Naming practices as a technique for rewriting African women into history

Review article

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Abstract

Although daughterhood is a gendered identity, often invoked in nationalist discourses to further nationalist agenda, its 'private' status is often silenced or misrepresented in public discourses. This article, however, examines how naming practices re/signify the private selves of Wambui Waiyaki Otieno and Wangari Muta Maathai, two Kenyan women politicians, as political. This re/signification is made possible by the two memoirists advancing names in their memoirs as a discursive technique for negotiating their public and private identities. The assumption guiding the argument is that the two narrators either identify with or reject certain names related to individuals, places, political movements, or cultural aspects with whom they identify as biological or ideological daughters. The article finds that the narrators neither valorize the private nor public aspects of their daughterhood. Rather, they foreground alternate facets of their public or private daughterhood to suit a specific purpose, depending on the desired agenda they wish to foreground.

Keywords: daughterhood, gender, identity, memoir, re/signification

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Public Interest Statement

This article examines how naming practices re/signify the private selves of Wambui Waiyaki Otieno and Wangari Muta Maathai, two Kenyan women politicians, as political. This re/signification is made possible by the two memoirists advancing names in their memoirs as a discursive technique for negotiating their public and private identities.

Introduction

> [A] sense of belonging [...] is established through a multitude of references to place and to the names of homesteads and individuals, forebears, friends and foes (Gunner "Names" 118)

The epigraph above foregrounds the assumption that anchors this article, that is, the centrality of names in identity conceptualisation. It examines the deployment of names as a discursive technique in the memoirs of Mary Josephine Wangari Muta Ma(a)thai and Virginia Tiras Wambui Waiyaki Otieno Mbugua. It also revisits how these women come to possess all the names they identify with as the argument unfolds later. For now, it only points out that the latter's surname is hyphenated into a compound noun in recognition of her maternal, paternal, and cultural roots, which is culturally inscribed in her various names. In highlighting the centrality of names in identity configuration, this article focused on two life narratives from Kenya: Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's autobiography *Mau Mau's Daughter: A Life History* (1998, henceforth *Mau Mau's Daughter*) and Wangari Muta Maathai's memoir *Unbowed: One Woman's Story* (2007, henceforth *Unbowed*). The two narratives foreground women's encounters with cultural practices whose epistemologies resonate with African feminist debates on the personal as political. The aim is to explore how the narrators re/sign their private selves in life writings through names to negotiate political and cultural conceptions of daughterhood in Kenyan histories.

Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno (1946–2011) was a former Mau Mau freedom fighter, an anti-colonial movement in Kenya. She was also a key figure in the women's movement in this country. In 1997, she unsuccessfully contested the Kamukunji Constituency parliamentary seat as a member of the opposition party. Further, she served as a leader of the National People's Convention Party (NPCP) choir and executive member of the then ruling party's women's wing, the Kenya African National Union (hereafter KANU). On the other hand, Maathai (1941–2011), was an outspoken Kenyan politician in the pro-democracy movement. In 2002, she became Tetu Constituency's parliamentarian under the National Rainbow Coalition party that removed KANU from power. Maathai was also active in the Kenyan women's movement as the chairperson of the National

Council of Women, an elite women's organisation, and of its grassroots' counterpart, the Maendeleo Ya Wanawake (Women's Progress) Organisation. She is the founder of Mazingira Green Party, an eco-friendly political movement established in 2003.

Unlike in most Southern African countries where women who took part in nationalist struggles and political revolutions were appropriated in nationalist discourses as mothers of the nation, most Eastern African countries mostly co-opted women in politics as daughters of the nation. In Kenya, particularly, the practice of co-opting women as daughters of the nation suggests a paternalistic mode of political engagement that positions women below fathers of the struggle for independence, prohibiting a possibility of such women occupying a parallel political stature. As such, the figure of most East African nationalists was that of a black man who, in his capacity as father of the nation, patronised women as their daughters, thereby commanding respect that suppressed any possible criticism of the leader. In his capacity as a father of the nation, the president's authority was deemed sacred hence unquestionable. To further cement the authority of the leader of the nation, the family unit became the sphere where masculine political authority was sanctified. National politics drew parallels with African traditions, especially the dictum that children display total respect for one's parents and to question the nation's president meant to question your father, which in the African tradition was considered a taboo.

The imaginary of women as daughters however surpasses such political contexts as detailed above. It is also prevalent in Kenyan oral traditions, and Wangari Maathai mentions such an example in the Gikuyu myth of origin where the nine clans that comprise the Gikuyu nation are named after the nine daughters of Mumbi, the mother of the Gikuyu nation. Coincidentally, the oral narrative of Mumbi has been repressed in favour of her nine daughters, proving this article's assumption correct, that daughterhood is celebrated in recognition of women's leadership capacity, though in ways that do not threaten men's status quo as leaders. Consequently, there is need to explore how the negotiation of daughterhood in public and private spaces realizes different notions of African political womanhood. Daughterhood is a subjectivity, which according to Chikwenye Ogunyemi, is a 'source of power not fully explored, politically' (1996, p. 46). Both Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno and Wangari Maathai implicitly identify with this subjectivity through the autobiographical pact that Phillipe Lejeune speaks of at the level of names. Wangari Maathai identifies herself as a daughter of Mumbi, while Wambui Otieno calls herself Mau Mau's daughter as indicated in the title of her autobiography.

