

Portrait of a political liberation theologian: Liberation theology and the making of Abel Muzorewa's autobiographical subjectivity in *Rise up and walk*

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ABSTRACT

Autobiographical subjects are products of their experiential histories, memories, agency and the discourses of their time lived and time of textual production. This article explores the religious and political discursive economy in which Abel Muzorewa (former Prime Minister of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia) narrates the story of his life and how this discursive context constructs his autobiographical subjectivity. The article examines how Muzorewa's religious beliefs – combined with his experiential history of being a colonial subject – are deployed as a strategy of constructing his subjectivity. I argue that the discursive contexts of mass nationalism and his Christian religious beliefs grounded in Latin American liberation theology construct both Muzorewa as the subject of *Rise up and walk* and the narrative discourse. The article posits that the narrative tropes derived from Christian texts that Muzorewa deploys mediate his identity, and that his selfhood emerges with the unfolding of the narrative. What he claims to be political pragmatism on his part is also inspired by the practical theology which he subscribes to. I argue that his subjectivity is complexly realised through the contradictory relationship between missionary theology and liberation theology.

Keywords:

autobiography, subjectivity, Muzorewa, liberation theology, discourse, colonial subject

Introduction

This article explores the religious and political discursive economy in which Abel Muzorewa (former Prime Minister of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia) narrates his story and how this discursive context constructs his autobiographical subjectivity. The article examines how Muzorewa's religious beliefs, combined with his experiential history of being a colonial subject, are deployed as a strategy for constructing his subjectivity. Pena-Marin (1993: 2) proposes that:

Subjective identity may be understood as the construction of the meaning of one's life which unifies its different *I*'s and its different self-representations into one coherent image. Autobiographical narration, through which subjects select certain events from their biography and organise them as a unified succession of events, plays a fundamental role

in this construction of identity carried out by the subjects themselves.

Subjectivity, in this sense, is the identity of the narrating subject: the self who creates the text and who is also in turn created by the text. Apart from being the author of the text, the subject is also involved in the narrative in which selfhood or subjectivity emerge with the unfolding of narrative, underscoring Stuart Hall's (2003) assertion that the subject is the centre and author of representation and that subjects are specific to specific discursive regimes and historical periods. The era of mass nationalism in Zimbabwe and the armed struggles that attended it constitutes the specific historical period within which Muzorewa's narrative, and consequently his subjectivity, is constructed. At the centre of the theory of autobiography is the constructedness of both the subject of autobiography and of the text. The discursive contexts of nationalism, along with his religious beliefs grounded in liberation theology, construct both Muzorewa as the subject of *Rise Up and Walk* and the discourse of the text.

Liberation theology, which developed in the 1960s, has its roots in the revolutions in Latin America. It is a particular kind of Christian theology which arises from some form of oppression. According to Rhodes (1990), liberation theology is a family of theologies and includes Latin American, black and feminist varieties. It ties Christian salvation to liberation from all forms of oppression. Latin American theologians argue that their people have suffered oppression at the hands of wealthy capitalist nations. Black liberation theologians suggest that their people have suffered oppression from white racists and feminist liberation theologians think about the status and liberation of women in a male-dominated society.

The Latin American version of this liberation theology is associated with the Roman Catholic Church, but as Rhodes (1990) argues, the theory has its roots in Europe. Rhodes identifies Jürgen Moltmann, Johannes Baptist Metz, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer as Europeans who influenced the development of this theory. According to Rhodes, Moltmann argued that the coming kingdom of God gives the church a vision that transforms society, as opposed to a merely private vision of personal salvation. This provides an emphasis that there is a political dimension to faith and that the church must be an institution of social criticism. Rhodes further argues that Bonhoeffer suggests that religion should be redefined in a secular context – that human beings should be responsible towards each other and that the world should be seen from below. In other words, the perspective of the poor and oppressed should count in society.

