

Remembering or re-membering? Life-writing and the politics of narration in Morgan Tsvangirai's autobiography *At the Deep End* (2011)

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Abstract

Morgan Tsvangirai's autobiography is a construction of both personal and national identities from the 1960s up to 2011. In doing that the autobiography *At the Deep End* reshapes events from the colonial up to the period of Zimbabwe's crisis with a view to staking a specific, deliberate identity that privileges the self as more sinned against than sinning. This paper interrogates Tsvangirai's autobiography so as to unpack the conspicuous presences and absences and the motive of such narration. The paper argues that the politics of narration in the book is motivated by the reality of his being a leader of the opposition party in Zimbabwe where he has faced a lot of accusations about his history and leadership qualities. Tsvangirai's party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was often branded as a 'terrorist' organisation by the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). We argue that Tsvangirai's analysis of events is compromised by his view of the self as a possible leader in Zimbabwe. Out of the possible selves generated by his shifty experiences, he privileges the political identity in order to create an aura of relevance in the rugged political terrain of Zimbabwe. Thus the autobiography is constructed in a way that shows remembrance and re-membering of historical accounts.

Introduction

Autobiography is an act of narrating history out of memory, an exercise in constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing the past in given spatio-temporal

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circumstances. This is why Nuttall (1998, p. 78) defines an autobiography as a “... public rehearsal of memory.” This suggests that the act of remembering or re-remembering, recollecting one’s personal history is only a selective rearrangement of events of the past that “can never be fixed in any one point ... “(Muponde & Primorac, 2005, p. 105). The writer looks backwards in time, steeped in particular contemporary circumstances and distils events with the benefit of hindsight. Harris (in Muponde and Primorac, 2005, p. 104) argues that “only articulation of personal memory... or autobiography, becomes subsumed within a broader social, political, and historical discourse of nationhood.” Autobiography pretends to be history in that certain occurrences in the past can be verified and observed, but because it is mediated through imagination it also tends to incline towards fiction. The interpretations that the autobiographer affixes to events are coloured by the present and the ideological, political and occupational standing of the writing self. This is why Nuttall (1998, p. 80) views it as a literary-historical rendition of “not simply the self, but the life of the self within a broader social, political and historical discourse of nationhood”. This is further buttressed by Coetzee (1992, p.280) who argues that in autobiography:

*Confession (is) made via a process
of relentless self-unmasking which
might yet be not the truth but a
self-serving fiction, because the
unexamined, unexaminable principle
behind it may be not a desire for the truth
but a desire to be a particular way. The
more coherent such a hypothetical fiction
of the self might be, the less the reader’s
chance of knowing whether it is a true
confession.*

Thus self-writing, in the case of Tsvangirai’s, is an attempt to inscribe the self into the past, into history, in order to better stake a claim in the leadership position in Zimbabwe. In doing that he uses the technique of privileging childhood memories that are characterised by banality and extreme poverty and suffering. This strategy allows the writer to construct a particularised political identity and, necessarily, authenticating it to the nation. The identity that autobiography intends to create is not neutral, it is willed and deliberate. Day to day occurrences are inflected and afflicted with symbolic nuances that have a bearing on the future. This is why Stone (1982, p.7) observes that an autobiographical act makes the writer at once the creator and recreator of his personal identity “and this heightens interest in life writing.” The observation is corroborated by Guisdorf (1980) when he opines that life writing is the second reading of experience and that it is truer than the first because it adds to experience itself consciousness of it because it is sanitised. But the question arises as to what identity, what self the writer wants to project because they are always multiple selves which are invariably a function of multiple experiences as the writer negotiates the slippery path of life. Is the narrating self the same as the remembered self? Often it is not. It is in this context that Doris Lessing (1994, p. 13) seems to be aware of the limitations of life writing and its constructedness when she observes that:

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We make up our pasts, you can actually watch your mind
Doing it, taking a little fragment of fact and spinning a tale out
of it.

