

The Ghost Within: A Literary Study of East African Nationalist Leaders' Writings

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Abstract

It is unanimously 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. This paper intervenes 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 nationalist leaders' understanding and representation of their own selves, finds expression in their writings. This paper, therefore, concerns itself with the representation by East African nationalist leaders of their identities in their writings, selves that are at marked variance with their true inner core, the ghost within. In their writings, they focus their energy and attention on concealing their ambition-deformed personalities behind the masks of the positive self-identities they construct. In the resultant hide-and-seek game with their peoples, the opportunity for selfless leadership and genuine service to nation-building is lost. Constructivist research methodology will be used in the study.

Keywords: identities, nationalist leaders, postcolonial, nationalist writings

Introduction

Selfless leadership, nation-building and an enthusiasm for a realisation of an all-round development is what African leaders promise their masses before they become Presidents. Many African leaders get the support of the entire nations populations and eventually ascend to the highest office in the land, then, all of a sudden, a mysterious disconnect with the rest of the society emerges. Their poor democratic and human rights record, coupled with their patronising and paternalistic attitude, represent a radical departure from a free and tolerant society they promise to build at the onset of their rule. This is what I will call the manifestations of the ghost within. In this paper I argue that even before they came into power, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda were already undemocratic, opportunists, and dictatorial. The ghost has always been there, lying within the deep recesses of their personalities and only hobble outside when these leaders are exposed to much power.

This paper argues that, it is in this desire to hide the ghost within that drives them, instead of trying to reverse the state of affairs in their own countries, to invent images about themselves that are convenient projections of their own selfish interests. In this paper we argue that Jomo Kenyatta's *Suffering Without Bitterness* (hereafter *Suffering*), Julius Nyerere's *Freedom and Unity* (*Freedom*) and Yoweri Museveni's *Sowing the Mustard Seed* (*Sowing*) are not simply partial historical documents, but texts involved in constructing identities of Kenyatta, Nyerere and Museveni portraying them as nationalist leaders. These writings are a powerful medium through which their authors camouflage their abuse of power and pursuit of own interests – the ghost within. The paper interrogates the literariness of these works to show how Kenyatta, Nyerere and Museveni perceive their roles, how they interpret their leadership and how, in their writings create new fictional selves in the texts, selves that portray them as leaders worthy of trust. This paper argues 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 dichotomy was created between the leaders' desires 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. The paper contends 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 mask the ghosts within the leaders' personalities.

Camouflaging the Ghost Within through Literature

Suffering: A Father of the Nation or a Tribalist?

In this paper I argue that Kenyatta's *Suffering* constructs Kenyatta's identity as a father, in fact a founding father of a young nation, an identity that is of necessity multi-faceted. One of its key aspects is that of a unifier. As I have already argued elsewhere, a unifying identity for Kenyatta seems to have been necessitated by the travails of tribalism, ethnicity and other divisive social evils. After independence, tribalism and ethnic-based political parties were indicative of the failure of national politics in Kenya. There was largely a lack of a sense of unity when the ethnic calculus was employed in the use of national assets and opportunities, and those not included opted for sectional identification as a source of strength and safety (Kaggia, 1975: 3). Kenyatta, for his part, had to put on the garment of a leader who aspired for unification and one who hated tribalism, disunity and other divisive policies. In his 1964 "Kenyatta Day Speech" (240-245), he railed against leaders whom he claimed were using tribalism to bring division among the Kenyan people, including the leaders of the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) and the African People's Party (APP). He makes the determined statement that: "My government [...] will not permit exploitation of tribalism and divisive politics" (241). In saying this, Kenyatta is driven by the desire to depict himself as a true head of state in order to ward off the increasing claims that he was a budding dictator and ethnic chauvinist. A close examination of the speech in relation to the prevailing circumstances reveals that it was a part of his strategy to disguise his actual qualities and intentions. In the speech, Kenyatta writes:

There have been murmurs here in Kenya about the part played by one set of people, or another set of people, in the struggle for uhuru [...] there has been vindictive comment, and a finger of scorn has been pointed at some selected race, or group or tribe. All this is unworthy of our future here. (241)

Here, he creates the impression that he is a leader for all Kenyans. However, in the speech "Kenyatta Day, 1967" (341-348), Kenyatta poses a question to his audience which betrays his own divisive tendency: "Where did you fight? How many weapons did you use? How many guns? [...] apart from Achieng who was with us in Lokitaung, and maybe Kaggia [...] they did nothing." (343). In other words, the leaders of KPU were cowards who never fought for independence. To put it differently, Kenyatta insinuated that there are leaders who never fought for independence and who therefore had no right to question his actions. This speech polarised the country into two sides based on who fought and who did not fight for independence. The KPU members, who were predominantly Luo, were thus judged as cowards who never fought for independence and who should always remain in the political cold.

