

# **Rethinking Edgar Tekere's *A Lifetime of Struggle***

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## **Abstract**

This article seeks to interrogate the construction of identities in Edgar Tekere's *A Lifetime of Struggle* for the purposes of establishing political legitimacy and heroism for himself. This article observes that the autobiographical narrator attempts to achieve this end through constructing heroic identities on a multiplicity of sites such as heredity, military, prisoner, welfare, masculine, intellectual and spiritual identities. The conclusion is that identity is multiple. Heroism is accentuated when that hero identity can be configured into a multiplicity of sub-identities. Hero identities and political legitimacy are achieved in the genre of autobiography through elevating and centering the narrating self while at the same time undermining the narrated others. It is also achieved through what is stated and the silences.

**Key words:** Tekere, Identities, Heroism, Legitimacy, ZANU, ZANLA, Autobiography

## **Introduction**

Identity is an inseparable aspect of autobiographical writing and criticism. The ultimate function of autobiographical writing and reading is self-location, (Bruner and Weisser 1991). Self-location is identification. It is only through textualisation that one can know one's life and self (ibid). Textualisation is both written and oral. It gives coherence to memory. This research seeks to add that even the reader of autobiography develops skills of life conceptualisation. Life conceptualisation determines who we become. Therefore, autobiographical writing and reading influence life trajectories: future identities. To add, identity involves personal investment. People are willing to die to assert or construct identity (Woodward, 2002). Self-narration is also a personal

investment. Identity is historically situated, located in culture, spatial and temporal (ibid). This research will apply Woodward's observations to the construction of heroic and legitimate identities in the selected texts.

Woodward (ibid) also notes that identity is relational. It is about sameness and difference, "us" and "them". This binary dualism affects every sphere of life. This researcher will agree with Woodward's observation but seek to contextualise this observation in the construction of political, leadership, welfare, spiritual, military, masculine, intellectual and hereditary identities. How this difference and sameness is managed will also be examined. To further enrich Woodward's analysis, this research seeks to interrogate the setting of identity boundaries. This will include the fluidity, temporality, and spatiality, historical and cultural locatedness of these boundaries. The politics of inclusion and exclusion as well as the role of war in narration and identification will be examined.

To begin with, it is necessary to look at the genres characteristics. Smith and Watson (2001:14) define autobiography as "a historically situated practice of self-representation in which narrators selectively engage their lived experience through personal story telling, in dialogue with the personal process and archives of memory." Therefore, historical context, self-representation, selective memory and emplotment are the key elements of autobiography. Bruner and Weisser (in Olson and Torrence, 1999: 130) point out that self-representation is not always literary or written, it may be oral. Further, one may have more than one self account. Thirdly, the key to self-accounting is not in the events per-se, but one's understanding, consciousness or conception of one's life. That is, the meaning one attaches to it. The multiplicity of texts creates an exciting area of exploration in autobiographical literary criticism. That is, using the literary text to figure out the unwritten text. For instance, a part may read as a confessional paragraph when it is actually self-vindication consciously or unconsciously. This research will seek to unravel multiple textualisations.

A significant aspect of autobiography is its impact on the future. Self-narration is not only located in the past. It is situated in the future as it moulds future reflexivity or agency. The past is implicated in the present and future. Bruner and Weisser (ibid) point out that to get ahead, one needs a good theory of themselves (ibid). This theory is shaped by the past.

Trotsky (1960) adds interesting dimensions to the definition of autobiography. He characterises the self-narration of a revolutionary politician. Firstly, the self narrative of a subversive activist challenges the status quo. It is incomplete without a systematic

analysis of the dynamics of society. This conceptualisation is self-consciously and unapologetically exclusionary. Autobiographies of revolutionaries differ in intention and method from others and raise unique expectations. Trotsky further asserts that self-narration is an emotional experience and exercise. Feeling is not an intruder but an intrinsic part of it. Also, textualisation is not a product but a part of the lived life. In addition, autobiography is a weapon to achieve one's goals in struggle. He concludes that personal details are only relevant when they are bound up with one's public identity. While this researcher will concur largely with Trotsky's postulations, one may disagree with the binary oppositioning of the personal and social/ public. The personal is always implicated in the social identity.