This has the effect of energising the past to inform the present and shape the future. But Lessing's view of the autobiographical act is in contrast to Huddart's (2008, p.9) observation that autobiography is a complete laying bare of a self. The very act of presencing, absencing and distorting certain details is itself a political decision about the self. He goes further to argue that given "the blurred division between the factual and the fictive elements in autobiography, it should be said that autobiographical theory is itself an invention, a reconstruction, or a restaging... (2008, p.19). Thus this paper seeks to analyse the extent to which Tsvangirai's autobiography tries to dig deep into memory to narrativise the history of the nation or the way he reconstructs it to suit his peculiar political circumstances. The paper also interrogates the autobiography from the perspective of the standpoint theory. The theory insists on the locatedness of knowledge from a given standpoint and it is "that knowledge articulated from the standpoint of those excluded from ruling relations of power.... Because of the exclusion, the knowledge that is offered from that excluded position is quite different to that current within the ethical and ideological systems of a society and its [political] system, and is therefore a source of... potential change and renewal" (Hunter, 1999, p.2). Unfortunately this approach tends to construct a totalising narrative of its own around the narrated and narrating self.

In interrogating autobiography as a weapon of contesting, legitimising, correcting and recuperating the self in the historico-literary iconography, certain questions arise with respect to its context: At what point do people decide to write their own autobiographies and why do they choose those points? Do they write them at the apogee of their political careers or when they have been pushed from their positions of dominance? Do they write these when their political stars are just beginning to shine? Do they write them when they are about to depart into the next world? Whatever the motives, it is clear that political nodes they decide to immortalise their life-worlds have implications on the structures of interpretation that have to be deployed in dialoguing with the autobiographies. Equally, these different political nodes have a bearing on the language, rhetoric and tone deployed by the self-narrators in order to conjure up particular ways of viewing the narrating self. For example, Joshua Nkomo's *The Story of my Life* and Edgar Tekere's *A life Time of Struggle* are written at a time they (Nkomo and Tekere) have been scapegoated, harassed, persecuted and thrown into the political wilderness. The language and tone that are mobilised are meant to create sympathy and what Zimbabweans in general have lost in terms of solid and organic leadership. Ian Smith's *The Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal* is written long after white rule has been dismantled and when Zimbabwe is on a downward spiral economically, politically and socially. Herein, Smith wants to portray himself as a victim of conspiracies that torpedoed his sagacious leadership that would not have led to the ruination of the country. To that end, he frames himself as having been vindicated by events in the Zimbabwe of 1997. The same goes for Tsvangirai's autobiography which is influenced by certain political, personal and national developments. We argue that Tsvangirai's book exudes largely progressive rhetoric or rhetoric of change.

Tsvangirai's background

Tsvangirai was born on 10 March 1952 in Buhera. Like most African families during the colonial period, his parents were poor and struggled to provide for him and his other siblings. Like most people growing up under colonial oppression, his political consciousness was shaped by politics of exclusion and repression by the white regimes. This, to him is what radicalised the blacks and led them to join the liberation movements although Tsvangirai himself did not go for what he calls family reasons. After independence Tsvangirai becomes an active trade union member, rising through the ranks to become its secretary general. It should be remembered that soon after independence, the only trade union body in Zimbabwe was affiliated to the Zimbabwe African People's Union Patriotic-Front (ZANU- PF). It was during Tsvangirai's stewardship of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, that this body became critical of the ruling elite's questionable policies and corruption. This critical and vocal stance led to clashes with Robert Mugabe's government which eventuated in the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. The opposition party led by Tsvangirai was formed from the labour movement and came as a result of the government's insensitivity to the welfare of the workers and the people in general.

After crushing Zimbabwe People's Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo into submission in 1987, ZANU-PF had not been seriously challenged politically in the country. This led ZANU-PF to believe they were both invincible and indispensable. Thus the emergence of the MDC changed the Zimbabwean oppositional political landscape in that there was a serious opposition for the first time. Tsvangirai's entry into politics was therefore auspicious in that people had become tired of ZANU- PF and its failed, patronising policies. The salutariness of Tsvangirai's entry into politics coincided with a democratic void that needed to be filled at the time and the need for a courageous leader who would step into the ring with a seemingly brutal and violent regime. Many had knuckled under, many were imprisoned and brutalised. Tsvangirai's entry had less to do with his leadership qualities but more to do with a yawning oppositional chasm that needed to be filled. But his courage was what was certainly needed at the time.