In fact, in the same speech, "Kenyatta Day, 1967" (341-348), Kenyatta urges his audience to "crush the snakes" (meaning KPU members) (343). Yet, these KPU leaders were agitating for the eradication of poverty, equal distribution of resources, and eradication of landlessness (Ogot, 1996; Mbato, 1969; Osolo, 1968). Kenyatta's negative response to their demands therefore reveals a leader who could not listen to any opinion contrary to his. The speech shows Kenyatta's budding dictatorial tendencies.

Faced with the twin problem of forging a nation from the diverse ethnic communities of Kenya and placating the Kikuyu masses (Tamarkin, 1978: 298), Kenyatta decided to pursue both goals simultaneously. He co-opted the power elite of other ethnic nationalities into his ruling coalition and by so doing, he set himself up as the ultimate patron in the neo-patrimonial state he presided over, without pacifying the poor and the dispossessed. This complex client-patron network within which Kenyatta set up "ethnic chiefs" was aimed at helping him retain power (Muigai, 2004: 209). On the other hand, to mollify the Kikuyu masses, he chose to surround himself with an inner circle of Kikuyu advisors, creating a Kikuyu government within the government.

Muigai (2004: 209) observes that by choosing to champion the deep-seated land and power grievances of the Kikuyu, he was perceived as having consented to be the Kikuyu paramount chief. This stand did nothing to help solve the issue of historical ethnic claims.

Another way that Kenyatta used to camouflage his true interests and intentions was the rhetoric of patriotism and nationalism.

On the surface, he spoke continuously about the need for Kenyans to rise above their ethnic and regional boundaries in order to forge ahead as a united nation. But beneath the rhetoric appears to have been a systematic programme of “Kikuyunisation” of national institutions and resources.

When Kenyatta became Prime Minister in June 1963, he promised to fight poverty, ignorance and disease as a way of leading the country to the realisation of an all-round development. This, as Kenyatta put it, would be achieved through the spirit of nation-building and Africanisation of agriculture and the civil service. In his Independence Day Speech of 1963 (212-217), he averred that independence was, to the Kenyan people, the turning point of their lives, the reversal of all things in their favour. He proposed the socialist slogan *Harambee* as a call to self-sufficiency. The slogan was devised for the purpose of national development. Kenyatta likened the task ahead of the new nation to that of workers with a burden which would only be overcome by working together to successfully heave up or pull together their heavy load.

In “Kenyatta Day, 1964” (240-245), Kenyatta describes the political hurdles that he encountered in the fight for the emancipation of the Kenyan people. He presents himself as a leader who suffered, offering himself as a sacrifice for the nation. He narrates to his people the difficulties he experienced in founding the nation, presenting himself as a nationalist who endured and came out of suffering victoriously. He prides himself on fighting for the welfare of the Kenyan people, recalling how he was “heavily chained in detention camps and prison [but how] he never gave up” (243). He supposedly knew that “one must learn to suffer and endure, to replant or rebuild, to move on again” (5). In his words, “a practitioner must never lose faith” (6). By presenting himself as a leader who endures suffering without losing focus, Kenyatta aims to be understood as a patriotic leader who is concerned with the welfare of his nation.

