engagement need to be anchored in historical context.[43] That is, not only seeing all Sub-Saharan African female authors as homogenized political subjects in relation to *issues* (often connected to colonial oppression) and collective identity, but also seeing the differences in political struggle for different women, in relation to specific historical and socioeconomic contexts.[44]

Furthermore, Mohanty explores political consciousness in relation to "Third World women's" writings on feminism.[45] Although she mostly refers to testimonies, she argues that even fictional texts affect how collective history and memory are interpreted, that they can contribute to rewriting the predominantly male-centered history of "Third World women".[46] However, Mohanty also emphasizes that the rewriting of an imagined homogenized female history does not happen simply because texts written by Sub-Saharan African female authors *exist*, but because of *how* they are *read*.[47] Thus, by analyzing paratexts around the chosen authors, this thesis is explicitly investigating exactly what Mohanty argues is central in (re)constructing

[40] Ibid., p. 23-30
[41] Ibid., p. 23.
[42] Ibid., p. 32.
[43] Ibid., p. 48.
[44] Ibid., p. 49.
[45] Ibid., p. 76-84.
[46] Ibid., p. 79-80.
[47] Ibid., p. 77-78.

political consciousness and questioning hegemony: the paratextual translation of authors and their works.

3.1.1 Postcolonialism

As the discourses that are focused on in this thesis, are referred to as 'postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses', postcolonialism is inevitably a theory that needs clarifying. What follows is a brief discussion on what I mean when I say that the literary discourses are postcolonial, following Mohanty's theory.

Postcolonialism refers to an understanding that colonial domination does not stop once a nation gains independence; it just takes new forms.[48] Mohanty argues that colonialism is not only acted through military or political violence, but also through culture, by representing "Third World women" in ways that erase their diversity.[49] What Mohanty refers to as "Western feminism", is a postcolonial way of understanding "Third World women's" experience. Essentially, postcolonialism in this sense is discursive; it is the structural ways through which "Third World women" are represented in discourse, through language, by colonial ideas about 'us vs. them'.[50]

3.2 Spivak: The 'Subaltern' and the 'Other'

Postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak theorizes the postcolonial act of 'Othering'.[51] To be able to conceptualize and analyze the process by which postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses project hegemonic and homogenizing ideas onto the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors, I engage with Spivak's theory of the 'Subaltern' and the 'Other'. Spivak puts Otherness in relation to European-ness, the "Other of Europe".[52] Otherness typically refers to a relational position to a normative identity, it is not exclusively tied to the relation of European-ness.[53] Thus, the construction of "the Other" (Othering) can happen to many different subjects; it is always relative to the present subjects in a specific context.

Spivak uses the concept of *epistemic violence* to describe the process of hegemonic forces constructing the 'Subaltern' or the 'Other' in Eurocentric, thus dominant, narratives of "reality" in the context of history-writing.[54] Historically, epistemic violence has been used by European colonizers to erase and/or alter colonized peoples' voices and knowledges, often to legitimize

[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., p. 17.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Spivak. *Can the subaltern speak?*
[52] Ibid., p. 280.
[53] Ibid., p. 280.
[54] Ibid., p. 281.

colonization and imperialism.[55] Although Spivak talks about epistemic violence in relation to history-writing during colonization, the process of altering or erasing peoples' voices in order to construct them as the 'Other' also happens in postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses.[56] Considering that epistemic violence frames hegemonic narratives as "reality", by pairing Spivak's theory with Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework, Sub-Saharan African female authors' fictional writing could be seen as a way of rewriting their history, counteracting epistemic violence by claiming their voices.[57]

As Spivak is known for the theory of the 'Subaltern' and the argument that this category of people has no voice in the discourse that constitutes the world, I find it important to disclaim that I do *not* suggest that Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi and NoViolet Bulawayo are constructed as 'Subalterns'. I adopt Spivak's theory to be able to analyze how the process of 'Othering' is visible in paratexts surrounding the authors. Spivak makes an important distinction between the two categorizations.

The category of the 'Subaltern' implies not only a marginalization in relation to normative subjects, but a representational and political exclusion as well as a disregard of voices.[58] This distinction of definitions between the constructed 'Other' and the constructed 'Subaltern' is significant for this thesis because of the position of the authors in hegemonic discourse. The fact that paratexts, especially peritexts, exist in direct relation to the chosen authors' literary works, implies that they are not 'Subaltern' subjects – they *are* represented, both by themselves and by paratexts (such as being published at all).[59]

3.3 Genette's Theory of Paratexts

To be able to execute an analysis of paratexts, there is a need to define what constitutes a paratext for this thesis. I base my definition of paratext on Gérard Genette's theory of paratexts and interpretations of texts. A *paratext*, generally, is what makes a text turn into a book: a title, a preface, a blurb, a book review, to name a few.[60] However, to determine if something is paratext, one must identify the different parts of a potential paratextual element. This is done, according to Genette's model, by identifying the following five aspects of the element; (1) the location of the paratext, (2) its original publishing date, (3) the mode in which it exists, (4) who is sending the message of the paratext and who is its intended receiver, (5) and what the paratext

[55] Ibid., p. 280-294.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Spivak. Can the subaltern speak?; Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*, p. 77-78.
[58] Spivak. Can the subaltern speak?
[59] Ibid.
[60] Genette. *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*.

is intended to achieve.[61] If all these factors can be identified, it is a paratext. Paratexts are made up of *peritexts* and *epitexts*, where the former entails that the element exists in the same mode that the text does, such as a preface or a title, and the latter refers to elements that are not physically tied to the text but operate as a paratextual element from a distance, such as interviews with the author in media.[62] Furthermore, *factual paratexts* are elements that are of significance for this thesis, namely, an existing fact that offers an additional dimension to the text by simply being known.[63]

Factual paratexts relevant for this thesis are mainly the gender of the author as well as the author's country of origin. Genette also considers the concept of an author owning a literary prize to be a factual paratext, however, I view this more as an epitext because of the extensive number of contemporary literary prizes, compared with when Genette's text was originally published almost 40 years ago. All of this to say, literary prizes as paratexts are of interest to this thesis, as the statement that an author has received a literary prize is often part of the peritext of a text in the form of a notice on the cover of the book. Furthermore, factual paratexts are not always known to all readers, but they make a significant difference in how the text is perceived by the readers who are aware of them.[64]

Genette argues that paratexts produce meaning, which alone stands as an argument for why this thesis applies a discourse analysis on paratexts.[65] However, Genette also argues that a paratext is "fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its raison d'etre. This something is the text."[66] Thus, Genette understands a paratext to be exclusively serving the text. Despite the fact that his theory of how to determine a paratextual element is applied as a theoretical approach, this thesis differs from his understanding of what a paratext serves. I approach the paratext as a key site of discursive identity construction that not only serves the original text, but markets, institutions, and postcolonial and gendered power structures.

In other words, Genette's theory is adopted in terms of how to analyze a paratextual element, his theoretical understanding of what a paratext embodies is not included. Furthermore, Genette explicitly states that the theory on paratexts and interpretation is limited to Western literature, which could be a direct connection to the argument that a paratext solely exists to serve the

[61] Ibid., p. 4.
[62] Ibid., p. 5.
[63] Ibid., p. 7.
[64] Ibid., p. 8.
[65] Ibid., p. 12.
[66] Ibid., p. 12.

original text.[67] A text that is identified as Western literature might have the privilege of having its paratexts somewhat only serve the text itself, but paratexts surrounding a text that is written by a female author from Sub-Saharan Africa cannot escape operating within hegemonic power structures.

3.2.2 Critique of Genette

As mentioned above, Genette's theory of paratexts is almost 40 years old, implying that there are newer thinkers on the subject of paratextual analyses. To motivate why I adopt such an old framework, I present some scholarly critique of his theory and argue for why it is still useful for my research.

Genette's framework has received critique from scholars saying that the theory is limited by only focusing on texts that are printed, excluding for instance digital paratexts.[68] As a consequence, the framework does not have a clear structure for how to analyze digital paratexts. As Genette established this framework almost 40 years ago, I do not see it as a limitation that digital paratexts are not explicitly included, but as an opportunity to apply the framework to new and contemporary paratexts. Thus, although the framework's original context historically refers to print culture, the concepts established in this framework are still valuable and adaptable to other contexts. In this thesis, I use Genette's framework on both printed and digital paratexts.

Furthermore, the framework has been criticized for being vague regarding how to differentiate between text and paratext.[69] Critics argue that Genette's framework is sometimes contradictory and ambiguous about the boundaries that separate text and paratext, especially when the text is not printed or material, making it difficult for scholars to create a system that helps their research in practice.[70] However, I believe that the ambiguity of what differentiates a text from a paratext is one of the reasons that this framework still is relevant, it allows later scholars to adjust it to contemporary contexts.

One critique of Genette's framework that is essential to my thesis is that of the limited consideration he gives to the ideological factors in paratexts.[71] Jerome McGann argues that texts and paratexts must be analyzed as a part of social context, that they are material and must be

[67] Ibid., p. 12.
[68] . J. A. Gray. Show sold separately: promos, spoliers, and other media paratexts. (New York University Press, 2010); D. Birke, & B. Christ. Paratext and Digitized Narrative: Mapping the Field. Narrative, 21(1) (2013). http://www.jstor.org/stable/23321837
[69] Birke & Christ. Paratext and Digitized Narrative: Mapping the Field, p. 69; Gray. *Show sold separately: promos, spoilers, and other media paratexts;* J. J. McGann. *The Textual Condition*. (Princeton University Press, 1991).
[70] Birke & Christ. Paratext and Digitized Narrative: Mapping the Field, p. 69-70.
[71] McGann. *The Textual Condition*

treated as material, in contrast to Genette's abstract stance on paratexts and their materialism.[72] Thus, the framework cannot be used alone to analyze how the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors are constructed in paratexts, it must be paired with critical approaches that add nuance. Hence, I combine Genette's framework with Mohanty and Spivak's critical approaches, which adds the perspective of analyzing ideological factors within paratexts.

Genette's framework for analyzing paratexts is foundational enough in its conceptualization for it to still be relevant, not despite but because of the critique. The critique shows that the framework is unstable and can be adapted to paratexts of different modes, which makes it more reliable over time.

3.4 Foucault's Discourse Theory

Since the primary methodology of this thesis is a critical discourse analysis, it is relevant to apply a theoretical approach to the concept of *discourse*. I engage with Michel Foucault's discourse theory, which views the subject as a product of the different factors in a specific discourse.[73] Important to note is that although I engage with Foucault's theoretical approach to discourse, I do not execute a Foucauldian discourse analysis. I differentiate between discourse theory and critical discourse analysis as a method because it is important to understand that the theory guides my analysis in *why* it is a fitting framework for this study, and the method in *how* to carry out the analysis on my empirical material. This is further discussed in the methodology chapter.

A discourse is a system that categorizes the world into notions of *understanding*; it gives meaning to language and thus shapes the world as we understand it[74]; however, Foucault views discourse as not only structural language, but as something that shapes power and knowledge by constructing imagined "truths" which affect how we perceive reality.[75] Connecting Foucault's discourse theory to the discourse that this thesis investigates – that of which is constituted by paratexts around the selected authors and their works – implies that the discourse created by paratexts shapes how the authors are perceived, thus constructing their identities. Furthermore, Foucault discusses the power of discourse and the inability of subjects to escape the frames (constructions) of different discourses. Thinking about the inequalities of discourse,

[72] Ibid.
[73] Foucault. The Order of Discourse, p. 69.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*.

it is not unusual for people to express a wish to stand outside of discourse and have the "truth" of reality exist passively, without power relations and exclusion.[76]

In relation to this, Foucault argues that institutions expect subjects to speak out against the power of discourse and that there is an institutional system through which such subjects are domesticated and controlled.[77] Referring to Foucault's discourse theory and the tendency of institutional control to withhold the hegemonic power that discourse embodies, I argue that paratexts can constitute institutional control in the construction of the authors' identities.[78]

Taken together, these four theoretical approaches by Mohanty, Spivak, Genette, and Foucault, make up the framework of my study, providing me with an understanding of how to navigate postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses through analyzing paratexts.

[76] Ibid., p. 215-216.
[77] Ibid., p. 215-216.
[78] Ibid.

4. Literature review

This section presents previous research that situates my thesis within relevant existing research. I first draw upon research on how paratexts contribute to the construction of identities, situating my study within paratextual studies.[79] Then, I present previous research on literary prizes and how they contribute to an imagined 'global' category of literature, to understand what has already been researched in the context of the global literary system and African authors.[80] This is followed by looking at research that emphasizes the problem of alteration of paratexts for Western consumption,[81] as well as studies that explore different forms of feminist expression beyond "Western feminism" within African fiction.[82] I then look at what previous research has found on authorial negotiation of identity,[83] and how authors construct fictional characters in postcolonial contexts.[84] Finally, I identify the research gaps within the current literature, relating my study to previous research to understand what my research contributes with.