One may consider here Coetzee's (Vambe: 2009) definition of autobiography as being particularly enlightening. He defines it as *autre-biography*. That is, an account of another self. This suggests a split rather than unitary self. This researcher intends to reveal the multiplicity of selves in the narrators, each clamouring for heroism and legitimacy.

It is apt to argue that autobiography cuts across generic distinction of fact, fiction, history and narrative, and this protean nature of autobiography makes it a "meta-narrative (that) critiques the process of narration and the implicit authority that events are endowed with through this act (Levin and Taitz in Vambe: 2009: 81). Self-narration is a means of giving versions or interpretations of events or issues as portrayed in diverse fields. It is a pervasive genre.

### **Heredity, Militarism, Legitimacy and Heroism in *A Lifetime of Struggle***

In constructing a heroic military identity for himself, Tekere recruits his heredity to legitimise and authenticate his claims. The narrator, on his maternal line, is a descendant of Chief Chingaira, a hero of the First Chimurenga. His spirited resistance led to his being beheaded by the colonial forces. His head was taken to England. Tekere grew up "in the shadow of Gwindingwi", the mountains from whose caves Chingaira commanded the war (p.28). On his paternal side, he is a descendant of the Mapungwana who were linked to the Ndebele people and their Chief Mzilikazi (p. 27). Firstly, by genealogy, Tekere inherits a military identity from Chingaira. This inheritance is not far removed temporally as the First Chimurenga began in 1896 and the Second Chimurenga, in which he participated, began in 1963. This is two generations. Dilution of genes is, it is implied, minimal. The two wars are remembered by the same name, Chimurenga, with their numbering being consecutive. In addition, the military identity is spatial as he

grows up by the command centre. Furthermore, Chingaira's military identity is an elite one as commander. Later in the narrative, the narrator takes pains to position himself as ZANLA commander, an identity made less accessible by the image of Tongogara. Also his paternal identity, being Nguni by origin, is a military one as the Ndebele and Mzilikazi were renowned fighters, commanding military states. At this point, the researcher senses distortions of history. The Mapungwana in Manicaland are of the Dube-Mhlanga totem, a breakaway group of the Mutasa chieftaincy of Shona identity. The Mapungwana joined the Gaza state of Soshangane who was of Zulu descent (Hodza 1990). Tekere identifies his totem as 'Shumba' (the Lion). It is the contention of this researcher that the narrator distorts history to construct a military identity, aware that in a patriarchal society claiming a military identity from ones maternal identity may not be regarded as legitimate or authentic. Further, appropriating the 'Shumba' totem will both masculinate and militarise him as the lion is a symbol strength and valour in battle, as opposed to the feminised Zebra, which has no prey. To further demonstrate the legitimacy of his inherited military identity, Tekere recruits his son, Farai, into the narrative. His son joined ZANLA and became an expert in surface to air missiles, leading a whole unit. This proves the Makoni and Mapungwana military strains are still in the narrator. Military identity here becomes relational; one of sameness rather than difference (Woodward 2001). Sameness refers to mutual identification through sharing similar perceived characteristics. Difference refers to dissimilarity

A psychoanalytic evaluation of this construction is that it is not genes that militarise an individual. Rather, collective memory is recruited by families in the socialisation of their young. These memories shape how individuals grow up to understand themselves. They (memories) become a model which may be ideal, romanticised by sentiment. Individuals then seek to approximate themselves to this ideal, if not in deed, then in self-conceptualisation. Rejection of this model is registered in the psyche as an act of betrayal of one's collective identity, putting one in conflict with their conscience. Self-narration becomes a way of affirming paternal and maternal loyalties. The narrative becomes therapeutic, making it scriptotherapeutic (Smith and Watson 2001). In a society which feminises women more than it masculinises them, Tekere may feel it a dishonour or injustice not to acknowledge his mother's Makoni militancy and masculinity. To rid himself of guilt, the narrator recruits her militancy into the narrative. Thus, we are told that she was "always at war with the whites" and the narrator was greatly influenced by her strong character, her courage and unrelenting stance."(ibid, p.33) She "directly" (p.33) encouraged him to fight. Of course, Tekere benefits from his mother's militant identity as it legitimises his and authenticates his claim to a military identity.

