



**The politics of narrating the performance of power in selected
Zimbabwean Autobiographical writings**

by

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Declaration

I, Walter Kudzai Barure, declare that this dissertation hereby submitted for the qualification of Master's degree in English at the University of the Free State is my own work and that I have not previously submitted the same work at another university.



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March 2019

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my beloved friend, Brian Alton Konzo.

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Summary

Over the past six decades, Zimbabwean politics and its trajectories have evolved as a result of nationalism, ethnocentrism, decolonisation, neo-colonialism, neoliberalism, nativism, Afro-radicalism and globalisation. These discourses have made Zimbabwean political actors and their supporters pit against each other on grounds of patriotism, race, gender, political affiliation, ethnicity and hegemonic struggles. Furthermore, this study analyses how these varying positions spurred the (dis)continuities between patriotic and ‘oppositional’ narratives in postcolonial Zimbabwe (specifically post-2000). It is important to explore how the schema of inclusion and exclusion manifest themselves in competing autobiographical narratives within the nation’s complex and contested political space. This dissertation analyses the politics of narrating the self, performativity and power in the autobiographical works of Tsvangirai, Msipa and Coltart. The primary concern of this study is to juxtapose these narratives and highlight salient connections between self and nation, past and the present and, autobiography and postcolonial theory. Reading these political autobiographies side by side locates the self in historical and aesthetic contexts that illustrate the faultlines of representation and identity. The study mainly refers to postcolonial theories by Bhabha (hybridity, liminality and mimicry) and Mbembe’s (African modes of writing the self) which interrogate the designation and discrimination of identities and the innovative sites of collaboration and contestation. The study also invokes Smith and Watson’s (2001) delineation of autobiographical modes of narration and McAdams’ (2006, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2018) psycho-literary approaches to personal narratives to critically interrogate narrative identity, life-transitions and imaginative acts of writing the self. Such an eclectic approach dispels illusions, self-justifications, myths and subjective generalisations of historical events and performances. A key finding of this study is that postcolonial politics in Zimbabwe is circumscribed and constituted by metaphors of hybridity, mimicry, liminality and new modes of writing. This dissertation concludes that ‘oppositional’ narratives appropriate and emulate the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front’s (ZANU-PF) performance of power to the extent of being travesty of democracy. I also suggest that a revisionist and inclusive writing of the nation goes against the grain of discriminatory and demonisation discourses that foreclose the imagination of having a future President from a minority tribe, race, younger generation, feminine gender and opposition party.

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Chapter 1: Zimbabwean writing and its context

1.1 Introduction

Writing in Zimbabwe is a contested terrain that is bifurcated between oppositional and dominant perceptions about race, class, ethnicity, identity, gender and patriotism. In essence, this study's research problem relates to the political dimensions of the represented and mythologised narratives that are consequent to and constantly evident in the construction of autobiographical narratives engaging with the Zimbabwean political landscape. The study situates the politics of narrating the performance of power within the global, African and particularly Zimbabwean contexts. It also seeks to identify and critique the politics of narrating the performance of power in autobiographical works. Political autobiographies, rather than poetry, short-stories, plays and novels were chosen for their immediacy and flexibility in going beyond the binary categories of subjectivity and objectivity, history and narrative. Similarly, Mbembe (2015: 159) argues that what constitutes a true narrative is the belief system of the person narrating it, hearing it or accepting it. In other words, political autobiographies are appropriate for this study because they represent the narrator as either the performer of power or the victim of the performance of power. This study is hinged on theories of autobiography and postcolonial theories which are central to the politics of narrating the performance of power. The same study closely refers to Bhabha's (2012) postcolonial notions on hybridity, liminality and mimicry and, Mbembe's (2002a, 2002b, 2015) conception of *African modes of Self-Writing* and this is also augmented by Smith and Watson's (2001) delineation of autobiographical modes of narration and McAdams' (2006, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2018) psycho-literary approaches to personal narratives.

1.2 Re-narrating the nation in the making

Colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe inspired and propelled the publishing of interesting political autobiographies by theologians, nationalists, ex-combatants, politicians, journalists, trade unionists, white farmers and lawyers. The general characteristics of autobiography are chronicling an event making "history" yet "performing several rhetorical acts" such as justifying perceptions, upholding reputations, disputing the preceding accounts of others, settling scores, conveying cultural information and *inventing* desirable futures among others (Smith & Watson, 2001: 10). Javangwe (2011: 11) succinctly defines "political (auto)biography as life writing that places the political self at the centre, both as observing and observed subject." According to

Bakhtin (1987a: 324) writing is a “literary-verbal performance”, that requires authors to take a position. However, it should be underlined that any form of writing is not a neutral undertaking but a political one in which texts speak and seek to both re-present and fashion ‘reality’ (Wa Thiong’o, 1997; Auerbach, 2003 and Hall, Evans & Nixon, 2013). Similarly, Bluck (2003) and Vambe and Chennells (2009: 1) note that narrating the self is inherently political and at best a performance that is staged in multiple spaces. This study is interested in the perception and performance of power by political actors and its reception by readers.

It is noteworthy that there are distinct commonalities in Zimbabwean political auto/biographies. These commonalities include the need for “re-creating ... people’s past”, “re-writing ... history”, “forging myths” and “putting the record straight so as to correct the glaring distortions of imperial history” (De Waal, 1990: 51-52). As a result, Zimbabwean autobiographical writings are often divided into two broad categories; patriotic and ‘oppositional narratives.’ This ideological rift in the literary representation of Zimbabwean politics makes the national narrative fractured as noted by Veit-Wild (1993), Chennells (1995), Zhuwarara (2001), Muponde and Primorac (2005), Primorac (2006), Muchemwa and Muponde (2007), Hove and Masemola (2014) and Nyanda (2016). In this schema, patriotic auto/biographies are perceived as aligning the memory of the nation along the ideological axis of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), while the ‘oppositional’ ones challenge the dominant perceptions written and circulated by the ruling party, ZANU-PF, just as much as the opposition parties contest the authorised historiography.

The concept of patriotic narratives is borrowed from Ranger (2004: 215) who used it in reference to the self-centred, exclusive re-narration and re-interpretation of Zimbabwe’s past by the ruling ZANU-PF party. Patriotic narratives are intended to proclaim the seamless continuity of the history of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition. Although Ranger is always credited as having conceptualised the term in broad swathes, prior research by Sylvester (2003: 35) suggests that patriotic history both builds on and departs from previous nationalist narratives through a series of omissions, additions and simplifications. Likewise, Tendi reinforces the argument and pinpoints that:

Patriotic History is however, silent on narratives about white contributions to Zimbabwe’s independence. [...] Patriotic History is also silent on ZANU PF’s links with wealthy white allies,

such as John Bredenkamp and Nicholas van Hoogstraten, while it plays up the opposition's links to white capital. (2010: 130)

Evidently, this significant silence and omission,¹ is also considered by Muponde and Primorac (2005: xiv) as an exemplar of historical 'blindness' and by Bhebe and Ranger (1995: 3) and Bourne (2011: 240) as a deliberate ploy to manipulate the past in order to create a singular and exultant narrative. This reality is, therefore, akin to the singularity that Adichie (2009) admonishes as elevating one story into the *only* story and thus creating hackneyed stereotypes that are untrue and incomplete.² Therefore, gaps and silences in the national narrative can be interpreted to mean a deliberate suppression of the past and the contesting narratives about that same past.

Writers from the White, African, and Asian communities, in their quest for writing the self inadvertently wrote political histories that narrated the Zimbabwean nation in the making. Bakhtin (1987a) acknowledges that the unsaid, partially said and equivocally said are as potentially meaningful as the explicitly stated. To this end, White (2003: 2) demonstrates that all that has been omitted is not necessarily erased because the most powerless actors leave traces of themselves in contemporary accounts. These postulations are evident in the narratives and diaries of missionaries, travellers and hunters that make up the early published accounts of Zimbabwe and are regarded as imperial romances (Chennells, 1982, 1995, 2005). These imperial romances, I argue, project the perspective of imperial power and its performance of power in the colonies. Yet, imperial accounts are associated with the inherent politics of representation. It is interesting to note that this representation is always one sided and tends to silence other voices, other narrative, and other alter/natives as foregrounded by Said:

But to most Europeans, reading a rather rarefied text like *Heart of Darkness* was often as close as they came to Africa, and in that limited sense it was part of the European effort to hold on to, think about, plan for Africa. To represent Africa is to enter the battle over Africa, inevitably connected to later resistance, decolonization, and so forth. (1994: 68)

It is clear from this orientation that the misrepresentation(s) of Africa and Africans in these imperial accounts,³ dehumanise, dehistoricise and objectify their subjects as well as silencing and discovering them.⁴ Similarly, Spivak (1998: 83) laments that "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak" as a result of being othered and misrepresented. This is revealed in Livingstone's (1857) missionary narrative, in which he describes Africa as a vast hinterland and purports to

have *discovered* the Victoria Falls. Inherent in these imperial romances is the politics of gazing and the desire to control and tame the mystic landscape, animals and Africans.

The use of bigoted epithets is replete in colonial auto/biographies and was justified the perception and reception of myths and stereotypes of Africa and Africans. Terms such as ‘uncharted country’, ‘barbaric land’, ‘empty unmapped lands’ and ‘no man’s land’ are evident in Gale’s *One Man’s Vision* (1935), Somerville’s *My Life was a Ranch* (1976: 153) and Smith’s *The Great Betrayal: The memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith* (1997: 1-2). Gale’s (1935) biography glorifies Cecil John Rhodes’ vision and describes the movement of the Pioneer Column in an untamed hinterland and how it formed the nucleus of a civilised population in the heart of a barbaric space. The same sentiments are echoed in Somerville’s memoir which narrates how Devuli Ranch emerged from a wild bushveld country and how the ‘primitive’ inhabitants became civilised through their contact with white settlers. The former Rhodesian Prime Minister, Ian Smith, contends in his (1997: 1-2) autobiography, that clearly Rhodesia was a ‘no man’s land’ as Cecil John Rhodes and the politicians back in London had confirmed. As a result, no one could accuse them of trespassing or taking part in an invasion. In essence, the African landscape was imagined as vast, unsettled and underutilised in order to rationalise and justify the colonial conquest.

The ‘unsettled land’ is also a Eurocentric and exaggerated image that was expedient in luring Western travellers to the untamed expanses of such terrain. For Alexander:

The ‘unsettled land’ is a metaphor with manifold meanings in Zimbabwean history. It conjures settler fantasies of an empty, unproductive land, ripe for exploitation. It encompasses the harsh disruptions of colonial conquest, eviction and agrarian intervention. (2006: 1)

In addition, Pilosof (2012: 154-155) attests that images of vast, open, virgin lands found a deep resonance in the imagination of white settlers who came to Rhodesia. The same scholar further claims that beliefs in empty land elide the indigenous black populations’ pre-existence and place of belonging. In essence, the country was not empty, but sparsely populated. Such imperial accounts, as noted by Chennells (2005: 132-133) created a singular narrative, a part of the representative cultural (dominant version of) history that was authorised by whites and later on rebutted by black authors who subverted the presupposition of white history. Hence, Somers (1994: 606) postulates, it is against this backdrop that, we come to know, understand, and make

sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities. Therefore, imperial narratives were subjective and paternalistic accounts of Africa and Africans.

It can be inferred from the above that imperial narratives simulated and conditioned racial hostilities. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin concur as noted in their assertion that:

the most formidable ally of economic and political control had long been the business of 'knowing' other peoples because this 'knowing' underpinned imperial dominance and became the mode by which they were increasingly persuaded to know themselves [...] as subordinate. (2006: 1)

The same notion is espoused by Achebe who opines that:

To the colonialist mind, it was always of the utmost importance to be able to say: 'I know my natives', a claim which implied two things at once (a) that the native was really quite simple and (b) that understanding him and controlling him went hand in hand - understanding being a pre-condition for control and control constituting adequate proof of understanding. (1974: 74)

It is quite interesting to note that the crux of Achebe's observation is akin to the claims of objective truth in political autobiography. Coullie, et al. (2006: 3) underscore that "auto/biographical accounts can function as sites of governmentality that produce sanitised subjectivities as well as practices that hold the promise of emancipation and autonomy". The Rhodesian Prime minister, Ian Smith, in his autobiography (2008: 14), confirms this colonial discourse in his statement that Rhodesian blacks were "happy in their separate universe" and "were the happiest in Africa." This post-colonial depiction of Rhodesian blacks perpetuates the colonial myths and stereotypes that were thought to be 'real' by many whites. For Foucault (1991: 194), power is a form of knowledge that produces rituals of truth. Hegemonic discourses should "seek to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern (Spivak, 1998: 91). Comparably, a "radical re-thinking and re-formulation of forms of knowledge and social identities authored and authorised by colonialism and western domination" (Prakash, 1992: 8) incited black writers to write their own personal histories. These narratives "repudiated master-narratives and disposed Eurocentric hegemonic assumptions" (Dirlik, 2018: 56). It should be noted that black writers' "self-determination to defy, erode and supplant the prodigious power of imperial knowledges was a form of colonial-counter resistance" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2006: 1). Hence, some of the political auto/biographies

in this study confirm Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's view of deconstructing imperial narratives in order to undermine their credibility.

A number of texts that counter Rhodesian colonial discourses have been produced in Zimbabwe. Kahari's *The Search for a Zimbabwean Identity: An Introduction to the Black Zimbabwean Novel* (1980: 6) counters colonial discourses by 'defining' and 'decolonising' Zimbabwean identity through binaries. Kahari (1980: 10) however, narrows down black writing and identity as a representative of the whole, and thus consequently pays scant attention to the fluidity and multi-layered nature of identity.⁵ The concept of a 'Zimbabwean novel' raised by Kahari (1980: 6-10) is problematic as it does not mention and recognise novels and memoirs written by whites. His argument is essentialist in that all colonial white writing is catalogued as Rhodesian Literature and all colonial and post-independence black writing categorised as Zimbabwean Literature. Yet an early appreciation of this literature is shown in McLoughlin's (1976) anthology, *New Writing in Rhodesia: A Selection*, which examines black and white narratives in some balanced representation of poems in English. This means that there is need to use other categories that go beyond the dichotomies of race in any analysis of Zimbabwean Literature. Kahari's (1980: 6-10) polemical if limited study is reinforced by Zimunya in *Those Years of Drought and Hunger* (1982: xi, 126-128) who submits that "[i]n Marechera, Zimbabwean Literature achieves confirmation of birth." Such a monolithic interpretation engendered debate on what constitutes the development of Zimbabwean Literature.⁶ This essentialism warranted criticism from Veit-Wild (1993: 2) who argues that one cannot speak of a clear-cut, distinctly Zimbabwean identity. Nonetheless, what and who is Zimbabwean remains contested and has prompted Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a: 46) to ask do "Zimbabweans exist?" This prescriptive evaluation of Zimbabwean literature demarcated by race, gender and language is criticised by Muponde and Primorac (2005: xviii) and Primorac (2006: 14) who promote the plurality, inclusiveness and breaking of boundaries.

Nevertheless, Muponde (2007: 169) bemoans the reading of Zimbabwean literature as only the history of the liberation war and calls this critical tropism. Ranger's *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7: A study in African Resistance* (1967) and Raeburn's *We are Everywhere: Narratives from Rhodesian Guerillas* (1978) exemplifies this "critical tropism" and overrates the status of war as history. Ranger's (1967) book is criticised for its myth-making, inter-twining of

the 1896 revolt and the nationalist struggle of the 1960s, and interpretation of the 1896 uprisings as well-organised, pre-planned and simultaneous military movements with central co-ordination between the Ndebele and Shona Spirit mediums (Cobbing, 1977: 63; Beach, 1979; Veit-Wild, 1993: 108; Dawson, 2011: 145-146). This calculated historiographical error of writing history; “literature-like” in the words of Marechera (1994: 23), fuelled the nationalist consciousness and fanned an errant cultural nationalism. As a result, the selection, connection and interpretation of events in a causal and associational way propagate identity-constructing narratives (Cornell, 2000; Dunn, 2003: 64) such as Mutsvairo’s *Feso* (1957) and Katiyo’s *Son of the Soil* (1976). It must be stressed that there is an intertextuality of this mythologised history in early Zimbabwean novels and memoirs.⁷

Interestingly enough, this plotting, selective appropriation and interpretation of a mythologised past is depicted in early Zimbabwean quasi-biographical novels. The patriotic views of different authors become evident in these texts. For instance, Mutsvairo’s *Chaminuka: Prophet of Zimbabwe* represents the author’s view:

We’ve told the story so let us end this discussion by asserting that the last resistance in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) was simply a continuation of the early resistances of centuries ago, whose embers had never really died down completely, [...] And now events in Zimbabwe are proving that Mapondera, Nehanda, Kagubi, Mashayamombe, and hundreds of others have not died in vain. Though almost ninety years have elapsed, their successors continued to follow in their footsteps, seeking to reinstate their cherished human values of freedom and independence for which the noble predecessors spilt their life blood. (1983: 111-112)

This idyllic regression into a romanticised and serialised past also creates an invincible ‘hero’ making tradition which is resonant with the spiritual links of the First and Second Chimurenga. This spiritual linking of the past revolutionary wars is also common in the patriotic auto/biographies under discussion.

