Masculinities and Femininities in Zimbabwean Autobiographies of Political Struggle: The Case of Edgar Tekere and Fay Chung

Hazel Tafadzwa Ngoshi

Summary

Because masculinities and femininities are socially and culturally constructed, they often play significant roles in constructing identities and distinguishing one another. Femininities and masculinities therefore play a key role in nation-building and in the sustenance of national identities. In this article I explore, through the auto-biographies of two luminaries of Zimbabwe's liberation war, how individual politicians configure their own gender identities and consequently the masculine and feminine identities of others. I posit that the autobiographical mode allows for intimate gendering of the liberation discourse. I also argue that Tekere celebrates the heroic masculine self, preferring military femininities to domestic ones. He privileges his own masculinity while "feminising" Robert Mugabe. Chung debunks the perceived manliness of political struggle and its representations by hailing the participation of women in the struggle for liberation. Her narration of their femininity is in relation to the nation and is structured around the struggle for national liberation, female emancipation and nation-building. Typical of female life-writing, Chung exhibits a relational sense of identity in which the autonomous self is subordinate to or subsumed in the collective. Hers becomes a projection and celebration of heroic femininities. I conclude this article by asserting that masculine and feminine identities in Zimbabwe's political discourse remain bound up with the historical processes of colonial and nationalist liberation struggles.

Opsomming

Omdat manlikhede en vroulikhede sosiaal en kultureel gekonstrueer word, speel hulle dikwels 'n belangrike rol by die konstruksie van identiteite en om mekaar te onderskei. Vroulikhede en manlikhede speel dus 'n sleutelrol in nasiebou en in die behoud van nasionale identiteite. In hierdie artikel verken ek, deur middel van die outobiografieë van intellektuele leiersfigure in die bevrydingstryd in Zimbabwe, hoe individuele politici hul eie gender identiteite vorm, en gevolglik die manlike en vroulike identiteite van ander. Ek voer aan dat die outobiografiese metode ruimte skep vir die intieme toepassing van gender in die bevrydingsdiskoers. Ek voer verder aan dat Tekere die heroïese manlike self besing en militêre vroulikhede bo huislike vroulikhede verkies. Hy bevoordeel sy eie manlikheid terwyl hy Robert Mugabe "vervroulik". Chung ontmasker die waargenome manlikheid van die politieke

stryd en die voorstellings daarvan deur vroue se deelname aan die bevrydingstryd te loof. Haar beskrywing van hul vroulikheid is met betrekking tot die nasie en word gestruktureer rondom die stryd vir nasionale bevryding, die emansipasie van vroue en nasiebou. Soos tipies is van vroueskrywers se skryfwerk oor die lewe, toon Chung 'n rasionele identiteitsin waardeur die onafhanklike self ondergeskik is aan of ingesluit word in die kollektiewe. Haar werk word 'n projeksie en viering van heroïese vroulikhede. Ek sluit hierdie artikel af deur aan te voer dat manlike en vroulike identiteite in Zimbabwe se politieke diskoers ineengeweef bly met die historiese prosesse van koloniale en nasionalistiese bevrydingstryde.

Introduction

This article discusses masculinities and femininities and the accompanying argumentative discourses used to convey these as presented by Zimbabwean politicians Edgar Tekere and Fay Chung in their self life-narratives, *A Lifetime of Struggle* (2007) and *Reliving the Second Chimurenga* (2006) respectively. The article attempts to show how the autobiographical mode as used by the two politicians, maps the evolution of masculine and feminine identities in the context of the history of colonial conquest, the anti-colonial struggle and politics in post-independence Zimbabwe. This discussion explores and analyses Tekere's and Chung's personal narratives from a gender identities point of view. Because the genre of autobiography itself is a fundamental form of evidence of how individuals attempt to define the self by positioning themselves strategically along the historical and cultural continuum, I argue that the repressive political environment obtaining in Rhodesia shaped both autobiographers' self-conceptions. The discussion reveals how Tekere appropriates a heroic matriarchal heritage to position himself in the struggle for independence and in the process projecting a militaristic masculinity. It further highlights how he strives to identify himself in contradistinction to Robert Mugabe, in this way exhibiting his glorification of military and violent masculinities. Ultimately he engages in what I would call the feminisation of Robert Mugabe. I further posit in the article that while male autobiography generally celebrates, in a flamboyant way, the individual (although identities are always relational in that they are inflected by larger social and historical experiences), female life-writing establishes identity as relational; conceiving of the self in relation to others. At the same time, however, Chung's identity is also shaped, in a relational sense, by her relation to institutional structures of power and politics in colonial Rhodesia. I posit Chung's narrative is not a dramatisation of the feminine self nor is it only a celebration of public success, but rather a celebration of the pain, the heroic femininities of fellow women during the protracted war and the triumphant role of women in Zimbabwe's history of political struggle.