After independence, the unity between the Luo and the Kikuyu quickly fell apart. Once Kenyatta (a Kikuyu) became President his administration started favouring the Kikuyu people. This favouritism manifested itself in greater government expenditures for social infrastructure in Kikuyu areas, corruption benefits to fellow tribesmen and privileged access to government and parastatal jobs (Ogot, 1996: 49). The Luo, on the other hand, despite holding the vice-presidency, were largely discriminated against, and their complaints only elicited intimidation and even assassinations in return. Under the Kenyatta government, it was not unusual to have under-qualified staff from the Kikuyu community placed in positions of authority rather than qualified ones from other tribes (Tarimo, 2008: 3). This led to the final falling out between the Luo and the Kikuyu in the government as the Vice President, Oginga Odinga (a Luo), was eventually pushed out of government and detained (Tarimo, 2008: 3). The tribal rift was widened and solidified when a Luo minister, Tom Mboya, who had remained in government, was assassinated in 1969. The assassination was blamed on highly placed Kikuyu politicians, and this was seen as an assault on the Luo by the Kikuyu, and since then Kenyan politics has essentially pitted the Kikuyu against the Luo (Ogot, 1996: 54). As each of the two tribes attempted to attract other tribal groups to its side, Kenyatta sought to reshape and save his face by projecting an image of himself as a non-tribalistic leader.

In this respect, perhaps Kenyatta’s most important response against the increasing perception that he was a tribalist were his speeches, especially the ones that were included in *Suffering*. In speech after speech, he sought to focus on the dangers that the division of Kenya along tribal lines posed to the country’s future. It will be recalled that at the beginning of his presidency he had cautioned Kenyans that unless they achieved national unity they could become vulnerable to the same forces of imperialism and colonialism that had created their present conditions (Osolo, 1968: 25; Mbato, 1969: 3). In his verbal addresses to the nation in the course of the 1960s, especially subsequent to the fall-out with Odinga, he repeatedly emphasised that message. But it is debatable whether or not he achieved the objective of creating a more palatable image of himself as far as his handling of ethnic relations was concerned since criticisms of him to that effect persisted in spite of the patriotism he repeatedly communicated to the nation and to the world.

One of the speeches in which Kenyatta sought to exonerate himself from accusations of negative ethnicity is “Dissident Activity, 1966” (302-307).

When this speech is examined closely in relation to Kenyatta's political objectives, it becomes clear that Kenyatta was using it to caution the radicals within the government to desist from criticising him. These radicals wanted him to honour the pledge of steering Kenya as a socialist state, for it appeared to them that what Kenyatta's government was calling "African Socialism" was simply a cloak for the practice of tribalism and capitalism (Ogot, 1996: 100).

Freedom: Concealing Myopism?

The same kind of argument can be raised in so far as Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania is concerned. In his speeches, Nyerere constructs an identity of himself as a teacher in the broadest sense of the term. He aims to be understood as a counsellor, an ideologue and a liberator. To portray himself as a liberator, Nyerere challenges the imperial narrative with the intention of liberating the mind of Tanzanians. This imperial narrative, as Miller (1985: 44) argues, denied Africans their histories and humanity. Nyerere's approach to imperialism, as he aims to show in his speeches, is in line with Miller's argument that the nationalist historiographies sought to correct the one-sidedness and racist historiography that served the colonial ideological apparatus. To Miller, colonial historiography denied Africans agency and was essentially an account of the itineraries of explorers, trade merchants, missionaries and colonisers. Dethroning this view and placing Africans at the centre of the history of their country, Nyerere aims to be understood as one with a message of liberation and decolonisation of the mind of the Tanzanian person.

It will be recalled that post-independent African leaders typically wanted to be perceived as the ones who had the sole responsibility of liberating the citizens from the shackles of colonialism. They wanted to be applauded for leading their nations into freedom single-handedly. Most of them therefore abrogated for themselves the identities of liberators. Nyerere, in his speeches, aims to portray himself as the sole liberator of the Tanzanian nation. He strives to emerge as the one who redeems the humanity of the Tanzanian people, a humanity denied by Hegel's assertion that Africans had no history but a "blank darkness" (Miller, 1985: 45). In the speech "Independence Address to the United Nations, 1961" (144-156), Nyerere offers his interpretation of the meaning of independence: "Freedom is responsibility towards our people ... to raise the standards of living of our people and to lift up our economy" (144). He, in this speech, outlines the policies of his government, which aim at liberating the people of Tanzania from the shackles of colonialism and other social ills, such as poverty, disease and ignorance. He advances the idea that without freedom, a human being cannot be productive and is unable to benefit from the environment. These formulations sound as axioms, they do not open up possibilities for interrogation and preclude thought. What is also glaringly lacking in them is the consideration of personal freedoms.