The same glorification of the past can be discerned in Vambe’s autobiography *An Ill-Fated People*, which underscores that:

Ours therefore could be said to have been a more civilized society than to that to be found anywhere [...]. Life could be and often was very satisfactory, if not idyllic, until it was disturbed by external interference, in most cases from the Church, prying police or individual white men. We always felt then that as a people, with our spiritual and cultural heritage, our own country, language, paramount chief, tribal council and other indigenous institutions, we were quite capable of charting our own course. We did not need favours or guidance from the white man. (1972: 27)

Vambe (1972) nostalgically envisions a pastoral and utopian Zimbabwe that was developing at its unique and incomparable pace until this progression was hindered by colonialism and capitalist influences. Conversely, Soyinka advocates that:

The African writer needs an urgent release from the past. Of course the past exists ... the past exists now, at this moment it is coexistent in present awareness. It clarifies the present and explains the future, but it is not a fleshpot of escapist indulgence [...]. (1970: 140)

Comparatively, Reed (1986: 260) argues that any writer's desire to present the past of their own people in a more favourable light, while being a valid literary motive, is not in itself guaranteed to produce very satisfying novels. On the same note Muponde and Primorac (2005: xiv) underline that patriotic narratives are a discursive construct that is both neatly symmetrical and curiously familiar with present struggles that echo past ones and future goals which magnify past victories. This is clearly highlighted in the 'Foreword' of the quasi-biography, *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (1981: v), in which Mugabe commends Ranger for, firstly, amply portraying the first resistance of African people to white settlement and secondly, Martin and Johnson for carrying the story further by dwelling principally on the second war of resistance.⁸

From the onset of the liberation struggle, ZANU-PF constructed a national image and myth of itself as the sole custodian of patriotic and liberation history. Various fictional and authors of autobiographies, some of them studied in this research, emulated this salutary tradition and endorsed what Sylvester (2003: 35) labels the "ZANU-PF history, 'the only' history of the nation and any other versions [...] are regarded as anti-national." This politics of exclusion is explicitly highlighted in *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (1981: v) in which Mugabe also wrote that "in writing the history of our struggle, Martin and Johnson were compelled by historical reality to trace, the revolutionary process through ZANU's history [...]". Some actors who were regarded as opponents were literally erased from the national narrative. Nonetheless, the postcolonial theory employed in this study goes beyond the preoccupation with exclusion due to difference and inclusion as a result of loyalty and sameness.

There is also a tendency, evident in such essentialist and pro-nationalist elite writings, of obscuring and de-emphasising the roles played by other actors.⁹ This exclusion creates narratives that are highly partisan in nature. For instance, Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole's quasi-biography, *African Nationalism* (1959) privileges a ruling class in the making and eulogises ZANU, the

party he formed in 1963. Correspondingly, Heidi Holland, a South African journalist in her text, *Dinner with Mugabe: The untold Story of a Freedom Fighter Who Became a Tyrant* (2008: 194) illustrates how “Mugabe has refashioned history to ensure that it is his idealised version that remains absolute.” In the same light, Compagnon (2011: 3) considers this “reconstructed official history” an “ideological smokescreen” and “a political mythology” that glorifies Mugabe and the ruling elite as the sole liberators of Zimbabwe. In essence, patriotic narratives constantly (re)invented the liberation struggle in order to position ZANU-PF as the vanguard of freedom.

During and after the war, ZANU-PF collectively called other participants of the liberation struggle as ‘masses’. This is noted in the way Mugabe, in Martin and Johnson affirms that:

This is unavoidable, because the armed struggle pace of the revolution was set by ZANU and ZANLA [...]. Our struggle, which pitted the masses and their vanguard liberation movement on one side against the minority settler bourgeoisie (backed overtly and covertly by western powers, western capital, and the apartheid regime of South Africa). (1981: v)

This category of ‘masses’ is what Munochiveyi (2011: 96) names an undifferentiated totality which denies the participants agency. In essence, this stereotyping and Othering of ‘masses’ renders them passive subjects of history. Furthermore, White (2003: 2) critically observes that “not everyone is included in historical texts, let alone when these texts are joined together” nor are they included in narratives of the past that produce and reproduce power. Notably, King (2009: 370) argues that “hegemony depends on ambiguity and [...] curbs the other’s suffering for profit [...]”. Therefore, ‘patriotic’ discourses have been (re)appropriated by ZANU-PF as an instrument of domination which fosters the politics of both, inclusion and exclusion.

This present study acknowledges that the Zimbabwean nationalist liberation struggle was won through a concerted performance of not just the huddled ‘masses’ but Zimbabweans from different backgrounds. Williams acknowledges how the generic categorisation of people forges a politics of exclusion:

Masses are other people ... [t]here are in fact no masses; there are only ways of seeing people as masses. [...] The fact is, surely that is a way of seeing other people [...] has been capitalized for the purposes of political or cultural exploitation. What we see, neutrally, is other people, many others, people unknown to us. In practice, we mass them, and interpret them, according to some convenient formula. Within its terms, the formula will hold. Yet it is the formula, not the mass, which it is our real business to examine. It may help us to do this if we remember that we ourselves are all the time being massed by others. To the degree that we find the formula

inadequate for ourselves, we can wish to extend to others the courtesy of acknowledging the unknown. (1968: 289)

The so-called masses include peasants, urban workers, farm workers, business people, students (whether white, Asian, coloured or black), missionaries, Christian denominations and white liberals, whose roles were unaccountably diminished and glossed over. On the same note,

De Waal (1990: 98) bolsters that Asian, white, black business persons and organisations such as Christian Care, played a significant covert part in the liberation struggle, both politically when most black nationalist leaders were banned, imprisoned and exiled, and personally in caring for families of detainees. Ironically, the liberation struggle ended up focusing on prominent personalities and political parties and in that way invalidated the contribution of other participants and organisations.

However, some scholars hold an opposing view to the notion that Zimbabwe's independence came only through the anticolonial war. Bratton (2014: 7) contends that the conception of power politics should not grant undue attention to the biographical details and personal quirks of the towering gladiators who play starring roles in the political arena and ignore the political agency of other actors. By way of contrast, Smith, Simpson and Davies (1981) in their biography, *Mugabe*, observe that Zimbabwe's independence was a result of both guerilla fighting in the bush and diplomatic negotiations which took place both inside and outside Zimbabwe. Perceived in this view, Nkomo's (1984) autobiography, *The Story of My Life* validates and recognises the roles played by the Reverend Abel Muzorewa and Ndabaningi Sithole. Yet both Reverends are caricatured and demonised as "idiotic characters", "sell-outs" and "stooges" who collaborated with Ian Smith, the then Prime Minister of Rhodesia (Mugabe, 1983: 141; Smith, 1997: 262; Bhebe, 2004: 169; Tekere, 2007: 69). It should be noted that Muzorewa and Sithole's contribution to the liberation struggle has been reduced to mere footnotes and abstractions in the annals of Zimbabwean history, a blatant and sore act of erasure.

The same reduction made Tsvangirai, as noted by Raftopoulos and Phimister (1997: xi), to "remind the victors in the political arena that the struggle for independence was a broad uneven process, with many unsung heroes and unintended effects." Thus, this study argues that a blanket interpretation of the performance of the liberation struggle gives much credence only to the ex-combatants and nationalist leaders and consequently subordinates the roles of the

undifferentiated ‘masses.’ This study examines the following texts: Tsvangirai’s *At the Deep End* (2011), Msipa’s *In Pursuit of Freedom and Justice: A memoir* (2015) and Coltart’s *The Struggle Continues: 50 Years of Tyranny in Zimbabwe* (2016), which are all Zimbabwean political autobiographies published after the year 2010. It also makes a substantial contribution to Zimbabwean and African literary studies by offering a multi-perspectival approach to patriotic and ‘oppositional’ narratives. The patriotic auto/biographies discussed above have a single-minded focus of narrating the heroic and demigod-like performance of the liberation struggle. The national narrative is laden with strategic silences and omissions of past imperfections that are contested in ‘oppositional narratives’. Therefore, ‘oppositional narratives’ seek to fill the historiographical gaps that were decisively generated in the narration of the nation in the making.

1.3 Continuities and discontinuities between patriotic and ‘oppositional narratives’

A counter-discursive demystification of the liberation struggle is visible in Marechera’s semi-autobiographical novella, *House of Hunger* (1978), Nyamufukudza’s *The Non-Believers Journey* (1980), Kanengoni’s *Vicious Circle* (1983), Chinodya’s *Harvest of Thorns* (1989), Mazorodze’s *Silent Journey from the East* (1989), Samupindi’s *Pawns* (1992), Hove’s *Shadows* (1991), Vera’s *The Stone Virgins* (2002) and Dangarembga’s semi-autobiographical *The Book of Not* (2006). In this body of works, there is no trace of a simplistic binary heroisation of the resistance fighters versus a vilification of the settler forces (Gagiano, 2005: 44).¹⁰ As already indicated, the first fictional novels glorified both the past and war of national liberation using an anti-colonial and anti-white ideological stance. This stark ideological contrast created an “independent critical [...] oppositional consciousness” (Said, 1978: 325-326) that questioned the performance of the liberation struggle. The literary protest by Marechera (1978), Nyamufukudza (1980), Chinodya (1989) and Hove (1991) was not backed by a mass movement as it was loosely and indirectly connected with the political and military struggle (Veit-Wild, 1993: 244-245). Such protest gave these writers space to vent out their disillusionment.

Literature reflects an author’s own class, ideological disposition and analysis of power dynamics. This perception makes Zinyemba to regard the second generation of black writers as ‘lost’ novelists because their works have an unpatriotic outlook as noted in the argument:

Zimbabwe needs a literature that reflects its people's heroic efforts to re-discover themselves, literature that is imbued with local colour and perspective. This is the sacred duty for Zimbabwe's writers. (1983: 9-10)

Likewise, Zimunya (1982: 128) reduces these 'unpatriotic writings' to nothing more than an "eclectic babble" which cannot enrich one's culture. Zinyemba and Zimunya's ideological departments are influenced by Marxist criticism. According to Abrams (1999: 149) Marxist critics analyse literary works as 'products' of the economic and ideological determinants specific to that era. Surprisingly, when the colonial "gag" that was keeping the black mouths" of the so called lost novelist "shut" was removed, the ruling party "hoped they would sing their praises" (Sartre, 1965: 13).¹¹ This explains why these novels and memoirs were seen as an "anomaly" of Zimbabwean literature (Veit-Wild, 1993: 7). These black writers were labelled as the "radical pessimists" who viewed "national independence as an episode in a comedy" in which nothing fundamental changed (Ranger, 1968: xxi). Though such criticism is biased, one needs to question the partisan logic behind it.

The polarities that emerged on the Zimbabwean literary scene just after independence underline how narratives compete to control imaginaries of the nation. Gramsci (1971: 229, 495) stipulates that "a war of position" is an intellectual and cultural struggle to gain decisive influence in society. In reference to this literary war of words, Ngugi wa Thiong'o underscores that every writer must:

[...] choose one or the other side in the battle field: the side of the people, or the side of those social forces and classes that try to keep the people down. What he or she cannot do is remain neutral. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics. (1997: xvi)

This is specifically a battle over "reclamation of the fictive territory", and "an articulation of some of the discrepancies and their imagined consequences muffled [...]" by their predecessors to echo Said (1994: 212). This discrepancy between the liberation struggle and the foreseeable post-independent disillusionment is indeed depicted in novels, plays and poems by the so-called lost writers. Texts compete by claiming (and proclaiming) their truth. An examination of what they compete over and that which should be at stake in their competition assists readers to understand the relationship between them (White, 2003: 3). Literature is instrumental in support of 'hegemonic' versions of national identity and in opposition to those versions (Bull-Christiansen, 2004: 8). These competing trajectories mirror each other and for this effect, both

patriotic and ‘oppositional’ “politics” are understood as either liberating or authoritarian, depending on the analytical perspective (Rutherford, 2016: 14). In other words, the act of writing becomes more than just a form of protest or acquiescence as it achieves other objectives.

A patriotic writing and reading of the war has canonised its heroic performance to the extent that it should ‘not’ be contested. Visibly, this literary war of ideological position(s) is inherent in Kadhani and Zimunya’s anthology, *And Now the Poets Speak* (1981). To be critical of the heroics of the liberation struggle is synonymous with being unpatriotic, reactionary and pro-western. Nonetheless, Rai argues that:

[...] much of this performance can be challenged by disruption of the performance itself through counter-performance, mis-recognition or mis-reading of and by the audience, political performance is inherently unstable and vulnerable to being seen as illegitimate. (2014: 2)

However, this counter-performance and disjuncture in patriotic narratives was met with consistent criticism from some writers. Mugabe in *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (1981: vi) exclusively regards other writers as mere “on-lookers” and not “actors themselves” of the “drama of their struggle, as they planned and prosecuted it.” It is interesting to note that patriotic narratives particularly narratives about the war were initially and exclusively expected to be written only by participants and combatants of the liberation struggle. Nevertheless, Cooper (2008: 195) contends that any attempt to detach personal experience from critical practices risks leaving memories in the possession of specific groups (in this case, ZANU-PF). Connected to this risk is how hackneyed memories of past ZANU-PF liberation struggle victories were fed into the national and historical consciousness using state owned newspapers, the national broadcaster and patriotic narratives.

A searing ‘introduction’ by Mandaza in Tekere’s memoir condemns some of the early auto/biographies as “tribal sing-songs” and “official-type histories” of selected actors that are “presumptuous”, “self-indulgent accounts” or “vain attempts” at recording the “authentic” experiences of “would-be combatants” yet saturated in the realm of narrow ethnic politics.¹² Indeed, the issue of ethnicity was politically manipulated in assessing the performance of political actors. Despite having their shortcomings, early auto/biographies by Shamuyarira (1965), Vambe (1972: 27), Bhebe (1977), Muzorewa (1978), Nyagumbo (1980: 179), Martin and Johnson (1981: 35), Mutasa (1983: 15), Nkomo (1984: 17), Hamutyinei (1984), Bhebe (1989)

and Nyathi (1990), are significant because they capture the socio-political, cultural and economic ramifications of the colonial onslaught on the psyche of the black Africans. They also trace the ethnic and ideological rift that ensued between Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). This rupture was also reinforced after the Lancaster House settlement that brought the anticolonial war to an end and set dates for a democratic national election, as evidenced by the separate election campaigns.

Bishop Muzorewa's *Rise up and Walk: An Autobiography* (1978: 242) predicts the ousting of the white minority regime after independence but laments that it was not going to herald the golden millennium promised to ordinary black Zimbabweans. Mlambo (2014: 194) observes the same predictable tragedy by highlighting how independence was perceived as a boon of economic prosperity and political freedoms. The import of Mlambo's insights clearly spells out the perennial theme of post-independent disillusionment that is privileged in subsequent autobiographies and fictional novels, poems and protest plays. It was a crisis of expectations among the country's former colonised who expected immediate fruits soon after independence (Smith, Simpson & Davies, 1981: 216). Hence, Reverend Muzorewa's autobiography (1978: 242) fiercely criticised the crop of Zimbabwean leadership that was emerging from the liberation war, arguing that Zimbabweans wanted "no-second rate independence" and "no-worn out ideologies". This opposition made him a black-sheep in the national narrative. In a manner conforming to what was observed by Muzorewa, Smith, Simpson and Davies in the biography, *Mugabe* (1981: 133), underscore that Mugabe and Nkomo were "ideologically worlds apart" because "Nkomo was a nationalist before he was a socialist and Mugabe a socialist before he was a nationalist". These conflicting ideologies that were adopted and discarded willy-nilly proved to be doomed theoretical experiments.

These conflicting ideologies explain why Nkomo wanted unity between ZANU and ZAPU and hoped to run for elections jointly as the Patriotic Front because he foresaw a possible rupture that would end in a civil war. Ethnic narratives become most salient in periods of rupture when the 'taken-for-grantedness' that characterise most collective identities is disturbed (Cornell, 2000: 43). In addition, Sithole (1995: 122) maintains that as long as politics is about advantage and disadvantage, ethnicity will be exploited by political gladiators to gain and remain in power. Autobiographies by Muzorewa (1978), Nyagumbo (1980) and Nkomo (1984; 2001)

portray how ethnic factions were used to fan intra-party violence and to vote against leaders from minor tribes such as Ndabaningi Sithole. For Nyagumbo (1980: 179) tribal animosities opened “a black chapter of our history.” To this end, Nkomo (1984: 223) in his autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, sorrowfully pens the fratricidal violence that was directed at his people (Ndebele) in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces soon after independence under the guise of a choreographed ‘dissidents’ witch-hunt.¹³ Therefore, ethnicity in post-independent Zimbabwe is constantly politicised, weaponised and institutionalised by ZANU-PF to consolidate power.