In recent years autobiographic writing has burgeoned in Zimbabwe and notably this can be categorised as political. Javangwe (2011: 2) notes the

increase in (auto)biographical writing in the country as "a testimony to the quest for more subjective interpretation of experience, especially after the political and socio-economic crisis that Zimbabwe went through in the last decade". This suggests that moments of national crisis invoke more pronounced responses to national experience, and ultimately, contesting voices. The Zimbabwean crisis is thus manifest in the way in which there are competing narratives of the nation; more so life-narratives in which the Zimbabwean experience is not only articulated but also contested. Zimbabwe's history of colonialism and anti-colonial struggle complicates conceptions of both personal and national identities. Complex conceptions of self and national identities are hallmarks of the political autobiographical genre. Javangwe (2011: 2) further contends that political autobiography in the Zimbabwean context employs subjective renditions of those who were part of the struggle for liberation and can therefore contest what he terms the "narrative monopoly of ZANU-PF". It is in this context that Javangwe (2011: 11) argues that "political (auto)biography can therefore be defined as life-writing that places the political self at the center, both as the observing and observed subject". In this way the narrating subject of political autobiography is located at the core of nationalist politics and in articulating these experiences there is a suggestion that subjects' and nations' destinies are inextricably linked. The autobiographies under discussion are of political struggle as narratives of luminaries of Zimbabwe's war of liberation and struggle for independence. The proliferation of these autobiographic works has also spawned an awakening of keen interest (theoretically) in the literary criticism of Zimbabwean autobiography and life-writing in general.

Muponde and Primorac's (2005) *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture* devotes a section to the analysis of self life-writing in Zimbabwe. Chennells (2005: 131) in the essay entitled "Self-representation and National Memory: White Autobiographies in Zimbabwe" shows how "the primary signifier of a colonial identity was race, although what race signified differed between colonial systems and sometimes carried different significations within the same system". In the same section Ashleigh Harris (2005) in "Writing Home: Inscription of Whiteness/ Descriptions of Belonging in White Zimbabwean Memoir-Autobiography", explores the formulation of white Zimbabwean identities. Her analysis demonstrates how "the dialectic between personal and political memories and histories in a South African context provides some insight into the relationship between nostalgic constructions of the past ... and Zimbabwean political history" (Harris 2005: 103). She concludes her analysis by stating that in Godwin's *Mukiwa* and Fuller's *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*, "the claiming of white Zimbabwean identity is a complex process in which the tensions between belonging and ownership, between displacement and settling, and between personal and national memories and histories are negotiated" (p. 117). Much of the ground so far covered in the analysis of

Zimbabwean life-writing concerns, largely, the projections of race, class, ethnicity and the concept of nationhood. In essence, Zimbabwean literary and cultural discourses have been and are being enriched with the emerging and additional focus on autobiography and other forms of life-writing. It is within these emerging discourses that I will situate my own discussion of gendered rather than racialised autobiographical identities.

Given the burgeoning of work on gender in Africa, little has been said on the subject of femininities and masculinities in Zimbabwean life-writing. Autobiographical accounts by nature are terrains where identities are contested and produced, thus the relevance of femininities and masculinities as lenses through which identities can be analysed in autobiographies. I begin by highlighting how femininities and masculinities have been construed in Zimbabwe's cultural discourses, and then discuss models of femininity and masculinity from the Zimbabwean struggle. My analyses of Tekere's and Chung's texts are underwritten by these earlier discussions.

Femininities and Masculinities in Zimbabwe's Cultural Discourse

The notions of femininities and masculinities are both cultural and historical constructions. These constructions are social norms and values that define what it means to be a woman or a man in society. The years after Zimbabwe's independence have seen a significant adoption of approaches to criticism and creative methods inspired by theories of gender and feminist thought in particular. Gaidzanwa's *Images of Women in Zimbabwean Literature* (1985) stands as a milestone in this regard. This seminal work introduced the concepts of ideal Zimbabwean femininities and/or womanhood as culturally constructed by society and as projected in literary works. Gaidzanwa brings out the established cultural norms of what it means to be a woman and feminine and also how femininity seems to be the elementary signifier of womanhood. She demonstrates how women have been depicted as mothers, prostitutes, etc. and how women are subsequently chastised and branded unwomanly if they choose to transcend these culturally defined boundaries.

On the literary scene, Yvonne Vera has offered alternative views on Zimbabwean femininity and womanhood. Much of her work rejects a narrow vision of what it means to be a woman in Zimbabwe. While Vera seems to acknowledge the collective cultural constructions of femininity and womanhood in the way women share common historical and cultural burdens, her works also suggest that women do not necessarily have exactly the same life trajectories. In this regard, she turns to Zimbabwe's political and cultural history and through her fiction proves women to be agents of social and historical processes as well as achievers. Her novel *Nehanda* bears

testimony to this. Vera recreates the icon Nehanda who becomes a central spiritual figure in Zimbabwe's history of political struggle. Her approach to femininity is a departure from the way in which Western feminists view it. Morrell and Ouzgane (2005) posit that African feminists criticise Western feminism for being

> predicated on an oppositional gender binarism that translates into theories that emphasize struggle and disharmony between men and women; that Western feminism locates women as victims and over-emphasizes sexuality (and sexual orientation) and has ignored the history of African women, which speaks of agency and achievement.
>
> (Morrell & Ouzgane 2005: 5)

Vera demonstrates, through her feminist approach, diverse Zimbabwean femininities originating from varied life trajectories of its women.

To further demonstrate how the discourse on femininities has developed in Zimbabwe, Schmidt (1992), in *Peasants, Traders and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*, discusses the various roles that have defined Shona womanhood and femininities from precolonial times to the present. Schmidt's work reveals that women in precolonial Shona society could become socially prominent. For instance, unmarried aunts could become "*mbonga*" (powerful spiritual women, custodians of clan charms and heads of households). Women could also be members of patri-archal councils. Evidently, Shona women are seen cast in various social, economic and cultural roles that at times converge with masculine roles.