An argument can be made that Nyerere's understanding of liberation shared one common premise and fallacy of developmentalism. That is, the objectification of African peasants and rural dwellers as hapless victims of underdevelopment who needed to be emancipated to higher levels of social and material well-being (Freyhold, 1979; Ergas, 1980: 387-410). As a result, Nyerere's commitment to liberation resulted in a situation where improving the conditions of the peasants meant alienating them from their cultural and social backgrounds. This kind of scenario confirms the claim that Nyerere did not understand well the meaning of freedom and this misunderstanding can be attributed to his political myopism alluded to by Versi (1999: 7-13).

One aspect of the identity of an all-knowing teacher in Nyerere's speeches is that of a unifier. The first speech in *Freedom* is entitled "The Race Problem in East Africa, 1952" (23-29), and in it Nyerere points out that to achieve liberation of mind the Tanganyikan nation had to stop "racial animosity" (23). In this speech, Nyerere criticises racial attitudes. He recalls: "It was in Tanganyika where recently at a public gathering and before a minister of the Crown, a European settler declared that he would rather dine with swine than with an African" (23). Nyerere rejects this perverse attitude as an obstacle to the unity of the Tanzanian nation. Nyerere argues that without unity among the races living in Tanganyika at the time, freedom and development could not be achieved. In this speech, Nyerere emphasises unity and argues that in its absence the nation could never attain independence. However, as studies have shown, Nyerere after independence favoured white(s) in the awarding of state jobs. This is borne out of his definition of an African as anyone living in Tanzania rather than someone indigenous to the place (Boesen et al., 1977: 2-4; Freyhold, 1979: 34). Examining his definition of an African, in the post-independent state, in line with what he says in the above speech delivered before independence, it can be argued that Nyerere paid serious attention to the problem of racism before independence but after independence, when he is the President, he prefers to overlook this problem in order to emerge as a unifying force.

Similarly, in his speech “Oral Hearing at the Trusteeship Council, 1955” (35-39), Nyerere assures the Asian and European communities that upon attainment of independence, the Tanzanian nation would not discriminate against them and urges them that they should not go away when the country becomes independent. What Nyerere was expressing in the speech was the importance of uniting regardless of race and historical backgrounds.

The same message is expressed in the speech “Widening Brotherhood, 1958” (61-62), whereby Nyerere expresses gratitude for the solidarity among the masses in Tanzania before independence: “With this kind of solidarity it is going to be difficult in future for imperialism to exploit by the simple methods of *divide et impera*” (62). In this speech, Nyerere warns the nation against racism because it is an enemy to unity in diversity. In writing this speech, Nyerere aims to be understood as a symbol of the emancipation of the human race.

The same argument can be advanced in respect to the speech “Why I Resigned, 1957” (48-52), in which Nyerere blames the colonial government for not respecting African demands in the “spirit of give and take”. He cites what he terms the “unnecessary invitation of racial suspicions” as the reasons why he resigned from the Legislative Council (51). He does not spare even the African leaders but warns them against suspicion and discriminating against the whites. By appearing to stand outside his race and taking a neutral position, Nyerere speaks from a vantage point — as a significant factor in the then need to have both the whites and blacks in Tanzania forget their differences and unite for development of the nation.

A close examination of Nyerere’s call for unity shows that he advocated for unity in days before he became the President. Scholars have argued that Nyerere abdicated his call for unity after he assumed the reins of power. He favoured the whites in resource distribution (Johnson, 2000: 1), he pitted the people whom he thought fought for independence against those he thought did not to the extent of calling them religious bigots (Mwakikagile, 2010: 3). Mwakikagile (2010) contends that there were people in every tribe or ethnic group, in every district, every province, and every region who fought for the rights of Africans even before TANU was formed and after it was formed. Thus, no-one deserved more credit than others. They all deserved credit – equal credit. And they all were nationalists and patriots, not religious bigots or tribalists as Nyerere referred to them. Although hitherto Tanzania’s linguistic nationalism has played a vital role in fostering unity in the country, it can be argued that Nyerere’s call for unity was a vehicle for getting onto power. This is because, as already argued in the foregoing, Nyerere ignores the call for unity after independence.