The vicious cycle of violence and counter violence in Zimbabwe has become part of a political culture that is justified and reproduced in many forms such as political speeches, songs and the media. Kaulemu invokes a Fanonian angle in his postcolonial analysis of violence and he asserts that:

Violence breeds violence and the victims of violence become violent themselves [...]. The methods of violence developed during the War of Liberation have spread through our society. It has become part of our social and political language [...] At independence, our society did little to rehabilitate itself from the habits of violence prevalent during the liberation war. We have assumed that violence is a tool that we can take up, use and drop at any time. History has proved it is not so [...]. (2004: 81)

The legacy of violence escalated soon after independence and became a widespread practice amongst political opponents.¹⁴ Oddly, some political auto/biographies deliberately omit or make a cursory reference to the Matabeleland and Midlands mass murders. This is what obtains in Eide’s *Robert Mugabe: World Leaders Past and Present* (1989), Worth’s *Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe* (1990), Shamuyarira, Kumar and Kangai’s *Mugabe Reflections: Zimbabwe and the Contemporary World* (1995), Bhebe’s *Simon Vengayi Muzenda and the Struggle for and Liberation of Zimbabwe* (2005) and Tekere’s *A Lifetime of Struggle* (2007). Needless to say, the past is suppressed on political grounds of self-interest. Auto/biographies by Eide (1989), Worth (1990), Shamuyarira, Kumar and Kangai (1995) and Bhebe (2005) thrust the political self at the centre of the national narrative with Tekere’s *A Lifetime of Struggle* (2007) being a commendable attempt at de/constructing and critically over-writing ‘patriotic history’ from perspective that is both within and outside. However, all these autobiographies are lacking because they choose to underwrite certain events, particularly violent episodes in the past which in turn cause historical amnesia.¹⁵

This historical amnesia becomes evident in auto/biography essentially through what is suppressed, not included and (un)remembered in the national narrative. Foucault (1972: 110) insists that the unsaid has the power to challenge the said. As such, the disparity between the written or mentioned and the unwritten or unmentioned creates a counter-discourse. For instance, the internal party contestations and political venality of ZANU-PF that was unmentioned in auto/biographies by Nyagumbo (1980), Shamuyarira, Kumar and Kangai (1995) and Bhebe (2005) enabled Tekere in *A Lifetime of Struggle* (2007) to powerfully criticise what other political actors said. However, the main criticism leveled against Tekere is that he is a “self-promoter”, “hell-bent on revenge” and that his book is acutely damaging to Robert Mugabe’s struggle credentials (Holland, 2008: 46, 52). This view is also buttressed by Javangwe (2016: 82) who regards Tekere as a self in the act of self-consecration and an ultimate hero in the creation of the Zimbabwean nation. Closely related to Javangwe’s position is Eakin (2008: 21) who concedes that “we are free to write about ourselves as we like, though we can’t expect to be read as we like.” Tekere (2007: 92-93) portrays Mugabe as a military novice who did not know how to use a gun, march nor salute like other soldiers in Mozambique. Ngoshi (2013: 131), however, explicates the trivialised portrayal and feminisation of Robert Mugabe in Tekere’s autobiography. In addition, Smith, Simpson and Davies (1981: 105) express that Mugabe was attacked for his “lack of military knowledge and reluctance to go into the field with the guerillas.” It should be underlined that Tekere’s counter-argument is mainly aimed at settling old scores and disputing the accounts of others. Similarly, Tunzvi (1994) in *White Slave* dismisses and demystifies the infamous Chenjerai Hunzvi’s military pretensions and wild claims to be a war-veteran, in her outline that he never held a gun in his life.¹⁶ The rhetorical acts employed by Tekere (2007) and Tunzvi (1994) in their auto/biographies serve the purpose of challenging the militarised masculinities of Hunzvi and the masculinised but demilitarised personality of Robert Mugabe.

Other auto/biographies also inscribe what is commonly unmentioned in other patriotic narratives. First, Chung, (2006: 127), Mhanda (2011: 142), Sadomba (2011: 227),¹⁷ Mutambara (2014),¹⁸ and Mpofo (2014), consider the pivotal role played by female guerillas in the armed struggle, the silenced yet significant role of the Zimbabwe People’s Army (ZIPA) and the post-colonial role of war-veterans in Zimbabwe’s political economy, respectively. Secondly, the auto/biographies by Muzorewa (1978), Nkomo (1984), Tunzvi (1994), Godwin (1996), Smith

(1997), Sithole (2006),¹⁹ Chung (2006: 127), Tekere (2007), Mhanda (2011), Sadomba (2011) and Mpofu (2014) endeavour to be revisionist and critically resist dominant views about patriotic history and the performance of the liberation struggle. Hence, these texts reiterate Smith and Watson's (2001: 10) rhetorical acts. It is important to underscore that Chung, Tekere, Mpofu, Sadomba and Mhanda are bound together by the common denominator of being former military fighters of the war of national liberation who are re-writing and re-reading the liberation struggle in retrospect. These writers have been more critical of the performance of the war, the Mugabe and ZANU-PF government but ironically less evaluative of the ZANU-PF party. This revisionism is not a subtle regurgitation of patriotic history because their political perspective is too broad to be subsumed under patriotic narratives. In this respect, Palumbo-Liu untangles the complexities of re-writing history and states:

[...] to make space for themselves, to carve out an area for revision, they must first dis-place history, and yet such destabilization of the dominant history necessitates a preliminary critique of any history's epistemological claims. Any counter history, furthermore, must legitimate itself by laying claim to a firmer epistemology than that claimed by dominant history. The question then becomes how can one deconstruct the dominant history on the basis of its ideologically suspect nature, and not admit that one's revision is also overdetermined? [...] to offer a counter-history within the literary narrative, then one must still subvert history via a discourse that is equally, if not more, stable. (1996: 211-212)

In addition, Rooney (1995: 139) terms this, rewriting "the story of the story, the escape which escapes us, [and] the unwritten which makes for further writing [and] further departures." Thus, 'oppositional' narratives are chiefly concerned with the writing of the 'unwritten' and re-writing the written off in the national narrative.

At the same time this seismic wave of deconstructions and reconstructions was and is still exploited by ZANU-PF to dispute the performance of other ex-combatants,²⁰ and re-inscribe departed non-combatants.²¹ The ZANU-PF government always uses funerals, galas, rallies and commemorations to promote and exalt loyal cadres, demonise political opponents, discipline and excommunicate errant party members (Muchemwa, 2010). However, considerable attention has been paid to "the politics of creating national heroes" by Kriger (1995, 2003: 75-77); White (2003); Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007: 73, 2017); Hove (2016: 63) and Ndlovu (2017a) as complicit with patriotic history. It is indeed undisputed that the veneration of dead patriots is done using a jingoistic and lauded nationalistic rhetoric that refuses to be transparent. Yet, in essence, ZANU-PF selectively subscribes to a Zimbabwean Shona idiom, *wafa wanaka*, which literally translates

to that we should not speak badly about the dead and their character defects.²² The same idiom is a quick reminder of a Latin aphorism *De mortuis nil nisi bonum dicendum est* which translates to ‘of the departed nothing but good should be said’.²³ The National Heroes Acre, a nationally designated burial ground and monument for Zimbabwean heroes, has been personalised by the ruling party and become another ideological state apparatus. It is also interesting to note that the National Heroes Acre has been hijacked from being a source and symbol of unity and legitimacy to a site of contested belonging and participation in the war for liberation.

The symbolic importance of the national shrine had been sacralised in the national narrative until the family of the late ZAPU nationalist, Welshman Mabhena, declined the offer by the ZANU-PF politburo to have the remains of Welshman Mabhena interred at the National Heroes Acre (Clarke and Nyathi, 2016: 55). In addition, Clarke and Nyathi’s biography, *Welshman Hadane Mabhena: A voice for Matabeleland* (2016), outlines that the nationalist left a signed document with his stated wishes. Inevitably, Mabhena’s dying wish and rejection could be taken as an oppositional stance and a revision of patriotic identity by befitting heroes who no longer want their performance in the liberation struggle to be exploited for further partisan agendas. The same dis-identification is also evident in Kanengoni’s *Echoing Silences* (1997: 38) in which the protagonist, Munashe, an ex-combatant, intimates that “I am not a hero and I don’t want to be one [...]”. Muñoz broadly defines:

Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message’s universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture. (1999: 31)

This dynamic was not addressed in previous research because it was considered an “unthinkable” “positionality” for a liberation hero to reject the offer of a state-sponsored burial at the national shrine. This study by extension invokes this ‘unthinkable positionality’ of those who were denied hero-status by ZANU-PF, such as Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Reverend Abel Muzorewa, but were accorded a befitting heroes burial by the public. This notion is discussed in the textual analysis of ‘oppositional’ narratives such as Tsvangirai’s political auto/biography.

1.4 The postcolonial narrative-nexus

The ‘recent surge of interest’ in auto/biography in contemporary Zimbabwe seeks to respond to the lived realities of the current political, social and economic upheavals (Vambe & Chennells, 2009: 1).²⁴ Consequently, various scholars have critiqued these Zimbabwean auto/biographies and life narratives with a substantial part of their research focusing on ethnic-narratives, the construction of myths, identity politics, national memory, prison metanarratives, the politics of representation and white narratives (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007; Vambe, 2009; Javangwe, 2011; Pilosof, 2012; Ngoshi, 2013; Nyambi, 2013; Munochiveyi, 2014; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Manase, 2016; Nyanda, 2016, 2017). In addition, most of the recent literature in Zimbabwe is obsessed with Mugabe’s performance of power which then reduces history to a human enterprise and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) calls this Mugabe-centrism. The pitfall of such literature is in the direct comparison of Mugabe with Smith, Nkomo, and Mandela: a schematic plot of the good versus evil. This binary of how the Self is pitted against the Other is foregrounded in postcolonial theory, especially in the concepts of mimicry, liminality, ambivalences and hybridity as postulated by postcolonial critics like Young, Bhabha and Mbembe.

Mugabe was an enigmatic leader, full of contradictions yet he claimed to be the living embodiment of ‘popular’ aspirations. In short, Mugabe was a man of many faces. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012: 316) notes further that Mugabe emerges as a larger-than life political figure: a saviour, a servant of the people and a perpetual victim of the West. It is against this backdrop that Mugabe fits Mbembe’s (2015: 153) description of an autocrat who “condenses time by being of both the past and the present.” In essence, Mugabe is portrayed and psycho-analysed as an eponymous mystic leader akin to what Godwin (2010: 10) and Bourne (2011: 197) calls “our Big Man”. In other words, Mugabe has been a complex, devious and charismatic statesman. The same political inquest is clearly shown in Auret’s *From Liberator to Dictator: An Insider’s Account of Robert Mugabe’s Descent into Tyranny*:

Zimbabwean politics is about Robert Mugabe - no more, no less. Indeed, strip out all the eloquent anti-imperialist and anti-Western rhetoric and you find an old man desperate to cling to power. [...] Those who knew Mugabe during the struggle say that we are witnessing the real Mugabe. (2011: xiv)

However, this one-dimensional observation elides a lot hence this study's quest to distill further Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2012: 318) notion of 'Mugabe centric narratives' and consider works that inadvertently focalised Tsvangirai and perpetuated the 'big men thesis' (Huddleston, 2005; Chan 2008, 2010). As a result, this study juxtaposes and explores these compelling but competing narratives together.

Since the year 2000, white and Asian communities have taken a particular interest in writing auto/biographies that outline their ordeals and provide an insight into their understandings of place, race and belonging in Zimbabwe (Pilossof, 2012: 149; Nyambi, 2013; Tagwirei, 2014; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015; Manase, 2016). White farmers "[...] felt left out, culturally and politically from the mainstream of beliefs and thoughts" of the nation and sought to interpret their experiences in their memoirs (Muchemwa quoted in Zhuwarara, 2001: 23). Nordstrom (1997: 84) observes that "people protect themselves through silences as well as through speaking". In other words, white farmers insulated their interests through a strategic silence,²⁵ and they limited their writing and participation in politics until their livelihoods were threatened by erratic governmental policies and the fast track land invasions. In accounting for this silence, Manase (2016: 9) in his seminal text, *White Narratives: The depiction of Post-2000 Land Invasions in Zimbabwe* offers a historically informed critique that suggests that the influx of writing in the post-2000 era is partly linked to the historical events leading to the crisis conditions. In stark contrast, monologic popular texts by black writers related to the narrative of the *Third Chimurenga*, (revolutionary war) and helped to pave way for it, or even rehearse it in some complex ways (Muponde & Primorac, 2005: xv). The reluctance and silence of whites was a stimulus that promoted the writing of more patriotic narratives.

Individuals and communities use acts of re-membering to narrate alternative or counter-histories from the margins that are voiced by other kinds of subjects such as the tortured, displaced and overlooked, and the silenced and unacknowledged (Schaffer & Smith, 2004: 4). However, the 'late' and euphoric embrace of opposition politics by whites demonstrated an ill-conceived strategy and sense of victim-hood which had begun to mark the narratives of white discourse after 2000 (Chan & Primorac, 2004; Fisher, 2010; Pilossof, 2012). This view is echoed by Rosalind in Rogers' *The Last Resort: A Memoir of Zimbabwe* who intimates that:

And don't think this government doesn't know what we're up to. Whom we support. They have long memories. They know who did what in the war, and they know who is doing what now. They are watching us as we speak, and if we're not careful, they will come for us. (2009: 20)

The overwhelming narrative of victimhood allows no space for any blame to be apportioned to white farmers (Pilossof, 2012: 183). The post-eviction visions of the farm spill over to glorify the relations between black farm-workers and the white farmers. In white narratives, black labourers had no problem or 'worries'; they are presented as 'happy', industrious workers who were always 'content' under their benevolent employers (Pilossof, 2012: 167). The majority of these white narratives are reminiscent of colonial narratives that were alluded to in this chapter. This fixity on victimhood is unmistakably exploited and reiterated in white narratives in order to destabilise the authorised national narratives. On the contrary and as might be expected, White Zimbabweans in patriotic narratives are portrayed as 'perpetual victims of their own discourse' to quote Chennells (1995: 104). It is on account of this, that categorising white narratives as victim narratives inversely works in favour of patriotic narratives that seek to reverse colonial power politics such as Maredza's *The Blackness of Black* (2000), Mugabe's *Inside the Third Chimurenga* (2001), Chipamaunga's *Feeding Freedom* (2000), Maruma's *Coming Home* (2007), Mutasa's *Sekai, Minda Tave Nayo* (Sekai, We Now Have the Land, 2005), Mtizira's *The Chimurenga Protocol* (2008) and Gomo's *A Fine Madness* (2010).

The flagship of these patriotic narratives is apparent in what Gomo calls a 'Fine Madness', an oxymoron for justifying patriotic history and its gains. The land reform is depicted in patriotic narratives as "a source of terror, astonishment and hilarity, all at once" (Mbembe, 2015: 15). This myopic representation narrates how victims of the past colonial violence monopolised their victimhood and became perpetrators during the land invasions (Kaulemu, 2004: 81; Muponde, 2004: 179; Sachikonye, 2011: 37; Manase, 2014: 14). The ruling party imagined and then projected a pan-African-victim-identity to the regional community whilst at home it remained as patriotic vanguard of power. To this end, Muponde (2004: 177-178) observes the dynamics of victim politics and further shows how ZANU-PF ritualised and privatised the memory of past victimhood and regarded Mugabe as the "tormented", and "self righteous messiah." Mugabe's enunciation of Pan-African victimhood is best explained by Hall (1988: 44) in the observation that "[r]uling ideas may dominate other conceptions of the social world by setting the limit to what will appear as rational, reasonable, credible, indeed sayable or

thinkable, within the given vocabularies of motive and action available to us". Both ZANU-PF and Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) claim to be a victim of the other hence this paradox highlights the politics of narrating the performance of power.

Similarly, Bhabha (2012: 89) underscores that "the menace of mimicry is its double vision, which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority." In 1980 Mugabe altered his communist and terrorist image into a darling of the West by timely appropriating publicly endorsed reconciliatory rhetoric. However, the Matabeleland and Midlands mass murders, the removal of PF-ZAPU and white members of parliament from government that occurred between 1982 and 1987 and the post-2000 fast track land invasions disrupted this gesture of reconciliation. This double vision is also seen in the clandestine and inconsistent selection of heroes by the ruling party and in the titles of Mugabe centric narratives such as Auret's *From Liberator to Dictator: An Insider's Account of Robert Mugabe's Descent into Tyranny* (2009). In reminding his followers of resistance to settler conquest in the 1890s and the struggle for independence in the 1970s, Mugabe rhetorically urged a third phase of *Chimurenga* to complete the emancipation of the country. In this phase, land rights would be restored to the "sons of the soil," who were defined narrowly in the party's version of "patriotic history" as those who had actively supported ZANU's side in the struggle (Mugabe, 2001; Ranger, 2004; Kriger, 2006; Alexander, 2006: 184; Mararike, 2018: 205).

Mugabe's claim over the past gives him the authority to invent and distribute national identities whether 'patriotic' or 'sell out' using the "long memories", (Rogers, 2009: 20) that connect the past and present. Nyambi (2016: 217) articulates that the ruling party devised and operationalised the Third Chimurenga - a cache of anti-colonial, anti-West, and anti-opposition narratives that essentially reconstruct political power as inextricably bound together with the liberation struggle. The performance of the land invasions was portrayed in patriotic narratives as the fulfilment of past imperfections and for the same reason attracted scathing criticism in white narratives.

A brief consideration of the representations and misrepresentations of the post-2000 crisis is pertinent in understanding the influx of political writings in Zimbabwe. Nyambi (2013: 10) illustrates that representations of the post-2000 crisis are contested and polarised. This view is also harped upon by Pilosof (2012) whose seminal book, *The Unbearable Whiteness of*

Being: Farmers' Voices from Zimbabwe, critically engages with texts that were written by white farmers. The major drawback of this approach is that it does not provide a holistic consideration of the different perspectives held by the farm workers, black commercial farmers and war veterans as done by Orner and Holmes (2010), Sadomba (2011), Manase (2014: 11-12) and Moyo (2016). Sadomba (2011: 227) lends voice to Zimbabwe's war veterans in his quasi-biography and outlines the farm seizures as a pro-active war veteran's movement that gets hijacked and monopolised by the ruling party. The hegemonic positions and portrayal of farm workers and black commercial farmers in the Zimbabwean body politic are still glossed over and has been evaluated through a dichotomous analytical lens (Marongwe, 2003; Sachikonye, 2004; Hanlon, Manjengwa & Smart, 2012; Rutherford, 2016). 'Oppositional' literary narratives about black commercial farmers are sporadic, overlooked and under-acknowledged. Surprisingly, in Orner and Holmes' *Hope Deferred: Narratives of Zimbabwean Lives* (2010) there is only one story by Tsitsi, a black commercial farmer, for such a big volume. Interestingly, black commercial farmers have also begun writing their experiences and losses during the land invasions as exemplified by Moyo's *My Kondozi Story: The People's Hope Pillaged* (2016). Hence, this study examines this metanarrative element of opposition, polarities and exclusions in the textual analysis of the three primary texts selected for exegesis.