Arguably, therefore, the political imaginary of daughterhood has a restrictive capacity to represent individual women's (private) political agency. This paper seeks

to engage ongoing debates on women's political participation by interrogating how the name as a "signature of the self" functions as a discursive framework through which the writers re/sign their private selfhoods as public/political and politicize issues deemed apolitical in the public sphere. It interprets the name as a signifier of attempts by dominant discourses like patriarchy and colonialism to define the two Kenyan women in ways that silence their agency, hence a subversive modality. The article aims at showing how the chosen writers contest dominant symbolic grammars that generate discourses around the name as a male-defined site of identity formation and re-invent themselves anew as public and agential subjects. They resist the practice of self-identification through paternal lineages and underscore their womanhood through re-invented metaphorical grammars that make claims to a matrilineal heritage. The names that define these memoirists therefore have symbolic value in public discourses about them and inform their historical, cultural, and social selfhoods. Therefore, the naming practices discussed herein focus on personal names, titles of autobiographies, political movements, and names of places and spaces.

Theory and Methodology

In making sense of the name as a techniques of identity configuration, this article draws on Elsie Cloete's and Liz Gunner's theoretical views to examine how naming practices invoked in the memoirs of Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno and Maathai deliberate on the place of women in familial, communal, and national "public" archives in Kenya. In its capacity as a woman-centred discourse, the name becomes a technique that resignifies the private selfhoods of African women politicians as political in the private sphere of the memoir. The private sphere invoked in this paper refers to socially constructed spaces where secrecy is exerted on women by individuals and institutional frameworks that silence and normalise social injustices against women. In other words, private in this paper connotes the autobiographical process and female experiences that by their inability to further African nationalist ideologies or male political agenda are privatised in the public domain of formal politics as personal, hence apolitical. The epistemologies of these personal and collective memories are in tandem with oral narrative techniques and together, they act as subversive textual strategies to dominant discourses of patriarchy, dictatorial regimes, fundamentalism, and colonialism, etc., that oppress women and silence their voices as private.

As earlier noted, African women's political memoirs re/signify everyday female experiences as political. Jane Marcus in "Invincible Mediocrity: The Private Selves of Public Women" (1988), views autobiographical writing by women in public space as multiple performance acts. In reference to public documents, Marcus (1998, p. 114)

considers autobiographies of public women private in the sense that they 'represent a re/signing of their names in women's history'. The memoirists in this article narratively resign from the (public) political sphere, where their non-nationalist discourses are silenced. They then relocate their private discourses to the public-private space of memoir where they politicise their experiences privatised in the political sphere or in the domestic arena. In other words, the two women memoirists retract their names from public nationalist discourses where they exist only as public myths, and re-write themselves in alternative spaces like memoirs, immortalising themselves in what Marcus (1998, p. 114) calls the 'private collective world of women readers'. This act of defection from the public domain to the private is regarded as the return to traditional autobiographical practices. This article examines how women who are identified as public subjects, and their private selves suppressed in public domains, valorize their private selfhoods. This move is informed by what Marcus (1998, p. 114) terms as 'the inability of that [masculine] discourse to include their voices in its history, [hence] the necessity of the return to the personal'. Drawing on Marcus' notion of "re/signing", the article explores resignification of the self in the selected texts. Additionally, it shows how the writers re-invent the private act of the female personal narrative into alternative spaces, what Michael Warner (2002, p. 57) refers to as 'subaltern counter-publics' where they negotiate the politics of women's everyday struggles.

As a precursor to the textual analysis, the paper draws on Marcus's (1998, p. 114) notion of 're/signing of the [Private] Self', to focus on naming practices as 'private rituals' for remembering (Smith & Watson, 2001:16). I consider acts of remembering as a strategy to negotiate identity in the female political autobiography/memoir. Kathleen Woodward (1988, p. 98), views identity as a conscious 'performance' by a subject, and re-created through remembering. The individual and collective memories of the memoirist are intertwined and facilitate a reading of a panoply of modes through which the female political autobiographer constructs the private self as socially-produced. Shari Benstock (1988), regards ordinary female struggles as comprising the embodied experiences of the private self. Benstock (1998, p. 1) suggests that autobiographical writing 'raises issues of the "private" in terms of the "self"' and how the self is 'opened to question in the self-positioning act of writing'. An engagement with the ordinary is a re-invention of the '"self" and its [cultural] private status' (Benstock, 1998, p. 1). Most significance to this paper is how this '"private" situate[s] itself in terms of the "public"', and how this positionality facilitates a negotiation of embodied experiences of African (political) womanhood (Benstock, 1998, p. 1).