An important concept associated with Nyerere is that of *ujamaa*. It has been argued that Nyerere’s socialist strategy in Tanzania was a classic example of misplaced philosophical idealism, squandered developmental opportunities and broken political promises (Gerhart, 1997; Scott, 1999; Johnson, 2000). Scholars saw Nyerere as a coercive and forceful leader and as one who robbed the Tanzanian society of the personal freedoms, private incentives, and individual rewards that are essential for a transition to a modern, prosperous and democratic society (Yeager, 1989: 1).

In the speech “Ujamaa – The Basis of African Socialism, 1962” (162-172), Nyerere formulates a developmental strategy for the nation – a strategy that would help in nation-building. He argues that “our nation building is a collective effort” (167). By referring to a “collective effort,” he roots *ujamaa*’s philosophy in traditional African values that had as their core the emphasis on familyhood and communalism. *Ujamaa* was founded on a philosophy of development that was based on three essentials: freedom, equality and unity. The ideal society, Nyerere argues, must always be based on these three essentials. According to him, there must be equality, because only on that basis will men work cooperatively. There must be freedom, because the individual is not served by society unless it is his. And there must be unity, because only when society is unified can its members live and work in peace, security and well-being. These three essentials, Nyerere further contends, are not new to Africa; they have always been part of the traditional social order. Osabu-We (2000: 171) notes that *ujamaa* “was supposed to embrace the communal concepts of African culture such as mutual respect, common property and common labour.” The challenge was how to extend these traditional values to the modern postcolonial setting. It was in meeting this challenge that Nyerere postulated *ujamaa* – his version of African Socialism – as an answer.

Another issue Nyerere raises in his speeches, and which he aims to use in reaffirming his identity as a teacher, is education. Nyerere saw education as a sure way of decolonising people’s minds and imparting desired values that could enable them to be self-reliant. Nyerere encourages the citizens who had shown exemplary work in the Republic of Tanzania through hard work. In the speeches “State Visit to the People’s Republic of China, 1965” (323-325), “State Visit to Mali, 1965” (326-328) and “Official Visit to the Netherlands, 1965” (329-332), Nyerere borrows success stories and delivers them to his citizens in order to give them a blueprint for developing

Tanzania. The borrowing of success stories from different countries provides him with privileged practical knowledge which he transmits to his citizens. He teaches his citizens about the best ways to emancipate their society, leaving no room for doubt that these ways must be seen as the best.

Nyerere seeks to cement his identity as a teacher. As such, Nyerere aims to preserve for himself the right to always guide the citizens. Nyerere envisioned a world in which nation-building is to be based on the pillar of education, whether formal or informal. In “First Speech in Legislative Council, 1954” (30-35), Nyerere aims to restore self-confidence among the Tanzanian people as a way of curbing colonialism and its psychological effect through education. Nyerere became President at a time when colonialism had left African states with mass illiteracy and ignorance, and as a teacher he thought he was best-placed to rally the education agenda. In the same speech, Nyerere differentiates between “trouble-mongering and criticizing the government justifiably” (33). Nyerere teaches his government resilience by urging it to accept positive criticism. However, a close examination of his actions, as the President, indicates that Nyerere jailed scores of people who questioned his policies (Legum & Mmari, 1995: 2). He could not accept criticisms and was sliding in to dictatorship. He uses his speeches to camouflage dictating as teaching.

Nyerere’s decision to use speeches in constructing his identities is advantageous. Leaders’ speeches are supposed to make citizens conscious of their responsibility to participate in nation-building. The assumption which Nyerere makes here is that a careful examination of the values and priorities embodied in his speeches would teach the Tanzanian people to understand his dream and join him in realising it. But he defeats his own intention by denying these citizens the opportunity to interrogate this dream and thus internalise it. Nyerere’s teachings are more like what Freire (1970) calls the “banking” concept of education in which education becomes an act of depositing. The students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, Freire (1970) argues, the teacher issues statements and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorise, and repeat. The scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. This concept perceives knowledge as a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. Freire (1970) argues that the teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. In his speeches, Nyerere perceives the Tanzanian nation as a classroom and the citizens as students. The reasons why he fails in his projects might therefore be attributed to his methods of teaching. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. Nyerere negates the concept of education as the practice of freedom and perceives it as the practice of domination. Even as Nyerere persistently constructed his identity as *Mwalimu*, with its various aspects, his “lessons” largely failed to produce the desired results in terms of the prosperity of Tanzania because his myopism as a *Mwalimu* did not allow him to revisit and revise his ideas even when there was glaring evidence that he needed to do so.