4.1 Paratexts Constructing Identity

Previous research has shown that paratextual elements, especially peritexts, can provide an understanding of the identity of the main text, as well as the author of the main text, and the paratexts themselves are seen as a space of negotiation.[85]

Paratextual elements, especially peritexts, are treated as central in the understanding of linguistic translation of literature.[86] When a non-Western literary work is translated into Western languages and cultures, publishers often assume the author's position or values on something,

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[79] A. Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines." *Social Dynamics* 47(2) (2021). P. 211. https://doi.org/10.1080/02533952.2021.1958300; M. Al-Batineh & M. Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 11(1) (2024). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2417468; Lundahl. Kvinnor, vithet och de andras litteratur.

[80] J. English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value.* (Harvard University Press, 2005); N. Suhr-Sytsma. The Geography of Prestige: Prizes, Nigerian Writers, and World Literature. *English Literary History*, 85(4) (2018). https://www.jstor.org/stable/26802864; D. Pucherová. "A Continent Learns to Tell its Story at Last": Notes on the Caine Prize. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 48(1) (2012); D. Kiguru. Prizing African literature: creating a literary taste. *Social Dynamics*, 42(1) (2016). https://doi.org/10.1080/02533952.2016.1158484

[81] V. Steemers. *Francophone African narratives and the Anglo-American book market : ferment on the fringes*. (Lexington Books, 2021; Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English; Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."

[82] R. U. Davies. Gender Issues for Social Reformation in Contemporary African Women's Fiction. *European Modern Studies Journal*, 7(2), (2023). https://doi.org/10.59573/emsj.7(2).2023.06; N. Hamidouche. *The Role of Language, Realism and Resistance in the Construction of African Postcolonial Female Authorial Identities*. [PhD thesis] (University of Bath, 2022). https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/en/studentTheses/the-role-of-language-realism-and-resistance-in-the-construction-o/; Coly. *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*.

[83] Kapi. *Writing as a cultural negotiation: a study of Mariama Bâ, Marie NDiaye and Ama Ata Aidoo*; Hamidouche. *The Role of Language, Realism and Resistance in the Construction of African Postcolonial Female Authorial Identities*.

[84] H. S. Fnteel & H. H. Yasir. The Formation and Representation of Identity in the Works of Arundhati Roy and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. *Journal of Education Review Provision*, 3(2), (2023). https://doi.org/10.55885/jerp.v3i2.273; A. M. Opumbi, L. Ndede, M. Amimo. The Construction of Fragile Identities: African Women's Narratives of Post-colonial Trauma in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions and Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus. *Journal of Linguistics, Literary and Communication Studies*, 4(2) (2025). https://doi.org/10.58721/jllcs.v4i2.1269; L-M. Caraivan. Rewriting Herstory: Women from Micro-Histories to South African Fiction. *Gender Studies* West University of Timisoara, 24(1) (2025). https://doi.org/10.2478/genst-2025-0008

[85] Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."

[86] Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English.

resulting in paratexts communicating things about the author or their values that were not communicated in the original edition of the book.[87] Paratexts meaning different things in different contexts is something I explore in my analysis, although the original version of the main text is in English.

Furthermore, paratextual elements in the form of epitexts are spaces of ideological pursuance, where external actors construct authors, often in terms of dominant narratives.[88] Colonial legacies are visible in paratexts and receptions of literature by Sub-Saharan African female authors, thus the works are read through a postcolonial lens, constructing the authors in relation to their works.[89] They are constructed as representing "women's issues", writing fiction based on anticolonialism, anticapitalism and antipatriarchy.[90]

Lundahl frames this construction in what she refers to as *välvillighetsdiskursen* (English: the benevolence discourse (my translation)), which implies that white feminists implicitly construct their own identities by explicitly constructing women of color's identities as opposing, wanting to give Othered women a space, but doing it on Western terms.[91] Furthermore, comparing presentations of female versus male authors from Africa, female authors are more often presented in the context of their family situation than male authors.[92] Thus, the paratexts operate within intersectional power structures of both gendered and racialized power, as the "benevolence discourse" is connected to white women wanting to "save" women of color.

4.2 Literary Prizes and 'Global Literature'

Literary prizes have been an institutional symbol of achievement and prestige within the global literary discourse for many years.[93] James English's book on cultural prizes discusses the role of global literary prizes, using the first Nobel Literature Prize awarded to an author from Africa in 1986 as a discussion point.[94] Critics at the time meant that this author would reproduce colonial stereotypes on African culture, arguing that for him to "embrace the award, to view it as a great honor, was, in this view, a way of rejecting indigenous and vernacular culture in favor of global European hegemony."[95] This set the tone for future 'global' literary prizes.

[87] Ibid.
[88] Lundahl. Kvinnor, vithet och de andras litteratur.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., p. 116.
[91] Ibid., p. 127.
[92] Ibid., p. 117.
[93] English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value*.
[94] Ibid., p. 298-299.
[95] Ibid., p. 299.

Researchers often find that contemporary literary prizes that claim to be 'global' or 'international', construct African authors in terms of how they express their imagined 'African-ness', not in terms of nationality.[96] Two such prizes that are often mentioned in research projects on literary prizes and the construction of 'African literature' in relation to 'global literature', are the Caine Prize for African Writing and the Commonwealth Short Story Prize.

The Caine Prize for African Writing is based in London and presents the annual winner at an award in Oxford, awarding them with £10 000.[97] While the Caine Prize for African Writing rewards published works, the Commonwealth Short Story prize focuses on unpublished works in different geographical areas part of the Commonwealth association, one of them being Africa, and the winner receives £5000.[98] Furthermore, literary prizes such as these are part of a 'global' or 'world' literature which, through institutional power, creates and reproduces a category of literature that thrives on symbolic capital rather than economic.[99]

Moreover, English offers a critical standpoint in the conversation of 'global literature' as a literary category which argues that 'global literature' is a commodity most often "made for Euro-American consumption, masquerading as a representative form of indigenous cultural expression."[100] In this sense, literary prizes reproduce postcolonial ideas of stories that represent a "culture" as a homogenized entity while excluding other storytelling traditions.

The Caine Prize for African Writing, had, up until 2012, an eligibility criterion that for a literary work to be considered for the prize, it had to contain subjects of "African sensibilities".[101] Although this criterion was removed, the Caine Prize for African Writing is still one of many 'global' literary prizes that focus on 'African writing' in a postcolonial way. It constructs the identity of being an African author in terms of sociopolitical conditions rather than nationality or the usage of local storytelling techniques.[102] While the prize appears to focus on African fiction as one imagined genre, fictional works are not eligible for the prize unless they are either written in English or translated into English, which excludes any African literature that only exists in an Indigenous language.[103]

[96] Suhr-Sytsma. The Geography of Prestige: Prizes, Nigerian Writers, and World Literature. ; Pucherová. "A Continent Learns to Tell its Story at Last": Notes on the Caine Prize, p. 14.
[97] Suhr-Sytsma. The Geography of Prestige: Prizes, Nigerian Writers, and World Literature, p. 1094.
[98] Kiguru. Prizing African literature: creating a literary taste, p. 161.
[99] English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value.*
[100] Ibid., p. 307.
[101] Suhr-Sytsma. The Geography of Prestige: Prizes, Nigerian Writers, and World Literature, p. 1098.
[102] Ibid., p. 1098.
[103] Suhr-Sytsma. The Geography of Prestige: Prizes, Nigerian Writers, and World Literature, p. 1098.

4.3 Reframing Paratexts for the Imagined Consumer

Western publishers reframe both the text and the peritexts of literary works of Sub-Saharan African authors to fit a hegemonic Western audience.[104] This is especially evident in works translated from an African language to a European language, thus, the peritexts are also "translated" in a sense. Altering original meanings to fit a specific audience, does not serve the original meaning of the text, although it can popularize a literary work.[105] Similarly, white editors of African magazines mediate paratexts to fit a certain type of consumer.[106]

Taken together, these findings indicate that paratexts, especially peritexts, are often altered by institutional actors such as editors, translators, and publishers to serve a specific purpose. Such purposes might be to increase popularity among Western readers to enhance the sales of a book[107], to highlight one ideology to attract a certain reader[108], or to increase popularity among targeted readers by using stereotypes[109].

4.4 African Literature and Gender

Scholars argue that African female authors challenge "Western feminism" by incorporating other feminist theories in their fictional works.[110] Davies investigates the different feminist-related topics that African female authors cover in fictional works, and highlights the importance of an inclusive feminism in fiction.[111] While this is useful, it is not enough to simply look at fictional texts and conclude that African female authors reject "Western feminism"; this statement requires an analysis of the construction of the author's identity. Coly develops this thought by engaging with gender and post-nationalism in relation to female authors' Francophone African literature, criticizing the post-nationalism discourse that has imbued this category of literature.[112]

Where Davies argues that African female authors explicitly challenge "Western feminism", Coly argues that authors are, in addition to rejecting "Western feminism", also rejecting the concept of post-nationalism.[113] Furthermore, the concept of post-nationalism, that the nation

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[104] Steemers. *Francophone African narratives and the Anglo-American book market : ferment on the fringes*; Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English; Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."
[105] Steemers. *Francophone African narratives and the Anglo-American book market : ferment on the fringes*.
[106] Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."
[107] Steemers. *Francophone African narratives and the Anglo-American book market : ferment on the fringes*.
[108] Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English.
[109] Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."
[110] Davies. Gender Issues for Social Reformation in Contemporary African Women's Fiction; Hamidouche. *The Role of Language, Realism and Resistance in the Construction of African Postcolonial Female Authorial Identities*.; Coly. *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*.
[111] Davies. Gender Issues for Social Reformation in Contemporary African Women's Fiction, p. 54.
[112] Coly, *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*.
[113] Ibid.

state is no longer a main frame for constructions of identity, does not apply to postcolonial identities, as postcolonial nations are "the product of anticolonial liberation movements.".[114] Therefore, one cannot read Sub-Saharan African female authors' fiction through a lens of post-nationalism.[115] On the contrary, the emotional, cultural and political connection to the postcolonial nation is imbuing the literary works, often through negotiation of identity in the context of what "home" is between the postcolonial nation and the current nation of residence.[116]

4.5 Negotiation of Identity

Sub-Saharan African female authors negotiate cultural and gendered identity positions through their fiction in a male-dominated literary field, "not by opposition to western cultural paradigms or their patriarchal African counterparts, but by negotiation."[117] Furthermore, Kapi argues that authors who have pursued education in a Western country can feel the need to negotiate their identities; they may experience a kind of cultural "alienation" towards their home country after identifying with Western education.[118] Thus, authors construct their identities as part of both Western and African culture by creating fiction about their home countries after pursuing Western education.

One specific way in which Sub-Saharan African female authors often negotiate their identities is through *linguistic hybridity* within their literature.[119] This entails writing fiction in a "colonial" language to reach a bigger audience, but including words and concepts in Indigenous tongues that only make sense in the context of the country the author is writing about.[120] Another way in which identity negotiation is illustrated within fictional works is the way that African writers that operate within the global literary market write about and through both African and European norms and traditions, refusing to succumb to only one.[121]

4.6 Postcolonial Constructions of Fictional Characters

Although there is not an extensive amount of contemporary research on the explicit construction of Sub-Saharan female authors' identities, especially not through paratexts, the field of authors constructing postcolonial fictional characters in ways that challenge the dominant narratives on

[114] Ibid., p. xx.
[115] Ibid., p. xx.
[116] Ibid., p. xxvi.
[117] Kapi. *Writing as a cultural negotiation: a study of Mariama Bâ, Marie NDiaye and Ama Ata Aidoo*, p. 196
[118] Ibid., p. 47.
[119] Ibid., p. 110.
[120] Ibid., p. 46-78.
[121] Hamidouche. *The Role of Language, Realism and Resistance in the Construction of African Postcolonial Female Authorial Identities*, p. 254, 270.

the imagined 'Other' is more researched. My thesis does not analyze fictional characters or how they are constructed, however, it is relevant to understand what knowledge this kind of research has brought to the field, as it is a form of identity construction.