The article views the process of "resigning of the private self" in the autobiography/memoir, as a metaphorical return to the traditional view that women's writing narrates their private experiences. However, these writers' identification with the private self is a deliberate move to politicize the private sphere and contest different forms of oppression normalised by cultural customs or practices such as marriage and belief systems of traditional and religious affiliations; that is, marriage and religious practices within the domestic sphere. As it will be demonstrated, the writers featured in this paper raise awareness against these injustices through a symbolic grammar, discussed below, that traces the epistemology of historical injustices against black women (and men). Through this grammar, the autobiographers reveal the different manifestations of patriarchy by naming, narrating, and enacting its indicators, and subverting its 'dominion' over them in remembering and forgetting (Anderson, 2006:164).

In this way, the name becomes a signifier of attempts by dominant discourses like patriarchy, colonialism, liberation struggles, partisan politics, and post-independence nationalism to define the woman, and subvert these dominant practices. In contesting such dominant symbolic grammars that generate discourses around the name as a male-defined site of identity formation, women memoirists gain the agency to re-invent themselves anew. They resist the practice of self-identification through patriarchal institutions such as paternal lineages and underscore their womanhood through re-invented metaphorical grammars that make claims to a matrilineal heritage. The names that define these narrators therefore have symbolic value in public discourses about them and inform their historical, cultural, and social selfhoods. Arguably, therefore, the discursive framework of the name as a "signature of the self" implicitly and explicitly features as a strategy that facilitates the re/signification of the public self to the private sphere of life writing. This translation process facilitates the relocation of the public notion of daughterhood from the public sphere of politics where its agency is limited to furthering men's and the nationalist government's political agenda, and its re-signation into a private sphere as a public-private selfhood. In this alternate "public-private" sphere, a woman's multiple selves find the space and capacity to re-imagine issues deemed private in public spheres as political.

My discussion revolves around two broad categories of daughterhood: the biological and ideological. Under the spectrum of ideological daughterhood, there are several other sub-categories that imply an ideological kinship including but not limited to: daughters of Mumbi, the matriarchal mother of the Gikuyu community; daughters of Mau Mau, the anti-colonial liberation movement; daughters of KANU, the symbol

of the post-independent Kenyan nation; daughters of the Kenyan multi-party democracy movement, left-wing politicians challenging KANU's autocratic and dictatorial regime; and daughter(s) of the global nature conservation movement, a section of the Kenyan civil society monitoring the government's excesses and pushing for reforms to conserve the ecology. All these essences of daughterhood are alluded to in the various names the characters embrace in their autobiographies. As such, the naming practices discussed focus on personal names, titles of autobiographies, political movements, and names of places and spaces.

Wangari Maathai's Invocation of the Daughter of Mumbi Myth

This section discusses how Maathai's memoir narrates forms of myth-making generated around names and how these inform gendered life narrative practices in reference to Maathai's memoir. Towards this end, this article focuses on her narration of forms of myth-making generated around names and how these inform gendered practices. A memoir is an account of the self and others/community. Jennifer Muchiri (2010, p. 39) observes that 'memoir devotes more attention to occurrences around and outside the writer' unlike the autobiography that valorizes the self. Further, she adds, 'from the memoir we learn a great deal about the society in which the writer or subject moves, but only get limited information about the writers themselves' (Muchiri, 2010:39).

Maathai's *Unbowed* recaptures her struggles against attempts by patriarchal institutions like the state, colonialism, Christianity, politics and marriage to re-invent her as a 'proper' woman. She explores the notion of the self within Kenyan history by re-defining herself through naming practices. She embraces or rejects names given to her in the course of her life either to approve of subvert social and cultural practices that encompass her political womanhood. One narrative device that signals these negotiations is the title of her memoir *Unbowed.* This title is adopted from an anecdote in her memoir that narrates how mothers of political prisoners as political actors-maintained resilience in seeking the release of their sons from prison. Maathai describes their assertiveness as a strength that made them to remain 'unbowed' until their sons were released (2007, p. 222). By appropriating the word unbowed as the title of her memoir, Maathai establishes relationality with other mothers who are struggling to free their children from different forms of oppression. Not only does it voice her spirit of resilience, but also the efforts of Kenyan women in the struggle for independence from colonialism to post-independence disillusionment. Further, the title signals a voice which is relationally established with her mother and other Kenyan women. To be unbowed is thus to embrace motherhood and struggle to conserve

nature and democracy for the future Kenyan children. Consequently, motherhood for Maathai is not tied to one's ability to bear children, but the desire to see the nation, her community, and society prosper. Motherhood is then linked to non-partisan patriotism to the nation. The writer thus creates this title as a nexus between nature, culture and politics. The title also signifies Maathai's resilience against Christianity's effort to re-define her, as signified by her decision to drop her Christian name, as shown later in this discussion. Lastly, this title represents Kenyan women's collective action through grassroots movements. Unbent by patriarchy's attempts to confine them within the private space, they remain unbroken by the state's endeavour to disrupt their various empowerment initiatives. I therefore read this title as symbolising her (inter)subjectivity with struggles for restoration of democracy, human rights, and nature conservation in Kenya.