There are also Marxist influences on this theory. Latin American liberation theologians use Marxist categories of social analysis, such as class, to talk about the liberation of societies. These theologians have also developed their own theology by reinterpreting scripture with a bias toward or in favour of the poor and oppressed. As the discussion in this article demonstrates, Muzorewa's interpretation of the scriptures and his understanding of Christian salvation are inspired by this theory. Latin American liberation theologians argue that theology should be practical and not something just to be learned. It should involve revolutionary action on behalf of the poor and oppressed and theologians should

actively participate in the struggles to liberate the oppressed. It is within this context that I argue that Muzorewa's subjective identity is constructed. The following section begins by showing how Muzorewa's identity is mediated by his family's history of suffering and resisting Rhodesian oppression and how he makes use of the Augustan trope to demonstrate a turning point in his life and a radical shift in his political thinking.

Propping up an Augustan turning point

Muzorewa was born on 14 April 1925 in Old Umtali at a time when the black people of Rhodesia were still making the transition from the old world into the new, a change ushered in by colonialism. This transition was manifest in the life of his parents. He observes that "living between two worlds, they tried to hold on to what was worthwhile in both cultures" (p.2). Muzorewa is thus conditioned by an environment in which his parents are already situated in "the in-between" -- Homi Bhabha's (1994) third space in which culture is negotiated. This was an era in which Africans were grappling with a dying world and with an emerging one which was a re-constitution of the old. The beginning of the narrative sets the identity trajectory that is characteristic of Muzorewa's life, an identity trajectory inflected by ancestral history and interaction with modern forces in Rhodesia and the national politics of his time. He appropriates a historical identity derived from the achievements and misfortunes of his progenitors:

It was my ancestors of the Makombe tribe who fought courageously against Portuguese rule in the early years of this century until beaten into submission or forced into exile. They were the earliest 'freedom fighters'.

My father's mother was of the Chipunza family, one of the royal houses of the Makoni tribe, with the same totem, Shonga, as those named Makoni. They were among the first to be evicted by the Europeans from their rich farmlands of Headlands area, halfway between the present cities of Salisbury and Mutare. (p.2)

In fact, by way of these statements, Muzorewa simultaneously locates his narrative identity within the context of both the gallantry and the historical dispossession of his people. Interestingly however, Muzorewa also appears to be already deconstructing the image of freedom fighters in the contemporary context (contemporary at the time of his writing). This is implied in his emphatic statement that his maternal ancestors were the earliest 'freedom fighters'. While in the discourse of Chimurenga (war of liberation), the Ndebele and Shona uprisings of 1894--6 are identified as the origins of freedom fighting, Muzorewa takes us centuries back. He stretches this legacy in order to situate himself along the continuum of freedom fighters over centuries, being himself a descendant of the Makombe people on his mother's side. Having done so, he immediately proceeds to catapult his familial experience and locates it in the national political realm. Muzorewa comments that 'in fact, the history of my father's family mirrors the saga of so many thousands of Zimbabweans under white rule in Southern Rhodesia who became displaced persons in the land of their birth' (p.3). His family's experiences are metonymic of the

larger Rhodesian issue, and because of this he claims the authority to speak on behalf of the majority. The context of the forces that shape his subjectivity are then neatly summarised in the following statement: ‘Discipline, sharp temper, humour – those words summarise my upbringing. Add regular Bible lessons, plus church-going, and you have the ingredients which have moulded my character and that of my five brothers and sisters’ (p.4). To this he adds his first encounters with Rhodesian racism, especially on commercial farms, and the context of the formation of his early identity is complete. He thus identifies himself with his people’s experiential history of colonialism.

However, it is during his school days – part of which also meant attending religious services as required by missionary educationists – that one sees a philosophical identity tied to the spiritual identity emerging in Muzorewa. While some of his schoolmates loathed the religious services, Muzorewa belonged to another group that saw the services as a time of spiritual revival. It is during one of these services that he gives his life to Christ after an introspective search for his religious ontology, ‘Do I believe in Christ just because my parents and teachers want me to do so? What do I believe?’ (p. 21). He finds his answer and feels compelled to respond to an altar call. This becomes what I would call his Augustan moment, in which his action and experience recall Augustine’s turning point as the Saint described it in his *Confessions*. Muzorewa says:

Although I had been brought up in a devout Christian home, I made that morning my own commitment to follow Christ as my Saviour. On that day of days Christ gave me a spiritual microscope, spectacles and earphones to see and hear for myself what Christ offers. I realised that I was a sinner, but God loves me and forgives me. (p. 21)

