

The confession of a criminal woman: An interrogation of Saga McOdongo's *Deadly Money Maker*

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Abstract

Autobiographical writing in Kenya, specifically crime writing, is dominated by male writers. Hence, Saga McOdongo's autobiography, *Deadly Money Maker*, is unique because it is one of its kind, written by a Kenyan woman to foreground the criminalisation of women in Africa. Other Kenyan texts tackling issues on prison and imprisonment, appear to be relatively well-represented with both male and female writers articulating their experiences in incarceration as a result of first, colonialism, and later for political reasons. McOdongo's autobiography deviates from the rest because it is the only one from a woman's perspective that explores the subject of criminalisation. However, although studies on confession normally deal with crime in relation to penitence and forgiveness, I argue that Saga McOdongo's *Deadly Money Maker* adopts a disruptive confessional mode because at the end of her autobiography, the aspect of redemption remains a contestable one. This article examines the writer's confession: that is, how she admits to getting involved in drug peddling, her experience of prison, assumed contrition and the complexities of restoration. Also, I demonstrate that criminal autobiographical writing is gendered and that a holistic study of prison literature in Africa cannot overlook women's prison writing.