The politics of identity inherent in naming practices that Maathai voices reflect the dynamic challenges that her political womanhood experiences in the matriarchal-patriarchal society she hails from. While her claim to leadership is frowned upon in the postcolonial (patriarchal) Kenyan civic public, it is legitimised by the matriarchal background of the Kikuyu people,[1] foregrounded in the womanist epistemology of the Kikuyu myth of origin, reflecting what Mathilda Slabbert and Leonie Viljoen (2006, p. 135; original emphasis) describe as '*mythical motifs as creative device*'. This myth recaptures a nostalgic past of female dominance to advance an attitudinal change about female leadership. The myth further contests and re-writes gender stereotypes about Kikuyu women propagated by patriarchal gender discourses to oppress women in the private sphere. This is evident in Maathai's memoir where she foregrounds female figures in her community's genealogy from a matrilineal perspective. In this myth, God created Gikuyu and Mumbi, the Kikuyu ethnic community's primordial parents – who are akin to Adam and Eve – had ten daughters but no sons. Out of the ten daughters, ten clans that constitute the Kikuyu nation were born. I quote Maathai's retelling of the myth at length as follows:

> Together, Gikuyu and Mumbi had ten daughters – Wanjiru, Wambui, Wangari, Wanjiku, Wangui, Wangeci, Wanjeri, Nyambura, Wairimu, and Wamuyu – but they had no sons […]. When the time came for the daughters to marry, Gikuyu prayed to God under a holy fig tree, *mugumo*, as was his tradition, to send him sons-in-law. God told him to instruct nine of his daughters – the tenth was too young to be married – to go into the forest and to each cut a stick as long as she was tall. When the daughters

[1]The Kikuyu people comprise one of the major ethnic communities in Kenya.

> returned, Gikuyu took the sticks and with them built an altar under the *mugumo* tree, on which he sacrificed a lamb. As the fire was consuming the lamb's body, nine men appeared and walked out of the flames. Gikuyu took them home and each daughter married the man who was the same height as she was, and together they gave rise to the ten clans to which all Kikuyus belong. (Even though the youngest daughter, Wamuyu, did not get married, she did have children.)[2] Each clan is known for a particular trade or quality, such as prophecy, craftsmanship, and medicine. […]. The daughters made the clans matrilineal, but many privileges, such as inheritance and ownership of land, livestock, and perennial crops, were gradually transferred to men. It is not explained how women lost their rights and privileges (2007, p. 4-5).

The myth retold here explains the epistemology of Kikuyu matrilineality that informs her strong character and that of Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno. The matriarchal roots explain the desire for self-sufficiency demonstrated by these writers, and it is this knowledge that drives Maathai into conflicting situations and to success.

In view of the woman-centred ideology that Maathai foregrounds above, her definition of herself through the technique of naming practices is a discursive subversion of patriarchal discourses that constrain women's individuality. Thus, her memoir gives agency to female voices oppressed within the marriage institution. For example, while her postcolonial patriarchal society views her status as a female lecturer and her level of education (doctorate degree) as a threat to her husband Mwangi's masculinity and a sign that she is not a "proper" woman, her account of the myth of Gikuyu and Mumbi countersigns this patriarchal narrative by showing the ten daughters of Mumbi as performing a womanhood not stipulated by patriarchal conventions. Arising from Maathai's contestation of proper womanhood, Florence Ebila characterises Maathai's memoir as 'protest literature' against the state's attempts to define her womanhood and chastise her criticism of the former President Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi's governance (2015, p. 145). Ebila's inference to Maathai's text is framed around an instance in *Unbowed* where the writer recalls how the president described her as an '[im]proper woman' who meddled in government affairs (2015, p. 196). It is ironic that this "official" speech, which was delivered to the public in Uhuru Park in Nairobi, one of the spaces that Maathai re-members as a site symbolising freedom for Kenyans, and the day, 12 December, known as '*Jamhuri*, or Republic Day' is a historical day when Kenyans mark their independence from Britain

[2] Maathai, through the myth of Gikuyu and Mumbi, is deconstructing marriage as the pivot of female identity and the negative attitude directed to women who have children outside wedlock

(Ebila, 2015:196). The president recommended that 'if [Maathai] was to be a proper woman in "the African tradition" – [she] should respect men and be quiet' (Ebila, 2015:196). What stands out for Ebila, and this article concurs with, is that the attack on Maathai's womanhood, performed in a space and time that signify citizenship and sovereignty for Kenyans, signifies that the Kenyan political sphere is androcentric. Of further significance to me is the blurring of boundaries between the civic and primordial publics and notions of private that the president's speech enacts. In this way, Maathai deliberates on various dynamics that names negotiate in issues of representing female political identities.