1.5 Theoretical views on competing discourses

Competing discourses are constantly changing and need to be analysed using a multi-perspectival theory that focuses on difference, ethnicity, gender, historiography, hegemony, imperialism, ideology, identity, in-betweenness, nationalism, neo-colonialism, power, place, representation, resistance, racism and suppression. Postcolonial theory is an ever-evolving process of resistance and reconstruction that addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the time of colonial contact up to present day (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2006: 2). Similarly, Bhabha (2015) and Young (2012) contend that postcolonial theory 'remains' relevant, firstly, because of its continuing projection of past conflicts into the experience of the present. Secondly, the same theory is germane to the aesthetics of cultural difference and politics of minorities in an age of globalisation. This desire to transform the present by destabilising the past is what is central in the representation of both, 'oppositional' and patriotic narratives. The main proponents of this eclectic theory are Derrida, Foucault, Bakhtin, Butler, Gramsci, Spivak, Althusser, Said,

Bhabha, Memmi, Fanon, Young and Mbembe. This study relies on postcolonial theory, particularly Bhabha's (2012: 121-123) ideas on mimicry, hybridity, and liminality and Mbembe's (2002a: 241) *African modes of self-writing*.

Postcolonial literatures are a result of transcultural processes such as hybridity, mimicry and liminality. According to Huggan (2013: 10) postcolonialism enacts "a performative mode of critical revisionism" that focuses on the forms of colonialism that have surfaced more recently in the context of an increasingly globalised but incompletely decolonised world. It should be underlined that opposition is not simply reduced to intention, but is implicit in the very production of dominance whose intervention as a "dislocatory presence" paradoxically confirms the very thing it displaces (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2006: 9). Young (1995: 16) argues that hybridity can be invoked to imply a contra-fusion and disjunction (or even separate development) as well as fusion and assimilation. Moreover, Bhabha (2015) defines hybridity as a form of incipient critique that works within the cultural design of the present to reshape our understanding of the performative and political interstices. Similarly, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2006, 2013) note that hybridity stresses the mutuality of the colonial process and its counter-resistance. Exemplary in this regard is how Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) and Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) armed forces worked together during the liberation struggle as the Patriotic Front to dislodge white minority rule in Rhodesia but leaders from both camps ended up contesting elections as separate parties in 1980. Hybridity fosters the reconstruction of a political entity into a new one that is neither the same nor different (Bhabha, 2012). In other words, hybridity overturns myths and stereotypes of what is perceived as authentic and counterfeit in post/colonial discourse. Indeed, hybridity is a common and effective form of subversive opposition since it displays the "necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2006, 2013; Bhabha, 2012: 37-38). Put simply, a hybrid postcolonial situation can be seen as a counter-narrative and a counter-performance of power by the dominated and oppressed. In essence, this study is interested in the ramifications of hybridity, particularly how it initially challenges the unitary and essentialist representation of political parties, nation, history, ethnicity, performance of power and the self respectively. Secondly, it shows the postcolonial performative critique of hybridity amongst political actors and their political parties. This in turn amply demonstrates a postcolonial mutuality between patriotic and 'oppositional' narratives.

Liminality is a product of hybridity, distinctly the ambivalent identities that are constructed across traditional, cultural norms, tribal and political classifications. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2013) maintain that ambivalence characterises the way in which the post/colonial discourse relates to, and constructs the liminal subject at the centre of binary designations of power. Liminality can also be idealised to represent what Fanon (1952: 90) considers as having “two systems of reference” and what Du Bois (1976: 2) views as a “two-ness” caused by unreconciled strivings and warring ideals in *The Souls of Black Folks*. Comparably, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2013: 10) call this doubling and splitting of identity as being “two-powered”. Bhabha (2012: 2, 130) regards this duplicity as “the sum of the ‘parts’ of a difference” and in-between identities and stereotypes that lead to a crisis of identification. In other words, liminality entails occupying an in-between space that is ‘neither inside, nor outside any given setting or context. As such, liminal forms of identification may be asymmetrical, disjunctive and contradictory but be taken as emerging in the interstices of power blocs (Bhabha, 2015). Scholars such as Spivak (2003); Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2006, 2013); Dirlik (2018) and Gandhi (2019) assert that liminality is an artifice of transformation that highlights the politics of representation.

This splitting or doubling of the self shows how identity is positional and relational. This provides a discursive space for mediating on behalf of political rivals. Simply put, liminality embraces transitions, unity and diversity and thus promotes cross-cultural relations between the minority and the majority. In essence, liminality unsettles the construction and representation of identities that are regarded as fixed binaries or authentic. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2013: 25) outline that liminal spaces act to problematise and dismantle essentialisms, fixities and binary systems through forms of enunciation, negotiation, deconstruction, transformative agency and empowerment of minorities. This study deploys Bhabha’s (2012) theorisation of liminality as an intervening space of self-representation and imagining of the past and the nation. Such a critique of subjectivity and the nation’s history allows the recognition of those who were systematically erased, stereotyped, forgotten and rendered invisible.

Mimicry can be taken as the proclivity of copying and mocking the performances of those in power by the governed in a bid to eventually gain the right and recognition to rule. In addition, it is a tool for contesting the power of the dominant by the dominated. The foregoing

discussion shows that this dialectical nexus is as a result of power politics. As shown earlier, power is “everywhere and comes from everywhere” and is embodied through accepted yet negotiable forms of knowledge (Foucault, 1998: 68). Hence, the performance of power is a copied and negotiated ritual as much as an act of narration. This view is also buttressed by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2006, 2013) who advance that the colonised uses imitation and repetition as a coping mechanism against the imperial presence, which make the relationship one of constant, if implicit, contestation and opposition. For Bhabha (2012: 85) mimicry is an elusive and effective strategy that does not suggest the rejection of opposition but rather that it is an ironic compromise that encompasses more than an overt opposition to post/colonial authority. Mimetic literary effects such as repetition and irony are key in repudiating the construction of discriminatory identities and engendering transitions in the lives of autobiographical protagonists. For instance, the notion of writing back to the Empire invokes a mockery and repetition of the coloniser’s performance of power. In simple terms, mimicry is a site of resistance to the dominant discourse such as patriotic narratives analysed in this study. Whether it is colonial or postcolonial, mimicry is a performative activity and in particular a performance of resistance. Mimicry is a dialectical and recursive performance that also utilises counter-mimicking strategies. However, this study is interested in how both patriotic and oppositional narratives mimic and counter-mimic each other.

The ‘difference’ that constitutes the postcolonial notions of hybridity, mimicry and liminality can be geographical, ethnic, temporal, political, racial, cultural and economic. As such, this study is interested in how these differences act as signifiers of unity and alterity, inclusion and exclusion, equality and inequality and recognition and misrecognition. Bhabha (2012) observes that it is through the critical discourses of hybridity, mimicry and liminality that the postcolonial society becomes the site of writing the nation. Conjointly, Bhabha (2013: 1) notes the analogy between nations and narratives and argues that both materialise from myths. These myths are reclaimed in nationalist discourses to persistently produce the idea of the nation as a perpetual narrative of national progress and self-generation (Bhabha, 2013). The study also embraces the clarion call by Mbembe (2002a: 241) in *African modes of self-writing* that scholars should work beyond the contours of liberation histories that reduce political life to modular forms of “Afro-radicalism” and go beyond narratives anchored in nativism that continue to promote the colonial idea of African identity as fixed and permanently based on notions of

indigeneity, race, belonging, affiliation and patriotism. In essence, Mbembe's (2002a) essay looks at different ways of imagining and deploying 'African identity' not as a unified and fixed concept. To that end, the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from emerging is very important in the constitution of connections that exist between them (Said, 1994). This seminal production of knowledge by ZANU-PF uses demonisation discourses such as Afro-radicalism and nativism to suppress other narratives.

The same occlusion of alternative versions has been systematically used since independence by ZANU-PF to censor dissenting voices. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) regards the hegemonic production and control of memorialising the past as Mugabeism. ZANU-PF's "silencing strategies" incited what Ndlovu (2017b: 140-142) calls "writing back... the Zimbabwean way", which implies an answering back to ZANU-PF and its authorised patriotic historiography. For Bhabha (2012) such polemical writing ensures that meaning and symbols of culture can be translated, re-historicised and read anew. The postulations of Bhabha (2012) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) on counter-narratives goes in tandem with Mbembe's (2002a, 2015) proposition of "another form of writing" which deconstructs thematics of a romanticised history imbued by myths and nativist theses. It is in line with this context that the study infers the connotative power of self-writing and how it influences inclusivity, multivocality and the disavowal of myths and stereotypes. Furthermore, writing the self is a political act that is intoned with notions of rebuttal and validation. In comparison, Samuelson (2010: 113-114), focusing on the literary trends in a multiracial and democratic South Africa, regards this new wave of writing as a 'post-transitional' writing which is marked by a scripting connections of the "now" and the "ephemeral present." In other words, there is a nexus between these competing discourses in the sense that they work as polar opposites but covertly and overtly interact. In essence, this study examines contestations that exist between patriotic and 'oppositional' narratives, specifically those that are found on the axis of subjectivity and performativity.

It is plausible to consider the needs in autobiographical (re)construction of Zimbabwean identity as attempts at deconstructing the essentialist views of nation, patriotism and belonging. This critical writing is more specifically envisioned by Dirlik as:

multi-historicism, in its very repudiation of a single historical trajectory in the past, also opens the way to thinking of the future in terms of alternative historical trajectory that defy the colonization of the future by current structures of power. (2018: 17)

Here Dirlik argues that postcolonial criticism creates intellectual spaces for the voicing of alternatives and thus opens vistas of analytical perspectives. Interestingly, white Zimbabwean writers, particularly white farmers, also employ in their memoirs what Thomas (1994: 189) calls “nativist-primitivist idealizations” that merely recapitulate the “imperialist nostalgia.” This nativist essentialism can also be used “productively” to “complement the here-and-now concerns” of dislocation, displacement and marginality (Hove, 2016) as a direct attempt to combat notions of non-citizenship and non-belonging (Thomas, 1994: 189; Pilosof, 2012: 157). Similarly, Tsvangirai in Raftopoulos and Phimister (1997: xi) identify the need for a more open and critical process of writing history in Zimbabwe. Therefore, new modes of writing the African self and the nation should be inclusive in nature.

It is clear, as shown in this discussion that the past six decades have witnessed Zimbabwe’s trajectories characterised by a historiography that has continuities and discontinuities due to revision and deconstruction of patriotic history. This chapter provided a general picture of the divergence between these competing accounts and points to the ongoing battle over collective memory and national narratives. The memory of other nationalists and war heroes such as Reverend Sithole, Muzorewa and Banana, and former nationalist fighters such as Mhanda was effectively erased and suppressed from the narrative and memory of the nation. This political ploy was made possible by the ruling elite’s control of the agencies of state commemoration such as the Heroes Acre. Patriotic narratives are chiefly and obliquely concerned with the panoply of subjects such as histrionics and heroics of the liberation war. Mugabe has been imagined and re-imagined as a sole liberator and a super patriot. Nationalists from both military camps were eager to change the political template rather than weed out economic and social inequalities. Early black Zimbabwean auto/biographies offered a simplistic, enchanted and consciously pro-nationalist interpretation of the past motivated and burdened by cultural nationalism.

Current autobiographies, particularly those under discussion in this study, also perpetuate ‘the big man thesis.’ Some autobiographies view Mugabe as ‘larger than life’ and an unassailable leader. One of the most tenacious myths relating to the liberation struggle is the invincibility of the guerillas. It is my thesis that these memoirs were critical and revisionist of the colonial historiography but at the same time their conclusions are apologetic. ‘Oppositional narratives’ do

not delegitimise the performance of the liberation war but take a much more critical view of the war, politics, human rights and governance. They are compelled by the deconstruction of mythologised history and expose the traumatic and violent nature of the war that is repressed in patriotic narratives. As a result, this study, draws on postcolonial theory particularly Bhabha's (2012) concepts of mimicry, liminality, hybridity and Mbembe's (2002a: 241) 'another form of writing' to analyse political autobiographies.

Postcolonial theory in general cannot interrogate the complex facets of political autobiography, a self-referential mode of writing. As a result, this study also considers Smith and Watson's (2001) delineation of autobiographical strategies of representation and McAdams' (2006, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2018) psycho-literary constructions of the self. Postcolonial theories used in this study condense the concept of narratives by comparing it with nations whereas McAdams (2012, 2018) argues that identity itself takes the form of a story, complete with setting, scenes, character plot and theme as a life-story. Narrative identity is defined as the internalised story that individuals generate to integrate their experiences and create meaning in their lives (McAdams, 2008, 2018). Such an exploration of the self underlines the transformative process of writing and how it is sequentially structured to show episodes of growth and transformation. All of this is not dissimilar to Smith and Watson's (2001) strategies of representation (alluded to at the beginning of the chapter) that include the autobiographical acts of story-telling, use of narrative tropes, counter-narration and rhetorical aims such as self-interrogation, campaigns for social change, justice and human rights. The complexity of autobiographical texts requires reading practices that reflect on the socio-cultural contexts and narrative shifts within the historical or chronological trajectory (Smith & Watson, 2001). Therefore, an eclectic theoretical approach permits an exploration of the self, particularly the evolving and multilayered nature of the narrators' subjectivity.

Accordingly, this study seeks to enter into conversation with the body of existing studies on political autobiographies and open up a new avenue of inquiry that shifts from the traditional focus on patriotic narratives, which are in the service of the ruling elite, to opposition autobiographies, which I term 'democratic' narratives in this study. Research on 'democratic' narratives is sparse as they are still emerging on the Zimbabwean literary scene, hence the significance of my study. There is also paucity in the systematic interrogation of patriotic

narratives (that claim to narrate from the centre) in tandem with oppositional narratives hence there is a compelling need to undertake such an analysis. The sum of such an exploration reveals a very limiting and limited conception of patriotism, patriotic history, nationhood, national belonging and democracy. In essence, this study demystifies existing ideas on autobiography and thus enriches the area of Zimbabwean and Southern African literary studies through its analysis of these competing narratives.

This study is divided into five chapters with this first chapter defining the research problem and engaging in a review of related literature, as well as outlining the theoretical framework used in the analysis of the politics of narrating the performance of power.

The second chapter focuses on the postcolonial reading of Tsvangirai's *At the Deep End* (2011), particularly the limitations of patriotism and what I term 'democratic narratives'. It analyses the ambivalences of the representation of Tsvangirai as a democrat and his inadvertent imitations of ZANU-PF and patriotic history.

Chapter three analyses Msipa's *In Pursuit of Freedom and Justice: A Memoir* (2015). It concentrates on his impressions on violence, democracy and what constitutes justice. Of major importance is also his 'neutrality' or what I call narrating from the centre in the depiction of Zimbabwean history.

Chapter four examines Coltart's *The Struggle Continues: 50 Years of Tyranny in Zimbabwe* (2016). It explores Coltart's depiction of the politics of belonging, citizenship and his views on opposition politics in Zimbabwe particularly how he ends up being marginalised within the national discourse. Chapter four is followed by a conclusion.