Identity and reconstruction in *At the Deep end*

Like most autobiographies, Tsvangirai's begins his account by focusing on his childhood and the politics of the day and how this shaped his political consciousness. He rehashes the circumstances of his birth under colonial domination. Like most Africans worth their salt, he chronicles the evils of colonial rule and how it 'thingified' the Africans. His take is that African humanity counted for nothing in the eyes of the settlers who, after their conquest, embarked on an unprecedented exploitation of the Africans. His views therefore are that the liberation war was an inevitable and spontaneous expression of anger by the indigenous people against exploitation and pauperisation. This is understandable because, according to Schwartz (1982, p. 374), to remember or re-member is in effect to place a part of the past in the service of conceptions and needs of the present and possibly the future. One may argue that his strong views on colonialism are a reconstruction influenced largely by his present (2011) status in Zimbabwean politics and the real possibility that he may become the next president of the country. He is cognisant of the fact that the change from trade unionism to leadership of a political party in Africa calls for a sanitisation of past views to fit into the Pan-Africanist mould. Such reconstruction is arguably necessary because African leaders generally and

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Zimbabwean liberation politics in particular are united by their opposition to colonial reincarnation and any wishy-washy, ambivalent attitude to white politics. The decision to adopt a Pan-Africanist mien by Tsvangirai is partly because of the realisation that at home and in the region politicians without liberation war credentials are widely frowned upon as willing pawns in the hands of western powers. Thus Tsvangirai's autobiographical act is performative; it is a literary strategy of forging organic links with the majority of Zimbabweans whilst at the same time rebutting some of the aspersions cast upon him as a Zimbabwean political luminary. Accordingly, Marcus (1994, p.183) sees autobiography as "... a crucial site for explorations or constructions of selfhood and identity" It is therefore an act of self-imagination that operates within a realm in which the writing self wants to proffer answers about his subjectivity to the literate voting public.

In the later years, after he became leader of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change in Zimbabwe, Tsvangirai became painfully aware of the accusations at home that he was a white men's stooge. The suspicion was given credence by the constant visits to the western countries to drum up support for the MDC cause. The allegation gained currency when one of the British officials claimed they were working in cahoots with the MDC to effect regime change in Zimbabwe. In the autobiography Tsvangirai categorically refutes the claim and in fact accuses the British government of not wanting democracy but the need to punish Mugabe for appropriating land from the whites. In his words, he says:

I had never left the country for long periods, nor had I joined the liberation war as a frontline fighter. I had harboured no external influences and had never been "contaminated" by influences from other distant cultures and unknown lands (Tsvangirai, 2011, p. 170).

Thus in the autobiography, Tsvangirai delinks himself from the whites in Britain in order to forge a new identity with the benefit of hindsight in order to create some semblance of relevance and suitability in the politics of Africa and Zimbabwe. It is an act of self-exorcism. Lambek (1996, p.249) sees this type of remembrance as simply a moral and identity-building act. This reconstruction of a specific political identity is constituted out of what is constructedly recalled and forgotten about his place in the evolution of the nation and his assumed march towards the citadel of power.

There is no denying the fact that Tsvangirai's grasp of domestic and regional political goings-on is marvellous and a product of thorough research. He situates the local developments within the broader historical and regional dynamics in order to disrobe himself of the view that he is academically and analytically not gifted. One can argue that in foregrounding issues of governance in Malawi, Zambia, Zaire and Uganda, Tsvangirai's wants to show his political acumen. He wants to show that when he decided to enter politics he had sufficient theoretical grounding on African politics. In short that he was not an opportunist (Tsvangirai, p. 170). Similarly, his analysis of the Zimbabwean problems are placed squarely in the history of the country. For example, the vexed issue of the land is fingered as the most important trigger of the war. He observes that whites were determined not to leave Zimbabwe as evidenced by the measures that they put in place in order to root their hegemonic colonial position. These include the 1955 federation scheme,

the 1961 Constitution, the 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence and the 1972 referendum and the determined, gritty and spirited resistance to nationalist demands for power to the majority. His view is that it was white intransigence and the belief by the Rhodesians that they could never be defeated that led to the long, arduous and bloody war as the nationalists insisted on their legitimate right to the ancestral land. To that end he seems to confer respect and honour to those nationalists who directed the war for the ownership of the space later called Zimbabwe.