Hence, Maathai's memoir invokes the slanderous connotations that her name is linked with in the grammar of improper womanhood in Moi's public discourse. In this way, she critiques the state's policing of women's sexuality and identities. She portrays the Kenyan patrilineal society as designed to imagine male agency outside the domestic sphere and women in the home. Further, she notes that the state's control over the public and private domains has produced a society in which everyone is another's guardian of their sexuality. The head of state, then, becomes the ultimate symbol of patriarchy, a master dictator of standards that comprise appropriate masculinity or femininity. Thus, when her husband, Mwangi Mathai, decides to divorce her for not fitting within societal stipulations of proper wifehood, she relates that the media took over the responsibility of informing the public that she was 'too educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn, and too hard to control' as a wife by her husband (2007, p. 146). This portrayal of the middle-class educated Kenyan woman as improper reveals the tensions in the public sphere that according to Maathai, is choreographed by middle-class Kenyan men as inclined towards a masculine image. Perhaps aware of these politics of gender, Maathai discredits the media reports as a misrepresentation of Mwangi's sentiments, deliberately twisted to publicly humiliate her and punish her for 'challenging the authority of [her] husband' and to caution other women not to exhibit too much independence (2007, p. 146). She, therefore, interprets the media's attitude towards her as representative of a masculinised press that sees a woman as the sole bearer of the responsibility to sustain a marriage. However, she criticises Mwangi's decision to publicise their marital conflict, a move she views as his attempt to justify to the society that he was a strong and 'proper' man who can 'discipline' his wife. She contests this move by refusing to 'accept the inevitable recrimination from the public' that she was an adulteress or the one to blame for Mwangi's decision to divorce her (2007, p. 144). She invokes her divorce case in her memoir to expose the patriarchal nature of the Kenyan legal system. For instance, she says that the grounds for her divorce - that is, her abusive behaviour

(cruelty) and 'adultery' (2007, p. 145) - were based on prescriptive accusations by her husband. She then says that these allegations levelled against her by Mwangi would never have been proven beyond any reasonable doubt, yet they were the grounds on which she was divorced despite her unwillingness to be divorced. When she questioned the judge's decision, she was punished for challenging the court's authority by being arrested and imprisoned for six months. Maathai criticises this legal system's bias against women through textually vocalising her ordeal. She refuses to be renamed an adulterer, which she associates with a patriarchal gendered grammar of slander for non-conforming women. Her narrative therefore crafts a womanist discourse that condemns social injustices against women while enabling her to voice her own experiences in a tone that she deems fair to her.

After her divorce, faced with an official demand from her ex-husband to relinquish his name, Maathai deliberately demonstrates an unbowedness by changing her name from Mathai to Maathai. The name Maathai then reflects her resilience, invoked by the title of her memoir, unlike the submission to conventional notions of womanhood that the name Mathai demands. She reflects the dilemma of being forced to disengage with an identity with which she had established her professional and social achievements, i.e., as an academic and activist as a struggle that faces many other women. Her frustration is evident when she notes that, 'I'm not an object the name of which can change with every new owner' (2007, p. 147). She further declares:

> I had resisted adopting his name in the first place! As a way to deal with my terrible feelings of rejection, I got the idea of adding another "a" to "Mathai" and to write it as it is pronounced in Kikuyu. And so, I became "Maathai." The extra syllable also signified that although a part of me would always be connected to Mwangi and his surname, I had a new identity. Henceforth, only I would define who I was: Wangari Muta Maathai. (2007, p. 147)

This refusal becomes her own discursively-produced symbolic grammar that not only rejects her definition by patriarchal norms, but also the legal system. In this way, Maathai employs naming practices as a technique of negotiating power in relation to marriage. By re-naming herself, she resigns her identity, Mathai as a wife, and re/signs it as Maathai, an individual woman with agency. Re/signing herself then becomes more than a process of self-definition, it is also a way to re-affirm her political womanhood. She describes herself – Wangari Muta Maathai – as 'what [she] should always have

been' (2007, p. 96), a comment that reflects her self-consciousness and resistance towards definitions of the self by "others".

Wambui Otieno's Negotiation of Daughter of the Nation Myth

This section examines how Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno re/signs her private self in her autobiography. The autobiography is a narrative about an individual's journey in history and covers a series of events from birth to the time of its narration. The narrator, in most cases the narrated subject, represents key moments of their life. Muchiri (2010, p. 39) notes that unlike the memoir which focuses on the experiences of the communal/others within a specific historical key moment, the 'autobiography largely focuses its attention on the self'. This article deliberates on the possibilities this re/signing presents to Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's reading public in terms of re-evaluating how the name as a site of re/membering resituates different subjects within Kenya's histories. To present the argument on the name as a site of identity performance in Wambui Waiyaki Otieno's narrative, the article builds on critical perspectives advanced by Cloete on the former's name. Thus, the engagement with Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's autobiography on this issue (naming) is supplementary to factors not addressed by Cloete. Her autobiography *Mau Mau's Daughter* (1998), narrates her contestatory acts against the influence of patriarchy over institutions such as widowhood, ethnicity, motherhood, and marriage that render women vulnerable to oppression. The name Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno, by virtue of her public roles and struggles against various forms of oppression, presents a 'well known' subject in the Kenyan public sphere (Cloete, 2000:65). As a marker of the narrator's identity, this name as deployed in her autobiography indicates her identity but in terms dictated by the subject herself. It performs cultural syncretism and is, therefore, a site of identity transformation and contestation, especially gender constructions.