Sowing: A Saviour or a Dictator?

Museveni wrote *Sowing* in his tenth year as Uganda’s President, following his successful re-election. In the Preface to the book he makes the claim that he is not a professional politician and that he considers political leadership to be a service to his people (xiii). In saying that he is not a politician, Museveni aims to lure his readers into seeing him as a special type of a leader who is primarily concerned with the welfare of the people. He guides the reader to approach his autobiography, not as a scheme to glorify himself, but as an insight into true leadership. However, a close examination of the book reveals that Museveni is the quintessential politician determined to retain power using any political means available to him.

The autobiography consists of fourteen chapters which detail Museveni’s life from his childhood to the time he became Uganda’s President. These chapters are chronologically arranged and collectively construct a coherent narrative of Museveni the nationalist leader. They project the image of a revolutionary leader who banished the archaic and exclusionary modes of governance, corruption and economic mismanagement, and the manifestly discriminatory and marginalising methods employed by leaders of the past. In *Sowing*, Museveni carefully constructs his identity as a revolutionary leader who is also an intellectual and who, upon assumption of political power, pursues a transformative and development-oriented agenda.

However, questions arise as to whether Museveni actually changed the traditional modes of leadership and governance that he overthrew. It is important to consider how committed Museveni has been to the genuine and peaceful resolution of the conflicts that he confronted domestically, and to the regional conflicts that developed during the nearly two decades of his tenure in office.

In the autobiography, Museveni parades all the contributions that, in his view, he has made to Uganda's social, economic and political stability. *Sowing* is thus a form of life-construction, which involves Museveni's choice of certain events and subjects and the omission of others that obstruct his strategic goal of representing himself as different from former leaders. He uses the book to construct the identity of a revolutionary, a saviour whose words and deeds redeemed Ugandans. The reason for the construction of such an identity may well be his intention to deconstruct perceptions of him as a leader who has practised sectarian politics and has not been concerned with the welfare of the masses (Mujaju, 1997; Rosenblum, 2002: 195; Cheru, 2002: 196-198).

Sowing starts by portraying Museveni as an ordinary peasant. A substantial part of the book reconstructs Museveni's background as a poor boy who grew up in a family of peasants and who upon his growing up retained his peasant identity. Museveni declares that he is not a noble man because the livelihood of his people revolves around keeping cattle. He underscores, on the one hand, his lowly position and origin and on the other hand, his "inherent" ability to deliver his people from the bondage of underdevelopment.

Pursuing this connection with the peasants yet further, Museveni, contends that, among his people even young children owned cattle and the prosperity of a child depended on the prosperity of his cattle. He too, like most peasant boys, had his own. As he writes, "mine have done very well, in spite of many vicissitudes they have suffered! At one time when our cows died, because of my father moving to a tsetse area, only one of my cows progeny remained; but then it multiplied again and now there are many of them" (2). Narrating about his cattle's life cycle is important not only for the cattle-minded Ugandan people but also for his own presumed identity. A peasant should not forget the history of his cattle; he should value them as part of his life. Museveni traces his origins in order to identify himself with the peasants who work in the farms. In so doing, he creates an identity of a unique peasant whom Ugandans can embrace as a leader who can understand their plight and travails. As an ordinary peasant who has passed through life just like many Ugandans do, he is one with the people.

To placate his critics, Museveni wrote *Sowing* to portray himself, not as a violent man, but as a revolutionary leader. In the book he presents himself as a historic figure, who fought in the bush and overthrew "dark forces" that had to be done away with in order to transform Uganda. He emerges as a discerning leader who, upon his ascendancy to power in 1986, understood what ailed the country. He declares firmly that "the main political problem in Uganda ... was the army, which effectively prevented the country from attaining democracy" (40). Museveni understood, we are made to believe, what ailed the Ugandan nation and why he was out to solve the problem. He understood that although the army was important to the nation, it had to be controlled. *Sowing* anchors Museveni in Uganda's history as a leader whose revolutionary powers go beyond fighting in the bush. He instils the concept of revolution in governance by ensuring that the army is in his hands and that politics are fully militarised.