Tsvangirai writes from the point of view of 2011 when he has had a lot of electoral contests and experienced the violence of ZANU–PF under President Robert Mugabe. This tends to colour his analysis. He frames himself as a victim of the Mugabe violence. While he laments the exclusion of some of the political players in the narration of the nation, he rarely acknowledges Mugabe's contribution after independence. Instead he reaches out and sympathises with those who contested against Mugabe and lost. This is why he meticulously mentions the contributions of people like Ndabaningi Sithole, Abel Muzorewa and Joshua Nkomo. To him, therefore, they are in the same league of victimhood as himself. In his portrayal of Mugabe, he constantly uses the technique of juxtaposition by framing Mugabe as fixedly demagogic, totalitarian and a fake Pan- Africanist dredging up memories of colonialism in order to seek tenuous black brotherhood whilst riding roughshod over the rights of Zimbabweans. Whilst this may be true, he uses his attack on Mugabe to portray himself as a democrat, a unifier and consensus-builder (Tsvangirai, 2011, p. 170). Mugabe is often portrayed as a bundle of contradictions who indicates right but turns left and as having an eerie propensity towards coercion and one-manship in decision making (Tsvangirai, 2011, p. 217).

In certain instances his construction of Mugabe is grossly inaccurate. For example he blames him for his anti-apartheid stance. He opines that Mugabe played into the hands of Pretoria by adopting an aggressive stance towards apartheid and that the nation paid dearly as a result of the subversive acts perpetrated by the regime. In this regard Tsvangirai misses the point. It is instructive to note that Mugabe was the member of the Frontline States, the Organisation of African Unity and other international organisations that opposed the apartheid regime in South Africa. Only reactionary leaders in the region such as Mobuto Seseseko of Zaire and Hastings Banda of Malawi hobnobbed with the regime (Liebeng and Spies, 1993). Tsvangirai, in the autobiography, comes across as determined to convince the reader that Mugabe is a villain. This is not to argue that he is blameless. In fact there is a sense of the *déjàvu* when Tsvangirai flees to Botswana fearing for his life. This is exactly what happened to Joshua Nkomo who fled to London via Botswana fearing for his life from the self-same Mugabe. Such harassment also brings to mind the various incarcerations, beatings and trumped-up charges that Tsvangirai endured at the hands of Mugabe's ZANU- PF. But his relentless attack on him and all others opposed to him engenders curiosity rather than sympathy. With a touch of assumed clairvoyant powers that he arrogates to himself, he says at independence he got worried about Mugabe's suitability as a leader. The reader wants to find out which self Tsvangirai is using in making that statement. Is it the self-looking backwards from the vantage point of 2011 or the euphoric Tsvangirai staggered by the reality of independence in 1980? The same predictive powers are deployed in the assessment of Thabo Mbeki and Welshman Ncube

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as very suspicious characters bent on torpedoing the MDC's march into victory long after he had quarrelled with them. Could it be that the MDC leader is merely re-membering historical accounts only after they have come to pass? This is what Mbembe (2001, p. 9) describes as political "prophetism" of a certain sort of personal re-engineering. Even Mugabe's hatred of opposition politics gains more prominence when the MDC comes into existence. A good example is when Mugabe used the word "terrorist" more than ten times referring to the MDC at the burial of Cain Nkala on 18 November 2001 (Kangira, 2010, pp.45-46). Mugabe's terrorism rhetoric painted a picture in which Zimbabwe was under the siege of MDC terrorists; the only logical action was to vote for ZANU-PF in the 2002 election.

In the book, Tsvangirai talks about Mugabe's morbid love for one-party state as a sign of megalomania. Whilst this may be true, the desire to establish a one party state was not necessarily a consequence of political greed but a function of the political imperatives of the Cold War era, the very nature of Marxism-Leninism that Mugabe thought was the bedrock of his ideology and the need to protect what was seen as the hard-won independence (Smith, 1997). Equally, whilst the state-sponsored violence against the MDC cannot be disregarded, Tsvangirai should have realised that by joining politics he was stepping into the ring for a bruising battle with ZANU-PF. Mugabe and lieutenants suffered detention, torture and lost comrades during the struggle for independence. It was therefore to be expected that ZANU-PF would scatter banana skins on the road to State House against the MDC just like they did with other parties before. Besides, Tsvangirai is silent on the MDC's role in violence. The reader is made to believe that MDC is a passive victim of state violence. Sources however suggest that the MDC was equally to blame in violence (Ankomah, 2007). The writer's analysis of internecine violence at Harvest House receives only cursory and desultory analysis. He does not go to the bottom of it except to ascribe it to youth impatience and the plots by Welshman Ncube and his ilk. The issue is that violence, whether on the offensive, defensive or done to neutralise a possible threat (Ncube), is an antithesis of peace and deserves condemnation regardless of who unleashes it.