Such an approach requires an examination into the name Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno as a symbol of the social meanings that this name invokes in Kenya's history – socio-cultural philosophies and ideologies that are produced by discursive practices like religion, colonialism, and patriarchy. Cloete (2000, p. 66) notes that '[n]ames and titles can become very deliberate, carefully considered acts' that in my view, produce notions of womanhood and group identity politics in history. The first signifier of Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's identity, which appears on the cover of her autobiography, is the title of her text *Mau Mau's Daughter*. This title is a discursive device that might be read as a demonstration of the narrator's (womanist) historical revisionist agenda. The title also signifies a link between Kenya's precolonial, colonial and postcolonial histories as sites of memory where female notions of selfhood transit and translate the

self and others within and beyond national boundaries. In its capacity as genealogical map, the title also shows how Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's identity is discursively produced by discourses of the anti-colonial movement in Kenya and the subsequent authoritarian regimes of Kenyatta and Moi. What seems problematic is the fact that, despite her feminist agenda, she chooses to identify herself as a daughter rather than mother of the Mau Mau ideology, an association unlike trends evident in Southern African memoirs. The signing of self in this title as a daughter of this movement is an act that de-genders the movement, reinventing Mau Mau as both maternal and paternal.

Each name, in its capacity as a signifier in the writer's comprehensive name Virginia Tiras Wambui Waiyaki Otieno Mbugua, invokes a different historical milestone she has experienced in her life. In this way, the name Wambui is an indicator of Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's womanist consciousness. The matrilineal choice she makes, identifying herself as daughter of Mumbi, embodied by the name Wambui, suggests a deliberate choice to be a daughter of a mother rather than father. From this powerful and agential position, she re-members both her maternal and paternal lineages in her autobiography to sign 'forgotten' women like the nameless mother of her clan's patriarch, her great-great-great grandfather Hinga, into history. For example, she notes that Kikuyu oral history officially begins with Hinga but it fails to mention his mother whose courageous efforts saved his life. She is simply known as 'Nyina wa Hinga' or "mother of Hinga" and the anomaly of silencing her identity has resulted in a historic gap that describes her people as descendants of 'the Waiyaki line' rather than the 'Kaputiei lineage' (1998, p. 11), where Kaputiei refers to the nameless mother's clan name. Even then, this clan name, Kaputiei, is also patrilineal, a factor that shows the perversity of patriarchal patronage in her society. She intones that familial and communal archives are primordial publics where patriarchal histories thrive while women's experiences are privatised and marginalised. Once published, autobiographies are public sites and by re/signing women's stories into these public histories, Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno is conducting a womanist historical revision. Thus, the writer does not totally escape the patriarchal patronage that shrouds her identity. Her historical rendition of Kenya as a nation begins at the family level with the story of Hinga. In narrating the silenced history of 'Nyina wa Hinga', Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno allows the heroine of her family, whose history is archived in the Maasai people's matrilineal oral tradition to (re)emerge (1998, p. 11). She reverts to the oral archive and incorporates the names of women in this genealogy. In this way, she establishes a counter-narrative to the patriarchal narrative that valorises the names of their first-born-sons. She reiterates:

> I find it to be very discriminatory that a person is referred to as "son of Mr. so-and-so." I prefer that people be referred to as "son or daughter of Mr. and Mrs. So-and-so," except in cases of single parenthood. Because of this belief, I will show both sides of my family as I write about my genealogy. (1998, p. 11).

Consequently, she narrates both sides of her family tree and details ancestral charts of paternal and maternal lineages. This genealogical chart, complemented with photographs and anecdotes, constitutes her womanist genealogical narration. She demonstrates her awareness of the silencing of women's histories and voices in the oral archive and history of the (post)colonial struggle for independence. She also reconstructs this genealogy as a folktale, inserting Hinga's mother into the legend that is of a prophetic nature, denoted by the title of her first paper, 'the coming of Kumale Ole Lemotaka, or Hinga' (1998, p. 12). In doing so, she conveys her womanist agenda of writing against traditions that exclude women from their children's identity.

The name Virginia is a Christian name, which signifies the writer's colonial and Christianity encounters. As she explains, when she joined secondary school, she was re-named Tiras, which is her father's name, by her British teacher Miss Brownly, due to her teacher's inability to comprehend how a matriarchal name like Wambui can gain prominence over the Christian version Virginia or her father's name Tiras. She is re-named 'Virginia Tiras' and her maiden name "Wambui" is ignored (1998, p. 29). Consequently, she rebelled against this re-naming by refusing to answer 'yes ma'am' when addressed by the name Tiras (1998, p. 29), an event that marks her first struggle against patriarchy and colonialism. By rejecting being defined by someone else, she takes ownership of the identity-marker she likes which is her maiden name, Wambui. This decision indicates a resistance to hegemonic cultures like colonialism, Christianity, and patriarchy, even at a young age. She prefers being associated with the matriarchal figures Maathai identifies, rather than being daughtered to a father, the symbolic patriarch. As a result, she was characteristically called 'rude' (1998, p. 29). This experience partly explains her reluctance to being mothered by the patriarchal and colonial discursive practices of Queen Victoria's Empire.