Fictional characters in postcolonial settings, written by authors from colonized nations, often have complex identities that mirror the realities of having an identity that is connected to the postcolonial nation and the often Western country of residence.[122] Postcolonial authors' inclusion of identity discussions in fiction contributes to forming a more inclusive society, as readers are exposed to marginalized voices.[123]

Previous research shows that Sub-Saharan African female authors re-write historical female narratives and incorporate postcolonial trauma in the identities of fictional characters, thus negotiating the identities of their characters.[124] Authors are described as challenging hegemonic narratives by constructing historical identities from an intersectional perspective.[125] Fictional female characters are described as negotiating their "fragile identities", as a result of gendered violence based in colonialism and patriarchy.[126] However, Sub-Saharan African female authors do not construct these characters as passive victims of said power structures, but as subjects of hybridity who constantly negotiate their identities between "tradition and modernity".[127]

4.7 Research Gaps

By reviewing relevant scholarly literature, I have identified research gaps that my thesis aims to address. Authorial identities are mostly researched through analyses of main texts (fiction), not paratexts,[128] while constructions of postcolonial identities are researched through analyses of fictional characters, not authors.[129] Most of the literature on paratexts and identity construction does not consider self-representative paratexts – the focus is mostly on editorial or external paratexts, essentially victimizing the authors by talking about them as passive victims

[122] Fnteel & Yasir. The Formation and Representation of Identity in the Works of Arundhati Roy and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.; Opumbi, Ndede, Amimo. The Construction of Fragile Identities: African Women's Narratives of Post-colonial Trauma in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions and Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus.
[123] Fnteel & Yasir. The Formation and Representation of Identity in the Works of Arundhati Roy and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, p. 64.
[124] Caraivan. Rewriting Herstory: Women from Micro-Histories to South African Fiction.; Opumbi, Ndede, Amimo. The Construction of Fragile Identities: African Women's Narratives of Post-colonial Trauma in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions and Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus.
[125] Caraivan. Rewriting Herstory: Women from Micro-Histories to South African Fiction, p. 192.
[126] Ibid., p. 95.
[127] Ibid., p. 95.
[128] Hamidouche. *The Role of Language, Realism and Resistance in the Construction of African Postcolonial Female Authorial Identities*; Coly, *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*; Davies. Gender Issues for Social Reformation in Contemporary African Women's Fiction.
[129] Fnteel & Yasir. The Formation and Representation of Identity in the Works of Arundhati Roy and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; Caraivan. Rewriting Herstory: Women from Micro-Histories to South African Fiction; Opumbi, Ndede, Amimo. The Construction of Fragile Identities: African Women's Narratives of Post-colonial Trauma in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions and Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus.

of hegemonic discourse.[130] Research on how paratexts are altered to appeal to a Western audience focuses on how this affects the main text and the reception of the main text.[131] My thesis adds to this by analyzing how literary prizes as paratexts contribute to the construction of Sub-Saharan African female authors' identities.

Sub-Saharan African female authors' negotiation of identity is not extensively researched. The research that exists looks at negotiation in strategies of writing, not through paratexts.[132] Thus, my thesis provides a nuanced contribution to the understanding of authorial identity negotiations; however, because I focus on paratexts and not main texts, concepts such as linguistic hybridity, as previous research found as a type of identity negotiation,[133] are not central to my research, but the previous research provides an understanding of the need for exploring paratexts. Finally, literary prizes are researched in terms of how they create an imagined category of 'global literature' and focus on the construction and representation of African *literature* rather than on the construction of authorial identities.[134] Nonetheless, I draw on their work in my analysis to understand how literary prizes as paratexts construct the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses.

[130] Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."; Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English; Lundahl. Kvinnor, vithet och de andras litteratur.
[131] Steemers. *Francophone African narratives and the Anglo-American book market : ferment on the fringes*; Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English; Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."
[132] Kapi. *Writing as a cultural negotiation: a study of Mariama Bâ, Marie NDiaye and Ama Ata Aidoo*; Hamidouche. *The Role of Language, Realism and Resistance in the Construction of African Postcolonial Female Authorial Identities*.
[133] Kapi. *Writing as a cultural negotiation: a study of Mariama Bâ, Marie NDiaye and Ama Ata Aidoo*, p. 196.
[134] English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value;* Suhr-Sytsma. The Geography of Prestige: Prizes, Nigerian Writers, and World Literature; Kiguru. Prizing African literature: creating a literary taste; Pucherová. "A Continent Learns to Tell its Story at Last": Notes on the Caine Prize. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*.

5. Methodology

This chapter presents my main method, critical discourse analysis, explaining what parts of the method I centralize and how it relates to my study. Moreover, I explain my process of selecting the paratexts, guided by Genette's theory of paratexts. Finally, I discuss my subjectivity as a researcher, and this study's limitations.

5.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

To understand how the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors are constructed in paratexts within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses, I conduct a critical discourse analysis (CDA) inspired by Norman Fairclough. Fairclough argues that discourse constructs many aspects of social practice, mainly identities, relations between different identities, and knowledge; how it is understood and what kind of knowledge is normalized.[135] As I analyze the discursive construction of identities, this methodological framework is strongly fitting. A CDA analyzes communicative events, such as paratexts, and aims to understand how semiotic and other specific features of a communicative event are a part of a bigger social context, and that the social context is part of the communicative event.[136] Furthermore, the focus of a CDA is to reveal power structures and imbalances, motivated by advocating for social change.[137]

Applying Fairclough's framework of a CDA, I analyze three dimensions of the paratexts that allow me to understand how different aspects interact with each other and become discourse: communicative text, the bigger discursive practice of which the text is a part, and social practice.[138]

First, *communicative text* refers not only to written text but also to anything that communicates something, whether it is written text, an illustration, or verbal communication.[139] For analyzing the text itself, I focus on what is actually being communicated in the communicative event and how it is presented. For instance, when analyzing an interview with one of the authors, I not only analyze *what* they are communicating (as in what they are saying), but also *how* they communicate.

[135] Fairclough. *Discourse and Social Change*, p. 238.
[136] L. Chouliaraki & N. Fairclough. *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. (Edinburgh University Press, 1999). P. 113.
[137] Chouliaraki & Fairclough. *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*.
[138] Ibid., p. 113.
[139] Ibid., p. 113.

Second, *discursive practice* focuses on how the semiotics of a text are understood and refers to the process of a specific text becoming part of a discourse, within which the actor(s) of the text operate. In this sense, discursive practice illustrates a bridge between the specific semiotics of a communicative text and connects it to the structures of society.[140]

Third, *social practice* is what constitutes social life, it is the ways in which we as social people act in relation to different discourses.[141] In a CDA, social practice refers to the system of social structures that the communicative text is a part of, and the analysis of social practice focuses on power relations and how different social positions internalize different ways of thinking and acting within a discourse.[142] Furthermore, social practice, as the discursive practice, also illustrates a bridge between the text and social structures, although not focusing on semiotics but on how abstract social structures relate to specific events in the general discourse. Thus, the analytical dimension of social practice focuses on the relationship between the micro-level of a social practice within a discourse, and the macro-level of social structures.[143]

In addition to, and for the analysis of these three dimensions to answer my research questions, I adopt Fairclough's five-stage framework, within which the three dimensions mentioned above are analyzed. The five-stage framework is designed specifically for CDA, where the first stage is always identifying a problem related to discourse, which was done in the introduction of this thesis.[144] The second, third and fourth stages are all considered in my analysis: the second stage of this framework is the analysis of the *obstacles* that hinder the problem from being solved.[145] At this stage, the three dimensions (communicative text, discursive practice & social practice) are the focus of analysis. This includes the analysis of the *communicative text* (the paratexts), identifying what parts of *social practice* the discourse primarily internalizes, and investigating both structure and interaction of the *discursive practice*.[146] These three dimensions are analyzed together, and aim at identifying and understanding "structural obstacles to change".[147]

The third stage is the analysis of the *function* of the discourse-related problem, which focuses not only on why the problem exists, but also on what kind of ideological structures the problem enables further.[148] Thus, this stage of the analysis looks at both the reason for hegemonic

[140] Ibid., p. 58, 63.
[141] Ibid., p. 21.
[142] Ibid., p. 61-62.
[143] Ibid., p. 38.
[144] Ibid., p. 60.
[145] Ibid., p. 60.
[146] Ibid., p. 60-63.
[147] Ibid., p. 64.
[148] Ibid., p. 65.

constructions of the authors' identities and the power systems they sustain. The obstacle and the function of the problem are closely connected, however, while the obstacles focus on what is happening and how it is a structural problem within discourse and social practice, the function of the problem further deepens the analysis to an understanding of the ideology behind the obstacle.[149] In analyzing the obstacle and the function, the paratext, exemplifying the problem, should be treated as typical.[150] This entails that what can be understood in those specific analyses can be applied to the broader discourse, considering that these two stages focus on structures.

The fourth stage of Fairclough's framework I adopt is identifying and analyzing possible ways *past* the obstacles, focusing on structures and their "incompleteness, their contradictoriness, their gaps, i.e., the properties which keep systems open and make them amenable to transformative action."[151] In my thesis, this stage centralizes negotiations of the authors' identities and contradictions within the discourses. In contrast to the two previous stages, this stage is more data-specific, considering that negotiations are not structural but individual.[152]

The fifth and last stage of this framework is a critical reflection of the research, which I have chosen to divide into the following sections: subjectivity and limitations. Fairclough emphasizes that the stages of this framework do not have to be performed in the order in which they are listed.[153] Thus, my choice is to have the reflection here, in the methodology section.

5.2 Selection of Paratexts

The paratexts are located by identifying the five aspects that constitute a paratextual element following Genette's framework, as discussed under theory. For something to be considered a paratextual element, the following aspects need to be clear: location, publishing date, mode of existence, sender and receiver, and intended achievement.[154] These aspects are identified within all the paratexts discussed. The analysis is divided by authors, because although they somewhat represent the identity of Sub-Saharan African female authors in this thesis, they are individual authors and analyzed as such.

The selection of paratexts has been made in terms of what is available and what I found most informative in relation to my research questions. As some paratexts about the authors are

[149] Ibid., p. 60-65.
[150] Ibid., p. 65
[151] Ibid., p. 65.
[152] Ibid., p. 65.
[153] Ibid., p. 59.
[154] Genette. *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*, p.4.

relevant for both of their books, the analysis is not divided by the different books, but by paratexts and themes within each paratext.

The empirical material of the analysis consists of seven paratexts, three for Makumbi and four for Bulawayo. The reason for having one more for Bulawayo is that I analyze two digital interviews of hers that are 28 and ten minutes, while Makumbi has one comprehensive 48-minute-long interview.[155] To be able to answer my second research question, 'How do these authors negotiate their identities by discursively constructing themselves through self-representation?', I want to be sure that the authors' self-representation is reflected in the selection of paratexts, giving them somewhat equal speech time. Nonetheless, this is not a comparative analysis of the authors, it is an analysis of the discourse, which is why the selected paratexts are both similar and different. I analyze interviews and peritextual elements on both books for both authors. Additionally, for Bulawayo I analyze an article regarding her winning a literary prize for one of her works, while for Makumbi I examine a book review of one of her works.

When looking at peritexts, I focus on written language, not visual modes of discourse such as illustrative book covers. This is an active choice, not because illustrations do not add to the construction of the author's identity, but because they primarily construct the main text. Furthermore, focusing on linguistic rather than visual paratexts is the most appropriate for my approach.

5.3 Subjectivity

This thesis does not produce any new empirical data, but focuses on already existing material: paratexts. This implies that the existing data is interpreted by me as a researcher, and therefore is tied to my positionality and viewed through the specific theories that I have chosen. Considering that I am a white woman from the West, my positionality inevitably affects the analysis. Thus, I actively engage with and adopt Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework. Mohanty questions the tendency of feminist theorists in the West to put their Western-ness as a norm and write about non-Western people from the perspective that they are an "Other".[156] Therefore, I follow Mohanty's example of using quotation marks around "Western feminism"

[155] N. Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo answers readers' questions about 'Glory' | The Booker Prize*. [Video]. The Booker Prizes. (2022). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e4_xpUk6DFI; N. Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo : We Need New Names.* [Video]. Between The Covers Podcast. (2024 [2013]). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a-KIkZrHXc; Makumbi. *Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi: Uganda's First Woman of Fiction.*

[156] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity,* p. 18.

to avoid using it as a norm in my analysis of the construction of female Sub-Saharan African authors' identities.

My academic and personal experiences led me to take an interest in the topic of this thesis. My current master's studies in Social Studies of Gender have influenced and inspired my interest in discursive identity construction, whereas my previous bachelor's studies in Global Studies initiated my interest in gaining insight into the experiences of women who are racialized and whose voices are structurally marginalized.

In contrast to a positivistic view that there is an objective reality, my ontological standpoint is that there is no such thing as objective research, knowledge is always affected by the person who is interpreting it. As a researcher, I am part of the social world in which the identities of authors are discursively constructed, I cannot stand outside it.[157] Furthermore, qualitative research, such as this thesis, will always have the subjectivity of the researcher connected to it in some way.[158] Although I explicitly distance myself as a researcher from "Western feminism" and adopt Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework, I still have the positionality of being culturally and geographically in the West and all the privileges and pre-understandings that come with that.

Nonetheless, I argue that by adopting Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework and incorporating it into the analysis of this thesis, I do not reproduce the analytic principles of "Western feminist" discourse on women in and from the imagined "Third World", as discussed in the theory chapter. However, my positionality does affect what kind of research is part of the literature review and what is understood as not relevant, which shapes the analysis.[159] In other words: my positionality shapes my research, although I am transparent and reflexive about it rather than claiming that my research considers an objective reality.[160]

5.4 Limitations

As discussed above, my subjective position as a researcher has an impact on the results I produce, which implies that my subjectivity is a limitation to this thesis. This is not to say that my research should not be regarded as legitimate, only that it is important not to view my results as 'objective'. My linguistic limitation in only understanding English limits the scope of

[157] A. G. D. Holmes. Researcher positionality–A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research–A new researcher guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education* 8(4) (2020). P. 3. https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232
[158] Holmes. Researcher positionality–A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research–A new researcher guide, p. 4.
[159] Ibid., p. 3.
[160] P. R. Goundar. Researcher Positionality: Ways to Include it in a Qualitative Research Design. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 24 (2025). P. 6. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069251321251

paratexts to analyze. I cannot for instance compare acknowledgements in English with acknowledgements in an Indigenous language. Moreover, my understanding of Indigenous words included in texts is limited to the translations within the text, which also implies that if there is no translation into English, I only understand the word through context. However, this might not be a limitation in this particular thesis, as I explicitly only look at authors who write in English, but in the context of the bigger research field to which this thesis contributes, language can be considered a limitation.

