

A REVOLUTIONARY CHARACTER, A DISPENSABLE REBEL? EDGAR TEKERE'S POLITICAL POINT-SCORING AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A ZIMBABWEAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

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Abstract

*In Zimbabwe, autobiographies, particularly political ones, are sites of contestations, compositions, decompositions and recompositions of national narratives. In their obsession with the self, they always centre the narrating subjectivity whilst at the same time decentering and recentering others. This means that in this literary gamesmanship, certain political personalities are displaced, peripherised, and debunked in this historical re-imagination. Tekere in his autobiography, *A Life time of Struggle* (2007), seeks to impose his political credentials and legitimacy in the national script in the face of what he sees and stigmatises as opportunism by many politicians, and how these politicians were catapulted into positions of power by default. To dramatise this, his autobiography employs binary tropes that mark him out as iconic and a quintessence of virtue as opposed to the insipid, dour, corrupt and wishy-washy others. In this paper we argue that Tekere's autobiographical act, coming as it does after he has been pushed outside the ruling circles, is meant to portray him as the personification of revolutionary incorruptibility which both the colonial and postcolonial regimes felt threatened by. This autobiography is, therefore, a conscious and deliberate act of inscribing the self into the Zimbabwean historico-literary landscape. It presents an alternative frame to the hegemonic master-discourses of the fetishised, Mugabe-centred patriotic history on and about Zimbabwe.*

Introduction and Theoretical Background

Of the two probably most remembered pictures of Edgar 'Two-Boy' Tekere - the one-time Secretary General of Zimbabwe African National Union Party (ZANU) - are the 1960s group photograph taken while he was in detention with fellow nationalists, Ndabaningi Sithole, Leopold Takawira, Robert Mugabe, Enos

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Nkala, Maurice Nyagumbo, Morton Malianga and others and, another, captured during the 1980 Harare court proceedings concerning his murder trial of Mr Adams, in which he is clad in military uniform.[†] While the first photograph fixes him in the genesis of his political career, the second depicts him at its apex, and marks the denouement of his political career. Before the 2007 publication of his autobiography, stories related to these photographs had not been told from Tekere's perspective, despite the fact that these photographs buttress his historical and temperamental connection to the political party.

Considering that critics argue that autobiography is a situated performance embodying multiple and conflicting self-expressions (McAdams, 2008), had Tekere written his *A Lifetime of Struggle* (2007) at either of the above-mentioned moments, it might have assumed a different tone. The researchers doubt it would have been as politically worthwhile as it is now. As Karamelska and Geiselmann (2010, p. 3) note, any autobiographical remembering implies transformations which include "blending experience and emotions", "aggregation of diverse ideas into a unified order", "suppression", "selection" and "interpretation" of events. All these hint to the scepticism with which autobiographies are received today, especially if they are political autobiographies.

In Africa, there has been a slow growth of autobiographical work concomitant to decolonisation. Their character has been a broad spectrum from ruling class and opposition politicians alike. Autobiographies written by politicians, who have led the decolonisation process, and who, at the time of writing, still hold influential positions in post-independence governments have received commendable support and critical attention. This is because they complement official history and constitute unifying narratives of the nation. Examples of such writings include Kenyatta's *Facing Mount Kenya* (1938), Mandela's *No Easy Walk to Freedom* (1994), and Bhebe's *Simon Vengesai Muzenda* (2004). This paper, however, contends that it is not only the official-type, rhetorical voices that contribute to national consciousness and culture but even the side-lined voices like Tekere's (2007) and Morgan Tsvangirai's (2011). (Tekere's former ZANU friends discredited him after firing him from the party and government and Tsvangirai's autobiography is not available in Zimbabwean bookshops because he is the leader of the MDC political opposition). The Zimbabwean autobiographies of Ndabaningi Sithole, Abel Muzorewa, Joshua Nkomo, Edgar Tekere and

[†] These Zimbabwean nationalists are among the original founders of ZANU at its 1963 splitting from ZAPU under Joshua Nkomo's leadership. Sithole was the first president of ZANU, Takawira the Deputy and Mugabe the Secretary General. After Sithole 'renounced' the liberation struggle and Takawira had died in detention, Mugabe became the apparent successor. Adams is the white Rhodesian 'rebel' farmer shot and killed at his farm by Edgar Tekere's bodyguards soon after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. All the other names of politicians in this article are names of real Zimbabwean politicians and leaders and the analyses of their characters and contributions are as given in the autobiography.

Morgan Tsvangirai typify a movement by anguished outsiders looking in.[‡] Tekere's autobiography adds to the critical mass of such alternative writing that has emerged from Zimbabwe's 'oppositional' nationalists in recent years. This paper thus analyses Tekere's autobiography, cognisant of the fact that he is now considered a dissident by the same political party he helped mould into a liberation movement and into a post-independence ruling party.

This paper, however, focuses on Tekere's autobiography in order to argue that Tekere uses an apparently disinterested narration to give readers intimate insights about the on-goings in the ZANU party as it transforms itself from an urban movement into a shrewd political party that imposes itself on its formidable military wing. More specifically, the article examines how Edgar Tekere as an individual dramatically re-creates himself as typifying the hero a colonially oppressed Zimbabwe needed and had, as well as one a post-independence Zimbabwe needs, yet lacks. It, therefore, argues that Tekere uses autobiography to make historical facts more probable, comprehensible, yet contestable.