Even though Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno re-establishes her matrilineal lineage as central to her identity re-configuration, she also strategically reclaims histories of her paternal relations from the recesses of Kenya public memory. This, however, raises a host of issues, like what her defining the self in relation to paternal figures conform with cultural expectations that the daughter name herself in relation to her father and

not mother? Do these identity-markers signify the narrator's inability, albeit unconscious, to craft a selfhood separate from paternal figures? Arguably, by including Waiyaki as part of her name in this narrative, Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno strategically ratifies her warrior-image and signals her affinity with paternal strength and power. Interestingly, though, Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno defines herself by linking her identity to her grandfather Waiyaki and de-linking with her father's name. This decision to embrace the name Waiyaki as opposed to Tiras might be read as a deliberate act, perhaps a desire to distance herself from the weakness signified by her father. She explains:

> My father was Wathoni's first son. Her second son, Mugo, was sickly and died. Her third son, Gichuhi, died soon after birth. For this reason she was very possessive of my father, her only surviving son […]. My grandfather Munyua wa Waiyaki sensed Wathoni's attitude and started to dislike her son. He was nicknamed 'Karinde,' meaning the hidden one. (Later, my father would file a case in court giving people six months in which to stop calling him Karinde or face a jail term not exceeding six months). (1998, pp. 20-21)

From this recollection, Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno demonstrates an empathetic stance towards her father's inability to conform with the virulent masculinity associated with men in his lineage. Thus, while she abhors the weakness associated with her father's nick-name "Karinde", she also portrays her father as a victim of high expectations of masculinity. Nevertheless, her desire to craft an image of herself that conforms with her warrior-image necessitates the narrative distance she creates between her father and herself. She, however, attempts to redeem him by revising the oral history detailing her father's mockery in society and inadvertently reveals an implied, albeit partial, belief in his ability to overcome the fickle masculinity assigned to him.

Her own sense of warriorhood that leans towards Waiyaki's public imagery is legitimised by the anecdotes she recalls about Waiyaki's legendary exploits to resist the British Empire's Captain Lugard's attempts to confiscate the land of the Kikuyu. In Kenyan oral traditions, the name Waiyaki denotes a powerful Kikuyu legendary leader, also the writer's grandfather. According to Cloete, Waiyaki was a controversial 'Kikuyu warrior purported to have waged war against the neighbouring Maasai and the British, the latter later exiling him from Kikuyu land and, it is alleged, burying him alive head first' (1998, p. 67). This oral history is recorded in the initial pages of her autobiography

where Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno narrates it as part of her genealogy and family history.[3] Her nuancing of Waiyaki's status as King is therefore a technique of foreshadowing her future leadership subjectivity. Both names, Wambui and Waiyaki, also identify her as a Kikuyu, one of Kenya's largest indigenous communities.

While the afore-mentioned names: Virginia, Tiras, Wambui Waiyaki suggest the narrator's struggles within the public sphere, specifically her resistance against dominant religious and political ideologies; colonial and post-independent, the subsequent names Otieno and Mbugua denote the writer's negotiation of personal/intimate issues faced by women which are deemed private. The two names signify the narrator's negotiation of the cultural and social landscapes of Kenya. The two names, Otieno and Mbugua are the surnames of her two late husbands. Coincidentally, her relationships with the two men have at one point or another been cause of public scandal in the public domain of Kenya. Silvano Melea Otieno (hereafter SM Otieno), one of Kenya's most famous criminal lawyers, was her first husband. After his death, the ensuing battle over his remains placed his wife at logger-heads with the state and the Umira Kager clan of her husband, exposing the ethnic politics and evils of the autocratic regime of post-independence Kenya and the poor state of women's rights in the country. Otieno's burial saga, which according to Cloete, 'has generated over a dozen books and articles on the subject [where] details of Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's domestic and public life, as adduced from court evidence, hearsay and communications with her, are given' (1998, p. 67), became part of public discourse in Kenya following Otieno's family and clan's decision to contest his will to be buried in his Nairobi farm as opposed to his ancestral home. What began as a family conflict became state business when the government, then under the leadership of President Moi, interfered in private matters and issued a public statement supporting Otieno's clan's decision to bury him in Siaya. Later, this came to be interpreted as the state's misuse of power.[4]The inclusion of his surname on the cover of her memoir endorses Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's activism for widows' rights in the post-colonial era.

This activism emerges in the form of Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's challenging of the state's and patriarchal society's interference in her personal and private life. Her resistance is narratively launched through her invocation of the name 'Msaja', which she acquired during the struggle for independence to conceal her identity as a Mau

[3] Waiyaki is rumoured in some Kenyan public discourses as having been a sell-out of his people, though Kenyan official history and his family oral history portray him as a heroic mythical figure who resisted colonial rule. I consider these non-official versions of truth as important in Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's self-exploration, as they contain what Grace Musila (2015:7)calls 'social truths'.