End notes

- ¹ Arguably, there is preferential and ephemeral recognition of the roles played by white and/or coloured Zimbabwean nationalists such as Guy Clutton-Brock and Joseph Culverwell in the national narrative respectively. Nevertheless, slippery terms like ‘white and /or coloured nationalists’ are by no means problem free since they are used by ZANU-PF willy-nilly to only refer to few, loyal, liberal whites and coloureds. This view is also shared by Bond and Manyanya (2003: xiii) who argue that Mugabe publicly denounced whites but still maintained close ties with white business tycoons such as Tiny Rowland, Nicholas van Hoogstraten John Bredenkamp and Billy Rautenbach.
- ² Similarly, fictional works such as Kanengoni’s (1997: 87) novel also laments that this ‘echoing silence’ distorts the story and makes it defective.
- ³ Livingstone’s *The Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857), Thomas’s *Eleven Years in Central South Africa* (1873), Baldwin’s *African Hunting and Adventure from Natal to the Zambesi* (1868), Selous’ *A Hunter’s Wanderings in Africa* (1881), *Selous Travel and Adventure in South –East Africa* (1893), Selous’ *Sunshine and Storm in Rhodesia* (1896), Baden-Powell’s *The Matabele Campaign 1896* (1897) Stent’s *A Personal Record of Some Incidents in the Life of Cecil Rhodes*, are examples of missionary, hunting, travel and occupation narratives that have a singular story which justified imperialism and colonialism. The same conquistador and superior mentality in imperial narratives is also inherent in subsequent fictional and auto/biographical narratives such as Brown’s *A Forest is a Long Time Growing* (1967), Trew’s *Towards the Tamarind Tree* (1970), Stiff’s *The Rain Goddess* (1973), Berlyn’s *The Quiet Man: A Biography of Ian Douglas Smith* (1978) and Joyce’s *Anatomy of a Rebel: Smith of Rhodesia: A biography* (1974). These narratives reduced the liberation struggle to a nihilistic terrorist activity in which the anti-colonial fighters were portrayed as fighting a losing battle. Chennells (1995: 104) notes the settler mythology that was used to consider the liberation war as another rebellion. However, there are some writers such as Lessing (1950; 1995) and McLoughlin (1985) who humanely portrayed black characters and castigated societal evils such as racial discrimination, violence and oppression.
- ⁴ Currey (2008: 102-103) in *Africa Writes Back: The African Writers Series and the Launch of African Literature* contends that the Europeans always claimed that they ‘discovered’ land when they first went to a place which had been known since the dawn of time by the people who lived there.
- ⁵ Identity is the product of multiple and competing discourses, which construct unstable, multiple, fluctuating and fragmented senses of Self and Other (Hall & Du Gay, 2011; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 8).
- ⁶ Primorac’s *The Place of Tears – The Novel and Politics in Modern Zimbabwe*. (2006: 14) argues that Gaidzanwa (1985) and Veit-Wild (1993) proffer a literary-sociological reading approach that juxtapose texts written by black authors in different languages and ignores those authored by Rhodesian settlers. Whilst Kaarsholm (1991) and Chennells (1995) focus on white narratives yet they did so at the expense of black writing.
- ⁷ Mutsvairo’s, *Feso* (1957), Sithole’s *Obed Mutezo: The Mudzimu Christian Nationalist* (1970), Katiyo’s *Son of the Soil* (1976), Samukange’s *Year of the Uprising*, (1978), Mutsvairo’s *Mapondera: Soldier of Zimbabwe* (1978), Ndhkala’s *Jikinya* (1979), Pongweni’s *Songs that Won the Liberation War* (1982), Chipamaunga’s *A Fighter for Freedom*, (1983) Mutsvairo’s *Chaminuka: Prophet of Zimbabwe* (1983), Hamutyinei’s *Zvakanga Zvakaoma muZimbabwe* (1984), Mutsvairo’s *Mweya waNehanda* (1988), Mutasa’s *The Contact* (1985) and Chipamaunga’s *Chains of Freedom* (1998) were written in a euphoric manner that narrated a distant past and heavily relied on African orature. The same works mythologised and knitted together the 1896 revolt and the nationalist struggle of the 1960s.
- ⁸ Mugabe, was dislodged from power through a coup and replaced by Emmerson Mnangangwa in 2017.
- ⁹ Smith, Simpson and Davies. (1981: 133) records that Mugabe privately accused Nkomo of not taking a fair share of the war. The contribution by Zimbabwe People’s Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) is not included in patriotic history. A comprehensive perspective that corrects this historiographical error is in Bhebe’s *The ZAPU and Guerilla warfare and Evalengical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe* (1999) and Sibanda’s *The Zimbabwe Africa People’s Union, 1961-87* (2005).
- ¹⁰ The listing of all counter-discursive creative works is beyond the scope of this study but a few examples might suffice.
- ¹¹ The setting up of the Rhodesian Literature Bureau in 1953 ensured that there was virtually no means for black

writers to publish in English. This explains why there is a handful of novels written in English by blacks as opposed to those written in the vernacular. Much of the critical novels and autobiographies were published in exile and banned locally. The volume of locally published books increased after independence but shifted from simply glorifying the past to criticising it. Although the Literature Bureau was disbanded in 1999, censorship and self-censorship remained intact.

- ¹² Edgar Tekere, a one-time Secretary General of ZANU-PF, was dismissed from the party after making strong accusations against it. He later formed his own party, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement, and was probably the first to accuse the government for corruption and rigging elections. He was, however, accused of being a desperate drunkard in order to undermine his opposition.
- ¹³ This dissident witch-hunt also known as *Gukurahundi*, which is translated from Shona as “the spring rain that washes away the chaff from the last harvest” involved two over-lapping conflicts: a low-intensity counter insurgency campaign to root out “dissidents” by the regular defense forces; and an ethnic pogrom by the Fifth Brigade military unit against unarmed Ndebele civilians. These Mass murders were graphically recorded in the CCJPZ’s (1997/2007) *Breaking the silence, building true peace: A report in the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1988*, Woods’ *Kevin Woods Story* (2007), and Auret’s *From Liberator to Dictator: An Insiders’ Account of Robert Mugabe’s Descent into Tyranny* (2009). A multi-perspectival reading of the genocide is brought to the fore in these aforementioned texts. Auret co-compiled the CCJPZ report and later wrote his memoir whilst Woods sheds more light on the South African Apartheid government sponsored sabotage activities during the same period. Also worth noting is Kriger’s (2007: 66) observation records that many white farmers and their families were gruesomely murdered during this period than during the liberation war.
- ¹⁴ Sachikonye (2011: 107) concurs that provocative violence from ZANU-PF acts as a trap for the MDC who in turn reciprocate though in small proportion of the overall violence.
- ¹⁵ Eide (1989), Worth (1990) and Shamuyarira, Kumar and Kangai (1995) are less critical biographies that portray Mugabe as a darling of Africa, whilst Bhebe (2005) and Tekere (2007) merge the first and second liberation struggle.
- ¹⁶ Wieslawa Kanclerz, former wife of the late War Veterans leader Chenjerai Hunzvi, used the pseudonym Magda Tunzvi to cover up her identity when she wrote *White Slave*, an autobiography that was originally published in Polish as *Biała niewolnica*.
- ¹⁷ Sadomba is an ex-combatant and an academic who wrote a quasi-biography in 2011 titled, *War Veterans in Zimbabwe’s Revolution: Challenging neo-colonialism and settler and international capital*.
- ¹⁸ Mutambara’s (2014) autobiography, *The Rebel in Me: A ZANLA, Guerrilla Commander in the Rhodesian Bush war, 1974-1980* is a patriotic narrative as it does not question the status quo.
- ¹⁹ Vesta Sithole (2006), the widow of Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, wrote *My Life With An Unsung Hero* in order to repair the tarnished reputation of her husband who was regarded as a ‘sell-out’ and counter-revolutionary.
- ²⁰ Christopher Mutsvangwa in the *Zimbabwe Situation* (2016), an online newspaper disputed Joyce Mujuru’s once 1974 celebrated heroic performance for gunning down a Rhodesian Army helicopter soon after her fall-out in the ZANU-PF presidium and party.
- ²¹ Chenjerai Hunzvi and Border Gezi were honoured for their sadistic performance in the fast track land invasions also known as Third Chimurenga whilst Aguy Georgias, a mere top aide and former Member of Parliament were also interred at the national shrine despite having questionable war credentials. Their glossy obituaries created a counter-memory as they were referred to as Gallant Sons of the Soil and generally a fighter for economic freedom respectively. To the contrary, nationalists and war heroes such as Reverend ...Canaan Banana, Reverend Muzorewa, Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, Lookout Masuku and James Chikerema, Wilfred Mhanda were vilified and denied Hero statuses.
- ²² Maurice Nyagumbo, a ZANU-PF minister committed suicide in 1989 after he was implicated in a corruption scandal and yet he was buried at the National Heroes Acre.
- ²³ Bakhtin (1987b: 20) argues that the dead are loved in a different way hence the language about them is stylistically quite distinct from the language of the living.
- ²⁴ Fuller’s *Don’t Let’s Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (2003), Godwin’s *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun: A memoir* (2006), Nyarota’s *Against the Grain: Memoirs of a Zimbabwean Newsmen* (2006) and Todd’s *Through the Darkness: A Life in Zimbabwe* (2007).
- ²⁵ Selby (2006: 201) calls this “a decade of public silence” on the land question by commercial farmers.

Chapter 2: Re-reading Tsvangirai's *At the Deep End* as a 'democratic narrative'

This chapter closely reads Tsvangirai's autobiography *At the Deep End* (2011), focusing on evocations of the envisaged 'democratic' nation. I read the autobiography as a 'democratic narrative' where democracy is loosely conceived as, inter alia, subversions of autocracy. A major characteristic of this strand of 'democratic narratives' is that they are written by opposition political actors who identify themselves as democrats, social activists and human rights defenders. Their core intention is to lead the nation toward better governance, promotion and protection of human rights through peaceful means. As such, the present chapter examines the self-representation and 'democratic' performance of Tsvangirai and the MDC from its inception to rupture. This chapter also analyses how 'democratic narratives' could potentially lead to a cultural paradigm shift in the Zimbabwean political landscape.

2.1 The writer, history and the nation

The entry point of this chapter is to understand the writer and the context of his work. Morgan Richard Tsvangirai was born in a colonial setting and matured as a labour unionist under the post-colonial tyranny of Mugabe (p.538). To this end, the autobiographical narrator fits in the description given by wa Thiong'o (1986: 1) of a writer who emerged after the Second World War and experienced as part of his growth the nodal stages of anti-colonial struggle, independence and neo-colonialism. Both the writer and his work were products of the revolution that was to be understood, reflected upon and interpreted (Wa Thiong'o, 1986: 3; Mararike, 2018). This critique perceives the autobiographical narrator as a neo-colonial writer who locates the space of 'democratic' history in the Zimbabwean body politic. Likewise, Smith and Watson (2001: 2) describe autobiography as a self-referential discourse that is produced at a particular historical juncture and dwells much on self-interested intent of assessing one's performativity and the meaning of public achievements. As such, *At the Deep End* (2011) traces the life of Morgan Richard Tsvangirai,¹ from his early days as a trade unionist before becoming the founding president of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and the second Prime Minister of post-independent Zimbabwe. Tsvangirai's autobiography is informed by a sense of an impending change and, hence, employs a temporal juxtaposition as a central narrative technique in order to create a paradigm shift in the narrative of the nation. Tsvangirai's narrative

can be taken as *testimonio*: a story that needs to be told because it deals with the problem of repression, poverty, subalternity, exploitation, or simply struggle for survival, which is implicated in the narration itself (Vidal and Jaral 1986: 3). Moreover, Lotman (1971: 350) observes that there is no narrative where there is no story to tell - every narrative assumes a “spatial shift” which generates narrative interest. Inadvertently, the reader is compelled to pay particular attention to the similarities and differences between Tsvangirai and Mugabe’s performances of power. Thus, another central premise of ‘democratic narratives’ concerns the politics of representation.

At the Deep End (2011) contests state-authored patriotic narratives that were constructed using a self-serving hegemonic version of history. This narrative confrontation aims at promoting a reconfiguration of the political space and de-silencing past events such as the post-independence ethnically motivated violence. This mode of post/colonial representation and individuation has the potential to uncover othered and “denied” knowledges and allow their entrance into the domain of dominant discourse and be recognised (Bhabha, 2012: 144).² The autobiographical narrator, in this case, adds a personal chapter in the narrative of the nation. Similarly, Lejeune (1989: 14) highlights the politics of self-representation in the autobiography, arguing that the reader establishes resemblances and automatically looks for differences, errors and deformations. This hypothesis resonates well with Bhabha’s concepts of hybridity and mimicry. We witness a disruption of the hegemony of postcolonial authority through contesting the legitimacy of patriotic narratives but at the same time resembling and becoming that which is criticised. Thus, the suggestion is that Tsvangirai narrates a national and by extension ‘democratic’ identity through selecting, plotting and interpreting events from his childhood memory of colonial times. This current chapter examines how Tsvangirai’s autobiography deforms postcolonial authority and per/forms this ‘democratic’ identity.

Tsvangirai’s political subjectivity intertwines (and intervenes in) the memory and fate of the nation. The autobiographical narrator is a man of humble beginnings who has achieved so much for his own people and fought for democracy. This is seen, for instance, when the narrator says:

My life was destined to be closely interwoven with political, economic and social changes in Zimbabwe ... So in telling my personal story I track the historical background at the same time.

Zimbabwe's story is that background: it ultimately became, for me the foreground of my life. (p.3)

It is noteworthy that Tsvangirai attaches his life experiences to the political, economic and social developments in Zimbabwe in order to become a central figure of the 'democratic' narrative and historiography. In other words, Tsvangirai's personal story is likened to the narrative of a nation in the making and on the verge of becoming 'democratic'. This insight is indeed useful and constitutes what Smith and Watson (2001: 6) note as the imaginative acts of remembering which always intersect with rhetorical aims such as the narrator's conviction. Therefore, Tsvangirai's narrative is characterised by a sense of national connectedness based on his political evaluation of the performance of power of three leading figures who were all Prime Ministers in Zimbabwe namely, Ian Smith, Reverend Abel Muzorewa, Robert Mugabe and himself.

The same narrative extends our understanding of Zimbabwean politics and performance of power. A salient and remarkable aspect of Tsvangirai's memoir is that it performs "rhetorical acts" of narration such as settling scores, disputing accounts of other political actors, upholding reputations, justifying perceptions and inventing desirable futures (Smith & Watson, 2001: 10). It is against this background that Machakanja notes:

People's narratives, recollections or memories ... are highly fractured and politicized, to such an extent there is little consensus on what happened, how it happened and why it happened ... *this* reflects contested interests and positions over political power. (2010: 2-3; emphasis added)

Tsvangirai's narration of the self and nation blurs the line between the personal and the political by grounding social memories of suffering under the scourge of colonialism and the persecutions after independence. This blur is illustrated by Tsvangirai's justification for not participating in the liberation struggle:

Perhaps I would have become a political activist but my parents needed financial help to support the other children through school. (p.25)

Politics aside, I was increasingly concerned about the future of our own family and my role in pulling them out of poverty. (p.31)

In stark contrast, authorised patriotic narratives record failure to participate in the liberation struggle as a miscalculated error and an act of cowardice.³ However, it was not always the case that everyone who joined the liberation struggle was patriotic. It should be noted that there are multiple and divergent reasons that pushed and pulled people to join or not to join either side of

the anti-colonial war. Some individuals had their own selfish reasons whilst some were forced to join out of fear for political and economic reasons.⁴ The same notion is espoused by Tongogara in Tekere's memoir, *A Lifetime of Struggle* (2007: 95) who affirms that "some of these kids are killers, die-hard criminals that joined the war to escape jail or worse". Nevertheless, Mugabe and ZANU-PF deride Tsvangirai,⁵ and other non-participants of the liberation struggle as being effeminate, unpatriotic and sell-outs.⁶

The foregoing review of politics and the past clearly shows that many people who did not perform or support the liberation struggle later joined ZANU-PF party structures in order to elude being considered unpatriotic and sell-outs. Interestingly, Tsvangirai joined the ZANU-PF Bindura wing soon after the elections of 1980 and was elected secretary of the local structure of ZANU-PF (p.78). In essence, Tsvangirai's shifting personal experiences as an admirer of Mugabe, supporter and member of ZANU-PF and a disillusioned trade union activist made him seek alternative formations that were democratic. This seeking of alternatives foregrounds a comparative approach that is commonly used by an array of political actors when criticising other political parties. As a result, two explanations are given for Tsvangirai's short-lived support for Mugabe and ZANU-PF. The first, logical explanation is that he lost faith in both the party and its autocratic leader, and the second, he links his recalcitrance to his disappointment with the Gukurahundi Massacres in Matabeleland and Midlands and the repressive laws in post-independent Zimbabwe. Tsvangirai's disillusionment with nepotism, corruption and ethnic persecution fuelled his doubts and led him to question Mugabe's hegemonic performances of power. This questioning mind and attitude would naturally make him an 'enemy of the people' and therefore an opposition politician (p.88). What is significant here and embedded in the narrative of Tsvangirai is a continuously oppositional stance that is used to justify his 'democratic' performance of power. However, Tsvangirai misconstrues his experiences in ZANU-PF as a seamless process and does not acknowledge that it resulted in the constitution of his hybrid identity.

Tsvangirai's narrative is panoramic and responsive to current conditions and political despondency in Zimbabwe and Africa as a whole. Dowden (2006) observes that African politics is personal and he elaborates further that the calculation of what is rational in an African context may not be deemed equally rational in a European political context. Given this political

orientation, both ZANU-PF and the MDC have a tendency to engage in localising politics thus perceiving Zimbabwean issues in Zimbabwean terms (Chan, 2010). This point is made clear when Tsvangirai laments how Western diplomats abandoned him after failing to unseat Mugabe because they were using an unAfrican reading of African systems and African mind-sets (p.246). This line of argument rests on the notion of mimicry, which underscores the ambivalent relationship between ZANU-PF and the MDC. According to Bhabha (2012: 85) colonial mimicry is a subject of cultural difference between the oppressed and the oppressor. In this regard, the autobiographical narrator illustrates this cultural difference when he intimates that ZANU-PF used its liberation credentials as a perfect cover for black-on-black oppression (p.274). Although the focus of Bhabha is colonial mimicry, this chapter distends the same notion and shows its relevance in postcolonial Zimbabwe. It is noteworthy, that MDC imitates this localising politics as a manoeuvre of resisting the stereotype of being called a stooge of the West.⁷ However, this inward looking politics tends to be problematic and stimulates nativist politics and Afro-radicalism, which make it difficult to differentiate ‘democratic narratives’ from patriotic narratives.