Tsvangirai projects himself as an icon of political mobilisation. In fact, he creates a cult of personalism around his person. It might be that it is always in the nature of autobiography to privilege that 'i' rather than the 'we' and thus to be navel-gazing. There are many instances where he frames himself as the party and the party as the person of Tsvangirai. He is the one who does all the thinking and the party only endorses his own decisions. He is the person who individually does the recruitment of new members like Patrick Kombai and Fidelis Mhashu. One wonders what the department responsible for that was doing when a whole president of a party has to do that. Similarly, Tsvangirai's analysis is at times tinged with exaggerated triumphalism that serves to merely massage his ego which is not proper for a future president of the country. For example, he says of ZANU-PF's eventual willingness to come to the negotiating table:

*Finally I had dismantled the monolith to its last pebble (---)
The mountain has finally accepted that it needs to have a bath in a tiny
pond down the river (Tsvangirai, 2011, p. 499).*

He appropriates a collective struggle of many people into a personal victory. Such solipsism is dangerous because it assumes that without him there is no party yet the party should be guided by certain principles that it stands for and that it should be the stated principles and not the person of the leader that should attract or repel. Huddart (2008, p. 40) thus argues that “the assumptions of identity politics are every bit as constraining as the projected assumptions they reject” and this leads, inevitably, to ambivalence, contradictions and, in certain instances, outright mendacity. In that way Tsvangirai becomes no different from Mugabe’s framing of himself as the best leader Zimbabwe ever had. This is the reason why addressing chiefs in Gweru, Mugabe avers that he does not know who could have managed the Zimbabwean economy better than he did (Tsvangirai, 2011, p.163). Tsvangirai also points out that his trade union days honed his organisational skills. In elaborating these trade union days almost to the point of writing a memoir, he seems to be trying to make a link between himself and the people on the one hand, and justifying his dabbling in politics on the other. He is implying that he has a long history of fighting for the welfare of the people and for good governance. One gets the impression that he knew his destiny even then and that trade unionism was a stepping stone to greater things in politics. It is in this context that he sees himself as a brand in his own right. He narcissistically opines that:

For a long time, these senior politicians (the Ncubes, Sibandas and Mdlongwas) insisted that I should never address a meeting alone. They all wanted to be where I was, especially at mass rallies in order to benefit from my personal political brand(Tsvangirai, 2011, p. 451).

Tsvangirai in this case falls into the trap of conceptualising leadership in terms of what Kiro (2001) views as the ‘big man syndrome’ in African politics. One may hazard the argument that this way of framing the self is a function of the limitations of the genre itself in that autobiography, like the postcolonial theory, is motivated by the insistence on difference between the self and others involved in the cluttered political space of the country. Autobiography invariably privileges the narrating self’s uniqueness, individuality and idiosyncrasies at the expense of collective identities.

He constructs the self at this point as charismatic and magnetic to the people, a brand that sells not so much out of its functionality but because it is that brand. Analysed this way, the said senior politicians in the party are framed as dour and insipid, shamelessly falling over each other to bask and possibly gape at the vicarious magnetism of the ‘Dear leader’. Whilst this may have a kernel of truth, the reality however may have been different and is a reflection of Tsvangirai’s enactment of the politics of selective amnesia. Tsvangirai had committed a lot of errors of verbal incontinence at rallies the effect of which was damaging to the party as a whole. It was always the same senior politicians who ran around doing some damage control. The most notable one was the statement that if Mugabe does not want to go peacefully then the MDC would remove him violently. This was antithetic to the commitment to democratic change that the party purported to represent; it was a call to arms, perhaps to terrorism. As was to be expected, his adversaries enacted ambush politics and pounced on that statement and on the party. Thus, though Tsvangirai tries to rationalise these errors of sense of verbal context, because of his solipsism, the senior members of his party felt he needed to be kept in leash. The damage to the party does not fall on one person, but what the whole party represents. In any case, what was wrong with these politicians basking in a brand that they could never be themselves since it was

personal and God-given? Could it be that he was seeing phantoms and this becomes a strategy to explain later the genesis and consequences of the split? Whatever explanation one advances, it is apparent that though the autobiography is grounded in national and historical material, he attempts to erase and overwrite certain aspects in order to privilege what he sees as his burgeoning political identity.