Tekere's narrative portrays a military struggle as the only solution. This legitimises militarisation and protects it from a terrorist identity. In the introduction, Mandaza (Tekere 2007:12) states that in "a negotiated settlement", many would have seen this as compromising "total liberation". In a political speech in Mufakose Township, the narrator argued that the colonialists "vowed to use the guns if the bible did not work. The only way is to fight them with guns of steel!" (p.43) In other words, the colonialists already had a military identity; the only way to destroy the hegemony is a subversive military identity. African subversive military identities are a necessary reaction. They are a result of victimhood. It is self defence and, therefore, ethical. Protection and terrorism are juxtaposed. They are relational identities based on difference, opposition. Further, militarisation was democratically decided at a ZANU congress (p. 56). It was not a result of coercion. The notion of consensus and self defence, as well as colonial intransigence, makes the new military identities of the nationalists legitimate. The cause of liberation makes them heroic even before military success. Not only that, the decision to become militant is heroic in itself, as one intellectual identity enables one to conceptualise and perceive the inevitability of war. The fact that this may be received knowledge is left out, making memory in self narration selective.

Tekere's narrative elevates his military heroism by centring himself in the military struggle. The narrator is Deputy Secretary for Youth and "youth are considered the lifeblood of any war effort" (p. 59). Ageism is at play here. In a patriarchal society, age denotes importance and seniority. That is, the older one is the more superior. Aware that he is among the youngest founders, Tekere subverts tradition by positioning the youth and, therefore, himself, as the most important in a military struggle. Youthful masculinity hegemonises or dominates mature or aged masculinity. This undermines even the commander -in- chief, Ndabaningi Sithole, and elevates himself. Therefore, the more youthful the identity of the militant, the greater the heroism and legitimacy.

The security role he comes to play in ZANU also centres Tekere. He is the custodian of confidential documents in Prison at Sikhombela (P.63). He teaches Mugabe, the party leader how to use a gun to protect himself (p.94). He investigates conspirators with success. He protects those found guilty of plotting a coup such as Rugare Gumbo. The picture that emerges is that of him being indispensable. After all, he was trained by the best such as Teurai Ropa who was "extremely accomplished" as a fighter (p.78). In spite of his diminutive embodiment, he floors Toro, the very tall guerrilla to discipline him (p.76). In military exercises, "he had to be the fittest" (p. 77). Successful ZANLA strategies came to be associated with Tekere by the Smith regime, such as "Sunga Mberi" (p. 96). The Rhodesians called this the "Tekere style of fighting (p.91).

## **The Individual Hero versus the Collective Hero in *A Lifetime of Struggle***

A cultural materialist perspective would be that Tekere uses his superior class status in ZANU to individualise collective effort. The underclass of ZANU and ZANLA are exploited for the glory of the hegemonic upper class. Barely anyone else is mentioned as having played a security role or as evolving military strategies. Psychoanalysis of the narrative reveals that the narrator suffers from an inflated ego, saving all that is precious as emanating from himself. On the other hand, autobiography can be seen as an attempt by a marginalised self to re-centre itself. Appropriating collective identity and will by individualising it is one method of re-centering. The narrator appears conscious of the injustice that this autobiographical act entails. He explains that as Secretary-General, he had the dual responsibility “of coordinating the political and military”. He declares, “It was only I who was able to move between the two” otherwise the military and the political did not mix (p.93). The duality of identity elevates him above others. It also unconsciously reveals an awareness of the problematic plausibility of being both a political and military supremo, especially as the mindset of political and military nationalists was divergent. He acknowledges that he has been quizzed on how “a person such as myself, with no military background, came to be conducting a war. He asserts that he “belonged to that war, and to the soldiers who conducted it.” (p. 101). He trained with them to set an example. He unwittingly marginalises himself. He claims to have conducted the war during Tongogara’s detention (p 104) but states that he belonged to the soldiers who conducted it, suggesting that he did not conduct it himself. His centrality becomes questionable.