2.1 The politics of difference in ‘democratic narratives’

Tsvangirai is best poised to speak and act ‘democratic’ by claiming to articulate real change and being the proverbial servant leader. The autobiographical narrator portrays the party as formed not just to counter Mugabe but to offer an alternative future to the citizens of Zimbabwe (p.409). For this reason, the autobiographical narrator boldly declares that:

After two decades of watching Mugabe and ZANU PF closely I needed to do something meaningful to help Zimbabwe escape the consequences of what I considered unacceptable government behaviour. (p.192)

Evident in this description is the leitmotif of good versus evil which highlights the disparity between Mugabe and Tsvangirai’s performance of power. Furthermore, the same leitmotif shows how Tsvangirai dedicated his life to serve the people. As a result, he stands in the gap that no one else was prepared to occupy and takes the first step in organising a countrywide opposition. The autobiographical narrator’s entry into politics was not a career choice but a burning desire for change and a patriotic priority (p.544). The portrait of the servant leader that is given by the autobiographical narrator indicates a “desire to emerge as ‘authentic’ hence becomes a “subject

of difference” (Bhabha, 2012: 86; 88). The quest of becoming ‘a subject of difference’ is problematic because it construes identity as fixed. Therefore, *At the Deep End* (2011) privileges the disparate identity of the autobiographical narrator and the MDC to the extent that it essentialises difference.

The MDC emerged as a ‘democratic’ alternative to the ruling party. This explains why the self as a ‘democratic’ option is constructed as a foil to the other, Mugabe, and his tyrannical ZANU-PF party. This aestheticisation of being and (political) identity through foiling can be inferred from the quotation below:

What was the MDC bringing to the table and what was the essential difference between us and ZANU-PF? These were fairly common questions raised with me in the early life of the party. In short, ZANU-PF is a nationalist outfit with a liberation war legacy. It is structured like a pyramid and run directly from the top like a military unit with a commander whose orders are ignored at one’s peril. It is administered like an army, understandably so, because it was a liberation movement. The MDC allows for greater decision-making at the bottom of its structures, at a local level. As a post-liberation party formed by social movements with a culture of debate and discussion before decisions are made, the MDC’s main thrust is to extend the concept of freedom through popular participation, one of the ideals of the liberation struggle, which the founders of the party felt ZANU-PF had abandoned. (p.291-292)

The above description shows a binary representation of the hierarchical structures between these two dominant parties in Zimbabwe. On one hand, ZANU-PF is perceived as an enclave of the top-down consensus, conformity and acquiescence and thus a party that does not allow room for voicing divergent opinions and robust debate.⁸ Conversely, the MDC is considered to be a democratic party that is inclusive and fosters a liberal culture of debate and popular participation. This comparison is given to ridicule, especially considering how the hybrid nature of the MDC allowed the principal political actors to mimic authoritarian and repressive leadership styles.

Furthermore, Tsvangirai views himself and the MDC as an antithesis of Mugabe and ZANU-PF. He notes that both Mugabe and ZANU-PF had no interest in participatory governance and excluded the entire nation from the decision-making processes. As such, the autobiographical narrator wryly recalls how he tried to raise issues for debate and was advised that decisions in the ZANU-PF Bindura branch were made at the top for implementation at lower levels (p.98). This “essential difference” inferred by Tsvangirai becomes a self-made marker of ‘democratic’ identity (p.291). The autobiographical narrator assumes that political identity thrives through differentiation and can be constituted through radical criticism of ZANU-PF

structures. Here the problem with this assumption is that identity is perceived as a product of difference rather than negotiation. For instance, Tsvangirai acknowledges that “[u]nlike ZANU-PF, the MDC has no party cell... we devised one of the most democratic structures possible...” (p.292). The party cell referred by Tsvangirai, is a primary political organisational structure that is composed of a small group of affiliated members at the level of the village and community. It is this distinctiveness, which underlines the politics of inclusion in the MDC as opposed to ZANU-PF’s politics of exclusion. This difference is essentialised in Tsvangirai’s autobiography because it does not take into consideration that ZANU-PF’s Central Committee used to have a collegiate style of leadership that ensured Mugabe would not make his own independent decisions (Smith, Simpson & Davies, 1981: 156; Tekere 2007). However, this collegiate style of leadership was not binding and enforceable as shown by the numerous unilateral decisions made by Mugabe. For the same reason, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2006, 2013) argue that difference, which is measured with inadequate sticks, is designed for personal and morbid purposes. Therefore, what is critical to Tsvangirai’s conception and claims of ‘democratic’ space in the MDC is a personal motive of being applauded for introducing participatory democracy and sound political ideals in the narrative of the nation.

Ideological differences are constantly politicised and essentialised by both ZANU-PF and the MDC to create partisan dichotomies and hierarchies. Ironically, the call for attention to “difference” has ended up rendering “difference” itself into a metahistorical principle, making it impossible to distinguish one kind of “difference” from another politically (Dirlik, 2018: ix). In the same way, Attwell contends that:

The axis has been shifting ... from an emphasis on how to write about sameness and difference, to writing about *temporality*, which is to say, writing about one’s own place in history or one’s place in the present and future. (2005: 8)

Tsvangirai left ZANU-PF in 1984 because “the entire system abhorred black political opposition and was antagonistic to any form of dissent” (p.90). Tsvangirai discloses that the structuring of the MDC leadership after its formation in 1999 signalled the emergence of a “new kind of politics” (p.298). This ‘new kind of politics’ can be interpreted as a new political discourse that is based on participatory democracy, inclusiveness and non-racialism. However, the same discourse underlines what Spivak (2003: 361) calls a “triumphalist self-declared hybridity” in the sense that the majority in the MDC were at one time in ZANU-PF. There is a close analogy

between Spivak's postulation of a 'triumphalist self-declared hybridity' and the theorisation of Bhabha's hybridity and how it creates "new transcultural forms" as a result of cross-cultural exchange and counter-discourse as noted by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2006: 118). Notably, the autobiographical narrator laments that "...there appeared to be a tendency to mimic ZANU-PF's structural models" (p.292). As evident throughout, my readjusted focus of this 'triumphalist self-declared hybridity' is that it also created internal party contestations.

It is inevitable that when two or more political cultures blend, people tend to oscillate from what they were used to rather than gravitate towards change. The autobiographical narrator describes this oscillation in the following manner:

The few whites in the MDC exhibited both their strengths and their own idiosyncrasies. Our cultures are different - and that resulted in friction over policies, organisational styles and mass mobilisation activities (p.242).

Former unionists preferred to inherit ZCTU structural systems, coming up with executive and policy councils. Those who joined the party from civil society believed in the power of local structures as major determinants of policy and needs. The MDC structure therefore is a combination of influences from labour and from practices in civil society and other social movements (p.292).

The implication of these divergent and oscillating yet competing political influences and structural systems that were inherited is that it enacts the hybridity of the party (p.242). For instance, many whites in the MDC did not want to adopt the structural models of the party that were preferred by former unionists and as a result devised their own structures in the form of support groups (p.245) These support groups comprised both whites and influential black Zimbabweans who were not keen to be at the forefront of political activism but preferred to work behind the scenes, supporting MDC programmes and activities on the ground (p.245). It is against this background that some white Zimbabweans were apolitical whilst others such as Roy Bennet, the MDC legislator for Chimanimani who defected from ZANU-PF (p.406) participated. However, the combination of influences from different political backgrounds stunted the growth of the party during its formative years due to friction over policies and organisational styles. Therefore, the disagreements on matters of policy were governed by individual and group interest dynamics.

Conversely, Tsvangirai argues that the contestations over policy matters helped the MDC to re-imagine Zimbabwean politics as an inter-cultural space and to distinguish itself as

‘democratic’. This reflects how Tsvangirai identifies the party as inclusive and self-governing. In essence, what the autobiographical narrator calls strengths and ‘idiosyncrasies’ of the party members summarises how the process of hybridity happens:

When more than two individual consciousness, ... come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of utterance ... it is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms ... such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views. (Bhabha, 2011: 58; emphasis added)

Given this orientation, ‘the collision between differing points of view’ in the policies underlines a collective yearning to mount a strong and broad-based challenge against Mugabe and ZANU-PF. Similarly, Young (1995: 21) argues that at an unconscious level, hybridity creates new forms of synthesis instead of contestation. This synthesis explains why as a resort, change became the MDC’s guiding philosophy, as if *change* represented a single monolithic transformation (Tendi, 2010: 215). However, the autobiographical narrator’s social articulation of difference from the perspective of the dominated is what Bhabha (2012: 2) refers to as a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridity that emerges in moments of historical transformation such as the year 2000 constitutional referendum and defeat of Mugabe. Furthermore, civic organisations aligned to the MDC, such as labour and student movements, created a broad-based alliance that played a pivotal role in protesting against the draft constitution proposal. As a result, the referendum deterred ZANU-PF from pursuing radical constitutional amendments that would have given Mugabe more presidential powers.

At the Deep End (2011) offers a counter-interpretation of the dominant patriotic narratives and the ritualised performances of power by Mugabe and ZANU-PF. The corollary of this counter-narrative is shown in the paradigmatic juxtaposition of the MDC and ZANU-PF. Tsvangirai also illustrates this differentiation when he retorts that when “[w]e were talking about democracy; Mugabe was talking about patriotic history” (p.274). This comparison is akin to what Culler (1982: 48) calls the “difference by differing”, a mere attempt by MDC to be what ZANU-PF is not. Such an enunciation constitutes a fruitless attempt to go beyond the Tsvangirai-Mugabe / MDC-ZANU-PF binary. Furthermore, essential difference allows those who rely on it to rest reassuringly on its gamut of fixed notions (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013: 197). This postulation resonates with the literary war of ideological positions mentioned in

the first chapter. However, these critical reflections can be argued as not having overtly confronted the limitations and imitations of patriotic history.

2.3 Limitations of patriotic history in ‘democratic narratives’

Tsvangirai and the MDC appear apprehensive and reluctant in their engagement and reading of liberation history because of its limitations. Exemplary in this regard is how the heroic performance of the liberation struggle is affirmed in patriotic writing which undermines the roles of non-participants and non-combatants. This explains why the autobiographical narrator and the MDC implicitly invoke the liberation struggle to justify their pursuit for a ‘democratic’ struggle. For Tsvangirai, history - especially distorted patriotic history - often provides a rationale for instability, corruption, abuse and dictatorship (p.274). Yet a closer examination reveals that it was a strategic ploy to sustain a clear-cut distinction between the MDC and ZANU-PF. We get a glimpse of this in the following statement:

Mugabe’s mentality and political strategy had never moved out of the ideological shell with which ... [h]is ideas on governance were permanently rooted in the defeat of white Rhodesia and colonialism. To him, defeat of those twin evils was both symbolic and terminal; it was in a sense the end of his story...Those who sought to move on in a postcolonial framework were treated with utmost suspicion. (p.209)

This quotation shows that Tsvangirai perceived ZANU-PF as a nationalist movement whose agenda had its *terminus ad quem* with independence. Patriotic narratives, however, constantly proclaim the continuity of the history of the Zimbabwean revolutionary tradition. This tradition is ritualised through an affirmation of the past heroic performances of Mugabe and ZANU-PF as the sole liberators of Zimbabweans. Therefore, patriotic history is ZANU-PF’s unfinished history that is premised on a linear continuum of the heroic literary tradition that glorifies the past in order to create permanent ideals and values embedded in the liberation struggle.

Part of the explanation for Tsvangirai’s point of departure from patriotic history is that he envisioned a far-sighted leadership that is guided by a postcolonial framework different from the anti-colonial worldview of Mugabe. More than that, the autobiographical narrator finds patriotic history to be static. In one sense, Mugabe and ZANU-PF are depicted as blind to change and according to Tsvangirai:

The political environment required a visionary leadership to carry the entire population to a new mindset. Mugabe and the ZANU-PF nationalists needed to move beyond what they knew; to get

out of their 'war management' psyche; to listen; and to take cognisance of what others proposed to make the country successful. But our rulers clung to narrow insular formulae. Their group egos and limited world view caused them to lose sight of a Zimbabwean reality. (p.163)

Tsvangirai's representation of Mugabe and ZANU-PF marks a defining feature of oppositional narratives, which tends to distance itself from nostalgically envisioning the liberation struggle. In essence, a counter-discursive demystification of the performance of power by ZANU-PF is shown in how: "ZANU-PF refused to see this vision, insisting on a sense of ownership of Zimbabwe" (p.210). Given this orientation, it would suffice for now to consider that the deconstruction of patriotic history by the MDC is "a mode of representation that marginalises the monumentality of history *and* quite simply mocks its power to be *an* imitable model of writing" (Bhabha, 2012: 87-8; emphasis added).

Evidently, Tsvangirai and the MDC were not concerned with the past performances of the liberation struggle because they claimed ownership of 'an entire generation of educated 'born-free' Zimbabweans without any emotional attachment to the liberation struggle (p.210). This was the generation that was born after independence eligible to vote in a general election of the year 2000 for the first time. A variant of this position is to argue that some of the so-called 'born-frees' were forced by ZANU-PF to join the national service programme, a principal campaign tool to counter the opposition's dominance.⁹ The training of a youth militia was meant to assure ZANU-PF of a continuous source of partisan 'shock troops' (p.320). Therefore, it is regrettable that the autobiographical narrator misreads and underestimates the power of patriotic history as it was later weaponised by ZANU-PF to disrupt the political performance of the MDC.

The ramification of such a misreading of patriotic history is that it fortified the simplification of the past and sustained a monolithic and complacent narrative in favour of ZANU-PF. For instance, the autobiographical narrator maintains that there will be no democracy in Zimbabwe until ZANU-PF politicians cease to regard themselves as the ultimate underwriters of the people's freedom (p.544). Although the sole justification of this misreading was to highlight the distinction between two dominant parties, however, it proved to be a futile exercise because these differences were essentialised and politicised. Accordingly, Mbembe (2015: 148) contends that "[m]any things are not simply set by side; they also resemble each other". This view is also buttressed by Tendi (2010: 171) who argues that ZANU-PF has been reproduced in some quarters of the opposition and civil society because of the utility and familiarity of the

distinction between ‘patriots’ and ‘sell-outs.’ On the contrary, Tsvangirai in Raftopoulos and Phimister (1997) had previously expressed the need for a more open and critical process of writing history in Zimbabwe. Ironically, Tsvangirai perpetuates the same binary categorisation of Zimbabwean politics that is also visible in early autobiographies such as Nkomo’s *The Story of My Life* (1984, 2001) and Smith’s *The Great Betrayal: The memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith* (1997). For instance, Nkomo (2001: 166) argues in his autobiography that ZANLA operated as a political force during the liberation struggle while ZIPRA had to behave in a strictly military way because of its well-governed organs and structures. This reproduction of ZANU-PF and by extension patriotic history in oppositional circles is what Bond and Manyanya (2002: 271) and, Tendi (2010: 236) label “Zanufication of the MDC.” The label ‘Zanufication’ is extraordinarily evocative, for it raises the spectre of a venal combination: a despotic centralisation of power on the one hand, and the capacity to talk-left and act-right on the other (Bond & Manyanya, 2002: 271). Therefore, the capacity to talk-left and act-right exposes the contradictions and ambivalences immanent in Tsvangirai and the MDC.

It is a fitting irony that the autobiographical narrator declares, “it is impossible for any leader in the MDC, including himself to impose a personal preference or viewpoint as a party position” (p.292). The inconsistencies in the MDC resulted in the mis-performances of the party as they slowly digressed from their ‘democratic’ claims and principles (Chan, 2005, 2010; Tendi, 2010).¹⁰ A parallel situation is also portrayed in Marechera’s *Black Sunlight* (1980), in which an opposition party (like the MDC), on the brink of dislodging a tyrant from state power, ended up assimilating dictatorial tendencies. The notion of assimilated dictatorial tendencies is further noted in the following comment:

Personally, I abhor the use of too much executive authority. I believe in sharing. I believe that it is always better to start by random sharing... Perhaps this is a weakness. There were instances where, as the party leader, I felt I had to take a firm stance and drive the political agenda and process. Dictatorial as it may sound, the truth is that in the end the buck stops with the party-leader not a committee or the executive team. (p.315)

Tsvangirai shows, on one hand, that he loathes the use of unrestrained authority and, on the other hand, considers it a form of weakness thus justifying his firm stance and making autocratic decisions on behalf of the party. In essence, this leadership style is found wanting as it is contrary to the ideals of participatory democracy that ought to be the distinguishing hallmark separating MDC from ZANU-PF.

Nonetheless, this explains why Tsvangirai “felt betrayed” and “angry” (p.450) when most of his trusted colleagues voted in favour of the Senate, the upper house of the parliament. Tsvangirai’s bouts of anger indicate his penchant for making the party pander to his whims. Voting for the Senate ended up being taken as doubly inimical to the decision-making power of Tsvangirai. Much the same may be said for Mugabe who displays matching inconsistency particularly when he abolished the Senate in 1989 because it was unnecessarily costly and an effective layer of bureaucracy (p.117). However, years later, in 2005 Mugabe reintroduced the Senate in order to counter the opposition’s challenge at the polls (p.117). In such a way, the power to talk-left and act-right can be likened to what Bhabha (2012: 86) views as mimicry which is a sign of double articulation and a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline. Furthermore, it is a double barreled process of ‘appropriation’ and ‘difference’. In other words, the autobiographical narrator simultaneously appropriates ZANU-PF’s leadership styles yet seeks in vain to project himself as different. Seen in this light, the performance of mimicry is therefore an interplay of repetition and recalcitrance in order to destabilise dominant discourses.