In *Sowing* Museveni criticises the first crop of African leaders, who dwelt on sectarian politics and were concerned with pampering their egos instead of helping their states fight poverty, disease and ignorance. Museveni is convinced that African states were misled by their postcolonial leaders. He argues that these leaders "completely failed to address the real African crisis or find solutions to the continent's problems" (140). Museveni blames his predecessors (Milton Obote and Idi Amin) for the ills that beset the Ugandan state after independence. He avers that these Ugandan leaders were preoccupied not with the welfare of the Ugandan people but with their own welfare. He uses Uganda as a microcosm of African states that were plundered by their selfish first generation postcolonial leaders. In this regard his ideas echo Fanon's (1968: 152), who maintains that the goal of anti-colonial nationalism in Africa was to transfer into native hands the unfair advantages which were the legacy of colonialism. Upon attainment of independence, these advantages were appropriated by the small elite, and the peasantry was left to wallow in perpetual poverty. Museveni pieces facts and perceptions in such a way that his revolution is seen as bringing a new dawn. He draws a parallel between his leadership and that of others in his speech to the nation during his inauguration. Museveni aims to be understood as a unique leader, different from the former leaders.

Museveni insists that Africa cannot be emancipated from selfish leadership without a revolution. By justifying a revolution both outside and inside the government, *Sowing* portrays Museveni as a king of revolution, a revolutionary leader who is called to face head-on the problems that face Uganda as a country.

Paradoxically, Museveni, like Obote before him, believes in the supremacy of his political organisation (the Uganda People's Congress) and his own ability to manoeuvre the political elite.

Both men relied extensively on the military to resolve essentially political disputes. Both strongly believed in individual destiny (Ogot, 1999: 223), and have demonstrated this – Obote in seeking the presidency for a second time, and Museveni in pursuing a war that appeared a futile and doomed endeavour (Ingham, 1994). Even as he repeats so many of Obote's political mistakes, he evokes Obote's image and persona in futile support of the claim that he actually differs from him. But both these men's Achilles' heel, the deepest vulnerability they share, is a disdain for, and fear of, oppositional politics. Thus, in the 1960s, Obote moved against both the right and left-wings of his party – the UPC – in a bid to consolidate his power, just as Museveni did against the "traditionalists", urging the restoration of a political monarchy in Buganda, and the reformists in the contemporary Movement. Central to Museveni's worldview is the primacy of security over virtually any other public good. On the first anniversary of the NRA/M's assumption of power, Museveni gave a speech in which he attacked the incipient rebels, cattle-raiders and "tribalists" who were causing problems in various parts of the country. In that address, he provided his most succinct explanation for placing security concerns above all else:

We are, therefore, continuing to strengthen our defense forces: to neglect doing so would be like exposing meat when there are dangerous carnivores around. Remember the story of the boy who took a lump of meat out in the courtyard? A carnivorous bird (*kamunye*) swooped down on him and not only took the meat but left his fingers bleeding. (122)

In certain respects, this viewpoint may be acceptable given Uganda's turbulent history and the problems of insecurity that continue to plague the country. Rebel groups, particularly in the north, have wreaked havoc on civilians, cattle rustling in the pastoral part of the northeast has disrupted everyday life there, and the upsurge in regional wars have all been given as justification for this approach to Uganda's security concerns. Consequently, defense spending has grown to overshadow any other sector as a proportion of national expenditure. Even attempts by donor governments to cap military spending have been unsuccessful. As a consequence, Uganda under Museveni has built a formidable military machine, one that has insinuated itself into nearly all aspects of the national social and political life. Museveni's belief in the military is demonstrated by not only his continued leadership of the army (as a lieutenant general), but also his recourse to the military in dealing with essentially political and economic affairs, such as elections, taxation, and smuggling.

To create the impression that he is different from the first generation of leaders, Museveni represents himself as intellectually predisposed leader but who is also a man of action when he outlines the faults within the state and the measures he had taken to correct them. For example, he waged guerrilla warfare in which he abandoned the comfort zones of his family to save Ugandans from poverty, ignorance and disease. It is his conviction that one of the things that prevented the first African leaders from realising all-round development was sectarianism, which he defines as "a consequence of an incomplete social metamorphosis" (187). He contends that the problem with Africa is not only that it has not metamorphosed, but that it has actually regressed. By showing his understanding of the continent's ills, Museveni presents himself as a leader with sharp intellectual capability, and yet not a rigid ideologue.