The narrative is also a confessional, which compromises the military heroism constructed. Tongogara is quoted as saying to Tekere that ZANLA had, as some of its members, “killers...die hard criminals who only joined the war to escape jail or worse” (p.97). Tongogara suspected that these killed Edson Sithole, a nationalist in ZANU. Elsewhere, Tongogara’s voice is recruited, justifying forced recruitment or kidnapping. While generally elevating ZANLA, especially in opposition to ZIPRA, Tekere appears to be confessing that the ZANLA identity is not sacrosanct. It does not automatically entitle one to a nationalist, military or heroic identity. However, as he partially criminalises ZANLA, he may be elevating those more associated with ZANU, including himself.

## **Incarceration as Rite of Passage in *A Lifetime of Struggle***

Incarceration is an autobiographical experience much sought after for narration by the selected narrating-subjects. Heroism and legitimacy are identities that are sited in prisons. It symbolises sacrifice for one's cause and the people. It establishes one's authenticity. It can be a site of self-development. Psychoanalysis would argue that imprisonment can aid individuals to develop mechanisms for dealing with pain, pressure and fear. Such mechanisms make one a more dependable leader. On the other hand, it may include claustrophobia, that is, fear of confinement. This may explain the accusation by the public that leaders in the post-colony are exaggeratedly fond of travelling, even at the expense of meagre state resources. Furthermore, post-independence African leaders frequently incarcerate opposition politicians. Perhaps to them, imprisonment is seen as a necessary ritual before assuming power, proving one's legitimacy and heroism. It is a political culture.

Tekere uses imprisonment to construct heroism and legitimacy. To clearly distinguish political prisoners from civilian prisoners, the narrator states that when political prisoners arrived at Kentucky prison, "the civilians had already been removed" (p.57). This decriminalizes the political prisoners in the mind of the reader. In the narrative, prison becomes a geographical space denoting or symbolizing political subversion, heroism and legitimacy. The rest of the narrative is silent on civilian prisoners. Prison, however, undermines the heroism of the nationalists as it reveals cleavages and lack of focus. On arrival at Gweru prison, the ZANU detainees were attacked by ZAPU detainees who accused them of murdering a ZAPU member. This intra-nationalist conflict is a spill over of the split of some members from ZAPU to form ZANU. The picture that emerges is one of nationalists who would sometimes divert attention from the colonial enemy to focus on destroying fellow nationalists. This feeds into the colonial myth that colonization saved Africans from themselves, making colonialism a benevolent humanitarian gesture and giving the colonial protagonist this noble identity. Only Nkomo remains a hero at this point as he takes the ZANU members in for their protection. Prison becomes a site for entrenching intra-nationalist antagonistic identities when ZAPU prisoners are taken to Gonakudzingwa and ZANU prisoners to Whawha.

Tekere positions himself as the prize prisoner. At Kentucky prison, the other detainees are conventionally incarcerated. The narrator, on the other hand, is cast into a small hut measuring about a square metre. It is so small, he says, that he was unable to sit down (p.58). The floor was lumpy and he was given a single blanket. Only a riot by fellow detainees demanding to know why he was being treated "particularly harshly" (ibid)

saved him. The narrator leaves it to the reader to interpret that he was the prize prisoner. This leaves the narrator free of the accusation of othering other nationalists and self-elevation. One can argue that the narrator is aware that if so many were imprisoned, his hero status maybe compromised. He, therefore, resorts to establishing various degrees of suffering in prison, placing his as the highest. This undermines the experiences of the other nationalists.