[4]I interpret the state's extension of its power into the primordial and private domain as a blurring of the public-private boundaries and the indeterminacy of the stability of citizenship or subjecthood for hybrid subjects like Wambui Otieno in the postcolonial context.

Mau warrior (1998, p. 37). This name not only represents her militancy during the anti-colonial struggle and celebrates other ordinary women's contribution to the anti-colonial struggle, but it also captures her headstrong decision not to succumb to the state and Umira Kager clan's manipulation that she conforms to the standards of womanhood set by them. She explains that Msaja 'is a Baganda word that means man or mister', a nickname given to her by the Mau Mau fighters due to her fame of strength and bravery 'as a man' (1998, p. 92). Apart from re-membering her political activism, this name is also a reminder of the trauma she experienced during her tenure as a freedom fighter. The name Msaja is a nick-name that her husband SM Otieno often evoked in acknowledgement of her indomitable spirit. The use of Msaja in her reminiscence about her inability to bury Otieno's body, juxtaposed with her innovative honouring of his wish by setting up his monument instead and carrying out a burial ceremony on their farm, are acts that portray her resilience towards patriarchal acts that attempt to subjugate her. She recalls how her husband, anticipating this conflict after his death, warned her friend Rahab Wambui that:

> Msaja [Rahab], you know Mr. [meaning myself][5]will have a lot of problems when I die. She will have a lot of problems from my relatives and the Kager clan […]. I come from a very bad tribe. I come from a very bad clan. If they deprive you of the right to bury me, do not pass Westlands, do not attend my funeral at Nyamila [his ancestral village], for if you do, I will kick the coffin, come out, and fight you and all those who would be accompanying you and then go back to my coffin and die, for dying I must die. (1998, p. 134-135).

In this extract there are two references to 'Msaja'; first in reference to the writer's friend who is a metonym of the women's movement in Kenya and second to the writer, who is portrayed as masculine. This image evokes her militancy as a Mau Mau warrior, and it foreshadows her unwavering strength in the war she wages against two strong patriarchs – the Luo community and, by proxy, the state. Arguably, therefore, the name Otieno functions as a textual strategy that Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno uses to sign her struggles for widows' rights as political.

Similarly, the name of her second husband Mbugua, which she also assumed after marrying him in her old age signifies Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's metaphorical fight that women be allowed to marry whoever they want. The name Mbugua countersigns

[5] The words in square brackets appear this way in the original. This stylistic interruption clarifies that Mr. signifies her and not her husband.

the patriarchal society's biased dictates in terms of marriage norms. Her marriage to Peter Mbugua in 2003 mainstreamed in Kenyan media and public space. In this discourse, she was portrayed as a "she-roe"by some and transgressor by others for marrying a younger man. At the time of this scandal, she was 67 years old and her husband Mbugua was 25 years old. The 42-year age difference became a point of national debate in which Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno was criticised for transgressing social and cultural norms. She portrays her marriage as a challenge to society' easy acceptance of men's decision to marry anyone of their choice while establishing stipulations that restrict older women from marrying younger men. In a media interview, she explained that she wanted her marriage to liberate Kenyan women from the patriarchal supposition that a man can marry a younger woman, yet the reversal is frowned upon.[6]It therefore emerges that the memoirist's invocation of her two marital names signals struggles of Kenyan women within the private institution of marriage. Evidently therefore, the name as a syntactic unit embodies Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno's personal everyday struggles at home and in her. The naming practices she embraces and foregrounds function as a rhetorical strategy to denounce attempts by various institutions and traditions to silence her agency and limit her political womanhood. The names she signs herself with therefore function as a site where she negotiates patriarchal, historical, and cultural expectations of proper womanhood.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the name as a discursive technique that Wangari Muta Maathai and Wambui-Waiyaki-Otieno deploy in their autobiographies to narrate the public and private aspects of their daughterhood. As discussed and demonstrated by citing examples from the narrators' life narratives, the private selfhood of daughterhood reconceptualizes African women's ordinary struggles as political. The narrators perform both public and private aspects of daughterhood to historicize their political experiences, which have been undersigned in history. They also politicize their private experiences of daughterhood to re-invent social histories and raise these events to the ranks of key historical moments in Kenya such as struggle for independence and struggle for multi-party democracy. They, therefore, define themselves in relation to both maternal and paternal relations with whom they are linked through familial bonds. As daughters of the nation, they sign their selfhoods within political movements like the Mau Mau rebellion and the Green Belt Movement. They, however, reclaim histories of their people's pre-colonial experiences that exist in oral traditions, and define themselves in relation to the Kikuyu legendary/mythical

[6] For more details, see the video on: http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2qf118.

primordial parents Gikuyu and Mumbi. Naming thus encodes a plethora of histories and memories. It is a site where women negotiate patriarchy, history, and identity.

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