In defining masculinities, R.W. Connell (1995: 71) sees masculinity as "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture". In engaging that place in gender relations, men and women carve gender identities. Very often, femininities and masculinities intersect. Masculine tendencies at times turn out not to be entirely male. Chenjerai Shire, in a discussion of Shona masculinities, insists that "[w]omen constructed masculinities right through the lives of men, from birth to adulthood" (Shire quoted in Holland 2005: 132). Holland adds, "The vatete (paternal aunt) ... taught young boys about sex and contraception, and taught wives how to celebrate and/or contest their husbands' lineages" (p. 132). It is axiomatic that women collude in the creation of masculinities.

The precolonial conception of masculinity was premised on a man's ability to acquire material, social and political status. Holland posits that "within the Shona family unit and society, the show of physical fecundity by men indicated a successful negotiation into adulthood and social worth" (2005: 123). Underlining this is the concept that men were/are expected to fulfil certain culturally specified masculine duties. The colonial state, however, destabilised this concept, resulting in colonial standards and

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expectations redefining masculinities. Colonial educational training played a significant role in this regard. It was designed to produce a new breed of men who would be of service to the colonial state; taking their appropriate and designated places in the service of empire. Several postcolonial scholars have problematised this image of men created and institutionalised by the colonial state. Morrell and Swart argue thus: "[C]olonialism was a highly gendered process. In the first instance, it was driven by gendered metropolitan forces and reflected the gender order of the metropole" (2005: 2). Evident from this observation is the issue of transference and the colonial establishments bringing a gender dimension to societies themselves deeply gendered. This extended and reconfigured gendering of the colonised peoples was part of the imperial project. Morrell and Swart further observe that "the Victorians connected race, class and gender in ways that promoted imperialism abroad and classism at home" (p. 3). The colonial space therefore became a place of gender contestations; in which masculinities as conceived in precolonial times were at once abated, rendered obsolete and contested. In view of this, Suttner posits that "notions of masculinity are essentially conditional, contested, ambiguous or contradictory and have varied over time and at any particular moment within any particular experience" (2004: 5). It is within this context that this article seeks to discuss both masculinities and femininities as they are projected in Zimbabwean political autobiographies.

Femininities and Masculinities: Models from the Zimbabwean Struggle

Zimbabwe's liberation struggles provide distinct models of femininities and masculinities. Nhongo-Simbanegavi's *For Better or Worse?*: *Women and ZANLA in Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle* (2000) is a highlight in a developing spectrum of a critical canon on female participation in the armed struggle. She delves substantially into the roles of female combatants of Zimbabwe's guerilla warfare. Nhongo-Simbanegavi points out that the image of heroic women in the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA)'s guerrilla war is highly mythologised. She says it is a myth originally peddled by the ZANLA propaganda machinery through a few and elite ZANLA women whose spouses were equally highly placed in the ZANLA hierarchy. (I do not purport that these women owe their political status entirely to their spouses.) In this regard she cites Mrs. Joice Mujuru now Zimbabwe's Vice-President and also wife to powerful, but now deceased retired army general Solomon Mujuru, Mrs. Sally Mugabe (the deceased former First Lady of Zimbabwe) and Mrs. Julia Zvobgo (now deceased) as women who acted as official mouthpieces in selling the idea that the war of liberation had transformed the social standing of women.

Nhongo-Simbanegavi argues that these highly placed women spoke on behalf of ZANLA women, in the process projecting a false and jaundiced discourse of women empowerment through the liberation struggle. Her research revealed a scenario contrary to assertions by the aforementioned women and party propaganda. She established that the equality of men and women peddled by the liberation movement was far from the truth as trained ZANLA women had to fight an unwilling command in order to be deployed at the battlefront and engage in military combat. Initially they were made to carry on with "feminine" duties like being cooks and porters, tasks that resonated well with their traditional domestic roles. She adds that the situation was aggravated by the fact that after independence most women who had received military training were simply demobilised and at the very worst, just excluded from the assembly points where most guerillas were supposed to be stationed. Following this, these women simply went back home and picked up from where they had left. In view of this, the liberation war experiences, Nhongo-Simbanegavi concludes, had not trans-formed gender relations and the position of women to the levels purported by ZANLA. Clearly, the so-called equality between men and women peddled through ZANU propaganda was self-serving; it created the image of a progressive liberation movement with a broad liberation agenda. As shall be seen in my discussion of the almost quiet acceptance of Tongo-gara's sexual abuse of women combatants, patriarchal privilege persisted even amidst claims of equality.

From a literary perspective, Zimbabwean war literature in both indigenous languages and English is replete with images of heroic male combatants who leave schools and colleges to reclaim the motherland from colonial rule. While I do concede that some of these characters are fallible and have internal struggles and contradictions, the characters are often larger than life and the bullets of the colonial soldier never seem to get them. They are invariably victorious whenever they engage in combat with the enemy sol-diers. Again the detachment commanders are virtually male, while women appear as teachers in camp schools, refugees and at times providers of sexual relief. The self-introspective questioning of manhood or masculinity is also not prominent in the literary discourses. It is the feminine and masculine dimensions from a self-introspective vantage point that this article seeks to discuss and this is where the autobiographical framework becomes relevant.

In Zimbabwean autobiographies of political struggle, notions of self-questioning, self-discovery and self-evaluation are held against a back-ground of violated humanity. To clarify this point, the South African experience is instructive. Commenting on masculinities and femininities within the political and liberation struggle led by the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), Suttner (2004) laments:

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[M]ajor textbooks on masculinity, primarily if not exclusively, concern situations different from that of South Africa. When they speak of masculinity or masculinities they are not relating to a situation where manhood has been denied in the sense that it has been in the history of apartheid or colonialism in general.