Significantly though, Tekere's autobiography seems to support and contest both the Gusdorfian conditions and limits of Western male autobiography. This is in a context where Gusdorf (1980) and Olney (1993) demonstrate the characteristic ethnocentric logocentrism of Western Enlightenment where they, respectively, suggest that the autobiographical form is restricted to Europe, a continent of fully conscious individuals, not to Africa. In Africa, according to such reasoning, attempts at "autobiography" only produce "autophylography", or an emphasis on shared group experiences, instead of those of an individual. McNee (1997, p. 84), however, dismisses this binary reductionism as "the logical error" of "opposing a collectivist Third World to an individualist West." McNee (1997, p. 84) is convinced that the collective-conscious African subject can still be master of an individual form because "the premise that the individual cannot be separated from the wider social framework does not foreclose the possibility of individual agency, for the individual constructs an identity through negotiation or resistance to that framework." McNee's view tends to suggest that consciousness and storytelling are intuitive universal social attributes. As Damasio (1999, p. 10) observes: "... consciousness begins when brains acquire the power ... of telling a story." This ability has nothing to do with geographical location. The paper thus draws from postcolonial theory (Said, 1978; Berger, 2010) to argue that Tekere's autobiography contests such Western notions about Africans through talking back to Western stereotypes about African political inertia. Tekere does

[‡] We have not cited these political autobiographies, hence the missing reference details, particularly of the first three. Incidentally though, all these five political biographers have been each a president of his political party in Zimbabwe, implying that a reading of each would give you five different versions of the struggles for liberation in Zimbabwe.

that mostly through self-characterisation. The paper, however, notes how Tekere, as a nationalist, intends to entrench his subjective narrative about the nation on the reader. This resonates with Cuesta's (2011, p. 1) observation that postcolonial autobiographical "representations highlight questions about how personal legitimacy and testimony is articulated." As such, the paper shall remain cognizant of how Tekere's political interests actively shape his autobiography.

African nationalist autobiographies, such as Tekere's, deconstruct the Western conceptions epitomised in Gusdorf (1980). Gusdorf (1980, p. 29) claims that autobiography is a preserve of the imperial west, and [autobiography]:

... is not to be found outside of our cultural area; one would say that it expresses a concern peculiar to Western man, a concern that has been of good use in his systematic conquest of the universe and that he has communicated to men of other cultures; ...

This language expresses a view that Western culture and intellect are superior to other so-called non-literary, unsophisticated communities. It demonstrates arrogance peculiar to the Manichean and Orientalist discourse recognised and contested by Said (1978). This paper, however, argues that the thrust of Tekere's autobiography is not a deconstruction of imperial narratives per se, but a postmodern deconstruction of the mysteries of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, its protagonists and villains. The paper believes that Tekere's autobiography, like all forms of political self-writing, contribute to the political and literary discourses of the nation that compete for space as edificial blocks to Zimbabwe's cultural heritage. On his personal relationship with his nationalist foil and foe, Robert Mugabe, as well as the "three-some" including himself (Edgar Tekere), Maurice Nyagumbo and Enos Nkala, who together launched ZANU, the nationalist party, nothing could be more fitting than Renan's (2007, p. 4) apprehension on the limitations of nations, that, "suffering in common unifies more than joy does". These pioneering nationalists drift apart soon after the joy of independence, each constructing a different tale about the nation.

This paper posits that Tekere manipulates the elasticity of autobiographical time to illustrate his ever metamorphosing subjectivities, particularly, his confronting of the postcolonial tyrannies of his erstwhile comrades. He makes the struggle against all kinds of oppression seem to have always been the defining experience in his life. Tekere, thus, harnesses autobiography as a form for a self-conscious political self-writing that both complements and challenges the dominant official memories of those in power. Utilising a postcolonial approach to analyse its form and content, the paper contends that Tekere brings together a historically supported and supporting written critique of the experiences of repression and betrayal in both colonial Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and post-independent Zimbabwe, respectively. It argues that Tekere

uses autobiography to inscribe himself as a champion of freedom against both colonial and postcolonial oppression and injustice.

The paper finds one of Olney's (1973; 1993) expanded ways of understanding autobiography particularly useful in appreciating the psychological impulses of Edgar Tekere. This is especially so where, Benstock (1997, p. 1138) notes that "we can understand it [autobiography] as consciousness, pure and simple, consciousness referring to no objects outside itself, to no events, and to no other lives". As if re-echoing this narcissism, Tekere's narrator deliberately attempts to convince the readers that the real Tekere, whose life he (narrator) recreates, was a peculiarly starred individual. Tekere seems to invoke some centripetal force, manifesting in self-adulation, where the Zimbabwean nationalist revolution is impelled to revolve around himself, and not Mugabe, the party president. Such an attempt to revise the readers' supposedly held views about the liberation struggle is a rewriting of 'history', which Brockmeier (2000, p. 52) regards as a "retrospective reconstruction of one's life history". Such a claim invites readers to employ a postmodern analytical approach, particularly bearing in mind that by its nature, or what Lejuene (1975) considers the autobiographical pact (sameness of the author, narrator and protagonist), autobiography may mislead readers into accepting political bluffing and speechifying. According to Brosman (2005), postmodern theorists regard autobiography with incredulity, as any other indeterminate metanarrative. Brosman (2005, p. 97) succinctly summarises what preoccupies the postmodernist when he notes: "... there is no reliable knowledge of the human world, no well-grounded history, personal or collective; all necessary evidence is either culturally conditioned or "constructed" to the point where it offers no access to what was previously thought of as reality and truth." Drawing from the postmodern approach enables the paper to question autobiography's pretensions to historical remembering.

The view that the self can be constructed or reconstructed through language (Benstock, 1997) implies that the historical part the reconstructed self plays is also an alterable story. To buttress the view that language has ubiquitous impingement on all available truths, Dobos (2010, p. 9) opines that "... language is the source, the carrier, and the re-creator of memories, so it would be a mistake to assume that, as opposed to fiction, autobiography reports about events that preceded language." This means readers need to be cognisant of the subjective intentions and potential of language deployment and use in autobiography. It appears Tekere picks up his political tatters and linguistically stitches them together into something politically meaningful to the nation, in this autobiography. Ibbo Mandaza, the editor and publisher of the autobiography has, however, significantly edited Tekere's politically involving moments and

his personal linguistic barrages. While Tekere might have intended to tell it all, with the force of his subjectivity, the fact that he does not personally write his own autobiography implies that his true voice has been literally and symbolically whittled, hence a collaborative biography which affects and reshapes the eventual narrative structure and tone.