This is for him a turning point which subsequently shapes his whole view of religion, life and politics. Prior to his realisation of his sinful nature, Muzorewa is an incoherent being who finds coherence only in this newly found relationship with God. He is a spiritual scientist, as suggested by a combination of ‘microscope, spectacles and earphones’ and he also sets himself apart as highly qualified for his future religious and political vocation. Muzorewa continues to use the Augustan tropology as evidenced by a moment which parallels Augustine’s experience of coming to a realisation of his sinful nature when he steals a pear. He says ‘at such moments it is often the little misdeeds that at first bring remorse. I remembered how a group of us had stripped a mango tree when asked to cut grass at the home of Sister Hansen, our missionary nurse. On leaving the small group I went immediately to her and said, “Sister, I am sorry that I took your mangoes without permission. Today I have accepted Christ and have felt His acceptance of me. I now seek your forgiveness also, Sister Ruth”’ (p. 21--22). In appropriating the Augustan trope, Muzorewa is authorising the spiritual foundation of his priestly identity which he will assume in the Methodist Church later in life. Manganielo Dominic (2001: 228), commenting on Augustine’s *Confessions*, suggests that:

his ‘confessio peccati et laudis’ (confession of sin and praise[of God]) follows the biblical pattern of two selves in conflict, the old and the new, the one imprisoned in sin, the other released by grace. The split subjectivity between ‘what I once was’ and ‘what I am now’ produces a discontinuous account.... To resolve the problem of personal identity Augustine turns towards the immutable God,

... who continually gathers the fragmented self into one. A coherent story becomes possible for Augustine because the human narrator enters into an I/Thou relationship with the divine Author.

This is also similar to how Muzorewa crafts an allegory of the self by finding coherence in the grace of God; "I realised that I was a sinner, but God loves me and forgives me" (p. 21). By extension, his incoherent self, betrayed in his questions of his faith in God, finds coherence when he also becomes a High Priest of Zimbabwean nationalist politics. In that vocation he marries the gospel of Christian salvation to nationalist liberation politics. Muzorewa is able to maintain this spiritual identity throughout his narrative, especially by consistently touting the philosophical relationship between Shona traditions, Christian belief and political liberation.

Apart from the Christian influence, his parents also provided a model of identity, especially by instilling a desire for education; 'They have taught by example a vital Christian faith and we have caught it. Their integrity and courage in standing for the truth have been my model not only when a student, but also later when chosen to lead in both church and politics' (p. 25). His career as a minister of the church is cast as God-ordained. This is brought out in the dreams he begins to have as he grapples with the question of whether God wants him to be a minister or a farmer. According to Akira Okazaki (2002: 63) dreams are a 'strategy for subjectivity' and 'intersubjective dreaming [contributes] to the consciousness of subjects [and] to their subjectivity as moral beings who perceive the moral ambiguities of their social lives'. The moral dilemmas he grapples with in his daily existence play themselves out in dreams and this magnifies the sense of complexity in the choices he has to make.

In late 1947 Muzorewa was in Salisbury, having abandoned teaching at Chitimbe School where he had taught in 1944 and 1945. In Salisbury he comes face to face with racism; he had not experienced its kind with missionary whites. It is here that he experiences the beckoning call of the priesthood; 'On the first night in Salisbury, I had a dream. It was a vision of a hut full of ministers of religion, all clothed in clerical garb. They surrounded my shabbily dressed figure. I was the only dirty fellow in that room. Was God saying to me that I should join the company of the ministers of the church? I doubted in the next morning as I set for the city centre to look for a job' (p. 29). A complete stranger then tells Muzorewa to go back and work for the church; astounded, he takes this to be a message from God. After three months of joblessness in Salisbury he comes across Darius Jijita who has been sent by Reverend O'Farrell to look for him. Thus, strictly speaking, his move to Salisbury in search of employment in 1947 constitutes a Jonah moment, a futile exercise, since his destiny to become a man of the cloth has been divinely ordained, just as Jonah was destined for Nineveh. He is appointed as a lay preacher and sees this as confirmation of his prayer just after quitting teaching in which he had asked God to find a means of sending him back if Salisbury was not meant for him. This is why he titles a segment of his first chapter 'When He Calls I Will Follow' (p. 31). In it, he carefully positions himself as a servant of God and, like Augustine, he is a subject of God's grace. This is the image that he also so consistently props up throughout the narrative, to the extent that even his entry into nationalist politics is conceived of as God's call which he has no

choice but to obey. This way Muzorewa absolves himself from any blame for any of his subsequent actions in the political arena since God himself has tasked him with that work.