(Suttner 2004: 2)

He adds, "[T]hey do not purport to address a situation where manhood is actually assaulted, that is, when men are called boys, no matter what their age, where many whites never bothered to even know their actual names" (p. 2). The South African apartheid dispensation, which forms the background against which the ANC operated and against which masculinities and femininities are analysed by Suttner, is no different, in principle, from the situation obtaining in Rhodesia (which forms the backdrop of the struggle autobiographies that will be discussed in this article). Suttner has shown the uniqueness of apartheid and colonialism in general and consequently why masculinities that emerge in such situations deserve special status in the study of masculinities. His observations are therefore instructive. Autobiography in the hands of a politician becomes a potent form of rhetoric used to understand, to question, to challenge and even conceive of alternatives regarding identity. Scholars have responded to and have been cognisant of such, and the work of Elaine Unterhalter (2000) is seminal in this regard. She discusses what she terms "heroic masculinities" in the autobiographical writings of South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle. For this discussion, I am indebted to her insights and candid observations.

The discussion in the following section will attempt to demonstrate the interaction between the personal, the social and the political in the construction of masculinities and femininities. The discussion will strive to discuss and establish the legitimacy of these, given the background of political struggle against the Rhodesian state. As will be demonstrated, the black man's manhood was assaulted by the colonial state and confronted with this, "the black man is faced with a choice and has to exercise his agency. Identity becomes a matter of choice, although it is a choice played out against the backdrop of environment and history" (Morrell & Swart 2005: 7). We will see how Edgar Tekere plays out his choices against the oppressive nature of the Rhodesian state.

Disempowered Masculinities and the Search for Alternatives

Tekere's *A Lifetime of Struggle* (2007) narrates his birth, formative years in educational institutions, the milestone decision to join the struggle for independence, the political intrigues that characterised this struggle and its aftermaths. The struggle for liberation and the aftermaths of independence

form the political background that defines Tekere, as he is known today. The Rhodesian state was oppressive and exclusionary in so far as who was part of the nation or not. Its colonial policies demeaned the black people and relegated them to the margins of the nation. It is within this nexus that Tekere experienced and projected his gendered self.

From the very beginning of his narrative, Tekere shows how his ancestral background was instrumental in shaping his ideas about the self and what he stood for. He reveals the significance of his mother's ancestry; she was a descendent of the Makoni people. The Makoni are an old family with a very prominent chieftaincy in the eastern part of Zimbabwe. In the first uprising against colonial occupation, Chief Chingaira Makoni fought bravely and eventually had his head decapitated and taken to England as a trophy. As great-great-grandson to this heroic Chief, Tekere says, he was often reminded that it was his traditional and customary duty to see to it that the head was returned to Zimbabwe for decent burial. From his childhood Tekere is initiated into the masculine role of avenging the dishonourable treatment of his maternal great-ancestor and acknowledges in the narrative that he owes the spirit of fighting, so deeply ingrained in his personality, to his maternal ancestry. He says in his dedication: "I often good-humouredly, and with pride, taunted my mother for passing onto me the Chingaira strain of blood, causing me to relentlessly engage in the struggle for liberation" (p. v).

It is worthwhile to note that the Shona people are patriarchal and that they very rarely emphasise the matriarchal side when identifying themselves. Discussing the conditions and limits of autobiography, Georges Gusdorf (1980: 28-48) concludes, "[E]ach man thus appears as the possessor of a role, already performed by the ancestors and to be performed again by descendants". Gusdorf was discussing Western autobiography and yet I find this applicable to Tekere's narrative. Tekere stresses his mother's ancestry in order to lay claim to its heroic legacy and to appropriate his maternal grandfather's legendary fighting spirit. Later on he adds, "And, of course I longed to emulate the proud fighter of the First *Chimurenga* in my role during the Second *Chimurenga*; and I believe that, in time, this is what I came to do" (p. 29). But, what is it that shaped the self according to his narrative? After briefly describing his birth, family and the Makoni roots, Tekere winds up that part of the narrative by declaring, "Underlying all this, the village life, reverence for the ancestors, the generosity and warmth of the people in those rural areas, was the continuing occupation of Zimbabwe by the whites" (p. 29) and adds, "My family living in Nyan'ombe grew in the shadow of British rule. My mother, in particular was very bitterly against the British settlers for what they had done to her grandfather, Chingaira" (p. 29). Clearly underlining these statements is a note of resentment towards colonial rule and the brooding shadow it cast over apparently peaceful people living harmoniously with each other. It is this shadow that haunts him and subsequently helps to determine his identity. In this regard,

one can argue that this colonial shadow constantly challenged the manhood, the very being of black men in general and Tekere in particular. This state of affairs resonates very well with Suttner's argument cited earlier on in this discussion that masculinities in colonial societies need to be analysed within the context of colonial vagaries on the humanity of the colonised. In discussing his years at St. Augustine's mission, Tekere says:

> Rebelliousness was beginning to emerge among young people at the time I was at St. Augustine, as we listened to the older people express disgust at the way we were treated. No-one [sic] was immune from the treatment of blacks by whites, the inequality, segregation and exploitation we suffered. Many of us had witnessed the white government dispossess black people of their land and livestock. Our parents were forced to pay many taxes, and the movement of people from rural to urban centers was restricted.