Mandaza (Tekere, 2007) informs readers early on that Tekere has eyesight difficulties which render impossible the task of writing his own story. This health crisis apparently introduces a psychoanalytical dimension where Tekere becomes both a subject and object of his own story. Tekere has to unburden himself to biographers, editors and publishers like a patient of neurosis before psychotherapists. According to Mandaza (Tekere, 2007) the collaborative process of collecting, collating, editing and rewriting Tekere's story takes four years. Such a form of collaborative autobiography has its advantages and disadvantages. Mandaza and his team, however, express keenness to return subjectivity to Tekere. They describe the methodology of composition as including "tape recording his account, followed by long-drawn and even complex transcriptions which, in turn ... required Tekere himself to revise, correct or cast aside, depending on his mood or recollection" (Tekere, 2007, p. 24). This seems to suggest that Tekere had the opportunity to reflect on what they had orally recorded of him and to alter or clarify his earlier pronouncements. This apparently does not lead to an objective opening up, but to a more shrewd linguistic mediation. Rather, it places the final product into a more subjective domain, a calculated discourse, instead of a spontaneous narrating of self.

Autobiography could exemplify best how method and subject matter can be seen interfacing, particularly the fact that the narrator, for instance Tekere, takes himself as the subject of narration. In discussing the autobiographical pact, Lejeune (1975) indicates that the pact is a social agreement between the narrator and the reader that what is presented is true. In this pact, the author presents the text as a historically accurate version. The narrator, the protagonist and author share an identity. The presently narrating self, however, is temporally separated from the narrated self (Dobos, 2010). This is why Benstock (1997, p. 1139) observes that:

... autobiography reveals gaps, and not only gaps in time and space or between the manner and matter of its discourse. That is, autobiography reveals the impossibility of its own dream: what begins on the presumption of self-knowledge ends in the creation of a fiction that covers over the premises of its construction.

This means autobiography hardly fulfils its promise of truthfulness and completeness regarding the protagonist. Here, Tekere offers himself as the most incisive critic and narrator but struggles to deconstruct

the narrative of the liberation struggle, a narrative he has helped entrench as both politician and guerrilla. The self-narrative, however, offers Tekere the psychological opportunity to put order, harmony and coherence into his historical life, otherwise marked with discord and dysfunction, instanced in his numerous failed marriages, drunkenness and chain smoking. He interprets his life as a pre-figuration of his political mission, a purpose he presents as more important than his personal life. McAdams (2008, pp. 242-243) observes that autobiographical reconstructions imply "our struggle to reconcile who we imagine we were, are, and might be in our heads and bodies with who we were, are, and might be in the social contexts of family, community, the workplace, ethnicity, religion, gender, social class, and culture writ large. The self comes to terms with society through narrative identity." This suggests the tense interplay between the individual and society in autobiography.

Tekere's autobiography arguably reads more like a personal account that aims to draw sympathy from readers than a disinterested account. Tekere presents himself as a betrayed freedom fighter who sacrifices everything to liberate Zimbabwe but who never really benefits financially or otherwise for that feat. Instead, he transforms ironically into a charity case from the day he enters the first black majority parliament. The real autobiography, however, avoids such sordid realities only hinted at in his acknowledgements.

As suggested earlier on, Tekere's autobiography downplays the seamier side of his personal life in order to foreground the political side. This resonates with Mandaza's (Tekere, 2007, p. 1) observation that, autobiography, as "a personal account, [is] sometimes even a convenient and expedient interpretation of one's experience and interactions." As for political autobiography, it places "the political self at the centre of a given historical period or process" (Tekere, 2007, p. 1). Even then, the view of autobiographical memory as "a knowledge which can be remembered and represented in hindsight in a more or less linear, coherent, and true life account" has long been challenged (Brockmeier, 2000, p. 54). Even here, Mandaza (Tekere, 2007) confesses about how the editors literally interfere with Tekere's real story, editing it in order that it sounds as a probable version of what Tekere meant it to be and how Tekere had actually put and lived it. This puts to doubt the claims of personal coherence or true life or historical accounts.

We cannot gainsay the rationale for embarking on an analysis of political autobiography. This is because sensitive areas of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle are characterised with scanty literature since they fall under the Official Secrets Act. Files containing ZANLA and ZIPRA material on these Zimbabwean liberation movements and the real conduct of war were not open or available to scholars (Yap 2001, p. 19). Apart from radio and television archival broadcasts and edited eye-witness accounts of massacres at

Nyadzonja, Chimoio and Tembwe, as well as school book history accounts, there remains little or no comprehensive and objective historical evidence of the Chimurenga. Available narratives were consequently not uninterested. This autobiography, therefore, adds to the budding corpus of narratives by some political protagonists of the nationalist liberation movements in SADC.

The Ford Foundation (SAPES) supports and funds this SADC liberation autobiographies venture following the realisation that literature on this important area “has been thin and scant in terms of output” (Mandaza in Tekere, 2007, p. 2). This meagreness is even more conspicuous in the literary criticism of those sprouting autobiographies hence the significance of this article. Moreover, writing about a politically controversial episode such as a liberation struggle is challenging and vexatious. Mandaza notes that it is difficult to “produce a record of even one aspect of that history, without the pitfalls of subjectivity and even revisionism” (Tekere, 2007, p. 2). This suggests that every autobiography of the liberation war brings about a fresh perspective which is critical to our understanding of that phenomenon. The implication is that resultant analyses are equally important. The researchers, therefore, intend to avail new insights into the mystery of the Zimbabwean second Chimurenga liberation struggle through an analysis of Tekere's autobiography.

The paper notes that Tekere, however, embarks on self-writing, self-authenticating and moral-absolving, only after being jettisoned from the ruling party gravy train. Tekere manipulates the opportunities offered by autobiography to set himself up as an isle of morality and steadfastness in a sea of grasping corruption. Through narrating his own story, Tekere refuses to die an unsung hero among the herd of:

... [Zimbabwean] persons who have contributed so much in their respective ways to our society- who have been forgotten in this, our history; a history that has, for example been so selective as to who is hero/heroine and who is not, based as it is on criteria that have less to do with reference to history itself than the self-indulgence of those who wield power and influence today.” (Mandaza in Tekere, 2007, p. 5)

This suggests that Zimbabwe's national narrative is characterised by ambiguous ellipses, forgotten accounts and mischievous recreations. Ranger's (2004) and Muponde's (2004) conceptions of 'patriotic historiography' and 'selective amnesia', respectively, encapsulate this kind of narration. For instance, anyone who does not tow the ruling party line is labelled a traitor who is bent on reversing the gains of the liberation struggle and therefore not fit to be linguistically classified as hero or ritualistically interred at the national heroes' shrine. The paper rues the fact that Tekere imagines he is responding to this kind of

fictionalisation of the history of the Zimbabwean Chimurenga when, in fact, he is only adding to it his own contestable and selective version.