As a lay preacher, he ‘soon became a familiar figure in the district – the small preacher trudging along the dusty road’ (p. 30). Here Muzorewa points to the embodied nature of autobiographical subjectivity. Indeed he was physically small, but by calling himself ‘the small preacher’, he is suggesting how, despite his small frame, he trudges along dusty roads enduring difficulty while doing God’s work. This obsession with trying to relate work and physical stature is also seen later in the narrative when he refers to Robert Mugabe’s stature when they meet in Lusaka for the first time. He describes how he had expected to see a physically imposing Robert Mugabe, only to see a man of small physical stature. Muzorewa appears to be haunted by the belief that nationalists have to have imposing statures to match their equally imposing roles in nationalist politics. He also calls himself the ‘itinerant bachelor’ (p. 31) after the manner of his travels across the district in his ministry duties as an unmarried preacher. These are the many identities that are constitutive of Muzorewa’s subjectivity. The small preacher and itinerant bachelor identities are evidence of the multiple nature of identities in general and how they are always in a state of flux. His own identity is always changing in relation to his changed circumstances.

Muzorewa’s ‘total gospel’ and immersion in liberation theology

After flirting for eight years with the idea of total commitment to the church ministry, Muzorewa finally responds to the call of God by enrolling at theological school. He makes this decision while working as a minister at Nyadiri. The experiences at the theological school also underwrite another turning point in his life. Here he sees the shortcomings of a gospel that extols material poverty on earth in anticipation of heavenly bliss in the afterlife. While studying at the theological college, Muzorewa and his colleagues begin to articulate a different gospel and at the same time begin to question the efficacy of the gospel as preached by missionaries:

The new content of our preaching did little to alleviate their fears. Previously, the evangelistic message of our Church in both hymns and sermons stressed heavenly rewards to be given to the faithful who must endure suffering here on earth.... The early missionaries had given a literal interpretation to those Bible verses that implied that the poor and not the rich would inherit the kingdom of heaven. African evangelists and pastors went out of training to preach the same message. It was found in the words of another hymn which sang, ‘I don’t want much money’ (p. 33).

Here Muzorewa exhibits a sense of growing consciousness, which manifests through a critique of religious doctrine previously accepted wholesale as interpreted by mission theologians. That growth in consciousness is also nurtured by the intellectual environment subsisting in the school. He goes on to say ‘My classmates and I disliked that emphasis. We labelled it the “pie in the sky by and by” gospel. We found more appealing another side of the church mission – that of giving to those who follow Christ not only faith but

also the skills of agriculture, carpentry, teaching, etc., so that they might live a fuller life here and now' (p. 33).

The realisation of the limits of the gospel as expounded by missionaries in a way fractures the earlier coherence of the self as acquired from reconciliation with God's grace. The religious zone, as represented by the theological school, is thus potentially a liminal space where Muzorewa is in-between the suffering of the working black people (found in Salisbury and the white farms) and the space occupied by the suffering peasant majority in rural areas. He is at the interstices of colonial discourse and emerging resistance to colonialism. Because of the in-between space offered by religion Muzorewa cannot easily be situated in the category of radical nationalist resistance to colonial rule with its implications of ideological homogeneity. The value of the theological school is that it is a place that nurtures hybridity, and this is where Muzorewa develops his ideology of the total gospel, which is a marriage of the spiritual and physical needs of humanity. It is the total gospel that discursively underwrites his subjectivity.

Muzorewa's analytical mind spurs him to some form of agency: that of proclaiming a holistic gospel. In his mind therefore, he is playing God's advocate: 'Did God want some to seize the good land of our country leaving the masses to scratch the dry and sandy soil and starve? We wanted to proclaim a whole gospel for the whole man that would speak to what was going on in the day-to-day life of our people' (p. 33). This is an echo of liberation theology. Colonial ideology, at psychological and economic levels, creates a sense of insecurity among the colonised. In Muzorewa's case, religion and an emergent form of nationalism are useful in securing a stable identity and in signifying that identity. His personal identity is thus shaped by an amalgam of re-interpreted scriptures and nationalist concerns such as access to land resources by Africans in Rhodesia. These address the existential crisis engendered by colonialism.