Put differently, political actors are primarily obsessed with personalising power in order to firmly control the party under the illusion of unity and democracy. The matter invokes Chomsky’s argument that:

In a democracy the people rule, in principle. But decision-making power over central areas of life resides in private hands, with large-scale effects throughout the social order...the problem is typically approached by a variety of measures to deprive democratic political structures of substantive content, while leaving them formally intact. A large part of this task is assumed by ideological institutions that channel thought and attitudes within acceptable bounds, deflecting any potential challenge to established privilege and authority before it can take form and gather strength. (1989: vii)

Furthermore, Tsvangirai and the MDC employ the mere rhetoric of democracy to appeal to the Zimbabwean electorate and the rest of the world in order to be considered a preferable alternative to the ruling ZANU-PF. What this indicates is that the autobiographical narrator places expediency above principle and maintains the guise of a tightly controlled ‘democratic’ party. Therefore, the imprecise usage of democratic rhetoric by the narrator ensures that decision-making powers remain in the hands of the party leader.

Significantly, *At the Deep End* (2011) ridicules the way government posts were snapped up by nimble-footed, educated former refugees and relatives of senior politicians who had spent the war years in exile in the comfort of foreign universities (p.77). Likewise, those seen to be educated and loyal to Tsvangirai filled important positions and consequently marginalised aspiring grassroots leaders. The best example is the parachuting of Elias Mudzuri, an engineer by profession and former Mayor of Harare from Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he was studying public administration at Harvard University into the position of organising secretary for the MDC (p.470). What is interesting is the fact that during the formative stages of the MDC, Tsvangirai talked of participatory democracy as the party's commitment to eradicating the politics of exclusion.¹¹ In a paradoxical manner, the narrator regards Mugabe as a leader who would readily burn down a house rather than live in it with a compatriot who had differences with him (p.207). Therefore, the above-noted trope of sheltering represents a non-exploitative space that conjures an image of democracy but politicians created nothing other than their own powerhouse. In essence, this elitist culture is also noted in some of the MDC members of parliament who assumed an air of superiority over their colleagues and supporters both in and outside parliament and thus suggesting exclusionary politics.

Tsvangirai strongly condemns Mugabe's patronage system which ultimately led to the creation of a personality political cult in ZANU-PF. As noted in the autobiography, Mugabe took advantage of the expiry of government farm leases of hundreds of white farms in 1992, and gave them to his government ministers and top ZANU-PF officials while ignoring the land hungry masses (p.145). Added to this, is the unfathomable way that Mugabe co-opted intellectuals who criticised him into his party ranks (p.212) and also ordered military generals to take political positions closer to the levers of state power (p.373-374). While one can quite probably point to ambiguities, it is interesting that the entrance of academics and military generals into national politics ensured a replenished hybridity of the ZANU-PF party and its political culture. Hence, the hybridity of the party gave military generals the voice to publicly support Mugabe and denounce Tsvangirai's non-participation in the liberation struggle.

The new army elite quickly became the surreptitious and non-public political managers of Zimbabwe as they had experience in dealing with internal opposition forces after heinous missions in Matabeleland and Mozambique soon after independence (p.309). The same selective

pattern of patronage also emerged in the MDC during the 2000 parliamentary elections when Tsvangirai appointed a close family friend, Ian Makone, as secretary for elections in the national executive (p.469). Moreover, Tsvangirai had to arbitrarily intervene to secure Morgan Komichi, the Matabeleland North provincial chairman, the position of deputy organising secretary even when there was an electoral challenge by a younger candidate called Dennis Murira, a member of Tsvangirai's staff (p.469). Tsvangirai appointed Komichi because of his loyalty and maturity despite having lost the position to Murira. This appointment indicates the way participatory democracy was deployed haphazardly to ensure Tsvangirai remained the party president. Hence, the unilateral appointments of candidates by Tsvangirai created a disconnection in the expectations between senior politicians who were middle-class intellectuals and those who were at the bottom of grassroots structures within the MDC party.

The patronage bestowed on Makone and Komichi was dubious and proved to be a recipe for disaster. As a result, this decision irked several members in the leadership who then accused Tsvangirai of having a hand-picked and undemocratically appointed cabinet (p.469). The existence of parallel structures such as the kitchen cabinet within the MDC made Tsvangirai to be an architect of the very same personality politics played by Mugabe who also had a 'war cabinet.' This cult of personality politics is shown when the autobiographical narrator affirms that his staff were like mirrors at his disposal and drew encouragement from their supportive sentiments (p.452). Tsvangirai relied too much on the advice of loyalists who acted according to his bidding. The miming of parallel structures and the politics of patronage is akin to what Bhabha (2012: 87) calls a "partial reform" and "an empty form of imitation" which might collude with divisive practices. Perhaps, the logic behind this empty imitation of the MDC is to intentionally give the autobiographical narrator an upper-hand to pursue his personal motives which leads to an interesting paradox.

The narrator's self-identity had undergone substantial shifts in the years leading up to the Government of National Unity in 2009. The Tsvangirai we are initially introduced to at the beginning of *At the Deep End* (2011) has a burning desire to be an architect of democracy but digressed from this vision when he realised the party was under siege from both ZANU-PF and some colleagues within his party. Exemplary in this regard is when he asserts that he "needed an urgent makeover from an innocent cushioned role as a leader of the labour movement to that of a

state actor in waiting and, perhaps the future president of Zimbabwe” (p.280). The need to urgently shift from being naïve and innocent to a shrewd leader was influenced by Tsvangirai’s dismay when MDC legislators proposed a constitutional amendment that disqualifies any future presidential aspirant without an academic degree (p.446). This proposal was clearly designed to ensure that Tsvangirai would not contest in the presidential elections because he did not have any tertiary qualification. Given this background, the autobiographical narrator further attests that Professor Welshman Ncube, a former lecturer at the erstwhile University of Zimbabwe, lawyer and founding member of the MDC and others thought he was still the ‘same’ trade unionist they had persuaded to take over the leadership position and reluctantly accepted in January 2000. The personal shifts of the autobiographical narrator are noted in the following remark:

Little did they know that over the years, experience had transformed me, teaching me to live with diversity and to manage adversity [...] I had come to understand my inner voice; if others thought I was making a mistake, so be it; I could live with that. If I was convinced I was doing the right thing. [...] In a struggle of our nature, a political party cannot function effectively when it is run by committees (p.451).

In contradistinction, Tsvangirai argues at the end of his narrative that, “[b]ut I remain the same person, always without a magic wand” (p.530). The self-representation and ‘democratic identity’ of Tsvangirai remains ambivalent and what Bhabha (2012: 91) estimates to be “almost but not quite”. The autobiographical narrator is initially depicted as subject of difference but later mimes his detractors. In essence, to concurrently embrace sameness and difference underlines the hybridity of Tsvangirai and the MDC.

At the Deep End (2011: 8) also highlights Tsvangirai’s identity politics through the portrayal of Mugabe’s unpredictable Janus-faced personality. On one hand, Mugabe was a democrat and a statesman worthy of respect (p.438) and, on the other hand, a ruthless dictator who brooked no opposition (p.115). Mugabe’s performance of power followed the trajectory from hope to disillusionment. Furthermore, Bhabha (2012: 126) and Bond and Manyanya (2002: 271) show that it is this “double vision” and “double articulation” which discloses an ambivalence that make Mugabe and Tsvangirai to “talk-left and act-right”.¹² In essence, Tsvangirai claims to have changed and remained the ‘same’ in one fell-swoop. This can only be understood if we are to consider Tsvangirai’s identity as fractured. This view is implicitly connected to the observation that:

One is the self that *others* see - the social, historical person, with achievements, personal appearance, and social relationship. These are “real” attributes of a person living in the world. But there is also the self only experienced by that person, the self felt from the inside that the writer can never get “outside of.” (Smith & Watson, 2001: 5)

What this entails is that both Tsvangirai and Mugabe live and perform their identities as split-personalities and this corresponds with the theorisation of hybridity as a site of transformation that calls into question the fixity of identity. I thus consider that the imitation of Mugabe’s two-faced personality by Tsvangirai is what Bhabha (2012: 86) refers to as the “sign of the inappropriate” that is constructed around ambivalence and becomes stricken by indeterminacy. Similarly, Tekere (2007: 31-35) in his memoir, *A Lifetime of Struggle* confesses also of having the same split-personality as hinted by his *nom de guerre*, “2-Boy” which according to him means being two people in one; thus a non-conformist rebel and a hero. Therefore, the conflation of this split-personality underscores the evasive nature of mimicry as a strategy of adaptation and control by both the dominant and dominated.

There is a further irony, in the narrative performance of power, in that Tsvangirai just as Mugabe created impressions of being a ‘democrat’. The juxtaposition of Tsvangirai and Mugabe in the autobiography creates space for the former to reconstruct the self as the idyllic and authentic democrat. Indeed, this highlights that both Tsvangirai and Mugabe performed disparate identities to different audiences. As an illustration, the autobiographical narrator hints at the beginning of his memoir that the MDC’s founding philosophy was non-violence and peaceful reforms but veered off course by agitating for a violent removal of Mugabe (p.326). With this notion in mind, Tendi (2010: 213) records other MDC founding members like Trudy Stevenson, also the first white woman to be elected into the executive committee, stating that it seemed that Tsvangirai changed from being the man they hero-worshipped in 1999 to one who had strayed from the vision of the MDC. The desertion of the peaceful trajectory by Tsvangirai can also be linked to Mbembe’s (2015: 155) postcolonial concept of “simultaneous multiplicities”, which is helpful at this stage. However, Mbembe’s concept alludes to the Cameroonian experience and by extension can be likened to the Zimbabwean context. Viewed from this perspective Tsvangirai, “is in himself, an intertwining of multiple identities”. Tsvangirai is what Mbembe (2015: 165) describes as a “chameleon” that changes depending on its location,¹³ from the outside he is a ‘democrat’ and inside an unrivalled dictator as shown by the unilateral decisions he made to maintain power. This chameleon-like character is what Bhabha (2012: 121) refers to as a

“camouflage”,¹⁴ an effect of mimicry. Chirimambowa and Chimedza (2017: 2) observe that the reality of our times indicate that even when Mugabe is gone, we have created little Mugabes amongst us. Correspondingly, Dirlik (2018: 71) considers the multivalent selves as being a poor copy of one and a degenerate of the other. In this sense, mimicry is both intentional and unintentional. Either way, it consequently made Tsvangirai and the MDC emerge (and submerge) as blurred copies of Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

The appropriation of political cultures between ZANU-PF and the MDC signifies the way in which political identities are fluid and relational. The MDC had tendencies of mimicking the structural models of ZANU-PF (p.292). Connected to this fluidity and multiplicity is what Lifton (1999: 28) considers as proteanism and what Mbembe (2015: 202) calls being literally, “*several in a single body*” that is existing in “*several modes*” or “*several beings*”. Furthermore, Mbembe maintains that:

To be several in the same body is not only to proceed to a constant enlargement of the limits of one’s identity; it is for the same unique being, to experience the possibility or actuality of several types of being, themselves taking shape and being revealed under several beings. (2015: 202)

Lifton (1999: 11) and Mbembe (2015: 202) both agree that this protean self is a choice (such as doing monstrous things) that is performed in the very compartments of ordinary life, as circumstance and events occur. Crosson (2014: 65) views the inadvertent and subconscious mimicking of political leadership, behaviour and political cultures by other politicians as an isopraxism.¹⁵ The imitation of the political culture of ZANU-PF affected some MDC party structures such that they were dissolved because of vote-buying, patronage and nepotism. In addition, the new ones that were set up were led by individuals of questionable political standing who ended up supporting ZANU-PF (p.444). The mimicry of ZANU-PF’s political culture is akin to what Young (1995: 21) calls an ‘unconscious hybridity.’ Tsvangirai’s “likeness” and “ability to annex and mime” the masking power of his arbitrariness can be taken as such (Mbembe, 2015: 142). A similar position is further supported by Smith and Watson (2001), who problematise hybrid subjectivity as being both similar and different. Therefore, the ‘democratic’ culture of politics in MDC is overpowered and subdued by the appropriated ZANU-PF tendencies. Consequently, it is a result of hybridity and mimicry that the so called democrats have retained a ZANU-PF-like mentality. However, what is interesting here is the justification of how the democratic movement was symbolised (and personified) by Tsvangirai.

2.4 ‘Democratic narratives’ as symbolic constructs

This section explores the evocations of the self and the party as the democratic side of a Government of National Unity (GNU). The focus of Tsvangirai’s meta-narrative is the symbolic construction of a democratic Zimbabwean society imbued with a positive future trajectory. For example, Zimbabweans are portrayed throughout the autobiography as “voiceless, root-less and future-less” and in dire need of a political and an economic saviour (p.226). Alexander (2011: 91) submits that democracy might be conceived as a system that allows for the continued existence of counter-performances. Tsvangirai portrays himself as an epitome of the democratic struggle and a political and economic saviour. For instance, Tsvangirai intimates that the MDC and him as a symbol of struggle could rejuvenate an intolerable situation (p.352). This is true if we consider the notable developments that occurred during the government of national unity in 2009.

The autobiographical narrator recounts his performance of power during the government of national unity where he took over a state that was completely broke but managed to stabilise the situation by allowing financial aid inflows which curbed hyper-inflation and contained the cholera epidemic (p.551). It is important to note that the symbolising self of Tsvangirai unfolds into many sub-narratives. For Lifton:

... the symbolizing self centers on its own narrative, on a life story that is itself narrative, on a life story that is itself created and constantly re-created. To be sure, the self can fall from narrative and undergo perceived breaks and radical discontinuities in life story. It can also divide itself into many subnarratives sufficiently developed to form their own self-structures or subselves. (1999: 30)

What is key here is that Tsvangirai’s symbolising self underwent ‘perceived breaks and radical discontinuities’ that hint on his hybridity and mimicry. In essence, the autobiographical narrator’s popularity is tied to the fact that he became the embodiment of resistance that resonates with what Huddleston (2005) calls the *Face of Courage* after he challenged Mugabe and ZANU-PF’s party and its autocratic dominance. Tsvangirai literally wears the face of the ‘democratic’ struggle and becomes its cause as shown by his vow to remain close to the people and lead the people in their resistance against Mugabe (p.352). This entails a radical performance of power against the status quo to the extent that Tsvangirai at one stage describes himself as willing to be killed for the common cause. This is exemplified in the autobiographical narrator’s

preparedness to pay the price for freedom and his pledge to remain focused the people's messenger (p.383). Therefore, the symbolising self of Tsvangirai played a pivotal role in keeping hope alive and encouraging Zimbabweans to persevere against ZANU-PF and overcome fear, intimidation and violence.

The autobiographical narrator claims to be the symbol of determination and courage against the tyranny of Mugabe. This determination is illustrated during trying times in the 'democratic struggle'. For instance, in 2007, Tsvangirai was hauled out of his car by men clad in police uniforms and hit with an iron bar, resulting in a skull fracture (p.463). This makes the autobiographical narrator to state that Mugabe was bent on striking what he called "the head of the MDC snake, Morgan Tsvangirai" (p.489). What is interesting is that the autobiographical narrator exploits the trope of the snake in order to foist himself as a fearless leader and a victim of state sponsored violence. Similar threats had been issued to Joshua Nkomo by Mugabe soon after independence and the former was likened to a cobra in a house that needed to be crushed by striking its head (Nkomo, 2001). Needless to say, the autobiographical narrator claims to be a victim of violence rather than its perpetrator yet pays lip-service to his Gandhi-esque code of non-violence.

A case in point is how Tsvangirai declared, during the commemoration of the MDC's first anniversary in 2000, that if Mugabe did not go peacefully, he was going to be removed violently (p.326). In spite of repeatedly describing himself as bearing the brunt of ZANU-PF violence, the autobiographical narrator's public remark about violently unseating Mugabe could be deemed as an open threat. Furthermore, Tsvangirai regards this open threat as a verbal slip (p.327). This verbal slip is explicitly associated with Bhabha's (2012: 90) theorisation of mimicry which destroys narcissistic authority through repetitious slippage of difference and desire. It is noteworthy, the double articulation of peace and violence within the MDC underlines the constitution of ambivalent identities which partly differs from ZANU-PF and partly desires to resemble the latter's performance of power. The predilection for violence is seen during the formative years of the MDC where colleagues in the party suggested taking up arms to mount a formidable challenge against Mugabe and ZANU-PF (p.209). Correspondingly, Tendi (2010: 204, 210) notes that the use of violence began as a response to ZANU-PF sponsored violence and in the process became useful as an instrument of political organisation and repression. The

use and politicisation of violence in oppositional circles to stifle voices of dissent are fully discussed in Chapter 4.

Tsvangirai indeed felt that he owed it to the people to be their “symbol of resistance” (p.350). It seems the MDC could possibly win the struggle for democracy in the national interest under the leadership of the autobiographical narrator. He also claims to be the sole voice of democracy as noted in the way he calls himself “a lone voice in the call for order” (p.546). In addition, Tsvangirai intimates that no one in the MDC leadership possessed the necessary pulling power that would keep the party together (p.492). In other words, the autobiographical narrator regards himself as the only leader with political gravitas and capable of unifying the party. As such, the self becomes an engine of symbolisation as it continuously receives, recreates, and extends all it encounters (Lifton, 1999: 28). To this end, Tsvangirai’s face appears on the open palm symbol and was super-imposed even on their political regalia. I thus consider that the symbolisation of the struggle using Tsvangirai’s face made him to be an icon of the ‘democratic’ struggle. Nonetheless, some party members felt that it was part of an undemocratic plot to personalise both the struggle and the party (p.459). This argument relies on the underlying assumption that Tsvangirai is not the MDC and the party is not Tsvangirai. As we may see from these and many other examples, it seems as if the MDC, just as its nemesis ZANU-PF and other postcolonial African parties such as Kamuzu Banda’s Malawi Congress Party (MCP), and the African National Congress (ANC) under Jacob Zuma, had institutionalised personalities and, hence, created personality cults out of leaders. However, the justification for super-imposing Tsvangirai’s face on the party’s open palm symbol was meant to reduce confusion during the 2005 Senate elections, given the backdrop that there were other MDC factions.