Furthermore, this thesis only analyzes paratexts surrounding *two* Sub-Saharan African female authors. Thus, the results are specific to the chosen authors and the four books (which I present in the next chapter), and are not to be read as representative of Sub-Saharan African female authors as an imagined group. Nonetheless, the results can be read as an *estimation* for how postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses construct the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors, and structural results could be applied generally. But specific results regarding the chosen literary works should only be read in relation to those works and authors. I have also not been in contact with the authors, thus what I present as self-representative paratexts should not be read as the authors' actual or 'authentic' stances, but their public, discursive construction of their own identities.

6. Fictional Works

For the analysis to be as comprehensive as possible, I focus on paratexts around two fictional works from each author. The fictional works have been chosen based on the following criteria:

- being explicitly marketed as a 'novel';
- being originally written in English;
- has won and/or been listed for literary prizes.

These criteria were chosen in consideration of the scope of my study. As my empirical material is paratexts, I focused on explicitly marketed novels because they are published physically, implying that they have extensive peritexts within the physical copies[161], whereas, for instance, short stories are mostly published within another text and do not exist in a mode that includes peritexts, often not an extensive amount of epitexts either.

I do not examine linguistic translations of works, hence the criterion of being originally written in English. If I looked at translated works, there would be another layer of power to consider, acknowledging the role of the translator. The reason for focusing on works that have won and/or been listed for literary prizes is that such works tend to have more paratexts around them, given that such listings *are* paratexts themselves.[162]

Considering these criteria, both authors have only two works each that meet them. Both Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi and NoViolet Bulawayo have published other fictional works, such as short stories, which may be mentioned in the paratexts surrounding the chosen works, however they are not analyzed by peritexts.

Although I do not analyze the fictional works themselves, I have read them to be able to better understand the paratexts and the historical and political contexts of the books. What follows is a summary of each of the four works, with plot details that are relevant for the analysis of paratexts.

6.1 We Need New Names

We Need New Names is NoViolet Bulawayo's debut novel, published in 2013.[163] It focuses on the 10-year-old girl, Darling, whose narrative the reader follows throughout the book. The first half of the book is set in Zimbabwe in the village of Paradise where Darling lives with her mother, and the second half is set in the United States, where Darling moves to live with her

[161] Genette. *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation.*
[162] Ibid.
[163] N. Bulawayo. *We Need New Names*. (Little, Brown and Company, 2013).

aunt. It handles the subject of colonialism, migration, and belonging.[164] In this book, Bulawayo critically engages with Operation Murambatsvina as Darling and her friends live in small shacks that were destroyed during the operation.

Because Darling is a child, she does not know about the operation, or about why the adults scream 'change is coming' when they leave the village to go vote, which refers to the period where the oppositional party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was popularized.[165] Furthermore, Bulawayo refers to the authoritarian ZANU-PF's violence against the MDC when a boy a few years older than Darling is killed by the military because he was putting up flyers pleading for democratic change. Although describing this difficult time in Zimbabwe, the characters are not only depicted in terms of struggle and despair, but also through hope and resistance.

6.2 Glory

Glory was published in 2022 and is Bulawayo's second and most recent published novel.[166] It is a fictional political satire, heavily based on Zimbabwe's political setting in 2017, with the downfall of the authoritarian president from the militarized party ZANU-PF. The book is narrated by animals living in Jidada, an allegorical reference to Zimbabwe. The animals of Jidada suffer from a corrupt government that violently censors anyone who wants change, referring to ZANU-PF's oppositional party: the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Beginning with an Independence Day speech that clearly illustrates the injustice and poverty that the authoritarian regime has reproduced for the animals that inhabit Jidada, the story unfolds as 'the Father of the Nation', referring to former president Robert Mugabe, is forcibly removed from power. This mirrors the 2017 coup in Zimbabwe, where the current president of Zimbabwe, also from the ZANU-PF, came to power, represented in *Glory* by the vice-president horse that takes over after the Father of the Nation meets his downfall. In the book, the Father of the Nation and his allies continuously remind the inhabitants of Jidada that he fought in the war and that he is the reason for Jidada's independence.[167] This is a satire of how Mugabe often referred to himself as a revolutionary leader who brought liberation to Zimbabwe from the British colonialism.

[164] Bulawayo. *We Need New Names*.
[165] Ibid.
[166] N. Bulawayo. *Glory*. (Chatto & Windus, 2022).
[167] Bulawayo. *Glory*.

6.3 Kintu

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi's debut novel *Kintu* was published in 2014.[168] It is her second written book, but the first to be published. The story is inspired by Ugandan folklore and has roots in oral tradition. With a time span from 1750 until 2004, the plot follows the Kintu clan over five generations, centralizing a curse that was brought upon the original Kintu in 1750: Kintu Kidda. Kintu Kidda was a respected governor and he had several wives, although only one that he really loved. He wanted to marry only his true love, Nnakato, but she had a twin, Babirye, and according to tradition, identical twins were one soul, and the first-born twin was the original and the other was merely a copy.[169]

At first, he married only Nnakato, despite her parents' disapproval, and when she could not conceive because she was not the original twin, he had to marry and conceive children with Babirye. Later, as he had taken two wives, parents gave him their daughters for him to marry, which he did because of duty, not because he wanted to. After Babirye had given him four sets of twins, Nnakato was finally able to conceive, and gave birth to a son whom Kintu Kidda decided would inherit his title, despite being the youngest sibling. Kintu Kidda and Nnakato also adopted a son from a widower. When the adopted son dies while accompanying Kintu Kidda on his travels to pay homage to the new king, the widower puts a curse on Kintu's future descendants. This curse follows the Kintu clan, and the reader experiences this in different generations of Kintu.[170]

6.4 The First Woman

The First Woman was published in 2020 and is Makumbi's latest published novel.[171] She started writing this book in 1998 and finished it in 2003 as part of her MA studies. It was rewritten and rejected by publishing houses in 2001, 2005 and 2008.[172] Thus, it is the first book she wrote, but the second to be published. Its US title is *A Girl is A Body of Water*, but I use the UK title when referring to the book, as that is where Makumbi is currently based. The book is set in several parts of Uganda, beginning in the fictional rural village Nattetta, in 1975, four years into Idi Amin's dictatorship. It follows the 12-year-old protagonist Kirabo, a girl who lives in this village with her grandparents, as she grows up during her teenage years and how she

[168] J. N. Makumbi. *Kintu*. (Oneworld, 2014).
[169] Makumbi. *Kintu*, p. 8.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Makumbi. *The First Woman*.
[172] Makumbi. *Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi: Uganda's First Woman of Fiction*.

navigates her world, moving from a rural village to the colonial city of Kampala to get better education.[173]

The war between Uganda and Tanzania affects the plot significantly, as it limits the protagonist's contact with family and friends, forces her to ration her food and negatively affects her education when teachers are unable to be present.[174] Moreover, there is a gendered aspect imbuing the entire story; Kirabo wants to know who her mother is, and during the years that the reader gets to follow her on this journey, she discovers many things about womanhood and feminism, what it means to her and what is expected of her by colonial structures. For instance, the protagonist rejects the word 'feminist' in English, as she associates it with women with "first-world problems", and only identifies with the Luganda word for feminist: mwenkanonkano.[175]

The following chapters contain my analysis of selected paratexts surrounding these four novels, divided by authors but not by literary works, as some paratexts concern both books.

[173] Makumbi. *The First Woman*.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid., p. 219.

7. Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi

7.1 Edinburgh Book Festival – Digital Interview

In August 2020, Makumbi was interviewed for the Edinburgh International Book Festival about *The First Woman*.[176] The book was not published at the time, but the Edinburgh International Book Festival had access to the novel beforehand, so this interview could be seen as a marketing strategy by Makumbi, accepting an interview at a prestigious book festival to talk about and promote her upcoming book. As this took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, the festival was live-streamed and then posted to YouTube for festival-goers to enjoy the festival despite the lockdown in the UK. The interview was held online, with Makumbi in her home and the interviewer on a stage curated for the festival.[177] The title of the interview, 'Uganda's First Woman of Fiction', referring to the title of her book, suggests that there has been no other Ugandan female author writing fiction, constructing Makumbi as a pioneer in her field.

7.1.1 Postcolonial Exercises of Power

The interviewer presents Makumbi as a "novelist, essayist, short-story writer, a teacher, a huge enthusiast for reading and for writing, and known by her fans around the world as the international superstar of Ugandan literature".[178] In this sentence alone, Makumbi's identity is discursively constructed in several ways. First, her identity is constructed in relation to her career and professional life. The word 'enthusiast' suggests that the focus is on the author's *interest* in writing, not skill or talent. Furthermore, as the interviewer continues, the last sentence constructs Makumbi in terms of nationality, while also suggesting that she is more than a national author, as the word 'international' is used. The usage of the word 'international' in this sentence, functions as a contrast to 'Ugandan literature', which is a broad term that is used here to describe a fraction of the literature that Uganda has to offer. The fact that Makumbi's literature is constructed as the representative of 'Ugandan literature' is connected to the construction of her as an 'international superstar'.

Describing Makumbi's work as 'Ugandan literature' in the context of an international book festival in the UK is, to use Spivak's theory, implicitly Othering the literature as well as its author.[179] This is done by including her literature in the festival for its international-ness and representation of an 'Other' literature.[180] As the point of departure in this international book

[176] Makumbi. *Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi: Uganda's First Woman of Fiction*.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid., 03:25-03:41.
[179] Spivak. Can the subaltern speak?
[180] Ibid.

festival is the UK, what is included in the word 'international' must be considered in relation to the UK. Makumbi has lived in the UK for the past 20 years, but is constructed as an international author because of her origins. Thus, by presenting her in this paratext as "the international superstar of Ugandan literature", Makumbi's identity is constructed as an international author who represents national literature. Describing her work this way, instead of either describing it in very general terms as fiction, or actually pinpointing what her stories are about, as they are not capable of representing something as broad and historic as 'Ugandan literature', reveals the power structures within the postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourse of which this book festival is a part.

One obstacle here, to use Fairclough's framework, is the structured way through which Western media represent Sub-Saharan African female authors by being dependent on dominant discourses that rely on postcolonial differentiations between European literature and "Other" literature.[181] Furthermore, the structural way that the word 'international' is understood as something positive in a global literary context, while for Makumbi as a Sub-Saharan African author, going international is the necessary way to capitalize on her books in large quantities, is another obstacle. The ideological function of this problematic understanding of the discourse is to perpetuate the supremacy of Western literary powers through normalizing the representation of Sub-Saharan African female authors as representatives of national literature and constructing global literary discourses as positive and exclusive by using words such as 'international superstar' to describe Othered authors. However, this obstacle also presents discursive contradictions in the form of identity negotiation. These contradictions are analyzed as ways to overcome the obstacle, opening possibilities for social change.[182] The following section discusses this identity negotiation.

7.1.2 Negotiation & Resistance

Although the interviewer constructs Makumbi as an imagined representative of 'Ugandan literature', Makumbi implicitly negotiates her identity by saying that she was once asked to write about "Africans," to which she responded that: "I cannot write about Africa, let alone the whole of Uganda, even the little space I occupy."[183] This was not a direct response to the interviewer's presentation of Makumbi as a representative of 'Ugandan literature'. The quote is part of Makumbi sharing the story of how she started writing *The First Woman*, when a British

[181] Chouliaraki & Fairclough. *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*.
[182] Ibid.
[183] Makumbi. *Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi: Uganda's First Woman of Fiction*, 06:26-06:48.

man came to Uganda and was surprised to see Ugandans working rather than just sitting around waiting for aid. He met Makumbi at the school where they both worked and encouraged her to write "African stories".[184] Despite this quote not being an explicit response to the interviewer's construction, it exists within the same paratext, thus they relate to each other within discourse. While being explicit that her literature is not a representation of Africa or all of Uganda, Makumbi continues to say that she started writing anyway, and that the story of *The First Woman* was the product of that writing.[185]

Here, Makumbi is negotiating her identity by, on the one hand, being a part of the postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourse by partaking in this British book festival and contributing to the system of the global literary market, and on the other hand using the space to promote her new book while clearly opposing the idea that she is representing 'Ugandan literature' as a homogenized entity. To relate this to Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework, Makumbi is not simply a victim of the hegemonic identity construction that is happening in the postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourse of this interview, she is showing resistance by claiming her voice and taking a clear stance that she is in fact not a representative of African or Ugandan literature, but that it is complex and that her works are only one small part.[186] Furthermore, this can be seen as a possible way past the obstacles identified above, because while being a postcolonial institution, the book festival still broadcast and posted this interview, including Makumbi's clear stance on not representing all of 'Ugandan literature', for the public to see.