Interaction with his educators also shaped Muzorewa's identity; 'Today it is the living example of my teachers more than their formal teaching that remains impressed on my memory. Dr Arthur Mansure brought from Boston not only new insights in New Testament interpretation, but also an example of humility that remained with us all' (p. 33). Obviously the new insights in biblical hermeneutics propel Muzorewa's agency in re-articulating the gospel to fellow Africans. He chronicles how he wins new souls to Christ by avoiding a confrontational approach previously employed by missionaries. He argues 'Too often the missionary witnessed to Africans as if they had no religion, speaking only of Christ without reference to our rich religious heritage. Such an approach I found to be both ineffective and disrespectful to our Shona culture' (p. 38). Muzorewa develops an ontological balance between Christian and traditional Shona culture; a philosophy he upholds throughout the narrative as he engages in both religious and political leadership. His turning points in life remain interesting as he metamorphoses from 'village pastor', 'a new crusader' to a 'fledgling nationalist' (p. 44). Muzorewa's identity is constantly in the making as he goes through many life-changing encounters.

Muzorewa the fledgling nationalist and freedom fighter

His being a fledgling nationalist coincides in his narrative, with the deployment of Dr Ralph E. Dodge in 1956 as the new Bishop for Angola, Mozambique, South Africa and Rhodesia. Bishop Dodge's radicalism in many ways influences Muzorewa. For instance, the Bishop would not carry provisions when he toured church circuits, but depended on African hospitality, which many white missionaries before him would have been reluctant to do. Muzorewa also recounts how the Bishop's radicalism was manifest in his sermons. In the absence of Bishop Dodge, however, Muzorewa had already begun to question a religious doctrine that did not address the liberation of black people or the segregationist race relations in Rhodesia. However, the coming of the bishop adds impetus to his agency and this he achieves through a dialogic interaction with his ideas, especially his radical sermons. Therefore, the bishop's ideas and his *modus operandi* instantiate a radical political subjectivity in Muzorewa, but a radicalism always tempered by Christian values. Muzorewa himself assumed leadership of the United Methodist Church, succeeding Bishop Ralph Edward Dodge after his deportation by the Rhodesian government for his sharp criticism of its racist policies. From the perspective that autobiographers benefit from readily available cultural models, Bishop Dodge stands as a role-model in constructing the identity of Abel Muzorewa both in the political and religious sense.

Muzorewa's identity is, in a significant way, tied to the Christian church, not solely because he became a man of the cloth, but because ideologically, his articulation of the self ties the religious to the political. His theology is thus politically situated and when he ventures into nationalist politics, the church doctrine and scriptures become the ideological basis for his articulation of nationalist philosophy. Christianity thus functions as a cultural resource that Muzorewa draws from in articulating his memories of colonial experience, agency (in articulating a liberation agenda), and identity, all constitutive of his autobiographical subjectivity. Huddart (2008: 78) cites Harbard as suggesting that:

Autobiography is never simply about the constitution of a stable, knowable self, even if that is the desire in the writing. The writing of the self involves an engagement with the various cultural resources available, forms which are recognisable to institutions, publishers and audiences.... To dismiss it as an intrinsically private activity, signalling a retreat from either public communication or narratives of broader social application, is to miss the point, and to reinstate the tired polarities of public and private, abstract versus embodied knowledge, the political subject versus the narcissist: the ineluctability of othering each other.

The above suggests that autobiographical narration is located in a matrix of pre-existing and even emerging cultural resources. It is in this context that Muzorewa's autobiography *Rise up and walk* and his subjectivity in the narrative can be understood as mediated by his Christian disposition and nationalist liberation ideology inflected by Christian ideals. Understanding Muzorewa's subjectivity is thus a situated undertaking.

Muzorewa's fledgling nationalism, which blossoms in later years, is a result of political encounters: 'during my years as a village pastor our country was experiencing an awakening of African nationalism. The honeymoon of racial partnership was over' (p.