In the following sections the paper picks up examples and incidents from the autobiography which represent Tekere as either a born rebel, or a born revolutionary.

A born rebel, a revolutionary born

This paper's interpretive methodology proceeds mostly through an attempt to answer Smith and Watson's (2001) twenty categories of guiding questions to reading autobiographies. This is despite the fact that the theories underpinning this analysis are the deconstructive views from both postcolonial and post-modern analysis. Smith and Watson (2001, pp. 166-178) identify questions such as importance of narration at narrating juncture; the differing "I"s of text; the narrative plotting and patterns, narrative time or temporality; narrative coherence and emphasised remembering; evidence, voice, experience, knowledge, and agency; relationality, ethics and collaborative autobiography, among others. For example, readers may want to know why Tekere gives them his childhood experience as one marked by rebellion. Considering Smith and Watson's (2001) questions, for instance, clarifies that this background is necessary because it creates emotional, psychological and physical conditions that breed the outspoken and defiant revolutionary character who has always opposed all forms of oppression.

For instance, at St Faith's primary and St Augustine's secondary schools, the 'narrated self' behaves like an "unteachable" rebel and is eventually expelled for his non-conformist behaviour. This early lawlessness is, however, post-reflectively used by Tekere, the narrator, to establish the real Tekere as one born and bred to antagonise racist oppression and discriminatory education rules and the bad conditions in schools. Tekere positions himself characteristically at the helm of all opposition to oppression. This behaviour is symbolically inscribed to herald Tekere's conscious opposition to the restrictive and poor colonial education, a stance he impresses on ZANU to pursue in the bush camp schools in Mozambique in the late 1970s and in Zimbabwe soon after independence, in 1980. "The models of identity" (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 168) Tekere claims in this instance, are genealogical; the nationalist protagonists of the First Chimurenga, particularly his maternal grandfather Chingaira Makoni, and his renowned warrior-ancestor, Mzilikazi of the Nguni. Tekere thus etches himself in the glorious historical and political backdrop of achievement. Chingaira Makoni was a renowned fighter of the first Chimurenga who fought against the colonialist pioneer army alongside heroes and heroines of the First Chimurenga uprising, such as Kaguvi, Mkwati and Nehanda. His head was cut off by colonialist forces as the price of that war. Mzilikazi was the founding king of the Matabele kingdom of western Zimbabwe.

Tekere uses autobiography to paint himself as a non-racist. Though Tekere challenges whites, he realises that there are also some moderates and liberal-minded European educationists. For instance, Father Baynham, the principal of St Augustine, compromises the safety and existence of his institution by encouraging free debate among his students. Such individuals enable Tekere to apprehend, even as a school child, that it was not all white people who supported the capitalist exploitation and attitudes of its racist government. These liberals also establish the conditions that mould him into astute political debater. His narrative, however, establishes Tekere as a budding political debater whose consciousness levels even scare these white administrators.

Tekere claims through autobiography that he plays a central role on much more politically decisive matters such as the rejection of Joshua Nkomo's leadership of the National Democratic Party (NDP). He charges that Nkomo travelled too much, did not consult and was overly giving in to the white administration (Tekere, 2007, p. 51). Tekere seems to raise the point that he is the main actor and king maker. It is he, in particular, who prepares for Mugabe's leadership control. However, readers also get the sense that Tekere wants them to accept him as a candid, upright narrator who does not take advantage of the control of language to misrepresent political opponents. For instance, he reiteratively absolves Robert Mugabe of undermining the authority of either of his predecessors, Joshua Nkomo or Ndabaningi Sithole, as previous writings might have suggested. There is some kind of irony in Tekere's depiction of Mugabe as always deferring to his leaders. In fact, Tekere declares that Mugabe actually opposed the motion by his colleagues to depose Nkomo and abstains in the vote of no confidence against Ndabaningi Sithole, later on. Here, it seems Tekere's intention is to build up a patient politician, who is, by then, free of selfish ambitions and intrigue. This is all the more ironic when Tekere later on struggles to understand how the same cautious Mugabe begins to build a personality cult once he ascends to power.

Autobiography provides Tekere the opportunity to not only strategically position himself as the firebrand of the ZANU nationalist party, but also as one charting the path for Zimbabwean intra-party politics. On one hand, Tekere insinuates that he was the first to publicly announce to rural supporters in Mubaira that "colonial rule" could only end through "outright war". As he claims, this declaration that only an armed confrontation would unseat the hypocritical racist regime, earns him the ban from visiting rural areas and the township of Mufakose (an African township in Harare then). On the other hand, Tekere mocks Nkomo for his reaction to their ouster of him referred to above, which he had masterminded. Tekere narrates how Nkomo reacts helplessly by creating the People's Caretaker Council (PCC) with James Chikerema, who leads crowds of Nkomo supporters in Highfields to throw stones at the houses of Mugabe, Takawira and

Nkala and to attack people in the streets. He, as the firebrand, leads a group of youths to fight battles against Nkomo's supporters in Harare and Bulawayo. Though the narrating self intends to make Zimbabwean readers realise that Tekere, the protagonist, was critical in this phase of urban politics, he ends up revealing how such political splits have resulted in internecine violence. Tekere thus succeeds in unwittingly depicting the origins of the violent nature of post-independent Zimbabwean politics, epitomised in black on black violence and intimidation of opposition supporters.