Furthermore, Tsvangirai brags about his exceptional organisational skills because he managed to reorganise the MDC after senior members of the party, allegedly led by Welshman Ncube, walked out on the party. The fallout was a result of differences of opinion over the party's participation in the Senatorial elections. The group, which became known as the pro-senate group, saw value in participating in the elections while Tsvangirai argued that it did not make sense to have such elections ostensibly because the country did not have the wherewithal for such. Tsvangirai could have seen that these elections were a trap for his party. Most of the urban constituencies had been joined with rural constituencies during the delimitation exercise. Tsvangirai was aware that the rural voters who had benefited from the ZANU-PF land reform programme would betray him. His refusal was a calculated manoeuvre to remain relevant in the politics of Zimbabwe. While Tsvangirai boasts of his political acumen, he does not dwell very much on his role in bringing about the split, what he does is to simply scapegoat others largely on the basis of ethnic and regional affiliation. Nor does he interrogate the patent flouting of the majority vote to further his personal, decisional interests. Ncube and others that broke away cite Tsvangirai's dictatorial tendencies as the root cause of the split (Ankomah, 2007). The narrating self uses the technique of projection to ward off any accusations of having orchestrated the split, to frame the self as a unifying rather than a divisive element. According to Simpson (2002, p. 107), in autobiography "no one fully wishes to be what they say they are because what is enabling at one moment might become a liability at another." This possibly explains the narrator's ambivalence towards the same senatorial elections that he later participated in. The assessment above reinforces the argument that most of the information in the autobiography is re-membered.

The narrating self in the autobiography argues with a sense of cogency, that at the critical juncture in the late 1990s Zimbabwe needed a leader with fresh ideas about democracy outside the totalising imperatives of the liberation war discourse. He points out that all the previous opposition leaders had failed, been defanged or infiltrated to their doom and that Zimbabwe was ripe for the abandonment of commandist politics in favour of an organic engagement with the generality of the people. This is where Tsvangirai says his trade union mass engagement skills came in handy. But this positive aspect in the autobiography is inadvertently annulled when Tsvangirai paternalistically says:

There is nothing more heartrending to a parent than one's children crying with hunger when one is genuinely unable to help (Tsvangirai, 2011, p. 276).

There is indeed a sense of impotence against a ZANU-PF oligarchy possessing all the coercive state apparatus to ride roughshod over the helpless populace. The disgust over a state abdicating its responsibility of protecting its citizens from all forms of harm whether physical, physiological, emotional or spiritual is palpable. But framing the nation as a family, in terms of father figures and

mother figures is dangerous. Father figures wield unbridled authority in the African family setups. In fact their authority is unquestioned and often absolute. Apropos of this, (Nyambi, 2012, p. 3) observes that "... the Zimbabwean 'family' is strictly patriarchal, consisting of the 'fathers' (the ruling elite/the state and would-be rulers) overseeing the rest of the family members (women and children)-that is, the nation. The national family, then, is a community under surveillance." Christiansen (2007, p. 90) also bemoans the tendency to frame the nation in familial terms as problematic because "the husband of the nation ... is entitled to clamp down on anyone who attempts to 'steal/rape 'his wife; that is, the people'", my people. Such a construction of the nation reminds one of 'Father Zimbabwe' (Joshua Nkomo),' The Soul of the Nation' (Simon Muzenda) and 'Father of the Nation' or 'Protector of the Nation' (Robert Mugabe). This is a patently masculinist and absolutising discourse fraught with self-given entitlements. The tragedy is that Tsvangirai falls into this claustrophobic discourse and may well frame himself, using that logic, as the face of the opposition or the revolution in Zimbabwe, a short step to saying 'Father' of the Revolution!