As with military identity, Tekere recruits ageism to exceptionalise himself. The authorities graded the prisoners and located them accordingly. As he was twenty-two years old, he was too young to be graded. The autobiography also carries a photograph of a boyish Tekere with the inscriptions “still youthful” and “already a very active member of the SRANC” followed by “only months before arrest and detention”.(pages unnumbered) This is designed to convince the reader just how young he was, appealing to the reader intellectually and visually for emphasis. The reader is left in awe at the level of political consciousness of the narrator. His bravery and endurance are elevated to the highest level as is his victim-hood. At work here is the politics of inclusion and exclusion. If young, a prisoner identity is extremely heroic. If mature of age, it is heroic, but less so.

In prison identity remains fluid. Only movement is static. Some prisoners continue being subversive, though in new ways. Others crossed the boundary of subversion and become complicit. Those who remained subversive would smuggle out communications to “the outside world” (p.65) through a network of prison wardens. This maintained their identity as leaders of the struggle. Absence of communication with their parties would have meant that a vacuum was created which would, by necessity, be filled by unincarcerated others. This method also created subversive identities for the wardens. This makes identity multiple and conflictual. The wardens are at once complicit with the Rhodesian government by serving as wardens and subversive by serving nationalist interests as conduits. Perhaps this is the opportunism of those who wish to benefit from colonialism and ingratiate themselves to its opponents, perhaps for continued employment and freedom from retribution when the colonial regime falls. Michael Mawema is singled out as assuming a sell-out identity. The Central Committee (ZANU) voted to instruct the party in exile to resume the armed struggle. This was put into writing and the document became known as the Sikombela Declaration. Tekere was tasked with concealing this document. Soon after Mawema developed a tooth ache and was taken to Kwekwe for treatment. A raid was conducted by the prison authorities. They searched thoroughly but found nothing. (p.63). A footnote on the same page informs the reader that “Michael Mawema was later to commit suicide, but is never conclusively

proven that he did inform on us” (63). The reader is left to decide. Mawema’s identity as a hero is compromised though. The lack of proof is even added as a footnote, which is obscure and can be missed by many readers. Tekere protects himself subtly from a defamation suit though he has defamed Mawema. Nevertheless, sell-outs play a big role in politics. They make heroes out of those who don’t sell out.

Of note, is the effect of prison on masculinities. It is in prison that Takawira falls seriously ill and dies. Ndabaningi Sithole had his first attack of epilepsy while incarcerated (p.63). Prisoners are humiliated through beatings, being forced to strip naked and even defecate in the presence of others. This exposes the fragility of masculinity, associated with physical strength, when the body suffers. Perhaps post-Independence rulers incarcerate opponents to emasculate and feminize them in societies where masculinity is regarded as a pre-requisite to power. Interestingly, the ZANU leadership began incarcerating opponents before independence in 1977; those implicated in the “Vashandi rebellion” were detained (p.85). At an institutional level, this is self-incarceration.

We can see, therefore, that Tekere’s narrative is in many ways a prison and trauma narrative. The narrator continues to recalibrate himself as the plots unfold, refusing compartmentalisation. At the point that the narrator retrieves memories of prison life, the narrative becomes scriptotherapeutic. Such narratives provide emotional and psychological relief aiding narrators to come to terms with trauma by making sense of it. Expressing the pain is cathartic. Simultaneously, the narrators come to know themselves as heroes. Prison experiences legitimize this claim

### **The Spirituality of Legimacy and Heroism in *A Lifetime of Struggle***

Spirituality is recruited by the selected autobiographical narrator in his attempts at self-elevation and self authentication. His resourcefulness in this regard is demonstrated by their recruitment of both traditional African and Christian religions. These are politicized. Edgar Tekere recruits African traditional religion to elevate himself to heroism. Tekere’s spiritual heroism manifests at a tender age. Age, therefore, magnifies the autobiographical acts’ significance. A consciousness which evolves in youth is privileged above that which evolves in adulthood. As a boy scout, Tekere refuses to swear allegiance to “God and the king”, preferring “God and Mambo Makoni”, (p.15) arguing that this was more appropriate as the school was in Makoni’s territory and his mother is a Makoni princess. He was expelled from the club. His mother ululated on hearing what he had done. At one level one may regard this as a political statement. He

