THE WRITINGS OF EAST AFRICAN NATIONALIST LEADERS AS SITES OF
REPRESENTATION OF THEIR IDENTITIES

STEPHEN MUTHOKA MUTIE

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Award of the Master of Arts Degree in Literature of Egerton University

EGERTON UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER 2015
DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

DECLARATION

This Master of Arts thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

Signature ........................................

Stephen Muthoka Mutie
AM18/2787/10

RECOMMENDATION

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as supervisors.

Signature ------------------------------- Date -----------------------------

Prof. Emilia V. Ilieva
Professor, Department of Literature, Languages and Linguistics
Egerton University

Signature-------------------------------------- Date -----------------------------

Dr. Joseph Walunywa
Senior Lecturer, Department of Literature, Languages and Linguistics
Egerton University
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DEDICATION

To *mama*, Alice
*tata*, Aaron Ngotya

For Your joint teachings on values of hard work, Your fervent prayers,
Your encouragement and love,
Your trust and patience
Your generosity, even in Glaring lack
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would not have completed this thesis if Professor Emilia Ilieva and Dr. Joseph Walunywa, my research supervisors, had not offered such infinite patience, critical comments and productive arguments. It was my good fortune to have benefited greatly from their excellent supervision. Having tried to save me from errors, they cannot be held accountable for them. I also appreciate Mr. Adrian Onyando, of Pangolin Publishers, for introducing me to academic writing and also giving me counsel and encouragement when I desperately needed it.

I must thank my colleagues and friends in the Department of Literature, Languages and Linguistics of Egerton University, Felix Mutunga, Robert Rotich, Micah Were, Martin Bosire and Mathew Kwambai, for they were so generous with their time and useful discussions. I am greatly indebted to Janiffer Mwende for her unwavering trust and support, without which this research would have been impossible in the first place.

I am grateful to My God for graciously letting me pursue my ambition when all was bleak. To Him, I offer deepest appreciation and love for a lifetime.
ABSTRACT

It is commonly accepted that independence did not deliver the African masses from the burden of life-in-suffering. It is thus necessary to persist in the attempts to elucidate those murky aspects of the colonial past and postcolonial present which may resolve the conundrum of failed independence. The literary scholar can intervene in this undertaking by endeavouring to examine the mind-work of the leaders who steered the nationalist project and determined to a large extent its outcome. This mind-work, which crucially involves the representation of their own selves, finds expression in their writings, which the student of literature is best equipped to investigate. This study, therefore, concerned itself with the representation by East African nationalist leaders of their identities in their writings, i.e. speeches and autobiographies. The objectives of the Suffering study Without Bitterness (1968), Julius Freedom and Nyerere’s Unity/Uhuruna Umoja (1968), and Yoweri Museveni’s Sowing the Mustard Seed (1997) construct the identities of a nationalist leader; to identify the literary strategies used by the authors in this construction; and to establish the ways in which the anticipation of audience shapes the construction of these identities. The study was based on the assumptions that in the three texts Kenyatta, Nyerere and Museveni engage in the construction of their identities as nationalist leaders; that the three authors use various literary strategies to construct these identities effectively; and that the anticipation of particular audiences plays a part in the way they construct their identities. The study used the postcolonial theory of autobiography. This theory deals, most importantly, with cultural identity in formerly colonised societies; the dilemmas of developing a national identity after colonial rule; and the ways in which writers articulate, celebrate and interrogate that identity (often reclaiming it from and maintaining strong connections with the coloniser). Interpretivism was the research methodology for the study. The speeches and autobiography provided the primary data. Scholarly work and other secondary material complemented it. Data was analysed interpretively. The study established that the three texts project identities desired by the three authors – the father of the nation (Kenyatta), Mwalimu (Nyerere), and revolutionary saviour (Museveni). In the context of the problematic unfolding of the nationalist project these identities serve to This construction is made possible by Kenyatta paradox; Nyerere’s use of elism, repetition, and figurative language; and hist or Museveni’s use of Biblical parables and the im age lead responding to sceptical, dissatisfied and critical views of them through placation, reassurance, outright dismissal and counter-accusation. The study was able to conclude that identity representation for the three leaders became a complex process of projecting selves that were at marked variance with their true inner core. A of how they wanted to be perceived by the masses and the deviations from this ideal that they gradually became, shaped by personal ambitions for power before all else. This was a dichotomy the leaders never tried to overcome; instead they focused their energy and attention on concealing their ambition-deformed personalities behind the masks of the positive self-identities they constructed. In the resultant hide-and-seek game with their peoples, the opportunity for selfless leadership and genuine service to nation-building was lost. The study helps to understand East African nationalist leaders from a new perspective and in so doing expands the understanding of the region’s historical, political, literary.
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