The crass masculinism is manifest in most of the autobiographies in Zimbabwe. One finds it in Nkomo's *The Story of my Life*, Tekere's *A Lifetime of Struggle*, Sithole's *Letters from Salisbury*, Smith's *The Bitter Harvest: The Great Betrayal*, and Muzorewa's *Muzorewa: Rise up and Walk*. Huddart (2008) explains this as the result of the fact that autobiography as a genre is decidedly masculine, western and upper class in its origin. This explains why in Zimbabwe there have not been any autobiographical writings by females. It says a lot about Zimbabwe's masculinist nationalism and the political space afforded women. The proliferation of autobiographical writings in Africa in general perishes the idea that Africans did not and do not make use of the genre to navel gaze and narrate the nation. All the autobiographies mentioned above, like Tsvangirai's, are characterised by their obsession with the self as opposed to the collective, by selective reconstruction and interpretation.

Tsvangirai has been careful not to give publicity to mistakes he has committed. However, he regrets the MDC's campaign for a no vote in the 2000 constitutional referendum. Had the MDC campaigned for the adoption of the constitution as ZANU-PF did, it could have surprised ZANU-PF in the coming elections. However, the resounding no vote was a wakeup call for ZANU-PF to galvanise its machinery into political action (Hammar, 2003). The launch of the Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme and the war-like mobilisation for political power which ZANU-PF put in place and effectively outmanoeuvred the MDC were a consequence of the MDC's dearth of political maturity. The MDC's image has also been dented by the Western imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe. Tsvangirai makes veiled references to the sanctions and is quick to distance himself and the MDC from the Western countries' decision to impose sanctions on Zimbabwe. However, the MDC's complicity is arguably palpable. Ankomah (2007) argues that a white member of the MDC was involved in the crafting of Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA). While the Western nations might have imposed the sanctions as a result of the controversial Land Reform Programme, Tsvangirai's plea for innocence finds little purchase from the public and ZANU-PF because he went public calling for sanctions against Mugabe. These and others are some of the blunders which the MDC leader has not given prominence to in the book.

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The book tells the reader that the MDC is poor financially but its ostentatious and flamboyant posture completes a paradox. It is a public secret that the MDC is arguably fairly resourced. It has managed to fund its campaigns, field candidates in almost all the constituencies, officials drive latest expensive vehicles, and even the quality of their posters suggests reasonable investment of funds in their party activities. Tsvangirai, however, chooses to remain tight-lipped on the sources of their money. This has fulfilled speculation that the MDC is being bankrolled by the West and local financial oligarchies. While he has mentioned his contacts and efforts of regional leaders on the Zimbabwean question, the book is virtually silent on his interaction with the Western nations except Britain which he accuses of making unmeasured statements. Curiously overlooked is his invitation, acceptance and treatment by President Obama of the United States of America. One supposes it was a life-time occasion and an honour for him to interact with such a high profile statesman. If the failure to make reference to such a historic encounter was a human omission, the reader is persuaded to think that the book omitted several critical issues. However, the omission could have been a result of Tsvangirai's astute calculation to distance himself from Western nations. Giving publicity to such an occasion could have reinforced his opponents' argument that the MDC is not a home grown political outfit.

Conclusion

The narrative world is filtered by the author's beliefs and political standpoint so that everything bears marks of his choice of material and his evaluation of characters and their ideas. Thus the author's ideology enables him to present his readers with a narrative environment based on some value system and the political imperatives of the day. Tsvangirai guides the reader to see characters and events from his own perspective. He positions himself as a reliable narrator although reliability is not synonymous with historical accuracy. The white settlers are presented as exploiters and oppressors, Mugabe as a villain and he (Tsvangirai) is a passive victim of state and ZANU-PF apparatus. The intention of the author is to elicit the reader's pathos and acceptance. He paints himself as a Messiah. Thus, a prima facie acceptance of the book will be a triumph of subjectivity over objectivity. For much of the time Tsvangirai re-members his narrative account in order to suit the political circumstances of 2011. History and characters are judged according to how they relate to him and his political career. He positions himself as the epicentre of the fluid and often dangerous nature of Zimbabwean politics, as the only true democrat and consensus-builder. Nonetheless, the book is important as it is a well-researched account that complements other works on Zimbabwean history. To that end, his memory gives us the kaleidoscopic view of Zimbabwe's chequered history to this day.

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