7.1.3 Situating the Author within European Contexts

While discussing the main character of *The First Woman*, the interviewer compares the character's personality to European ones: "she is as intelligent as Jane Eyre or Dorothea Brooke, and for me, she was as fierce [as] any of the women in Elena Ferrante's novels."[187] The latter being an Italian author of the *My Brilliant Friend* series, and the former being characters of the well-known British novels *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë and *Middlemarch* by George Eliot. Although the construction present is technically of the character's identities, it is essentially connected to the construction of the author's identity because Makumbi's identity as an author is always constructed in relation to her work.[188]

[184] Ibid., 05:45-06:45.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity.*
[187] Makumbi. *Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi: Uganda's First Woman of Fiction,* 09:15-09:26.
[188] Lundahl. Kvinnor, vithet och de andras litteratur.

By comparing *The First Woman* to European literature, the interviewer situates Makumbi within a postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourse. In the interview, Makumbi does not get a chance to respond to this comparison, as the interviewer continues to ask her about the creation of the main character.[189] Instead of asking about her literary inspiration for creating the main character, the interviewer decides to situate Makumbi in the same group as these privileged European works, possibly to put the book in a European context. What the interviewer is doing here, I argue, is what several other studies argued, i.e. reframing paratexts for the imagined consumer.[190] Although those studies were primarily referring to peritexts (paratexts within the same mode as the text) or the actual text that had been altered to fit Western standards, by situating Makumbi's book among European novels, the interviewer is mediating the consumer's interpretation of the book to make the consumer more comfortable in their choice to purchase the book or not.

How Western media structurally adapts and curates paratexts to the imagined European consumer is an obstacle to solving the problem.[191] By comparing Sub-Saharan African female authors' literature to well-known European literature, the obstacle prevents the author's literature from creating its own discourse and sustains the supremacy of European literature by somewhat saying that European literature was first in creating these characters. The function here is the strategy of hiding postcolonial hegemonic constructions of "Third world women" behind a façade of empowerment and a discourse that insinuates that they are being put in the same space as European authors, similar to the benevolence discourse.[192]

Another way in which the interviewer mediates the meaning of the main text within this paratext, is by contextualizing Ugandan folklore to Scottish folklore. The interviewer, reading from what looks like a script, explains to the reader that Makumbi incorporates water as a recurring element throughout *The First Woman*, for instance by incorporating Ugandan folklore.[193] She describes how in the Ugandan folklore illustrated in *The First Woman*, female spirits come out of the river to seduce men, and then she looks up from her script and says "now that I come to think of it, we have those in Scotland as well. They're called Selkies. So your Mijinni are Ugandan Selkies."[194] Here, the interviewer is not just comparing Ugandan and

[189] Makumbi. *Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi: Uganda's First Woman of Fiction*.
[190] Steemers. *Francophone African narratives and the Anglo-American book market : ferment on the fringes*; Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English; Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."
[191] Chouliaraki & Fairclough. *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis,* p. 60.
[192] Lundahl. Kvinnor, vithet och de andras litteratur. Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity.*
[193] Makumbi. *Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi: Uganda's First Woman of Fiction,* 32:20-32:57.
[194] Ibid., 32:59-33:09.

Scottish folklore, but by saying that "your Mijinni are Ugandan Selkies", she is implying that Ugandan folklore is another *version* of Scottish folklore. Assuming that part of the audience is Scottish, considering that the festival usually takes place in Edinburgh, the interviewer can here be viewed as trying to situate Makumbi's work for the Scottish consumer.[195] Although not intentional, the interviewer is using a colonial ideal of centering Europe and putting other cultures in the periphery of Europe, by, to an extent, demeaning Ugandan folklore, thus Othering it in relation to European-ness.[196] [197]

7.2 Book Review

In 2018, The Guardian published a book review of *Kintu*. The title of the review is "Kintu by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi review – is this 'the great Ugandan novel'?", and the review mostly discusses the main text of *Kintu*.[198] Nonetheless, it is a paratext and it inevitably discusses Makumbi as well, thus constructing her identity as an author within the discourse. This review was published on The Guardian's website in 2018, four years after *Kintu* was published. The sender of this paratext is The Guardian, and the receiver is their readers. The paratext's intended achievement is to inform readers of the general themes of the novel, aiming to help readers choose whether to read it. Although the review is generally positive and encourages the reader to read *Kintu*, it reproduces the power structures that postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses are built upon.

7.2.1 Legitimizing Identity through Prizes

Already in the second paragraph of the review, Makumbi is presented in relation to a literary prize: "The winner of the 2014 Commonwealth short story prize, Makumbi has here written a multi-generational epic that is equal parts imagination and research."[199] By stating the prize she has won before even stating her name, Makumbi's identity seems to be legitimized by this literary achievement, as if the book review has a more valid spot in The Guardian because the author of the book has achieved a literary prize. Moreover, the subtitle sets the tone for the review by mentioning the same prize: "From a Commonwealth short story prizewinner comes a masterful epic that examines Uganda's history through generations of a cursed family".[200]

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[195] Steemers. Francophone African narratives and the Anglo-American book market : ferment on the fringes; Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English; Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."

[196] Spivak. Can the subaltern speak?, p. 280.

[197] I *want to emphasize that I am aware of the English colonization of Scotland, however, considering the social context of the interview and the postcolonial power relations that were analyzed above, the comment does not highlight some form of shared history of being colonized, but rather distinguishes the Scottish, European folklore from the Ugandan, African folklore.*

[198] L. N. Arimah. Kintu by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi review – is this 'the great Ugandan novel'? *The Guardian*, (2018). https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jan/26/kintu-jennifer-nansubuga-makumbi-review

[199] Arimah. Kintu by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi review – is this 'the great Ugandan novel'?

[200] Ibid.

Although she did not win this prize with *Kintu* but with an at the time unpublished story, it is a paratextual element as it is mentioned in this review of *Kintu*. Furthermore, being constructed in terms of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, Makumbi's identity as a Sub-Saharan African female author is somewhat diminished to writing stories that fit a certain description, writing the "African experience".[201] Thus, the review implicitly constructs the author by suggesting that *Kintu* follows a specific way of 'African writing' that global literary prizes value, because another one of her writings won a global literary prize.

Additionally, there is another layer of power here, as both The Guardian, which published the review, and the Commonwealth Short Story Prize are institutions. Referring to Foucault's discourse theory, these two institutions partly control the representation of Makumbi's identity in order to keep her within a postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourse.[202] By awarding her a literary prize and reminding the public that she won the prize by making it a paratext even four years later, the institutions of The Guardian and the Commonwealth Short Story Prize impose control on Makumbi's literary works in this paratext, and therefore also her identity as an author. Combining Foucault's discourse theory and the research on 'global' literary prizes and applying it to the way the review presents Makumbi in relation to such a prize, literary prizes are institutional power structures that construct authors and literary genres that might speak out against the power of discourse.[203]

7.2.2 Representation by Assumption

The Guardian's review continues by explaining that "There are some surprising historical omissions. Makumbi mostly avoids describing both the colonial period, which so often seems the obligation of the historical African novel, and Idi Amin's reign, which seems the obligation of the Ugandan novel."[204] This sentence implies that the author of the review expected Makumbi to write about colonialism and the Idi Amin regime in Uganda, and was shocked by the fact that *Kintu* does not include this. The reviewer then continues to say that it was difficult for Makumbi to find a British publisher who wanted to publish *Kintu*, and speculates that this is because of the absence of stereotypical history.[205] By saying that Makumbi *avoids* describing

[201] Suhr-Sytsma. The Geography of Prestige: Prizes, Nigerian Writers, and World Literature; Kiguru. Prizing African Literature: creating a literary taste.
[202] Foucault. The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language.
[203] Foucault. The Archeaology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language; Suhr-Sytsma. The Geography of Prestige: Prizes, Nigerian Writers, and World Literature; Kiguru. Prizing African Literature: creating a literary taste; Pucherová. "A Continent Learns to Tell its Story at Last": Notes on the Caine Prize.
[204] Arimah. Kintu by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi review – is this 'the great Ugandan novel'?
[205] Ibid.

the colonial period, the reviewer assumes Makumbi's position and constructs it as an active choice.

I do not intend to discover what is true, but how her identity is constructed in this sense. Makumbi is constructed as an author who wants to stand out in a sea of 'African' and 'Ugandan' novels, as if the choice to write about Ugandan folklore is a strategic choice instead of a literary preference for this particular book. Although the researchers who discuss institutions assuming authors' positions do so in relation to linguistic translation[206], it applies here as well, when the reviewer uses the word *avoid*, which implies that it is an active choice, instead of saying that she simply is not focusing on colonialism in this book. Nonetheless, colonialism is not ignored in *Kintu*, there are references to colonialism as the generations of the Kintu clan in the book go through over 200 years, but it is just not centralized.[207] Thus, by saying that Makumbi (mostly) avoids discussing colonialism when she, in fact, is not avoiding it but chooses to centralize Ugandan folklore and not colonial trauma, the interviewer reproduces the idea that European presence in African stories should be central.

7.3 Peritexts

7.3.1 Postcolonial & Gendered Acknowledgments

At the end of *Kintu*, there are acknowledgements from the author, in which Makumbi expresses her gratitude towards people and institutions who have contributed to her writing this book. Amongst names of individual people, Makumbi aims her gratitude towards "the Department of English and Creative Writing, University of Lancaster, for the continuous support".[208] As the sender of the paratext of acknowledgements is Makumbi, she is explicitly constructing her literary work in relation to British institutional support. Moreover, she gives thanks to "the City of Manchester for the libraries",[209] which adds to the institutional role in her writing. Relating *Kintu*, a book which is based on Ugandan folklore and oral tradition, to British institutions, is seemingly postcolonial, constructing it as relying on and benefiting from national institutions within the country that colonized Uganda. What I criticize here is not Makumbi's individual choice to acknowledge these institutions, but rather the structural ways in which this is the literary norm, which the author then reproduces by acknowledging them within the peritext of

[206] Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English.
[207] Makumbi. *Kintu*.
[208] Makumbi. *Kintu*, p. 411.
[209] Ibid., p. 411.

her book. However, Makumbi is not only connecting her book to British institutions, but also the other way around: connecting British institutions to Ugandan literature.

Considering the history of colonialism and its eradication of oral traditions in storytelling,[210] for Makumbi to explicitly state that British institutions such as a national university and Manchester City libraries support her writing a book inspired by the same oral traditions, is a way of negotiating her identity as a postcolonial writer. Although Makumbi explicitly operates within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses by crediting British institutions for being a part of her writing *Kintu*, she also names postcolonial institutions in the context of a book that does not focus on colonialism or the British, but centralizes pre-colonial narratives from Uganda.[211] By following Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework for contextualizing Makumbi's political position in history, the choice of expressing gratitude towards British institutions can be seen as a way of reclaiming agency – she is not constructing herself as a victim, she is bringing Ugandan stories to the UK by using their institutions.[212]

At the end of her acknowledgements in *Kintu*, Makumbi mentions her husband and son, contextualizing her identity not only as an author but as a wife and a mother. She gives thanks to her husband, "Damian Morris for indulging me and for not saying 'What?' when I talk to myself."[213] The last sentence of Makumbi's acknowledgements in *Kintu* is directed towards her son: "And thank you, Jordan Bamundaga, for putting up with a part-time mum."[214] This part of the paratext connects Makumbi's personal life with her identity as an author, in the context of the paratext being an acknowledgement in her globally recognized novel. She reminds the reader that her identity fits more than her literary achievements. Although I do not compare my selected authors with male authors, it is worth noting Makumbi's self-representation as a family woman, in relation to the research that emphasizes that female authors are constructed in terms of their families more frequently than male authors.[215] While Lundahl came to this conclusion by researching how female versus male authors were represented in epitexts by external actors, Makumbi has been operating within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses for many years, implying that she is also a recipient of the ideals reproduced as norms within discourse. Thus, constructing herself as a wife and a mother in relation to her identity as an

[210] A. Parwez. The Role of Storytelling as Resistance in Indigenous and Tribal Literatures (in English). Advanced International Journal for Research 6(5) (2025). https://doi.org/10.63363/aijfr.2025.v06i05.1326
[211] Makumbi. *Kintu*.
[212] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity,* p. 48.
[213] Makumbi. *Kintu*, p. 411.
[214] Ibid., p. 411.
[215] Lundahl. Kvinnor, vithet och de andras litteratur, p. 117.

author can be a way of following the literary norms of acknowledgements, to construct herself as an author in the way that other (female) authors do.