Tekere further uses autobiography to demonstrate how their new party, ZANU, had a clear, well-articulated focus. According to Tekere, he and the leadership elected during the 1964 ZANU Congress declared their intention to take over the government of the country. Tekere ropes into his narrative testimonies and real events to authenticate his assertions that his clique and he were responsible for initiating the programmes and plans of action for the new ZANU party. That way, Tekere gives due credit to Ndabaningi Sithole, the teacher/preacher who clearly articulates the party's adoption of the armed struggle to fight the colonial regime. He acknowledges Sithole (an often vilified nationalist) as the one who clarifies, for the first time, the need to create an army and one who gives the orders for the creation of such by the external wing led by Herbert Chitepo and William Ndongana. Meanwhile, Tekere and others actively recruited the youths for military training (Tekere, 2007, p. 55). Tekere takes pride in being one of those who penned the Sikombela declaration, an "instrument" that "authorised those in exile to set up the Revolutionary Council whose mandate was to prosecute the war of liberation." Tekere will, however, always claim greater credit. Though typed and duly signed by Ndabaningi Sithole, it is Tekere who single-handedly masterminds the smuggling of the declaration from prison, thus effectively making himself the spark that ignites the liberation struggle. From this episode, Tekere makes it clear that the external Council receives its terms of reference from the detained internal nationalists such as himself. But the military power and ruthlessness it gained over the years pricked the ego of some members of the Council (Dare Re-Chimurenga) such as Rugare Gumbo who later sought to undermine, overthrow or manipulate some of its more civilian leaders.

Tekere knits his experience in detention into autobiography in order to demonstrate a peculiar singularity of his. Tekere claims that he breaks the record of being the youngest political prisoner after being imprisoned at the age of twenty-two. In the narrative, Tekere claims that he harangues the African policemen for working for the enemy. It is when he describes the detention years at prisons such as Wha Wha that his pin-point accuracy on dates is realised, thereby giving veracity to his narrative. He avers being a very meticulous diarist. The diaries provide the dates and records of the detention proceedings which, in turn,

constitute most of the factual accounts in the autobiography. For example, the autobiography recovers from the diaries that Tekere was the first prisoner to be detained under Smith's State of Emergency Regulations on 8/11/65 at Salisbury Maximum Prison. Mugabe, Malianga, Zvogbo, Mudukuti, Malowa, Shiri-huru and Shoniwa only join Tekere at the prison later.

Tekere uses the detention experience to argue that incarceration distinguishes the brave from the faint-hearted. Prison cracks those not strong of heart. Tekere, however, rues the betrayal by Sithole, the leader who had impressed them all by crafting the Sikombela Declaration that conceived the Second Chimurenga. That Sithole could betray the armed struggle he initiated, disheartens Tekere and others, but especially Nyagumbo. Tekere, however, blames Sithole's unilateralism for causing him to be isolated by the regime's Special Branch secret police who torture him into abandoning the armed struggle. Sithole, henceforth, tries to convince others out of military conflict in exchange for freedom. Significantly, Tekere uses this incident to peep into Nyagumbo's emotional personality, especially his fatalistic disposition to personal betrayal.

Tekere unconvincingly tells readers how they had to guard Nyagumbo against committing suicide at this betrayal by Sithole. However far-fetched this explanation might sound, Tekere manipulates and culminates Nyagumbo's feared behaviour here with Nyagumbo's 1988 suicide. The latter politician allegedly commits suicide after being fingered in the Willowgate corruption scandal and then being abandoned by his trusted leadership. According to Tekere, Nyagumbo might have asked Mugabe the same question Nyagumbo asks Sithole about how the latter could have betrayed him, despite his trust and faith in him. Nyagumbo had also trusted Mugabe so much and done so much to keep him in power (including denouncing his old compatriot, Edgar Tekere), yet he is made a sacrificial scapegoat to cleanse the party's corruption. According to Tekere, it was actually Nkala, Nyagumbo, Malianga and himself who moved the motion to sack President Sithole, with Mugabe (who opposed) abstaining (Tekere, 2007, p. 68). So it was Tekere (tabling motion), Malianga (Chairing), Nkala and Nyagumbo (voting), who literally put Mugabe in charge of ZANU. Tekere restates that, contrary to popular myths of an ambitious Mugabe, the latter did not engineer his own ascension; so "there was no machination on his [Mugabe] part" (Tekere, 2007, p. 69). Thus, in spite of his attempt to lend credence to his own political expertise at the expense of Mugabe, Tekere ironically presents his antagonist as more favoured by fate. For instance, with Sithole sacked, Takawira dead, Mugabe as Secretary General naturally assumes leadership of party.

Readers might ask, how then does Tekere graduate from being a civilian into a guerrilla? The narrator points to the internal problems and mounting external pressures that influenced how politics was conducted in ZANU to offer that explanation. Tekere's narrative slant seems to suggest that he buys into Kaunda's conclusions that the murder of Herbert Chitepo in Lusaka on 18 March 1975 was an inside job. Though he is not categorical himself, Tekere allows space to the speculation that ethnic power rivalry between the Karanga and the Manyika, rather than Rhodesian forces, caused Herbert Chitepo (a Manyika like himself, who had initiated the armed struggle), to be eliminated by the Karanga whose numbers included Josiah Tongogara, Rugare Gumbo, Henry Hamadziripi and Mukudzei Mudzi. Kaunda's arrest and detention of most of the original Council of Seventeen, charged for the Chitepo assassination, meant that there was no leader to direct the war effort. Tekere raises this as a big dilemma since large numbers of recruits continued to cross the borders at a time the Frontline States leaders, particularly Kaunda and Nyerere, were worried about the leadership crisis among Zimbabwean nationalists and the apparent violence among Zimbabwe's freedom fighters.

This leadership crisis had repercussions at home where there emerged the need for a competent personality to lead the externally based liberation forces. Tekere claims that he, the Deputy Secretary for Youth, was very eager to join the liberation struggle outside, though his colleagues, Nkala and Malianga, were hesitant. He narrates it in such a way that it appears as if Mugabe joins the struggle in Mozambique only because he was a good rhetorician who would relate well with the OAU. According to Tekere, Mugabe's mandate was to be Chief Spokesperson of the Party and not its President. The emphasis, however, seems to be on his own zeal to join and the reluctance of the latter.