(Tekere 2007: 32)

In this, Tekere sums up what background created his identity and the masculine choices that he adopted. While he acknowledges that at this point many young people were not yet prepared to fight; they were, however, keen to listen to the elders as they articulated their suffering. The school environment had its own contradictions. While on the one hand the education was meant to create a subservient class of colonial functionaries, the environment on the other hand actively abated the awakening of political consciousness and a spirit of rebellion in the young people. At St. Augustine's, Father Baynham "encouraged free debate" (p. 33), and it is through this that Tekere came to understand that "colonialism and racism were much wider issues" (p. 33). Again at this mission school he is involved in activities that shape his identity. Apart from being a member of the debating society, he says he was also an actor, his most successful role being that of Absalom Kumalo in a production of *Cry the Beloved Country*. From a psychoanalytic point of view one may argue that given the similarities between apartheid South Africa and colonial Rhodesia, Tekere easily identifies with this Absalom Kumalo who in the play goes to Johannesburg and kills a white man, and is hanged. In the novel *Cry the Beloved Country*, Absalom Kumalo goes to Johannesburg to help find his father's sister, but ends up engaging in decadent behaviour. When Absalom is about to improve and turn his life around, he murders the benevolent Arthur Jarvis in a robbery act. Tekere may have simplified Paton's plot or the adaptation of the novel was deliberately altered by those who directed the school production to certain ends. In the original version Absalom hangs, but not before his admirable attributes are brought out and even the white man who is killed is not oppressive to justify murdering him. It will not be far-fetched to postulate that by extension Tekere longed to kill a white man in oppressive Rhodesia. It is also not surprising that later on Tekere is put on trial for his alleged murder of a white farmer in post-independence Zimbabwe.

Although he was acquitted, it is as if by "killing" Adams he is fulfilling a long-deferred dream. To Tekere therefore, the character of Kumalo is a symbol of heroic masculinity to be emulated given the odds staked against black people in both apartheid-era South Africa and Rhodesia (notwithstanding the fact that Jarvis simply does not fit into the oppressor paradigm). Tekere appropriates the violent masculinity projected in *Cry the Beloved Country* and sees the oppressive colonial environment as legitimating such masculinity.

Tekere refuses to conform to the colonially constructed masculine identity for black people, that is subservience to white people epitomised by swearing allegiance to "God and the King and obey[ing] the Scout law" (p. 35). He defiantly argues that since they were in Makoni country then they should be swearing allegiance to "God and *Mambo* Makoni" (p. 35). An equally defiant mother, a Makoni princess, constantly nurtures this attitude of defiance. For Tekere the legend of Chingaira Makoni is a signifier of heroic masculinity.

Tekere and the Rhetoric of Masculinity

Tekere's political activities develop from rebellion at school and joining the youth league, which later on merges with the African National Congress in 1957, to many other political undertakings and commitments. With the banning of the ANC the National Democratic Party was formed and with its outlawing the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) was formed. Tekere narrates his roles in all these formations. He manages to become a political player amidst complex political processes during those times. The narrative becomes a celebration of his heroic achievements throughout his political career in the struggle for liberation. Smith and Watson (2001: 10) argue:

> When life narrators write to chronicle an event, to explore a certain time period, or to enshrine a community, they are making "history" in a sense. But they are also performing several rhetorical acts: *justifying their own perceptions, upholding their reputations, disputing the accounts of others, settling scores*, conveying cultural information and inventing desirable futures among others.
>
> (Smith & Watson 2001: 10; my italics)

It is as if Tekere is responding to a post-independence discourse (following his fallout with ZANU-PF) that has been negating and undermining his perceived heroic identity and contributions to the struggle. Referring to his work with ZANU, which was formed after a leadership fallout with ZAPU, Tekere says, "I am very proud of the work I did in Gweru, for were it not for I and my team in the Midlands, ZANU would have died then" (Tekere

2007: 54). After the decision to embark on a military struggle against the Rhodesians, Tekere's narrative again highlights his heroic contributions to the whole effort. He says:

> "I had always been committed to the armed struggle, and moreover, as the leader of the Youth, I was the obvious choice" (p. 71).
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> "As we proceeded [into the camps], I made all the arrangements and took the lead, ensuring that Mugabe complied with the ZANU line" (p. 74).
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> "I would get up at 3.00 in the morning, and run for 20 kilometres in laps. As leader, I had to be the fittest. Mugabe participated a little" (p. 75).

These statements among many others of a similar nature are Tekere's attempt to authenticate his own role in the war effort and to show how his identity is inextricably entwined with that of the Zimbabwean nation. Hroch (1996: 90-91) says men have "a personalised image of the nation", while Mayer (2000: 6) adds that men "often tend to assume the role of defending the ego of the nation because their identity is so often intertwined with that of the nation". This narrative is also Tekere's way of highlighting his heroic achievements, which in ZANU PF's politics of inclusion and exclusion, are in danger of obliteration. It is important to note that he always juxtaposes his own achievements, especially in military accomplishments, with those of Robert Mugabe. He chronicles his own training, initially at the hands of Joice Mujuru, later Mark Dube, and adds, "Besides the individual coaching, I joined the recruits in the various training camps, such as Nachingwea. I went to Yugoslavia to learn the techniques of surface-to-air warfare. In Romania, I learned infantry maneuvers" (p. 78). Tekere is critical of Mugabe's aloofness and failure to conform to the military demands of the situation. Later on after the Chimoio massacres Tekere says Mugabe was incongruous with his formal attire at a time when they had come to visit the camp in the aftermath of the Rhodesian raids all dressed in military attire, which befit the occasion. About Mugabe, he says:

> I then taught him how to handle weapons, and to keep them always within reach. Yes, up to that time, he had not learnt how to use a weapon.
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> There were other examples of his lack of appetite for war. Mugabe was by now Commander-in-Chief of the ZANLA forces, yet he had no uniform .... He was really a civilian bureaucrat. He would sit in his office, waiting for military briefings from me, and never took the initiative himself unless pushed. He did not know how to salute.
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> (Tekere 2007: 92-93)

In Tekere's world view, lack of military skill and appreciation of the workings of war weapons is evidence of unmanliness. It is evident from this narrative that for Tekere, the masculine identity to be projected in a war situation like the one he is narrating is that of a military man. His narrative has no kind words for those he deemed to be cowards, the likes of Josiah

Tungamirai (later Commander of the Zimbabwe Air Force) and Ernest Kadungure who he says were abducted into the war; they did not join voluntarily. He does not hide his admiration for Tongogara (legendary commander of ZANLA), Joice Mujuru, Mark Dube, Serbia, Rex Nhongo (Solomon Mujuru) and Justin Chauke.

A critical mind will not fail to discern the hidden text in Tekere's autobiography; the feminisation of Robert Mugabe and the masculinisation of Joice Mujuru. Nationalist liberation movements are, more often than not, considered masculine and by feminising Mugabe Tekere attempts to undermine the former's centrality to the national liberation effort. Throughout the narrative Tekere projects himself as one who takes control of situations. One cannot help but see an overemphasis of his military accomplishments or attempts thereof. It is not surprising that he does this; Gusdorf argues that

> as soon as they have the leisure of retirement or exile, the minister of state, the politician, the military leader write in order to celebrate their deeds (always more or less misunderstood), providing a sort of posthumous propaganda for posterity that otherwise is in danger of forgetting them or of failing to esteem them properly.
>
> (Gusdorf 1980: 28-48)

It has also emerged in this discussion that the oral and at times written tradition, "amongst members of a liberation movement tend to create a model of what is revolutionary conduct and which people are exemplars of such conduct" (Suttner 2004: 2). For Tekere, the revolutionary conduct of Chief Chingaira Makoni, the legends of Nehanda, Kaguvi and Chaminuka provide such models as seen by traditional prayers to the latter three in the camp of the elders in Mozambique. In Tekere's hidden text, Mugabe is the antithesis of revolutionary conduct and desired military masculinity. Tekere appropriates the heritage of the first Chimurenga and by so doing appropriates a new kind of manhood and masculinity, which stands in opposition to that assigned black men by the Rhodesians. Joining the youth league, all the subsequent political formations and the war of liberation was a rite of passage for Tekere and all the others who joined. Tekere's version of favourable masculinity prioritises political and military exploits. Even his preferred femininities constitute resistance to political domination and military accomplishments as epitomised by his mother and the likes of Joice Mujuru and Serbia. Of the former he says, "Teurai (Joice Mujuru) was the first woman fighter I had encountered, and I was very impressed, as she was extremely accomplished. I submitted, with pleasure to her orders to crawl and roll on the ground" (p. 78). He has this to say about Serbia:

> Among those who died in the attack were Serbia, who had been my instructor, and my major source of inspiration. She had been a commander in Tete, where she headed a commando unit of some 99 men. She was the only

woman there …. She was a priceless soldier. She had come to Chimoio to get supplies for her unit, and was killed in the maize field. It was sad that such a great fighter had not gone down in battle ….

(Tekere 2007: 86)

Tekere's avid admiration for such women is undoubted. Also notable in his narrative is the contradictory relationships with women at a personal level. Tekere has a series of failed marriages and I wish to posit in this article that these are manifestations of his deeply entrenched respect for political and military femininities and alienation from domestic femininities. His admiration for military femininity alienates him from domestic femininities that largely suit a marital setup. What remains to be seen is whether a female ex-fighter projects similar femininities in an autobiography. The next section explores femininities in Chung's *Reliving the Second Chimurenga*.

Women and the Autobiographical Act

Mary G. Mason in "The Other Voice: Autobiographies of Women Writers" (1980) argues that women's establishment of identity is a relational rather than an individuating process. Her thesis is that the disclosure of the female self is linked to the identification of some other. To use Mason's words I would want to call Tekere's text "a flamboyant self-staging of the drama of the self", a situation which is far removed from Chung's narrative. Women are seen to identify themselves with others and it is this relationality that lies at the centre of Chung's narrative.

Chung's autobiography is seminal in a number of ways. At one level it is inspired by a desire to narrate the quest for an alternative political and cultural order. At another level it is a political narrative of femininity, which has historical imbeddedness and is foundational in canonising personal experiences of Zimbabwe's war of liberation by women. Chung's autobiography presents the reader with difficulties in reading. The narrative is in a way fragmentary in structure. Far from focusing more exclusively on her own role in the struggle, Chung's narrative captures more the role of many other luminaries of the struggle than her own. As mentioned earlier, this is characteristic of female life-writing in general. Her rhetoric does not exhibit the characteristics often associated with masculinity; characteristics such as being success oriented, aggressive, ambitious, proud, egotistical, decisive and competitive, though she participates in the struggle for liberation with distinction.