7.3.2 Showing Gratefulness toward Global Prizes as a Sign of Success

The acknowledgements in *The First Woman* are similar to the ones in *Kintu*, but they also differ in some senses. Considering that the two books were published eight years apart, *The First Woman* establishes more institutional contacts who have been involved in the making and publishing of the book. An interesting difference is the first sentence of the acknowledgements. In *Kintu*, Makumbi starts off her acknowledgements by thanking "Martha Ludigo-Nyenje for being my first reader and for those first six months in Manchester"[216], while in *The First Woman*, the first sentence expresses gratitude to "The Windham-Campbell Prize, for the relief and exposure.".[217] What can be understood from these paratexts is that, as Makumbi's literature has become more 'global' in the sense that she is achieving awards from global literary prizes, she is also acknowledging them more. Thus, Makumbi is constructing herself as a 'global' author, choosing to recognize the institutional prizes and other literary achievements she has claimed through her literature.[218] However, this is not only to be considered an obstacle, but also a way past the obstacle; it is, in a way, a contradiction. Because while reproducing global literary prizes and acknowledging 'global' literature as a category that capitalizes on a certain kind of 'African literature', Makumbi is also, in the broader social practice, claiming space within a 'global' literary scene.[219]

Nonetheless, the ideological function here, which is fundamental to the reproduction of the discourse, serves to sustain the partial control that 'global' literary institutions, such as prizes, have in constructing authors and literary categories as 'global'. Important to consider in this discussion is that Sub-Saharan African female authors are not simply victims of this ideological function, but, as mentioned, create their own spaces within the discourse where resistance to postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses is present.[220] Although Makumbi in her most recent published book chose to thank a literary prize first, she is also, for instance, thanking her mother, "who shared her family history and the history of her villages"[221], and "Enoch Kiyaga, my Luganda dictionary and cultural reference in Manchester".[222] In this sense,

[216] Makumbi. *Kintu*, p. 411.
[217] Makumbi. *The First Woman*, p. 436.
[218] English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value*.
[219] English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value;* Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*.
[220] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*.
[221] Makumbi. *The First Woman*, p. 436
[222] Ibid., p. 436

Makumbi's personal and cultural references claim space, constructing herself as a 'global' author with clear local connections, showing resistance to the dominant discourse while being a part of it.[223]

7.3.3 "Unapologetically African"

The peritexts on *The First Woman* offer four full pages of praising quotes for the novel.[224] The senders of the quotes are both institutions and individual authors of fictional works. The quotes differ in length and content, but the theme is positive praise. One comment offers few words but much content: "'Ambitious… unapologetically African.' *The Millions*".[225] The signed, 'The Millions', is an online magazine that reviews and writes about books, art and culture.[226] Moreover, there are 29 quotes featured under "Praise for *The First Woman*", of which 10 mention Uganda, and only this one quote mentions Africa.[227] Thus, the majority of the quotes do not construct Makumbi in relation to Uganda or Africa. However, a third still do, and as they are displayed amongst the quotes, the reader is left with an understanding of Makumbi as a Ugandan writer and *The First Woman* as a novel that illustrates local life. The quote that mentions Africa instead of Uganda, emphasizing that the novel is "unapologetically African", homogenizes Africa's very heterogeneous cultures.[228] If the quote were allowed more space and there were more context, it might not be read as homogenizing, however in the context of being a short peritext of this novel, the message that is being sent is that the sender views Makumbi's book as "African", thus homogenizing, since *The First Woman* does not represent all of Africa, not even all of Uganda.

However, considering that one third of the quotes mention Uganda by name, this could be seen as rejecting the idea of post-nationalism and acknowledging the national connection rather than hegemonically universalizing it.[229] Furthermore, although this paratext is not communicated by Makumbi herself, the quotes are peritextual and nevertheless construct her identity in terms of "home".[230] By mixing quotes that mention Uganda with quotes that do not, Makumbi's identity is somewhat negotiated by editorial paratexts.

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[223] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*.
[224] Makumbi. *The First Woman*.
[225] Ibid.
[226] The Millions. *About The Millions*. (n.d.) https://themillions.com/about-the-millions
[227] Makumbi. *The First Woman*.
[228] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*; Spivak. Can the subaltern speak?
[229] Coly. *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*.
[230] Ibid.

The negotiation lies in the fact that the actors behind most of these quotes are institutions that capitalize on the category of 'global' literature,[231] and here they describe Makumbi and her work as local. However, while rejecting post-nationalism and the idea that the nation does not play a role in constructions of identities, these institutions still contribute to a postcolonial understanding of 'African literature'.[232] Drawing on Coly's discussion, post-nationalism is not present in explicitly 'African' fiction, as it defeats the purpose of categorizing it as 'African' or in the context of a specific nation.[233] Thus, by including several quotes under praise for the book that remind the reader of its author's local roots, these paratexts construct Makumbi as an 'Other' author, representing her in terms of her 'Otherness'.[234]

7.3.4 Situated Comparison

Another quote on *The First Woman* says: "'[Makumbi] does for Ugandan literature what Chinua Achebe did for Nigerian writing.' *Guardian*".[235] Here, Makumbi is being compared to a male author. Depending on what the reader knows about Chinua Achebe, this paratext could symbolize different meanings. Achebe is considered to be the author who globalized Nigerian literature and boosted African literature to the global literary market.[236] If the receiver of this paratext is aware of this, Makumbi is constructed as bringing Ugandan literature to the global market.

As Achebe is a male author, this paratext could be seen as a way of legitimizing Makumbi's work, that it is in the same level as this male author who put Nigerian literature in a global context. Furthermore, the quote also assumes that putting local literature on the global literary market is positive, considering that it is placed under "Praise for *The First Woman*".[237] Thus, this paratext constructs Makumbi as doing it *for* the Ugandan literary community, almost as if she is doing them a favor. Furthermore, constructing her in terms of global literature reproduces a category of imagined 'African literature' that centralizes symbolic capital and sociopolitical contexts.[238] While putting two Sub-Saharan African authors in comparison despite the vast differences in Nigerian and Ugandan culture and literary traditions, thus homogenizing them as

[231] English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value;* Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*.
[232] Coly. *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*, p. xxvi.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Spivak. Can the subaltern speak?
[235] Makumbi. *The First Woman*.
[236] I. Madubuike. Chinua Achebe : His Ideas on African Literature. *Présence Africaine*, no. 93 (1975). http://www.jstor.org/stable/24349663
[237] Makumbi. *The First Woman*.
[238] Suhr-Sytsma. The Geography of Prestige: Prizes, Nigerian Writers, and World Literature, p. 1098.

'African literature', the paratext also functions as a way of celebrating Makumbi as an author, using the benevolence discourse to lift an imagined perspective of uniting African authors.[239]

Thus, the structural obstacle to change here is the ways in which Makumbi, as a Sub-Saharan African female author, is constructed by the peritexts of her book as doing Ugandan literature a favor, by comparing her to a Sub-Saharan African male author whose literary works were popularized by the global literary market.[240] However, as this is one of 29 quotes under "Praise for *The First Woman*", it is not consumed in a vacuum.[241] The quotes in this paratext are curated to be read together, and they are put close together, which makes it inevitable to read another quote once the reader starts discursively consuming them. This implies that the quote that compares Makumbi to Achebe does not construct Makumbi's identity by simply existing, but by interacting with the other quotes. Thus, irrespective of the reader's prior knowledge about Achebe, all the 29 quotes taken together will, in most cases, be understood as constructing Makumbi in her favor, as they are placed under "Praise for *The First Woman*".[242] I argue that although a paratext is framed as praise, it operates within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses and serves the discourse primarily and the author second.

Sometimes, paratexts even benefit the discourse first, the audience second, and the author third. Whoever chose to put this quote in the peritext, most likely the publisher, is framing the text to make it more accessible and recognizable for the reader.[243] If a reader has consumed Chinua Achebe's literature and is looking for something similar, then this paratext benefits the marketing of *The First Woman*. Consequently, the peritext of this quote, I argue, serves the audience over Makumbi, as it contextualizes her writing in relation to other, recognizable, globalized 'African literature'.

[239] Lundahl. Kvinnor, vithet och de andras litteratur.
[240] Chouliaraki & Fairclough. *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis*.
[241] Makumbi. *The First Woman*.
[242] Makumbi. *The First Woman*.
[243] Steemers. *Francophone African narratives and the Anglo-American book market : ferment on the fringes*; Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English; Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."

8. NoViolet Bulawayo

8.1 Podcast Interview about *We Need New Names*

The same year as her debut novel was published, Bulawayo was interviewed for a radio broadcast and podcast about *We Need New Names*.[244] The interview was posted to YouTube as a video in 2024, but it was originally published in 2013 on other podcast platforms, as it originally was a live broadcast on a radio show. The sender of this paratext is the Between the Covers Podcast, a podcast and American radio show produced by Milkweed Editions, a book publishing company, in which the host, David Naimon, interviews authors about their literature.[245] The intended receiver of this paratext is the podcast's and radio show's listeners. The paratext in the form of this interview with Bulawayo was not only posted on YouTube, but also on other platforms where one can stream podcasts, implying a broad listening range. This paratext intends to inform listeners of the background to *We Need New Names* as well as provide listeners with authorial context directly from the author.

8.1.1 Negotiation & Emotional Connection to the Postcolonial Nation

NoViolet Bulawayo is a chosen pen name; she was born as Elizabeth Zandile Tshele. When the interviewer asks about her name, the author shares that she chose her first name to honor her late mother, whose name was Violet.[246] Moreover, the author says that her last name, Bulawayo, is the name of the Zimbabwean city where she grew up: "Being out of the country for so many years and not being able to go back made me nostalgic. It made me want to connect to my homeland, so I did adopt the name."[247] There is a clear emotional connection to her home country, similar to how there often is in fictional works by Sub-Saharan African authors through the negotiation of "home".[248] Bulawayo negotiates her identity by having chosen a name that clearly shows her identity as Zimbabwean in the context of being active as an author within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses.

Although not mentioned in this paratext, Bulawayo's American education and residency are factual paratexts, which can be another reason for choosing her pen name. In relation to the study that argues that African authors who have moved to a Western country and pursued academic education there negotiate their identities between the West and their home nation,[249] this could be seen as another reason for her choosing this name. Authors adopt pen names in

[244] Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo : We Need New Names*.
[245] Milkweed Editions. *Between the Covers*. (2026). https://milkweed.org/between-the-covers
[246] Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo : We Need New Names*. 20:51-21:05.
[247] Ibid., 21:20-21:34.
[248] Coly. *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*, p. xxvi.
[249] Kapi. *Writing as a cultural negotiation: a study of Mariama Bâ, Marie NDiaye and Ama Ata Aidoo.*

relation to publishing their works. Considering that Bulawayo's first novel was published 13 years after she moved to the United States, one can assume she adopted the name after moving from Zimbabwe, emphasizing a nostalgic desire to connect with her homeland.[250] The obstacle here is the way that Western education is valued higher than other knowledge systems, making it inevitable for Sub-Saharan African authors who want to go global to do so without moving to the West, thus leaving the postcolonial nation and being somewhat disconnected from the culture which they write about. The function behind this is ideological: it serves to reproduce the supremacy of Western education by making it a norm to have academic qualifications, encouraging authors to leave their home countries to be able to sell their books globally.

Important to note is that I do not problematize Bulawayo's choice of pen name itself, but the structural ways that postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses sustain a system that capitalizes on literature by Sub-Saharan African authors who have *left* their home countries. If Bulawayo had not left Zimbabwe to pursue a Western education and become a 'global' author, she might not have felt this nostalgia and urge to reconnect with Zimbabwe that, according to herself, caused her to adopt her current pen name.[251] However, the way Bulawayo is transparent about her emotional experience of leaving Zimbabwe to become an author, and about choosing to dedicate something so public as her name to her roots, illustrates a way past the obstacle.