Tekere also takes advantage of the one-sided narrative nature of the autobiographical form to mystify issues. Tekere and Mugabe's adventurous journey to Mozambique is shrouded in mysterious fiction and fact. For instance, the two men's girlfriends are assigned a role that mirrors that played by the *chimbwidos* (civilian female assistants to guerrillas) in the revolution. Mugabe is seen scaling the concrete wall from his girlfriend's room just before their departure to the guerrilla camps in Mozambique. Following this escapade, they are together driven first by Rwizi Ziyenge who passes them on to Moven Mahachi and Robert Gumbo, and finally, to Chief Rekayi Tangwena's homestead. There, they miraculously escape from a pursuing army of Rhodesian forces through a back window. Tekere infuses into the autobiographical form nationally symbolic incidents to entrench his ordained significance. For instance, Tekere claims that their journey was a journey of national salvation. The ancestral spirits bless the journey because he and

Mugabe were going to save the liberation struggle which was aimed to repossess the ancestral lands that the colonialists had earlier dispossessed them of.

Significantly, the experience of the journey is to test their commitment, courage and suitability. This is why Tangwena takes them along the most difficult path (Tekere, 2007, p. 73). Tekere intimates that they are exposed to mysterious happenings such as the growls of a lion which Mugabe could not hear, the pitch blackness, the spirit possessions and other near catastrophes. He does that the better to claim communion with the spiritual custodians of the Chimurenga war, an experience he struggles to deny his fellow traveller, Mugabe. Tekere, however, fails to explain why it is Mugabe and not him who eventually becomes leader, despite the claim that he was the ancestral spirits' favourite. It seems that his attempt to invoke the presence of ancestral spirits throughout the nightmarish journey through the Kaerezi range reads better as strange subject for a jungle horror film than one highlighting the challenges Zimbabwean guerrilla recruits faced on their journey to Mozambique.

Becoming a Guerrilla in Mozambique

The tone of the autobiography implies how Tekere comes in at an opportune moment to save and prosper the revolution while it regrets how the civilian Mugabe slowly but eventually becomes the leader. In his quest to make himself the protagonist, Tekere claims he has his first quarrel with Mugabe over how they would present themselves to the guerrillas. Tekere strategically contrasts them, presenting Mugabe as prepared to announce himself as a representative of the UANC whereas he, Tekere, disagrees and stands by ZANU. Tekere emphasises his clear-mindedness on the crucial issue of the armed struggle while presenting his compatriot as a hapless victim of politics. Tekere boastfully notes: "I made all the arrangements and took the lead, ensuring that Mugabe complied with the ZANU line" (Tekere, 2007, p. 74). Tekere wants readers to consider, through such small innocent-looking revelations, what kind of leader they have in Mugabe; and, in himself, the one they have lost. He thus proceeds to literally take over the political education of recruits, ensuring the correct ZANU and not UANC (Mugabe) propaganda is preached.

There is a Siamese twin relationship of fact and fiction since autobiographies are postmodern in nature, intermixing and interlocking the two. For Smith (Benstock, 1997, p. 1117) autobiography indicates "the potential for works from the marginalised to challenge the ideology of individualism ..." Tekere's autobiography, coming from one dumped from the party he helped form, is, therefore, useful in challenging the patriarchal narrative and exclusivity of the Chimurenga, where the unchallengeable father figure of the party president thwarts and dwarfs all other voices contending to speak for that experience. To buttress his own claim to relevance in a party absorbed in personality cultism, Tekere attempts to write home the

critical role played by female cadres in the liberation war. Teurai Ropa (former Vice-President, Joice Mujuru, of Zimbabwe) is testimony to this. Tekere confides that she actually goes to Mozambique for guerrilla training well before Tekere and Mugabe. It is Mujuru who trains Tekere how to handle weapons and explosives, commanding him to roll and crawl on the ground in training. Tekere claims that he gladly undergoes rigorous training because as a dedicated cadre he wanted to lead by example. Tekere thus foregrounds the rivalry between Mugabe and him. Autobiography enables Tekere to foreground his special qualities at the expense of Robert Mugabe's. Tekere wallows about how he quickly gels into the guerrilla lifestyle, promptly acclimatising and going through the training unlike the reluctant Mugabe. Through narrative, Tekere naturalises his ambition to establish voluntary authority over the trainees where he says: "As leader, I had to be the fittest, [but] Mugabe participated a little" (Tekere, 2007, p. 75). While the narrator credits Tekere for daring to undergo the tough military training with much younger fighters, he assigns Mugabe to less strenuous tasks of establishing schools where he teaches the refugees. All this is an attempt to establish himself as a military leader of stature, a quality essential in guerrilla warfare but unfortunately lacking in the civilian politician.

When the autobiography re-narrates sorrowfully the massacres at Chimoio, Nyadzonja and other camps, it is to afford Tekere the opportunity to establish how the bombings affect him personally. For instance, Tekere claims he had personally suggested the siting of the Nyadzonja camp for purposes of agricultural production which he oversaw. The 23 November 1977 attack on the Chimoio complex of camps which saw more than 1200 massacred, leads Tekere to reflect on the gender complexion of the liberation struggle, something his male compatriots often looked over in passing. Contrary to patriarchal accounts, however, it was not the males who dominated the liberation struggle. The camp populations reflect that there were more women than men in camp. Two thirds of the dead were women. Tekere thus uses statistical evidence to demystify the view that only the brave males crossed the border into Mozambique. He records how more and more female recruits and refugees joined them, including prominent figures such as Oppah Muchinguri, Irene Zindi and Eunice Chadoka, a situation which demonstrates the big role females played in the Chimurenga war of liberation. This is notwithstanding the view that the large number of the female dead could mean that the majority of women and children were either refugees or camp assistants to the male commanders.