The narrative is informed by a feminist sensibility and it exposes the silences, boundaries and achievements of women from both her Chinese background and those who were part of the struggle for Zimbabwe. Chung's rhetoric on masculinities and femininities is informed by both the repressive

political atmosphere in Rhodesia and her own family and intellectual background. As already highlighted in my earlier discussion on Tekere, the recalling of family traditions and traditional history is crucial to the formations of both heroic masculinities and femininities. At the beginning of the text Chung's grandmother takes centre stage as she goes against Chinese tradition to follow her husband to Africa:

> My grandmother had refused to be constrained by tradition and had displayed great courage and determination in embarking into the unknown. Unlike the grass widows who had remained in China faithfully waiting for their husbands to return, my grandmother took her fate into her own hands and left for Africa, a continent of which she had no knowledge.
>
> (Chung 2006: 28-29)

Chung goes further to highlight her grandmother's successes, especially her business acumen in spite of her illiteracy. She says her grandmother "laid the foundations of the family wealth, on which her children could later build" (p. 29). Her grandmother's mobility from China to Africa and from passive femininity epitomised by the "grass widows" to becoming an active agent of social change and responsibility becomes symbolic of feminine heroism. In coming to Africa, Chung's grandmother was adopting a role conventionally played by men. She ventures into unknown territory and by so doing fractures the boundaries imposed by culture and gender. It is worthy to note that Chung repeats this pattern in her radical politics. Chung re-enacts her grandmother's radicalism.

Throughout the narrative Chung articulates her role as an educationist. She rejects race prejudices to go into African education and demonstrates early in life a distinct sense of self that is also tempered by acknowledgement of others. This sense of self is seen in the way she opts to go into African education rather than enter into matrimony. She says: "My family was astonished that I had decided to teach in an African school. My grandmother in particular was anxious to organize my marriage …. My father too felt that it was time for marriage" (p. 46). Chung rejects this preferred feminine identity. Her femininity is guided by belief in certain principles and that sense of self. She narrates her critical role in the ZANU education department and how the liberation war educational policies also informed post-independence education and teacher-training programmes. For Chung, her grandmother's story and the quest to work against the segregated education in Rhodesia are the conditions that shape her particular kind of femininity. It is a femininity that is premised on responsibility. Of responsibility she says:

> One of the most important changes in my outlook while at Leeds was that I began to personally accept responsibility for what was happening in Rhodesia. Before I went to Leeds, I saw political responsibility as resting

squarely on the shoulders of black nationalist leaders .... My three years at Leeds changed this. I realised that if skin colour was not to be used as a criterion, then all of us born in the country had an equal responsibility for the liberation of the country.

(Chung 2006: 68)

In this confession, Chung is advancing her own intellectually inspired explanatory narrative on her own reasons for joining the struggle. Her education contributes to the formation of a particular feminine identity that is linked to the anti-colonial struggle in Zimbabwe and also defined by her sense of duty.

Chung pays attention to gender and emphasises the role women play in political, cultural and social development. About Sally Mugabe she says:

> [Sally] made an indelible mark on the revolution in support of her husband's claim to leadership. Sally Mugabe was a single-minded woman .... She had a simple ambition: she wanted every woman in Zimbabwe to be educated and to have a job. She realised that economic independence was of critical importance to women. Without it, women could not be free. She spent a lot of time strengthening the women's movement.

(Chung 2006: 183)

On her own sense of duty regarding the struggle and fellow women, Preben Kaarsholm has this to say in the introduction to the text: "Fay Chung was also active as a feminist, and worked to improve the situation of women guerrillas and refugees, who were at times exposed to considerable harassment by male commanders, and expected to provide services as 'warm blankets'" (Kaarsholm in Chung 2006: 9).

Her narrative effectively questions violent and dominant masculinities that Morrell (1998, 2000) calls hegemonic masculinities. These entail "participating in violence against women and other men [and] exhibiting or enduring violence [which is seen] to be a feature of being a 'real man'" (Unterhalter 2000: 188). This questioning comes out in what I wish to call the Tongogara subtext where the ZANLA Chief of Defence is indicted by Chung for his rampant sexuality and bloody tendencies. Chung emphasises this violent masculinity when she narrates Tongogara's summary execution of the Nhari rebels. Notwithstanding this, she also portrays him as loving and caring to both guerrillas and the many feeding mothers in the camps whom he ensured were well taken care of. Chung's portrayal of Tongogara confers on him a dual masculine identity. In him are embodied both violent and heroic masculinities. These two are different in that violent masculinities are about proving manhood by inflicting violence against others and enduring violence, while heroic masculinities are constituted through relationships and loyalties. Unterhalter (2000: 173) posits that "the social construction of heroic masculinity entails that manhood is proved by locating oneself in history, identifying the significance of history and

working towards a vision of a better future. Heroic men do not mark bodies, but instead make their mark on historical time".

The violent masculinity in Tongogara is tempered by the heroic. Chung has this to say about him:

> Josiah Tongogara led ZANLA to success. A military specialist, he was over six feet tall, with the upright and muscular figure of a soldier accustomed to the rigours of war and the stresses of prolonged periods of living in the bush. Josiah Tongogara commanded both fear and love. Feared on the one hand by his enemies as an ambitious, ruthless, and implacable fighter, he was loved and respected by his supporters and followers as a faithful and caring leader, ever solicitous of his soldiers' welfare; as a leader who deserved to be followed; as a leader to whom people entrusted their children and their lives. Tongogara was able to command respect from both his enemies and his friends. No one could be indifferent to him.
>
> (Chung 2006: 124)

It is this heroic image that has been more dominant and enduring in Zimbabwe's memorial discourse than the violent. His two-pronged relationship with people defines his heroic identity.