44). In this statement, Muzorewa is, in effect, in dialogue with the racial ideology of the Rhodesian government under Garfield Todd, which the Federal Prime Minister, Godfrey Huggins (Lord Malvern) had undermined by claiming that the racial partnership was 'to be likened to the partnership between a horse and its rider' (p. 45). His first encounter with this awakening spirit of nationalism took place in 1957 when he attended an African National Congress (Rhodesian ANC) gathering at St Faith's Mission. Mr Winston Field, later leader of the Rhodesian Front Party, spoke at this meeting and Muzorewa recounts, 'I do not remember all that Mr Field said that night. Burned indelibly in my memory, however, was his statement, "I do not believe that an African will go to heaven"' (p. 45). For one whose re-reading of the scriptures has in a way created the illusion of a stable identity, Field's statement destabilises that identity, which momentarily finds stability when a white Anglican Bishop counters the statement; 'I breathed a deep sigh of relief. Here was another white Christian leader like my own bishop who was fearless in opposing the white racists who ruled our land. But I wondered how soon we as African Christians would rise up to join them in that struggle for justice' (p. 45). While it seems highly unlikely that the ANC should have invited Winston Field to speak at their meeting and that Field would have agreed and said something stupid as he did, as a story it justifies Muzorewa's later political attitudes although these became less radical in time. That fractured identity caused by Field's remarks inspires his quest for freedom.

Muzorewa's odyssey in America sharpens his analysis. When he comes back, and as he is driven to his village, he becomes critical of how African opposition is being silenced and of the implications of the Law and Order Maintenance Act on the rights and freedoms of black people. He also questions the sexual abuses of black women by whites. He shares a sense of living at the margins of Rhodesian society. This feeling of despondency is aptly captured through Old Testament tropology. He appeals to the Ezekiel metaphor:

It seemed at the time as if we had returned to 'a valley of dry bones'. That expression comes from the prophecy of Ezekiel in the Old Testament. His people were scattered in exile, crushed politically, and spiritually despondent.... Like Ezekiel I felt that my people were like dry bones – oppressed and depressed under the rule of a small white minority.... Like Ezekiel, I felt I had been called to preach the word of the Lord to such a people (p. 55).

The Ezekiel metaphor enables Muzorewa to assume a prophetic subjectivity, which also assumes a prophetic-nationalist dimension. The prophetic language of the Old Testament dialogises Muzorewa's political language in the narrative.

The biblical tropology is carried further when Muzorewa, in his inaugural sermon at Old Umtali, uses the text used by Christ in his first sermon. This choice is not innocent; it is also not devoid of symbolic import. Muzorewa is appropriating the Messianic role of Jesus Christ by re-deploying Luke 4: 18--19 for political ends couched as religious ends; 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord' (p. 55). Metaphorically speaking, Muzorewa is the Messiah come to deliver the Israelites (read Zimbabweans) from bondage. He is thus deploying a series of metaphors

of the self to articulate his identity; he is ‘itinerant bachelor’, ‘village pastor’, ‘fledgling nationalist’ and now political Messiah – an Ezekiel prophesying to dry bones in Rhodesia, the valley of dry bones, to extend the metaphor.

Muzorewa notes in his narrative, ‘our people needed to hear a total gospel – that God created a man, or a woman, as a total person, having a body, a mind and a spirit; and that our Heavenly father would save that total person’ (p. 56). This is the crux of his doctrine of salvation throughout his narrative. Beauty Maenzanise (2008: 81) observes that ‘one thing was clear in Bishop Muzorewa’s mind as he assumed his position of church leadership: people needed “a total gospel”. As far as Bishop Muzorewa was concerned, ‘participation in politics was not a secular activity only, but also part of the Christian duty.’ In this regard, Muzorewa partnered Catholic and Protestant church leaders in attacking new constitutional proposals by the Smith regime. Jeremy Punt’s (2004) discussion of the contested ownership of the Bible and its translation, especially in southern Africa, is instructive in apprehending Muzorewa’s ‘total gospel’. His stance can thus be explained by recourse to biblical hermeneutics. Punt (2004: 308) argues ‘all texts, and especially those disseminated and used widely, such as the Bible in southern Africa, encounter two powerful forces which have been described by Bakhtin and others as centripetal and centrifugal, or monologising and dialogising.’ Since Bakhtinian dialogism informs this study it is useful to explain it as it contrasts with monologism. Punt (2004, p. 308) contends that:

Centripetal or monologising forces are powerful efforts to centralise hermeneutic authority, suppress ambiguity and ambivalence, and curtail the practice of reading differently. In contrast, centrifugal or dialogising forces entail practices which allow and stimulate ambivalence and diverging interpretations. Both centripetal and centrifugal forces are important elements to account for in the proper use of the biblical texts.