Autobiography also allows Tekere room to reflect on personal and private issues. In the story involving Ruvimbo, his second wife, whom Tekere claims follows him to Mozambique he reveals some macabre incidents of the struggle. Tekere relates how during that Chimoio attack, Ruvimbo hides in a pit latrine for

three days from whence “her flesh had been chewed at by maggots” (Tekere, 2007, p. 40). Such were the hazards of the war, with deaths and maiming of thousands others. Here, Tekere emphasises his composure in the face of a near personal tragedy. Tekere uses this private incident to illustrate how Tongogara and he inculcate a jungle psychology and culture among all fighters that stipulates that experiences could not be personalised; all bodies were equal before the war. All guerrillas whose spouses might have been killed or injured were thus exhorted to be brave. Tekere, however, intimates that such circumstances saw the fainthearted beginning to balk. Tekere insinuates that Mugabe was about to break where he confides to him thus: “I’m beginning to wonder whether this is worthwhile, with all these people dying” (Tekere, 2007, p. 87). What we see here is Tekere’s deliberate attempt to undermine Mugabe’s credibility and leadership qualities. To substantiate his own lack of confidence in the leadership and personality of Mugabe, Tekere harnesses Samora Machel’s and Tongogora’s apprehensions. Tekere even ‘quotes’ Machel’s candid ‘confession’ to him where, after the Chimoio massacre, Machel confides to him as to an equal military commander, and not to Mugabe, about the need for a counter-offensive: “I respect Mugabe, but he does not measure up to this scale of military operation and planning. He does not belong as a soldier.” (Tekere, 2007, p. 88) Tekere later reconfirms this distinction between himself and Mugabe, something he wants all Zimbabweans to appreciate: “I belonged to the war; I was part of it in a way that Robert Mugabe never was” (Tekere, 2007, p. 105). As noted earlier on, Tekere, indeed, sees himself as greater than all the revolutionaries put together, but the country is unfortunately fated to be ruled by those who contributed least.

The autobiography brings to the readers’ attention the latent and simmering conflicts between military leaders and the civilian leadership, a scenario which recently reared its ugly head in the 2016 fall out between the ruling party and the ‘old’ war veterans. Here, Tekere seems to suggest that Machel, Tongogara and himself shared their worries and uncertainties about Mugabe’s commitment to the real war effort. Tekere wants readers to believe that his post as Secretary General allowed him to move easily between the top military leaders, the civilian leaders, the fighters, and Machel’s Frelimo, a feat Mugabe could not accomplish as easily – something which Tekere claims might have encouraged the later Mugabe to build a ruthless cult of personality.

Furthermore, Tekere harnesses autobiography to boast about his military prowess and tactics that are acknowledged by the Rhodesian forces. Tekere claims how *he* and his military colleagues “were able to intercept the Rhodesians’ radio messages to each other, and I occasionally heard them talking about “the Tekere style of fighting” (Tekere, 2007, p. 90). However, Tekere gains himself external as well as internal

enemies because of his increasing popularity and effectiveness, some of whom plot a coup, with Tekere as number one target of elimination. The hit list had Tekere, Tongogara, Muzenda, Urimbo, Ushewekunze, Tungamirai and Rex in that order. Luckily, Tekere detects this conspiracy early since he maintains close and tactical cooperation with FRELIMO. It turns out that the same men who had been accused of the Chitepo assassination in Zambia were the ones who wanted to stage an inside coup in the camps in Mozambique. These included Hamadziripi, Mandizvidza, Gumbo, Chigowe, Muparuri, Mudzi and Kangai, who had infiltrated the military and troops. After Tekere's shrewd efforts thwarted this coup attempt, the plotters confess: "We wanted to execute a coup, which you successfully foiled." (Tekere, 2007, p. 99) But as a magnanimous leader, Tekere seeks pardon for the internal coup leaders, a disposition which he denies Mugabe.

Lancaster House Conference and After

Tekere's discussion of the Lancaster House Conference, a brainchild of the Commonwealth Conference, contests the popular narrative of ZANU PF that pretends that Zimbabwean independence was won entirely on the battlefield. Though Tekere wants his readers to believe that by 1979, ZANLA forces, with special leadership and instruction from military men such as Tongogara and himself, had become such a formidable force that the popular talk was "*hondo yaakunikidza vakomana*" (war is now sweet and easy), his talk, however, compels readers to credit the 1978 Lusaka Commonwealth Conference for pressurising Britain to convene the Lancaster House Conference of 10 September 1979. Tekere, nonetheless, cleverly entrenches his role during the resultant Lancaster House Conference by claiming that he presides over the practical side of things such as raising funds for food and accommodation, and updating friendly countries on the proceedings.

The anticlimax of Tekere's autobiography is the Adams case, soon after Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. Having actively influenced Mugabe to reject the idea of contesting the election under one Patriotic Front leadership banner and ZANU PF having beaten Nkomo's PF ZAPU, Muzorewa's UANC and Smith's United Front (white), Tekere spearheads in formulating the new government with Robert Mugabe. Tekere's stay in government was, however, short-lived. And the Adams case could have been the catalyst that prompted Mugabe to restrain the loose cannon that Tekere had become. Tekere recounts how, together with his bodyguards, he embarks on a cinematic military style operation to rid newly independent Zimbabwe of remnants of the Rhodesian armed gangs operating outside the law on a farm in the outskirts of Harare. The swashbuckling Tekere does not seem to realise that he, too, fails to readjust from the jungle justice of ZANU, a fact which makes him an easy target of the "civilian bureaucrats" such as

Mugabe. Tekere declares how the Prime Minister, Mugabe, had intended to gain outright control and loyalty from him through an amnesty, once he pleaded guilty of the murder of Adams. To prove his suspicions of Mugabe, Tekere says soon after he was acquitted on technicality, after advocate McNally had read an Act crafted by the preceding Rhodesian regime to protect the president, ministers and deputies who acted against terrorism, Mugabe repeals that law. Tekere, in other words, accuses Mugabe of having cherished the idea of exercising his magnanimity in pardoning him after his being found guilty, a ploy to keep Tekere under his control.

Tekere further harnesses autobiography to present himself as a typical tragic hero – whose tragic flaw is his hatred for corruption and betrayal of the ideals of the Zimbabwean revolution. Tekere is continually isolated and betrayed by his erstwhile trusted friends, who soon stampede to amass wealth for themselves, contrary to the leadership code, and at the expense of ordinary Zimbabweans. He recounts how these selfish hypocrites poison the relations between him and his old ally, Mugabe, and how Mugabe himself, increasingly snubs him and stokes the other members' anxious jealousies of the self-declared popular and upright Tekere (in the eyes of freedom fighters and the populace).