owes allegiance, not to the colonial power, but to the African pre-colonial polity. It may also be regarded as spiritual subversion. The European aristocratic belief is that God rules through European monarchs. The African version is that God rules through the ancestors who in turn, rule through the Chiefs. His proximity to the centre of power, the chief and the ancestors is affirmed through his maternal identity. Tekere therefore, becomes a champion of traditional religion and African rule, subverting colonial domination. Even his paternal spirituality elevates him. The Tekere people are said to be renowned for their benevolence and generosity. Tekere tells his brother that if they do not live by the Tekere tradition they will be disowned by their ancestral spirits (p30). In Tekere, therefore, we have a leader who is spiritually bound to be a provider, loving, caring benevolent, generous. We are guaranteed. He humbles himself in the sense that being a 'Big Man' (Ouzagene and Morrell 1998) is not depicted as a personal trait per se, but a collective identity. Still it is exclusive to the Tekeres. As the only Tekere in leadership, he becomes the most legitimate candidate.

Tekere's entry into the struggle is authenticated by the ancestral spirits. He and Mugabe only leave for Mozambique when the ancestor possessing Mbuya Tangwena hears the roar of a lion, a symbol of the national ancestral spirits, Mhondoro, a sign of protection and guidance. Mugabe does not hear the roar (p.74). This implies that his involvement in the struggle was not sanctioned by the spirits. Therefore, we have Mugabe being undermined and marginalised. Spiritually, he does not belong to the struggle. He is an intruder and usurper. Even on the battlefield in Chimoio. The spirit mediums had their own camps. They were consulted for advice and guidance. Guerrillas never prayed the Christian style (p.78). The mediums foresaw impending attacks making safety precautions possible. Therefore, traditional religion becomes militarised. This makes probable a claim to both military and spiritual heroism and identity, which the narrator does. Mugabe as the unbeliever who refuses to have a cleansing ceremony after the war for the nation and him become responsible, it is implied, for the national spiritual contamination and his own. We see self-deification through this narration. Messiahnism of a more modest level than Nkomo is evident. Tekere, through advocacy for national rituals, is not only a spiritual hero, but a custodian of the will and rites of the ancestors, with Mugabe as his obstacle.

The narrative recruits Christianity too. The young Tekere served mass in the Anglican Church and at funerals. The latter Christian rituals (funerals) aided in creating a masculine and military heroism. The rituals made him unafraid of the dead and death in later life. This served him well in the war, when death was all around him. He sometimes goes to church but to various denominations. We see here a desire to appeal to readers

not only to the two dominant religions, but all Christian denominations to convince the reader of his spiritual heroism. He however, feels that identifying with the Anglican Church would be an act of complicity in spite of his father serving in it. The Anglican Church was the official church of the Rhodesian state. Both religions, therefore, are a site for constructing heroic identities and legitimacy, either because it is subversive, as in the case of traditional religion, or because it is popular, as is the case with Christianity.