Museveni's *Sowing* implies that true liberation comes from the peasantry, that true freedom is achieved through armed struggle, and that he is best suited to lead the armed struggle. Here, Museveni's formulation further serves to portray his intelligence. He deduces that for true freedom to be achieved in a country the peasantry must be armed with knowledge. He derives his peasantry idea from the story of Jesus Christ, who was born in a peasant family. Museveni avers that Jesus' background was the most fitted for a man who saved the world of its sins; and would become the most popular man in centuries. Museveni recalls how Uganda came to be 92 percent peasant through wiping out both the feudal and artisan classes in Uganda in the 1860s (188). Having grown up as a peasant, he is well-informed, through experience, that the peasants are stuck in poverty because they live from hand to mouth. As a leader who is knowledgeable about Karl Marx and Frantz Fanon (188), Museveni is aware that the peasants will need a leader who understands their plight. He uses this knowledge to appeal to them and portray himself as the leader they have always wished to have.

In *Sowing*, Museveni does not only outline problems, he also presents solutions to these problems. For example, he proposes to educate the masses in order to emancipate them from poverty. He emphasises that he understands that lack of education means lack of liberation. He is not only talking from the point of what he will do; he also narrates how after he assumed power, he united and armed the peasants with knowledge. In addition, he recalls how he restored peace in most parts of Uganda, when his National Resistance Movement united over forty different ethnic groups.

Sowing insists on making the point that Museveni has set the tone for the new Ugandan development. He is a military leader who came to power after leading a planned bush war and speaks with firm knowledge of international economics (Mazrui, 1987).

Museveni seems to understand the demographics and the socio-economic landscape of his country and uses the long-standing gender divide to elevate himself as the eagerly awaited saviour. Through his comments on gender, he projects himself as the epitome of the change that women have desired for so long, as a revolutionary man who came with compassion for women, who had faced discrimination and oppression for centuries. Being different, he is prepared to do things differently compared to the earlier regimes, which supposedly discredited and disrespected women. To emphasise the point, he appointed a woman as his vice president.

Another image that Museveni projects in *Sowing* is that of a sacrificial lamb for Uganda. It is popularly believed that liberation does not come without a price, and so Museveni takes the position of a leader who suffered in order to liberate his people. For example, he describes how he suffered under the “incompetence” of President Obote and his right-hand men. He paints an image of himself as a sacrificial lamb against wolves and unreasoning people, contending that Obote’s men were “people with bankrupt and false ideas and ideologically bankrupt politicians” (39). The reader is made to “see” who paid the price for the liberation of the Ugandan people. He juxtaposes himself with Obote’s men, presenting the figure of a man sacrificed by “the inefficiency of his friends” (39-48). He implies that for any leader to succeed in proving his capabilities, he must be a person who has suffered more than anyone else.

Conclusion

This paper was propelled, to begin with, by one broad, seemingly extra-literary, intellectual impulse, i.e. to account – in yet another way, besides ways that have already been offered – for the stubborn reality of largely unfulfilled aspirations of the anti-colonial struggle in Africa, and East Africa in particular; to explain from a possible new perspective East Africa’s deficient post-independence. I considered that unraveling the minds of key nationalist leaders of the region may well offer insights into that in-between space of hope and despair in which people continue to find themselves a lifetime after official independence. This supposition was based on the understanding that it is these minds that spearheaded the process of nation-building in the three states of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. But thus motivated, the idea of the paper soon gravitated towards the literary. It is in the realm of the literary, that is, in the writings that the leaders have produced, that one is bound to find a reflection of the workings of their minds. Among such writings, it is especially in speeches and autobiographies that one encounters, as part of the mental process at work, an attempt on the part of these authors cum leaders to construct their identities, that is, an attempt on their part to reveal certain images of themselves to readers/ listeners in a deliberate manner.

By examining the three texts, and setting them against the background of the leaders’ performance, ideological disposition, stands taken, decisions made, as documented and commented upon in various sources, the paper 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 – the ghost within. A dichotomy was created between the leaders’ desires of how they wanted to be perceived by the masses – a desire based of an abstract notion of an ideal leader – 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 genuine leadership and genuine service to nation-building was lost.

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