The Christian doctrine, in its liberatory sense, is the dialogising force that stimulates Muzorewa’s identity in the autobiographical account. His self-identity is thus refracted through religious lenses. Punt (2004) points to the problematic of biblical hermeneutics in Africa highlighting the fact that formations, maintenance and transformation of identity relate to the Bible in fundamental ways. While the Bible was viewed ambivalently, as the coloniser’s cultural tool of oppression and as having potential to liberate and empower, Punt (2004, p. 312) concludes:

In Christian, and Protestant communities in particular, the Bible often becomes a mode of identity, as these documents contribute in different ways to open up other worldviews, to create different realities. Enscripturalised identity entails not only self-definition in communal and individual sense, but also the identification of difference, of the Other, through the interpretation and appropriation of the biblical texts.

Muzorewa’s inclinations emerge notwithstanding the fact that, in postcolonial terms, the other is often inscribed using scriptures and other European generated texts about the Other. Scriptures were appropriated in the service of buttressing stereotypes of the other. Again from a hermeneutic perspective, Muzorewa’s reading of the bible is subversive and in that regard, as Punt (2004, p. 318) citing Schaaf (1994: 166) would argue, ‘the bible was indeed the ‘time-bomb’ which would eventually help to blow colonialism apart.’

With the formation of the Christian Council of Rhodesia in 1964, the same year that Ian Smith became Prime Minister, Muzorewa and others found new hope. The Council was instrumental in articulating the concerns of black people at a time when political parties had been banned and black nationalists imprisoned. This was the year that Bishop Dodge was also deported for being vocal against the detention of people without trial and for his denunciation of the proposed unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) (p. 59). Muzorewa joined other church leaders to protest the orders to deport the bishop. Muzorewa's subjectivity was partially formed by the prophetic role that the church played in taking part in actively resisting the oppressive Smith government.

Nevertheless, the church's stand was not without its critics. Muzorewa chronicles how some sections of the church 'enjoined Christians to obey the existing authorities under every circumstance' (p. 60) and how students wanted to 'throw out the white man's religion [asking] "why not stick to our own traditional ancestral worship?"... "why worship Jesus, a European God? Wasn't he a white man and not an African?"' (p. 62). In response, Muzorewa says he decided to preach a sermon he titled 'Why worship Jesus, a European God?', but adds that 'Today my reply would be "Liberation Theology"'. I explained that Jesus was not from Europe, but the Middle East. His people were themselves in bondage, and Jesus announced that his vision was "to proclaim release to the captives (and) set at liberty those who are oppressed"' (p. 62). This point raises an interesting question about experience, memory and time of narration. In retrospect, Muzorewa says that his response to the students' question would today be "liberation theology". Muzorewa constructs this narrative at a time when liberation theology has gained currency in Latin America. He thus retrospectively locates his own theology of the total gospel in liberation theology. In claiming that he is using the gospel to push a liberation agenda, Muzorewa's subjectivity becomes that of a political liberation theologian. He constructs a self-identity of one engaged in a moral combat with a political system whose architects profess to be Christians, which is why he comments 'the fact that so many whites in Rhodesia claimed to be Christians (although few attended churches) and that the vast majority, including some missionaries, supported white minority rule, made my witness to African students extremely difficult' (p. 62). Muzorewa's narrative is in effect problematising Christian practice in Rhodesia and, because his own identity is premised on Christian values, that identity is also problematic.