In the memoirs, Chung attacks violent masculinities and especially sexual aggression, which in the text she suggests is epitomised by ZANLA Chief of Defence Josiah Tongogara. Her chronicling of Tongogara's excesses is systematic and detailed. She recalls an incident at Pungwe III camp:

> I was awakened in the middle of the night by the sound of commotion – many angry voices could be heard shouting from the women's barracks situated a hundred metres from my *posto* (little grass huts occupied by individuals). The next morning I was told …. Tongogara and his retinue had arrived in the middle of the night and had demanded women to entertain them. Such women were euphemistically called "warm blankets".
>
> (Chung 2006: 126)

As already highlighted, the narrative projects Tongogara as both bloody and sexually aggressive, charges that are viciously contested by Tekere in his text. That his excesses were accepted with silence by his admirers is an indication that women were treated as trophies to reward successful militarists within this struggle. It is women themselves who had to rise to the occasion by challenging the exploitation of female sexuality. Chung constantly attacks the feudal nature of traditional culture, especially its treatment of women and construction of femininities. She says, "This feudal attitude towards women was one of the reasons the two rebellions in ZANLA, namely the Nhari rebellion and the Vashandi rebellion, both attracted very large numbers of women guerrillas" (p. 127). The fact that the women guerrillas reviled Tongogara and his top commanders is indicative

of another kind of femininity whereby women are not passive victims of sexual violence.

Still on matters of sexuality, Chung exposes the often ignored sexual aggression of females during the war. Women have often been depicted as victims of sexual violence, but Chung shows how senior ZANLA women also took their pick from newly arrived young male recruits in the camps. This is a theme often ignored in women's studies and merits research. What emerges from this is another dimension to femininity. Men are generally regarded as the initiators of sexual action and women as the passive victims of sexual aggression. It is therefore far from being feminine, in the conventional sense, if women initiate and take a leading role in matters pertaining to sex. Chung's narrative is also quite revealing in terms of the dynamic character of gender and sexuality. Here is a novel depiction of female sexuality juxtaposed with balanced femininity in the person of Sheba Tavarwisa. Sheba was one of the highest-ranking officers in the ZANLA hierarchy. Chung describes her as deeply religious and courageous. This is what she says about Sheba:

> The only camp commander who to my knowledge refused to comply with this systematic abuse of some of the young women who had joined the struggle, many of them for the most idealistic of reasons, was Sheba Tavarwisa, a top woman commander and one of the first and most respected of women guerrillas. She was a skilled and wise leader, who managed to maintain her integrity while enjoying the absolute trust of Tongogara, despite the fact that she always refused to comply with his demands for women. Tongogara respected her combination of independence and loyalty.
>
> (Chung 2006: 127)

Chung's narrative hails the contributions of women to the struggle and in the process links femininity to struggling against the colonial state. In this case Sheba's heroic femininity is premised on both independence and loyalty combined with her high ranking and strategic position in the struggle. One can also discern a touch of feminism in the autobiography, especially on the part of Chung herself in the manner in which she strives throughout to improve the welfare of fellow women. She also attributes heroism to fellow women, but typical of female life-writing, there is a way in which the narrative progressively obscures her own feminine identity. Because of the relational nature of female life-writing, Chung's own autobiographical persona is not fully developed. The narrative becomes more and more concerned with issues of social justice and political responsibility.

Conclusion

I have argued in this article that the two autobiographers contest hegemonic representations of nationalist identities that are based on homogenised accounts of national liberation. This article has posited that Tekere projects himself as an autonomous masculine subject. His "I" is emphatic throughout the narrative. He shows how historical forces in Zimbabwe have carved marks on individuals at the political, cultural and psychological levels. It is again evident in this discussion that conceptions of the self and both masculinities and femininities in Zimbabwean autobiographies of political struggle remain bound up with historical processes of colonial and nationalist liberation struggles. Tekere privileges hegemonic masculinity, which manifests in his case, as violent, military and with a propensity to want to control and consolidate power. He associates masculine identity with national political power and defines himself against dominant colonial representations of African manhood; representations that feminised African men. Tekere therefore shows the relationship between the configuration of the nation and the interests of men; they converge. In contrast, Chung's autobiography questions the masculinist and perhaps patriarchal articulation of the nationalist project of self-determination by inserting her own voice in the nationalist narrative. Her narrative is an articulation of both vulnerable and heroic femininities from a position of female marginalisation in political and cultural discourses. It is informed by a feminist sensibility. Chung shows how women's participation in the liberation struggle disrupts accepted significant images of femininity and consequently how some men in the struggle strove to perpetuate these. By narrating her presence and that of other women in the struggle, the manliness of combat and political struggle is compromised and destabilised. I have also argued that Chung's narration of Tongogara's sexual excesses is an articulation of patriarchal privilege that the presumed equalising nature of struggle failed to dismantle. She demonstrates how men benefited from the established gender order and how this in turn perpetuated hegemonic masculinity. Above all, while Tekere celebrates the heroic self and militant feminine identities, Chung's narrative hails women's collective resistance to both the colonial state and male excesses, especially as epitomised by Sheba Tavarwisa's calculated handling of Tongogara. Chung is rarely at the centre of her narrative, but achieves relationality in her relationship to the liberation struggle and her depiction of female identity.

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Hazel Tafadzwa Ngoshi
University of Pretoria
hngoshi@yahoo.co.uk