Tekere accuses his colleagues of falling prey to Mugabe's perceived divide-and-rule tactics and patronage system that has fuelled corruption where he observes: "Personally I feel alone in my crusade against corruption in the Party, and I am sure Tongogara would have been with me in my battles. I have been badly let down by other erstwhile comrades, particularly Nyagumbo and Enos Nkala." (Tekere, 2007, p. 118) The narrator dramatically presents Tekere's as a lone opposing voice drowned in the clangour of the gravy train such that the party president, being surrounded by sycophants and bootlickers, easily proceeds to isolate and stifle it, to the extent that Tekere is to be appointed ambassador. This, according to Tekere, could prevent him from criticising corruption in the Party. The problem, as Tekere reflects, reads like a normal ironic narrative rife with bootlickers set to separate the founders of the Party. Tekere claims this started "in Maputo, [where] Mugabe began to be surrounded by sycophants, opportunists and rumour mongers" (Tekere, 2007, p. 133). He regrets how, following this, he is gradually but systematically stripped of any power and influence, the excuse being that he is an intemperate threat to the party. He is thus sacked as Secretary General of the Party in 1981, a move he interprets in the context where "Mugabe was working to consolidate his personal control and power over the Party and I was obviously an obstacle to this." (Tekere, 2007, p. 132)

Wrenched of political muscle, Tekere clings to autobiography for political relevance. For, as Gusdorf (1980, p. 39) aptly notes that "... the task of autobiography is first of all a task of personal salvation." But as in

fiction, there is a protagonist and an antagonist. Still, the irony is that in Tekere's imagined Zimbabwean context, it is the antagonist and not the protagonist who triumphs. Hence, despite raising himself in the readers' eyes as the better, braver, more honest and more principled of the two, in reality, Tekere has been painted as the rogue. Tekere, in turn, apportions blame and complicity to the nation for denying themselves better leadership by accepting his downfall.

Yet another area that Tekere boasts about his influential role is the signing of the 1987 Unity Accord between ZANU PF and PF ZAPU. As he claims, both former liberation parties set him up as the uniting force between them. Nkomo actually travels from Bulawayo to far-away Mutare to consult Tekere before committing himself to the unity accord. Tekere claims he got on well with politicians in both parties and, as he writes, Nkomo is devastated to realise that as soon as he joins the Unity government, Tekere is chucked out of that government for his opposition to one-party state politics and the trickery of top ZANU PF leaders who outmanoeuvre the PF ZAPU politicians into being subordinate partners of ZANU PF in government.

Tekere forms his own party, Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), after being expelled from ZANU. But, at that time, it appeared the country was not yet ready for an oppositional party. The country needed a complete relook at the revolution's founding principles and strategies to ensure that whatever programme planned was implementable and feasible more than a new government. This could be why the university students stand up in response to his comparative analysis of ZANU and ZUM, and they tell him: "You, Tekere, you call yourself ZUM, but actually you represent the founding principles of ZANU. ZANU has now become something else." (Tekere, 2007, p. 155) This, however, sounds like an ambiguous declaration. As if fated to failure, and like the tragic character in pessimist fiction, there is role reversal where we see the honest fail and the shrewd and intriguing succeed. Tekere had never really convinced the ordinary person that he had left ZANU and this incident with students confirms those fears. Though he had formed a new party because he was dismayed with the old ZANU, his ZUM appeared more an attempt to revive the ideals of the ZANU he had helped form years back than a complete breakaway from it. There was no real shift in policy, and he continued to fraternise, as the autobiography sadly shows, the members in ZANU and government, and as such continued to cherish and live the dream he thought he had awoken from.

Conclusion

The article discussed how Edgar Tekere, through an emotional autobiography, retrospectively tries to counter the process of marginalisation that target him during the period of actual writing, that is, in post-independent Zimbabwe. The article has discussed how the postcolonial narrator resurrects and reconstructs Edgar “Two-boy” Tekere, the vibrant politician, from “the dust bin of history” where his erstwhile comrades have assigned him (Tekere, 2007). This article traced Tekere’s rise from the humble beginnings in an oppressive colonial environment, an environment that fires his consciousness through his decisive and epic contributions to the anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe. The paper has thus established that Tekere contributes to that African effort to deconstruct and counter the Eurocentric monopolistic views that claim that only European writers can handle and develop the aesthetics of the autobiographical literary form. In fact, the paper has demonstrated that Tekere does not only harness autobiography as a decolonising tool, but also as a post-colonial one, which also contests the African neo-colonial rulers who inherit oppressive tendencies from their former colonial masters. However, though the autobiography discursively enacts Tekere’s role in national identity formation as pre-ordained, inevitable and thus the victory almost certain, it does not convincingly explain why the postcolonial era should remain bleak. This autobiography, therefore, unlike most which end in hope, presents Zimbabwe’s independence as threatened by corrupt ruling class elites whose mismanagement begins to show shortly after independence. Why Tekere’s acclaimed ancestors and spiritual guardians of the war, those who had compelled him to orchestrate this revolution and carve out a niche in that fiery struggle, allow such a betrayal on their chosen messiah and his intended flock, is not fully explored. This means the problem of the place of tradition and culture in political autobiographies of a modernising postcolonial state needs to be interrogated further. Significantly, Tekere’s autobiography seems to suggest that independence comes too soon, before the leadership has clarified how they could actually move the country forward, beyond replacing white rule. This is evident in the leadership’s hesitation and avoidance to initiate a fundamental overhauling of the system. It would probably be interesting to probe how the group of nationalists Tekere re-presents perceive their role in Zimbabwe. Ultimately, this autobiography has not solved Tekere’s quandary, that, although he no longer agrees with his increasingly selfish cadres, he still retains more in common with them than differences. Another problem which makes readers find it difficult to separate Tekere from ZANU is suggested by Tsvangirai’s latest autobiography. Whereas Tsvangirai’s recently published autobiography opens to the readers the on-goings in the MDC party and the attainment of political relevance by the MDC, its strengths, fault lines and intrigues, Tekere’s autobiography also does the same; yet it is not for his new party, ZUM, which he should stand for, but for the old obsessive ZANU PF. That he discusses ZANU PF’s internal on-goings much more than he does about ZUM suggests that his heart has never really

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left ZANU PF, only that his former colleagues have corrupted and transformed the party, deviating from the original tenets and code of conduct. This suggests that, as literary form, autobiography can never be complete in itself, being apparently more obsessed with and more competent on the narrator's earlier experiences than his or her current experiences.

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