8.1.2 Self-representing as an Outsider

The interviewer in the podcast comments on the empowerment of the characters in the book and how they are not portrayed as victims despite their "difficult circumstances".[252] Bulawayo responds by saying that this is based on her experience of visiting Zimbabwe after living in the US for a long time, and being surprised by how people were living under the authoritarian regime: "I just went back home for the first time in 13 years, and of course, it was not the Zimbabwe I knew. But what struck me is how people just adapted and went on with the everyday."[253] As she moved to the US right before the ZANU-PF's violence against the opposition increased rapidly, she is referring to the political situation in this quote, surprised over the way people were living as if there was not an authoritarian regime that could strip them of everything they knew at any moment. Here, Bulawayo further negotiates her identity by

[250] Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo : We Need New Names,* 21:20-21:34.
[251] Ibid., 21:20-21:34.
[252] Ibid., 06:00-06:16.
[253] Ibid., 06:27-06:38.

showing both emotional and political connections to her home country, the postcolonial nation.[254]

While clearly constructing herself as a part of Zimbabwe, she also constructs herself as an outsider, in relation to her residing in the US, no longer experiencing firsthand what is happening there: "Coming from outside and having, you know, assessed the country through the media, through stories."[255] Furthermore, by implying that she came back to a Zimbabwe she did not recognize and being shocked to see that people were empowered and not just victims, the author is showing Westernized tendencies to think about postcolonial nations through a victimization perspective.[256] Considering that, at the time of this podcast interview being recorded, Bulawayo had lived in the United States for almost 15 years, it is not impossible to think that she had become influenced by "Western feminism" and its tendency to think about the "Third World" based on hegemonic narratives of viewing people as passive victims.[257] The political situation in Zimbabwe changed drastically during the years after Bulawayo moved to the US, leaving many people severely poor and subject to the regime's military violence,[258] and Bulawayo had not returned until just before this interview. This implies that much of the news of the situation in Zimbabwe had been consumed through Western media, which usually presents a dominant narrative of the people as victims.[259]

In the same way that Mohanty's antiracist framework enables my analysis to emphasize how Bulawayo and Makumbi resist and challenge the hegemonic discourse from within, it also works the other way around.[260] Thus, the framework also emphasizes when people living under oppressive systems and discourses are *not* interpreted as resisting or challenging dominant structures, which is essentially what Bulawayo admits to doing in terms of being shocked by how people lived their everyday lives and not giving up. However, one essential difference between Bulawayo's victimization of the people of Zimbabwe and the general victimization of people of the "Third World" that Mohanty refers to, is that Bulawayo did not try to hide it. She did not simply leave it at that, later in the interview she added to the conversation by saying:

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[254] Coly. *The Pull of Postcolonial Nationhood: Gender and Migration in Francophone African Literatures*, p. xxvi.
[255] Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo : We Need New Names,* 06:39-06:47.
[256] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity.*
[257] Ibid.
[258] Dendere & Tendi. Understanding the Evolution and State of Democracy in Zimbabwe; Potts. 'Restoring Order'? Operation Murambatsvina and the Urban Crisis in Zimbabwe.
[259] S. Pachauri & V. Singh. Representation of the Global South in Western News Media: A Postcolonial Analysis. Journal of Informatics Education and Research 5(3) (2025) https://doi.org/10.52783/jier.v5i3.3357
[260] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity.*

> Just being there and seeing the strength and courage, it was quite amazing. And I wanted to celebrate that because it's often easy to dismiss people in a space like this. But the reality is that people do not quit living. Somehow, they keep going.[261]

Although Bulawayo constructs herself as an outsider to Zimbabwe, both explicitly and by saying she was "struck" by the way the people of Zimbabwe lived their lives under an authoritarian regime, she also acknowledges that reality does not mirror what Western media presents. Thus, Bulawayo is transparent about her identity in terms of not personally relating to the situations she writes about in *We Need New Names*, as she did not experience Operation Murambatsvina first-hand. In this sense, Bulawayo constructs herself as an author who writes the stories of the Zimbabwean people during the aftermath of Operation Murambatsvina and brings a story of both the struggles and the empowerment of the Zimbabwean people to a global audience, while not experiencing it herself.

8.2 Booker Prize Interview

In 2022, *Glory* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Although Bulawayo did not win the prize, being shortlisted indicates that the author is one of six that the judges consider for the prize.[262] In relation to this, The Booker Prize, which is the sender of this paratext, published an interview on YouTube with the author, having her answer questions from readers.[263] The questions are taken from readers who published them on the social media platforms Facebook and Instagram, and the paratext features the questions in writing, followed by a video answer from Bulawayo.[264] Thus, the intended receiver of this paratext is readers and followers of the Booker Prize on social media. As the Booker Prize is an institution within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses, the paratext indirectly intends to serve the discourse and reproduce specific literary standards and norms[265], however the directly intended achievement is to inform readers about *Glory* and provide them with authorial insights into how the book was written.

8.2.1 Constructions of being a 'Global' Author

One reader asked "What were your biggest hopes and your biggest concerns in writing *Glory*?"[266] to which she answers that she hopes that people who live under similar circumstances to the animals in *Glory*, that is, under an authoritarian regime, will read the book

[261] Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo : We Need New Names,* 06:54-07:12.
[262] The Booker Prize. *About the Booker Prize*. (2026). https://thebookerprizes.com/booker-prize/about-the-booker-prize
[263] Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo answers readers' questions about 'Glory' | The Booker Prize*.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*.
[266] Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo answers readers' questions about 'Glory' | The Booker Prize,* 01:26.

and participate in the conversation.[267] By saying this, Bulawayo does not only refer to the people of Zimbabwe, but to anyone, regardless of geographical location. Thus, in this sense, she constructs herself as a 'global' author. Considering that the plot of *Glory* is heavily based on the political situation of Zimbabwe in 2017, with the coup that deposed President Robert Mugabe, by not explicitly saying that it is referring to Zimbabweans but to anyone, Bulawayo is constructing herself in terms of 'world literature', wanting to appeal to a bigger audience than only people of Zimbabwe.[268]

Factoring in James English's ideas on authors appealing to a global audience, as discussed in the literature review, the phenomenon of 'world literature', in postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses, is discursively constructed in literary ideals that correspond to Euro-American consumption.[269] In this view, Bulawayo can be seen as constructing herself as an author who writes for a global audience and not only for the people who can relate to the specific situation she writes about, thus essentially constructing herself as writing primarily for Euro-American consumption.[270]

However, identities are not stable, and Bulawayo is not only constructing herself as a global author in this paratext. While the fact that *Glory* is based on political events in Zimbabwe is not explicitly expressed in this interview, it is a factual paratext that surrounds the book, implying that it is generally known to readers.[271] Thus, while constructing herself as a global author in this paratext, Bulawayo is not disregarding or neglecting her local roots, since for instance both her fictional novels that are considered in this thesis take place in or are inspired by Zimbabwe.[272] Therefore, rather than agreeing with English's perspective, which suggests that Bulawayo is writing for Euro-American consumption, I argue that she negotiates her identity by both constructing herself as a global author and expressing a clear emotional connection to Zimbabwe.

8.2.2 Contradictions in Literary Achievements

Another question in the interview mentions the Booker Prize explicitly: "Being shortlisted for the Booker Prize is an amazing achievement. What other personal and literary achievements do you wish to accomplish?"[273] As the sender of this paratext is the Booker Prize, choosing a

[267] Ibid., 01:44-02:00.
[268] Bulawayo. *Glory*; Dendere & Tendi. *Understanding the Evolution and State of Democracy in Zimbabwe*.
[269] English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value*.
[270] Ibid.
[271] Genette. *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation*.
[272] Bulawayo. *Glory*; Bulawayo. *We Need New Names*.
[273] Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo answers readers' questions about 'Glory' | The Booker Prize,* 02:34.

question that features praise for the prize further reproduces the norm in postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses of literary prizes as symbols of prestige.[274] To this, Bulawayo responds: "Something like the Booker, or any other award really, is one of those things that happens to you without you working toward that or planning for it to happen."[275] Here, she negotiates her identity by rejecting the idea that she wrote *Glory* with the mindset of wanting to be shortlisted for a literary prize. Although the Booker Prize, unlike the Caine Prize for African Writing, does not focus solely on authors from Africa, books are only eligible if they have been published in the UK or Ireland, making it a Western institution.[276] From an antiracist feminist framework, she is thus also rejecting the idea that her writing follows the postcolonial "Third world women" ideal that literary prizes often value.[277] By saying that getting shortlisted for or winning a literary prize is something that "happens", rather than something that one works towards, she constructs her identity in terms of agency and not writing within the expectations of prestigious institutions. However, she is saying this as an author who has been shortlisted for and won several prizes, leading to the question of whether she would still say this without having won any prizes.

Moreover, answering the question of what achievements she wishes to accomplish in the future, Bulawayo says that she has already somewhat reached her achievement, which is "telling my stories as best as I can, and on my own terms. I feel like that's really something I can control, and that's all that matters. The rest is out of my hands."[278] As the question of what literary achievements she wishes to accomplish was asked in relation to the statement that it is an amazing achievement to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize, one can conclude that the inquirer was expecting an answer in relation to such formal literary achievements. By not answering this leading question with what is expected, such as not only being shortlisted but winning the Booker Prize, Bulawayo constructs her identity in terms of what she can control and not about her literature. The contradiction of participating in a prize interview, thus acknowledging its function in the global literary system, while simultaneously rejecting the idea of writing to achieve these prizes, is a negotiation of her identity as a Sub-Saharan African female author.

[274] English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value.*
[275] Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo answers readers' questions about 'Glory' | The Booker Prize*, 02:38-02:53.
[276] The Booker Prizes. *Entering the Booker Prizes*. (2026). https://thebookerprizes.com/booker-prize/entering-the-booker-prizes#:~:text=On%20this%20page%20you'll,of%20the%20Booker%20Prize%202024
[277] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*; English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value*.
[278] Bulawayo. *NoViolet Bulawayo answers readers' questions about 'Glory' | The Booker Prize,* 03:04-03:26.

Bulawayo is thus showing resistance to the discourse while being a part of it, not succumbing to the system of global literary prizes entirely.[279]

Global literary prizes are obstacles in how they structurally rely on postcolonial authors to gratefully acknowledge them and partly reject native culture and literary traditions to fit ideals of postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses.[280] The function is the ideological aspiration to sustain prestigious literary discourses by reproducing postcolonial literary ideals, making authors participate by awarding them with economic and symbolic capital (popularizing their books and giving them a space to talk, such as this interview).[281] Nevertheless, there are gaps in the discourse in the way that the author expresses resistance to said ideological aspiration. By clearly stating that her writing is on her own terms and not determined by institutional forces such as literary prize eligibility criteria, Bulawayo illustrates a way past the obstacle.[282]

8.3 Article on Winning the Best of Caine Prize

In 2011, Bulawayo won the Caine Prize for African Writing, and in 2025, she won the Best of Caine Prize, a special prize created for the 25th anniversary of the Caine Prize's existence, awarding one of the winners throughout the years. The 2011 Caine Prize was awarded to her for her short story *Hitting Budapest*, which then became the first chapter of *We Need New Names,* hence why I consider it a paratext for the latter. The Guardian posted an article regarding this, which features quotes from the author's speech at the Words Across Waters Afro Lit Festival at the British Library in London, where she received the Best of Caine award. The ceremony took place on September 27th 2025, the same day as the article was published.[283]

8.3.1 Crediting Literary Prizes

The Guardian summarizes the plot of *Hitting Budapest*, and then quotes Bulawayo's acceptance speech:

> "Winning the Caine prize as an unpublished writer back in 2011 was truly the kind of defining highlight to jumpstart a career," she said. "It brought my work to a global audience, affirmed my literary path, and strengthened my confidence and commitment to writing, so that finishing

[279] Mohanty. Feminism without borders: *decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity,* p. 32.
[280] English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards and the Circulation of Cultural Value.*
[281] Ibid.
[282] Chouliaraki & Fairclough. *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis*.
[283] C. Muerithi. *NoViolet Bulawayo wins the Best of Caine award*. (The Guardian, 2025).
https://www.theguardian.com/books/2025/sep/27/noviolet-bulawayo-wins-the-best-of-caine-award

> a first novel worthy of the recognition bestowed on me by Africa's most prestigious literary award – my first ever recognition – was non-negotiable."[284]

In this paratext, The Guardian, being a British institution, constructs Bulawayo as a Sub-Saharan African female author in terms of her achievement of winning the Best of Caine Prize. However, by quoting Bulawayo herself, she is also constructing her identity in terms of the prize, as she gives credit to the Caine Prize for finishing *We Need New Names*. Thus, she is insinuating that winning the Caine Prize for *Hitting Budapest* both motivated and enabled her to write a novel that was worthy of the prestigious prize. The fact that Bulawayo refers to the Caine Prize as *Africa's* most prestigious literary award, while it is explicitly based in London and the prize money is in British pounds,[285] symbolizes a Westernized perspective on 'global' literature as a legitimate category, sustaining the institution's control over prestigious literary culture. Stating that the prize brought her work to a global audience implies that she is aware of the power that global literary prizes hold, a power that she is reproducing by sending a message that confirms and encourages this power. The identity of the author is thus constructed both by The Guardian, which published the article, and indirectly by herself, who held the speech, as a dependent subject of literary institutional power structures.

8.3.2 Credit where Credit is due

By saying that the prize brought her work to a global audience, Bulawayo constructs herself as a global author and confirms the power of literary prizes. What is especially interesting is that, as she won the prize in 2011, the Caine Prize for African Writing still had the eligibility criterion stating that for a work to be eligible for the prize, it had to describe "African sensibilities".[286] Having won the prize in 2011, Bulawayo must have known about this criterion, and did not say anything about it in her speech for the Best of Caine Prize. However, considering that she received the Best of Caine Prize in 2025, the criterion had been removed for many years, meaning that she might not consider it. While crediting the Caine Prize for African Writing for being a crucial part in her writing *We Need New Names*, she is nonetheless saying that it *strengthened* her confidence and commitment to writing, not that it was the only thing that made her finish writing the novel.