Muzorewa also situates his identity in the discourse of pioneering. In his case, he is pioneering a version of liberation theology in Rhodesia. By highlighting that some churches preferred to abstain from political involvement, for instance, 'the Dutch Reformed [in Rhodesia at least], Salvation Army and Free Methodists' (p. 63), Muzorewa identifies himself as one doing what others have failed to do. He is, in a way, carving a heroic pioneering identity. Muzorewa also elevates his political influence by mentioning that it became increasingly difficult for him to work with students in government schools since the authorities suspected that his influence would result in restlessness among students. Thus, his narrative props up his claims to legitimacy as a fighter for freedom with entitlement to the governance of this country. This can also be inferred from the timing of

the publication of his autobiography, which was meant to coincide with independence or majority rule. The preface to the book describes the autobiography as one written by a man who is on the verge of becoming Rhodesian Prime Minister.

Muzorewa the strategic visionary

With an identity modelled on that of Bishop Dodge, Muzorewa positions himself as a naturally electable candidate – whether for religious or political office. He entitles the section that deals with his elevation to the office of Bishop of the United Methodist church ‘In the footsteps of Bishop Dodge’. He emphasises that he did not campaign for the post of Bishop, but wins ahead of Reverend Kawadza who is himself interested in becoming Bishop. Muzorewa’s pride in receiving the principles of leadership from Dodge, his ‘predecessor and mentor’ (p. 64) is all too obvious in the narrative: ‘I felt at ease in following in the footsteps of Bishop Dodge. He, too, had stressed that the Christian faith must be proclaimed as a total gospel for the total person’ (p. 68). By implication, Muzorewa is seeing himself as the new High Priest with a vocation to exorcise the demon of colonialism and the sense of inferiority among black people: ‘I wanted our people to be liberated from over eighty years of colonialism and the implication that Africans are by nature inferior’ (p. 68).

The many rhetorical questions that punctuate his narrative point to his being a philosopher or thinker. Muzorewa asks questions concerning the role of the church in the future society of his country: ‘Is it possible for the church to become a model of the kind of community we desire the nation to become? I believe so.’ (p. 70). This constant engagement with political and religious ontology spawns in him the subjectivity of a strategic visionary. In the context of his question, Muzorewa is envisioning a new nation characterised by inclusiveness; where there is even gender equality. At a psychological level, he sees himself as one possessing a strategic vision for a new nation. He positions the church as the springboard upon which a new nation will be launched and on this he says ‘The church conducts elections by secret ballot as fairly and smoothly as any independent state. It provides a practical training ground for self-government’ (p. 90). He conflates church and nation. Once imbued with this national vision, Muzorewa takes to the habit of addressing the nation, which he does on many occasions and of which he says ‘for the first time I addressed concerns which were political rather than religious in nature. In doing so I joined in a new wave of church opposition to racism in Rhodesia, and was to face the consequences in the months ahead’ (p. 71). He joins in opposing the proposed 1969 Republic Constitution, the December 1969 Land Tenure Act (LTA) and on June 4 1970 he is in confrontation with Smith over the LTA. The result was that, in September 1970, he was banned from entering the Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs).

Of this ban he says ‘the whole country was surprised and angered by it. ‘Congratulations’! many said. At first that response puzzled me. Later I understood its meaning. If I was considered a threat by the regime, then I must be honoured as a leading Zimbabwean nationalist’ (p. 85). While the founding nationalists are in prison, Muzorewa systematically

builds the image of a nationalist for himself. He finds legitimacy as a nationalist from the bannings – and the demonstrations by church men and women in Salisbury and Umtali become for him the basis upon which to carve a larger-than-life portrait of a liberation struggle hero. When he then describes the numbers and nature of the demonstration, all other demonstrations that had taken place in Rhodesia pale into insignificance. He then attacks other church leaders for being conspicuously silent on matters of violence. It can be noted that Muzorewa constantly thrusts himself to the fore and sees himself as filling the gap; another metaphoric reference to the book of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel. He keeps on offering his own intervention as the only viable voice of opposition.

Conclusion

This discussion has shown how Muzorewa's subjectivity has been constructed by the discourse of the narrative, which in turn has been shaped by the discourse of liberation and nation-building. His self-imagining is a conflation of individual and collective national experiences, which is why history plays a critical part in Muzorewa's subject formation and subjectivity. Muzorewa's identity is historicised within the events that characterised nationalist agitation and events that define the prophetic calling of the Methodist church and the church in general for the total liberation of humanity. Muzorewa makes use of theological resources to construct his autobiographical subjectivity and these resources are deployed to jettison colonial oppression.

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