### **Intellectual Identity and Legitimacy in *A Lifetime of Struggle***

Intellectual identities are much sought after in the selected texts, though not emphasised. Their significance is that they legitimise leadership. A leader is expected to be a visionary. He or she is also expected to have a high degree of conceptualisation of the dynamics of society. This helps in running a country and even in cases of effective subversion. Tekere also wrests an intellectual identity for himself. He was brilliant in school, “though younger than most” (Tekere 2007:31). His being younger, typically, emphasises his brilliance. The fact that he passed in a class which beat the “long standing high performance record of the school” in spite of it being so delinquent that it was “the worst since 1939” (Tekere 2007:32) emphasises his brilliance even more. Tekere seems to take pride in his childhood delinquency as the foundation of his subversive identity. The academic institutions one attends are part of one’s intellectual identity. St. Augustine’s mission was a subversive institution, though a mission station. The narrator recruits his membership of this school to build his liberation credentials. His teacher, Mr. Justin Mhlanga, “was no boot licker” (ibid: 33). He openly criticised colonialism and racism. Huddleston, a South African anti-apartheid activist, visited the school and criticized racial discrimination. Even Guy Clutton-Broke, “the only white man to be buried at Zimbabwe’s Heroes Acre”, came to work at the school (ibid: 34). The picture we get is of a young Tekere who is different from most nationalists in that the western educational institution he attended was subversive, not complicit. He was mentored into nationalism. He later worked for a bookshop where he indulged himself in books on the history of war. This masculinised him, helped him conceptualise subversion and militarised his identities. These were “valuable” years we are told (ibid: 48). The narrator’s professional and intellectual identities make him a more effective nationalist. Even his prison identity makes him an economist through studying for a Bachelor of Commerce Degree in Administration in which he studied Economics and Industrial Psychology (Ibid: 48). This legitimises the narrators’ criticisms of the mismanagement of the economy and of Mugabe’s psyche. The completion or non-completion of the

degree is not mentioned. This autobiographical silence or lack of disclosure is likely to point to non-completion, which compromises his intellectual identity. Being invited to speak at various universities around the world, originating the idea of founding Africa University (ibid: 48) and teaching others in prison (ibid: 77) may somewhat compensate for non-completion, though only partially.

### **Masculinity, Legitimacy and Heroism in A Lifetime of Struggle**

An arena of identity which is fiercely contested in constructing heroic identities is masculinity. This is manifested primarily through attempts to prove superior self assertion over others, be it politically, militarily or physically. Masculinity itself is a social construct (Murphy 2004). It is not based on maleness and femaleness. It is situated in culture and is historically, spatially and temporally located. Femininity in the narratives is posited as the binary opposite of masculinity. While this researcher disagrees with this binary oppositioning, it is beyond the scope of this research to examine that.

Tekere constructs his masculinity by portraying himself as a great sportsman. Sport in youth can be seen here as a dress rehearsal for war. It demonstrates and builds one's military and, therefore, subversive identities. He excelled in soccer so much that he was nicknamed "2-Boy" because he played like two people in one (ibid:36). Self assertion on the soccer field is a prologue to self assertion on the battle field. In Salisbury, he successfully sprints from his arresting officers. He floors a tall guerrilla in Mozambique. He had to be the fittest in military exercise. Mugabe is feminised for not participating adequately. Only Tongogara is physically superior to him in the narrative. He is described as tall imposing and built for war. With Tongogara, his masculinity and heroism are from nature, while Tekere's are from nurture. Therefore, heroism is made exclusive to the athletic. Only these can be true soldiers.

The masculinity of males is dependent on the masculinity of one's mother. Tekere's mother is militant, assertive, brave and aggressive. When she visits him in prison, she is so angered by the injustice that she rips the telephone out (p.65). Teurai Ropa can be described as the mother of guerrillas. She initiates the guerrillas into military identities by training them (p79). By being a guerrilla she is highly masculinised. Even Mbuya Tangwena becomes her husbands' parent when possessed by Tangwena's father. She is masculinised at this point. She begins to give orders to her husband. For Tekere, "it was amusing to see him defer to this small woman" (ibid: 74). The masculinity of males in

the narratives is, therefore, relational in sameness to the superior masculine females in ones' life. One has to be mothered by a masculine female to become a masculine male.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, therefore, this paper does not claim to have been exhaustive as there are other identities utilized to construct heroism such as leadership, benevolence, conciliator, victim-hood, artistic and class identities to explore. This research has selected military, prisoner, intellectual, spiritual and masculine identities for interrogation. Tekere's narrative uses these sites to construct heroic identities and legitimise themselves. The autobiographical narrators are aware of the multiplicity of identities and seek to multiply the identities of the self to authenticate themselves. Their simultaneous use of undermining and elevation demonstrate an awareness of the relationality of identity. Also, the confessional aspects demonstrate a concerted effort at maintaining plausibility.

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