This can be seen as a discreet negotiation and a way past the obstacle of literary prizes as Western institutions. Negotiations and ways to overcome the obstacles to solving the discourse-

[284] Muerithi. *NoViolet Bulawayo wins the Best of Caine award*.
[285] Suhr-Sytsma. The Geography of Prestige: Prizes, Nigerian Writers, and World Literature, p. 1094.
[286] Ibid., p. 1098.

related problem are rarely clearly expressed.[287] The negotiation that Bulawayo expresses in this paratext becomes visible only when investigating specific word use. By analyzing the usage of the word 'strengthened' in this paratext, it becomes evident that Bulawayo implies that she already had the strength, and that being awarded with the Caine Prize for African Writing positively motivated her, but the groundwork already existed. Considering that this speech was held at the ceremony where she was awarded, in front of the institution that has awarded her with economic and symbolic capital and, according to herself, brought her works to a big global audience, the subtle negotiation makes sense. Furthermore, she is using the system of global literary prizes for the benefit of her literary works, indicating a sense of wanting to sustain the system of global literary prizes for her own gain.

8.3.3 "Western feminism" & the Black, African Woman

The article continues by talking about *We Need New Names*, "which was shortlisted for the Booker prize in 2013 – a first for a Black African woman – and the Guardian First Book award."[288] Instead of simply informing the reader of Bulawayo's shortlistings for her first novel, The Guardian includes her gender and ethnicity, constructing her in terms of being a "Black African woman". While this might come from a place of wanting to celebrate and lift Bulawayo's origins in terms of the benevolence discourse,[289] following Spivak's theory, it nevertheless constructs her as an 'Other' within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses.[290] The Guardian implies that it was not the first time a work by a Black author or by an African author, nor by a female author was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. Thus, it is articulated as remarkable because of Bulawayo's *Blackness*, her *Africanness*, and her being a *woman*.

This entails that, were it a white European male author, his identity would not be articulated in this sense, thus The Guardian's Othering of Bulawayo in relation to this normative identity.[291] Using Mohanty's framework, I argue that the choice of emphasizing Bulawayo's identity can be seen as an attempt to apply "Western feminism".[292] While trying to oppose "Western feminism's" universal perspective and its assumption of women being one homogenous group by lifting Bulawayo's identity, the article constructs her identity in "Western feminist" terms by emphasizing Blackness, Africanness and woman-ness without contextualizing it within

[287] Chouliaraki & Fairclough. *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis,* p. 65.
[288] Muerithi. *NoViolet Bulawayo wins the Best of Caine award*.
[289] Lundahl. Kvinnor, vithet och de andras litteratur.
[290] Spivak. Can the subaltern speak?
[291] Ibid., p. 280.
[292] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity.*

postcolonial and dominant discourses of global literary prizes.[293] Thus, in the eyes of The Guardian, the intersectionality of Bulawayo's identity makes this literary achievement even more remarkable, while somewhat putting it as if she achieved it *despite* being Black and African and a woman.

8.4 Peritexts

8.4.1 Constructing Identity in terms of Professional Life

Upon opening Bulawayo's book *Glory*, the first page features six quotes from newspapers and other institutions regarding the text itself, followed by a short description of the author:

> NoViolet Bulawayo grew up in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. When she was eighteen, she moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan. Her first novel, *We Need New Names*, was shortlisted for the Booker Prize, the Guardian First Book Award and the Barnes & Noble Discover Award, and won a Betty Trask Award, Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award, Hurston-Wright Legacy Award, the Etisalat Prize and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize for First Fiction. She has also won the Caine Prize for African Writing and a National Book Award's '5 under 35'. Bulawayo earned her MFA at Cornell University and was a Stegner Fellow at Stanford University, where she taught fiction.[294]

Immediately, the reader is presented with a paratext and unconsciously consumes the publisher's construction of Bulawayo's identity, which, apart from where she grew up and when she moved away, exclusively refers to her career within literature in terms of literary prizes and academic achievements. Although the norm in peritexts to literary fiction is to present authors in relation to literary achievements and academic performances, it adds another layer of postcolonial discursive construction when that author has left a postcolonial nation to pursue academic degrees and finally receive literary achievements in Western countries. Moreover, mentioning the two American universities where Bulawayo got her academic achievements can, in relation to Kapi's study, be viewed as a way of assimilating her identity. As Kapi argues that Sub-Saharan African female authors negotiate their identities as a response to feeling culturally withdrawn from the local context by identifying with Western education, for publishers to only introduce Bulawayo in a Western context, increases the withdrawal even more.[295] Considering that Bulawayo's fiction is political, especially *Glory*, which is a political allegory, one could argue that it would make sense to include the author's political standpoints as factual paratexts here, instead of exclusively listing prizes and academic achievements. The factual paratext of

[293] Ibid., p. 21-22.
[294] Bulawayo. *Glory*.
[295] Kapi. *Writing as a cultural negotiation: a study of Mariama Bâ, Marie NDiaye and Ama Ata Aidoo*.

stating prizes and degrees does not serve the main text, but serves the publisher by justifying why the publisher is representing this author.

8.4.2 Peritextual Tension

Out of the six quotes on the first page of *Glory*, none of them address the author explicitly, but comment on the main text. In the blurb, there are four quotes from newspapers, of which one considers Bulawayo directly: "'Bulawayo is really out-Orwelling Orwell. This is a satire with sharper teeth, angrier and also very, very funny' *New York Times Book Review*".[296] Comparing Bulawayo to a white male author is, similarly to how the interviewer compared Makumbi to several European authors, situating the author in a context to make the Western consumer comfortable, for them to have a familiar point of reference.[297] However, in this case, in contrast to Makumbi's interview, there is also a "way past the obstacle" to follow Fairclough's framework for analysis.[298]

As Fairclough suggests, when looking at ways past the obstacles, the focus is on contradictions and gaps within the structure.[299] Although Bulawayo is structurally situated within the same category as a European author to contextualize her work for Western consumers, the contradiction is that she is also being constructed as *better* than George Orwell. By essentially describing *Glory* as being more politically critical in relation to Orwell's *Animal Farm,* right after saying that Bulawayo is "Out-Orwelling Orwell", the paratext constructs the author as a talented writer who makes political allegory even better than the author who is famous for his political allegory.[300]

8.4.3 Institutional Control

The sender of this paratext is signed with "New York Times Book Review", which makes them institutional. Thus, there is a discursive tension here between the New York Times being an institution and Bulawayo writing such explicitly politically critical fiction towards dominant powers of discourse. Foucault's discourse theory suggests that institutions systematically control subjects who question and criticize dominant discourses by encouraging them to critique *within* the discourse.[301] Although *Glory* is primarily criticizing Zimbabwe's regime[302], *We Need*

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[296] Bulawayo. *Glory*.
[297] Steemers. *Francophone African narratives and the Anglo-American book market : ferment on the fringes*; Al-Batineh & Al-Issa. Feminist translation and paratextual mediation: the case of Shaarawi's and Khalidi's memoirs in English; Journo. Reading the paratext: posture and self-fashioning in African "little magazines."
[298] Chouliaraki & Fairclough. *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis*.
[299] Chouliaraki & Fairclough. *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking critical discourse analysis*, p. 65
[300] Bulawayo. *Glory*.
[301] Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language,* p. 215-216.
[302] Bulawayo. *Glory*.

New Names is explicitly criticizing the US and its discursive homogenization of immigrants, among other things.[303] For an American institution such as the New York Times to then praise Bulawayo so explicitly in this epitext in *Glory* can be seen as a strategy to control her, to make sure that her critique stays within a controlled form (published book) and within the discourse.[304]

Moreover, the New York Times has also provided a peritext in the form of a comment on the first page of *We Need New Names* as well: "By turns unsparing and lyrical, unsentimental and poetic, spiky and meditative… stunning novel… remarkably talented author".[305] Additionally, the front cover of the book includes a short "'Stunning' – New York Times".[306] Similarly to the comment they made in the epitext of *Glory*, the institutional power is again encouraging the author to keep her political fiction within the discourse, where it can be controlled and modified. All of this is part of the paratexts that construct the author's identity. On the one hand, the author is to some degree controlled by institutions, not only the New York Times but also the publisher, the retail seller and every institutional power that plays a role in making sure that her books are promoted and sold. On the other hand, she has a space where she can publicly express her political opinions and speak out against the power of discourse, in fiction. Discursively, though, what this tension does to Bulawayo's identity is that it constructs her in terms of career and political opinions, while also constructing her as a creator of the problematic discourse that she speaks out against.

[303] Bulawayo. *We Need New Names*.
[304] Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*.
[305] Bulawayo. *We Need New Names*.
[306] Ibid.

9. Conclusion

This study has examined how the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors are constructed in paratexts within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses, as well as how the authors negotiate their identities through self-representation. By examining paratexts around two fictional works by Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi and two by NoViolet Bulawayo, I have carried out a critical discourse analysis of paratextual elements to understand the discursive construction and negotiation of authorial identities shaped by gendered and racialized power structures. Having analyzed seven different paratexts following Genette's theory on paratexts and interpretation, I have established several ways in which the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors are discursively constructed and negotiated. Employing Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework,[307] as well as Spivak's theory of Othering,[308] I centered the authors' identities at the intersection of being gendered and racialized. The paratexts, however, demonstrate a greater focus on the authors' African roots than on their gender.

Considering my first research question, *How are the identities of Sub-Saharan African female authors constructed in paratexts within postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses?*, I have analyzed their identity construction in relation to the discourse of an imagined 'global' literature. My results show that Sub-Saharan African female authors are often constructed in terms of their identities rather than their literature. Both authors have been shown to be represented in terms of global literary prizes and academic achievements, and are constructed as 'global' authors. Drawing on Foucault's discourse theory, this thesis has established that institutions, such as literary prizes and national newspapers, use their power to somewhat control how critique against postcolonial discourses is expressed, implying that the authors' identities are constructed by Western institutions to sustain their power.[309] While working within such discourses, Bulawayo and Makumbi also represent a utilization of the benevolence discourse,[310] through which global literary prizes often operate. Furthermore, Sub-Saharan African female authors are constructed as legitimate through comparison with other, European authors, hence are implicitly 'Othered'.[311] My analysis showed that Sub-Saharan African female authors are constructed as representatives of an entire nation's literary discourse, often in relation to European literature as the central point of departure, which, again, is a form of

[307] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity.*
[308] Spivak. Can the subaltern speak?
[309] Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*.
[310] Lundahl. Kvinnor, vithet och de andras litteratur.
[311] Spivak. Can the subaltern speak?

'Othering' the authors. Moreover, paratexts that are communicated as positive, such as peritexts framed as "praise", do not always benefit the authors, but rather the discourse. This keeps the authors within the hegemonic postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses, preventing them from creating alternative discourses that could criticize the dominant one.

Surprisingly, none of the analyzed paratexts constructs the authors as political. Despite Bulawayo's fictional works being explicitly political, critically engaging with both Zimbabwean and US politics, she is not constructed as a political author; the paratextual focus is rather on her connection to Zimbabwe and Africa in terms of culture and representation. Thus, Mohanty's antiracist feminist framework reveals that Sub-Saharan African female authors are, despite writing political fiction, not discursively constructed as politically engaged, but as political subjects in relation to homogenized and imagined "issues".[312] Postcolonial, Western-dominated literary discourses reproduce "Western feminism's" perspective of seeing "Third World women" as a homogenized group, being connected by their political identity, which is often related to colonialism and patriarchal oppression.[313]

My second research question, *How do these authors negotiate their identities in discursively constructing themselves through self-representation?*, centralizes Sub-Saharan African female authors' actions, viewing them from an antiracist feminist perspective and seeing them not as victims but as actors within the discourse. By negotiating their identities as Sub-Saharan African female authors, they utilize the global literary system, bringing stories of their home countries to a global audience, redefining African stories in contemporary narratives, and opposing colonial depictions of African women as one collective group. Nevertheless, the paratexts evidently show that the authors are not only constructed in terms of, for instance, literary prizes by external actors, but that they also construct themselves in this sense by claiming to be highly motivated by shortlistings and winnings to continue writing fiction.

Negotiation takes numerous forms, but the clearest one I found is for the authors to construct themselves as outsiders *and* insiders to their respective home countries. This is not the same as being Othered by external actors, but a way of being transparent about the fact that they do not represent every postcolonial experience. By implicitly and explicitly having their Western education and current residencies as paratextual elements, Bulawayo and Makumbi are constructed as emotionally connected to but physically and culturally somewhat disconnected from, their home countries. Moreover, the results of my analysis also show that the authors

[312] Mohanty. *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity,* p. 48-49.
[313] Ibid., p. 49.

negotiate their identities by showing resistance to the idea that they represent some sort of national literature in relation to their home countries.

Although dominant literary discourses are heavily shaped by postcolonial ideas that center Western knowledge on the imagined 'Other', Sub-Saharan African female authors negotiate their identities to show belonging in the postcolonial nation *and* in contemporary Western literary discourses. Finally, as this thesis is limited to two authors and to paratexts in English only, future research would benefit from looking at differences in paratexts between colonial languages and Indigenous languages, as well as studying more authors.

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