Factions in the MDC emerged because of different positions on the Senate elections. Tsvangirai was against the proposal of the Senate whilst Professor Welshman Ncube and Gibson Sibanda supported the proposal and this ultimately led to the split and formation of MDC-T (MDC Tsvangirai, the anti-Senate faction) and MDC-M which stands for MDC Mutambara which later transmogrified into MDC-N (MDC Ncube in 2011). What is interesting is that these splinter groups used the name MDC and logo. In essence, factions appeared in ways that mirrored the national picture of political dislocation, disintegration and hinting on the contest of

becoming the symbolising self and controlling the symbols of power within the MDC and ZANU-PF.

Mugabe and ZANU-PF, who positioned themselves as guardians of the national revolution and sole liberators of Zimbabwe, exploit the same symbolisation. For instance, the autobiographical narrator highlights how Mugabe exploited the need for restitution of past wrongs to become the symbol of liberation in Zimbabwe:

Who were we to claim a place in the councils and anointed inner circles of heroes, heroines and the liberationists? We were the governed, expected to live and work as directed by a superior wisdom, that of Mugabe the supreme leader. (p.211)

To this end, Mugabe is depicted by the autobiographical narrator as a man who saw himself as the national beacon, worthy of perpetual deification and adulation (p.102). Tsvangirai further ridicules how Mugabe packed parliament with his proven civilian-military loyalists and yes-men after the June 2000 elections (p.309-11). Here, Tsvangirai calls attention to the sharp contrast between his political character and that of Mugabe in order to accentuate the self-image of 'democrat'. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015: 12), the centrality of Mugabe in the liberation struggle was depicted by the imposition of the slogan "*Pamberi na Robert Gabriel Mugabe*" (Forward with Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe). This privileging of names reduced a broad revolutionary struggle to personality-politics that promoted deification. Likewise, Tsvangirai imitates this hero worshipping through the super-imposition of his face on the party paraphernalia and the use of a slogan that championed his name. As a result, the 'democratic' struggle has been subordinated to party symbols and slogans that give preeminence to individuals.

Nevertheless, Tsvangirai affirms that the 'democratic' struggle was never a "Tsvangirai struggle" (p.319) and that he only became its symbol. In other words, Tsvangirai as an opposition leader personified the 'democratic' struggle and in many ways became the opposition. This suggests that the 'democratic' struggle is imbued in one person who becomes its embodiment. This view could be linked to the way the autobiographical narrator portrays Mugabe and ZANU-PF as "an immovable object" because of the vague line between ZANU-PF as a party and the government (p.214, 240). Postcoloniality could be seen behind the façade of a polity in which the state (the embodied self) considered itself simultaneously indistinguishable

from society (Mbembe, 2015: 105). Similarly, Edelman (2013) succinctly observes that political symbols abstract, screen, condense, distort, displace and create what the sense brings to attention. Likewise, Mbembe (2015: 105) argues that the state can be embodied in a single person.¹⁶ This insight is indeed useful because within the single person there are ‘several beings’. To pursue the argument further, the self and the symbolic self become ‘condensed’ and ‘distorted’ because Tsvangirai and Mugabe embody the democratic struggle and the liberation struggle respectively. On the whole, Tsvangirai constantly reconstructs himself as a fearless and the only possible suitable leader who was chosen to lead the ‘democratic’ struggle.

Tsvangirai’s narrative about his attainment of power is instructive. He declares that he never jostled for power nor thought much about positions. He envisions himself as a people’s choice who was nominated by general consensus. This is shown when Paul Themba Nyathi, told Tsvangirai that:

We have been in consultation with our colleagues right across the spectrum in the MDC. The general feeling is that you are probably the one who has contributed more to this party than anybody else, he paused, checking my expression and body language. (p.254)

It should be noted that Tsvangirai portrays himself as a servant leader whose outstanding contribution made him the ‘symbol of the struggle’ and what Chan (2008: 62) calls a symbol of political mobilisation. Tsvangirai does not explicitly mention that Sibanda became his deputy on the grounds of ethnicity and did not demand a natural progression of leadership. Instead, Tsvangirai assigns significant importance to narrating his ‘democratic’ performance of power thus suggesting he contributed more to the democratic struggle. This self-representation is exclusive and makes Tsvangirai the only relevant and most viable leader in the MDC. The irony, however, is that the same obscuring and de-emphasising of the roles played by other actors is a hallmark of patriotic narratives.

Evocations of political difference and democracy by Tsvangirai and the MDC indicate the desire to overcome the hiatus of ideas, negation and cruel abandonment of the views of the poor (p.292). Accordingly, Smith and Watson (2001: 3) approach the autobiographical act of writing as a self-referential discourse, in which the writer becomes both the observing subject and symbol of investigation, remembrance and contemplation. Hence, the dialectical relationship between the self and the symbol cannot be understood in isolation without tracing how political

actors attained power. Tsvangirai portrays himself as a better political alternative and widely popular than other politicians and his colleagues. This is illustrated in his narration that:

My colleagues were simply riding on my popularity, in the forlorn hope that part of it would rub off on to them. They were uncomfortable with me as a person and a leader and I sensed that they wanted to build their political careers using Tsvangirai as a seat warmer who could ultimately be dislodged as soon as the right opportunity presented itself. Little did they know how easily I saw that. (p.451)

Here, Tsvangirai was particularly referring to Gibson Sibanda, Professor Welshman Ncube and Professor Arthur Mutambara, a former student activist, Robotics researcher and leader of the rival faction, MDC-M who regarded Tsvangirai as a leader lacking political gravitas and a dictator worse than Mugabe during the campaigns for Senate elections (p.475). Comparably, Mugabe was elected in 1973 after Tekere agitated for the ‘unconstitutional’ removal of Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole in a bloodless prison coup and reluctantly accepted his nomination (Martin and Johnson, 1981: 149 and Tekere, 2007: 133). Tsvangirai, Mutambara and Mugabe were elected along the same ethnic fault-lines and this in turn created factions, which are discussed in chapter 4 which focuses on the literary analysis of Coltart’s *The Struggle Continues: 50 years of Tyranny in Zimbabwe* (2016).

It is important to state that political autobiographies are commonly known for their influential role in narrating subjectivity which in turn yields a patronising and power mongering discourse. Understanding how individual representations of subjectivity are formed enables readers to explore how the personal story of a remembered past is always in dialogue with emergent cultural and political formations (Smith & Watson, 2001: 83). Furthermore, Smith and Watson (2001) observe that subjectivity constitutes memory, experience, identity and embodiment which enables us to probe the complexity of what happens in a particular autobiographical act. To this end, Tsvangirai claims to have won the war for the hearts and minds of the people, which was lost by Reverend Muzorewa (p.63).¹⁷ In saying this, Tsvangirai paints a positive portrait of himself as an analytical key figure in Zimbabwean politics. He seems to suggest that his arrival on the political scene coincided with meaningful and visible change, which was not felt during Reverend Muzorewa’s era. Tsvangirai’s narrative even trivialises Reverend Muzorewa as a “paper Prime Minister” who lost the plot and was dislodged because of his naivety and unpopularity (p.63). Ironically, Tsvangirai was also a paper Prime Minister who

played a ceremonial role during his tenure in the GNU because he was assigned responsibility without authority (p.506). In short, Tsvangirai was never in power but merely in office.

Tsvangirai regards the popularity of Reverend Muzorewa as rented and contrived because of his noisy rallies that attracted large crowds drawn by the distribution of plenty of food and drink. Something akin to this encounter happens in Chenjerai Hove's (1985: 29) poem entitled 'Professor' in the anthology *Red Hills of Home*, which describes how a speech ceremony could not start unless the "empty crowd" came. The oxymoron of an 'empty crowd' signifies the forced mobilisation of people just as Muzorewa staged his rallies for public display and approval. On the same note, the autobiographical narrator observes that soldiers and war veterans drove thousands of Zimbabweans to attend Mugabe's presidential campaign rallies in 2002 (p.413). These crowds were forced to attend rallies in order to create an impression that Mugabe had a huge support base. Comparatively, Nkomo (1984, 2001: 93) claims in his memoir *The Story of My Life* that he was received by the largest crowd ever seen in Southern Rhodesia when he returned to Zimbabwe from the Lancaster House Conference.¹⁸ Bond and Manyanya (2002: 71) observe that ZANU-PF defeated PF-ZAPU through a popularity contest and fighting for reputation. Likewise, Tsvangirai describes the 2006 MDC congress as a high achievement because it was well attended by delegates from all over the country and this on a purely voluntary basis. This high turnout could be read as a representational strategy which confirms Tsvangirai as naturally aligned with the people's visions and aspirations for a democratic nation. Therefore, the high turnout of delegates at the MDC congress indicates the symbolic construction of the MDC as a 'democratic' party which is popular compared to the waning version of ZANU-PF.

Zimbabwean politics before the entry of the MDC is perceived as partly a nominal democracy and largely ornamental, multiparty state system with symbolic and periodic elections. In essence, Tsvangirai regards opposition by the Reverends Ndabaningi Sithole, and Abel Muzorewa, and Edgar Tekere and Margaret Dongo as loose political groupings that were largely symbolic, inconsequential and featured loudmouths with little political clout and influence (p.158). The metaphor of 'loudmouths' is used here to place the self on top of the national narrative and at the same time silence other political actors. Tsvangirai further compares other opposition parties to the MDC and arrives at the claim that his party was national in character as

it incorporated all minorities and portrayed a ‘democratic’ movement away from ZANU-PF’s patriotic history, particularly the heroic performance of the liberation struggle. Such a conception of the self and the party is used to justify how traditionally ardent ZANU-PF supporters found comfort in the new movement because it was better than ZANU-PF (p.245). Tsvangirai insists that the inclusive structures of MDC made it a real threat to ZANU-PF, popular across the tribal, racial, class and gender divide. More specifically, Tsvangirai terms himself and the MDC as the ‘real’ opposition. This claim is predicated on the notion that he outperformed other opposition leaders hence underscores the exclusionary nature of identity construction.

As already illustrated in Chapter 1 patriotic and oppositional narratives are constantly competing and countering each other in a war-like fashion. In essence, political actors always contest the performative space of representation that is narrating the nation. This contest is underscored by Brekle who notes that a politician:

Wages war on others by means of words... [and] seeks adversely to affect the conditions of other people’s lives, to obtain power over them, to rob them of their human dignity or, in the extreme case, of their physical existence, using among other means words, statements [and] texts. (1989: 81)

Tsvangirai employs the same rhetoric of irrationality that was used by Mugabe and ZANU-PF to render him politically illegitimate and unpatriotic. Mugabe depicted Tsvangirai using vile adjectives such as “Tsvangson” (p.279), “an uneducated fool, a deserter from the liberation struggle” (p.280) “a vassal of imperialism, a puppet of whites and the West and a tea boy” (p.349). This rhetorical imagining and demonisation is ironically copied by Tsvangirai to ridicule his detractors such as Gibson Sibanda, Professor Welshman Ncube and Professor Arthur Mutambara. Thus, Tsvangirai describes Professor Mutambara as a “rented leader”, “an opportunist” (p.466), a “politically illiterate newcomer”, and “a lay intellectual, requiring time and space to grow up” (p.467). Seen in this light, the autobiographical narrator raises eyebrows on how Professor Mutambara, a Shona, was desperately ‘imposed’ to lead the rival faction simply because they were evading the politics of ethnicity since the majority in the splinter group were amaNdebele. Furthermore, Tsvangirai does not consider Professor Mutambara as a patriot because he had been out of Zimbabwe, mainly in the United States and South Africa, and had been living in comfortable circumstances for a long time. This view is premised on the assumption that being in exile for long periods is antithetical to the expected patriotic orientation.

What is key here is the appropriation of the notion of patriotism and its political discourse from which the autobiographical narrator is trying to distance himself. Such an assumption runs the risk of being taken as complicit with patriotic history, an inward looking nationalist discourse that is premised on the politics of exclusion. However, Primorac (2006: 3) argues that a nationalist stance is not in itself sufficient to render any literary work complicit with the repressive events and discourses. As such, it is interesting to note that the vilification of intellectuals within and outside the MDC is due to their criticism of Tsvangirai's leadership style. Even Professor Ncube and his MDC faction, formed in 2005 after accusing Tsvangirai of flouting the MDC constitution (p.466), are regarded as nothing but "a tiny, power-hungry and sectional outfit full of victims of educational success and desktop revolutionaries" (p.453). Therefore, the autobiographical narrator comparably performs the same rhetorical aims of justifying and upholding perceptions in a way reminiscent of what Smith and Watson (2001) theorise as the components and features that comprise autobiographical acts.

In addition, Tsvangirai appropriates the heavy gendered language such as Tekere's feminisation of other political actors for political mileage. Tekere in *A Lifetime of Struggle* (2007: 78; 92-93) ridicules the performance of Mugabe during the liberation struggle and portrays him as a novice who could neither march, salute nor handle weapons despite being an army commander as compared to fearless female fighters like Joice Mujuru, who was Tekere's instructor and commander at Chimoio military and refugee camp. To this end, Bakhtin (1981: 271) correctly observes that all literary texts are "ideologically saturated" since language is populated with the intention of others. A case in point is the feminisation of Gibson Sibanda and the masculinisation of his wife, Zodwa. The narrator depicts Zodwa as more politically astute than her husband and also as his close advisor and mentor (p.225). The motive behind such a narrative criss-crossing of Sibanda's performance of power by Tsvangirai underlines a self-serving politics of recognition which undermines other actors in order to become a towering figure in the 'democratic' narrative. Furthermore, people who switched political parties willy-nilly either within the two MDC factions or to ZANU-PF were portrayed as "political prostitutes" (p.286). For Muchemwa and Muponde (2007: xvii) current political cultures are sustained by the manning of many sites of identity so as to efficiently *man* women and to thoroughly *unman* other men. It is noteworthy, that there is a close analogy between 'democratic' and patriotic narratives particularly how they vilify other political actors. Exemplary in this

regard is how the autobiographical narrator is described by Mugabe as a ‘tea-boy’, a demeaning term used in racist Rhodesia for black workers who prepared and served tea to the white rulers at home and at work (p.349). This stereotyping was meant to mock and emasculate Tsvangirai for his non-participation in the liberation struggle and being a puppet of the West. Accordingly, the appropriation of the heavily gendered language by Tsvangirai and the MDC is symbolic as it displaces the performance of other political actors in narrating the nation.

The character assassination of political actors started during the colonial era but always finds its way in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The autobiographical narrator laments that after their loss in the 2000 referendum, Mugabe and ZANU-PF adopted the Rhodesian information management style against its critics, the MDC (p.288). This trend of character assassination alludes to what Primorac (2006: 68) calls the “Rhodesian chronotope” which is a static, yet contradictory and hierarchical representation and reproduction of black/white spaces and identities which are inside/outside Rhodesia or before and after majority rule. The autobiographical narrator records how Mugabe exploited this Rhodesian chronotope to tarnish the image of Tsvangirai in 2000 ahead of the June 2000 elections:

‘Tsvangson’ will never rule this country. Not in my lifetime or even after I die. My ghost will certainly come after him and all of you if you allow that to happen. He is a dreamer, who after his wife sucks his ears while in his sleep, he thinks he can take over Zimbabwe as President. Never ever [...]. The MDC is a Rhodesian puppet; a front for Britain. Zimbabwe will never be a colony again. (p.279)

What is most striking here is that the autobiographical narrator is given a contemptuous nickname, ‘Tsvangson’ which according to patriotic narratives sound non-Zimbabwean. Furthermore, the same nickname is suggestive and is exploited by Mugabe to depict Tsvangirai as a surrogate son of his colonial masters, hence, an outsider who should not be allowed to take power in Zimbabwe. Ironically, Tsvangirai became the second Prime Minister during the government of national unity in 2009 despite Mugabe’s renunciation of his performance of power. Primorac (2006: 68) aptly observes the static and yet contradictory binary representation of black or white, insider or outsider and patriotic or sell-out configuration of identities in colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe. The same paradox is seen in the irrational and public pronouncements by Mugabe’s predecessor, Rhodesian Prime Minister, Ian Smith who had vowed during the liberation war that there would never be majority rule in Rhodesia in a thousand years (p.280). In essence, the reproduction of the Rhodesian chronotope underlines a

fixity on controlling the performative space of representation and maintaining the performance of power.

The appropriation and reproduction of the Rhodesian chronotope is also rhetoricised in patriotic narratives that sought to heighten the performance of the liberation struggle. For instance, in Mutasa's *Rhodesian Black Behind Bars* (1983: 119), white settlers are portrayed as "parasitical ticks" that needed an arsenic spray because they were claimed to be sucking the livelihood of their black "hosts". From this perspective, Professor Welshman Ncube and Gibson Sibanda are likened to 'parasitical ticks' because they are firmly depicted as riding on Tsvangirai's popularity (p.451). Ironically, Tsvangirai vilifies Mugabe using less disparaging remarks by calling him a "bully", a "pathological coward" and "a national disgrace." This semantic derogation of political players helps to confirm the supremacy of the MDC and Tsvangirai. The same language is used to disqualify and infantilise other political actors because according to Spender (1990: 74) to be inferior entails being discounted. What is striking in Tsvangirai's narrative is the deligitimation of alternative opposition parties. Instead of focusing on dislodging Mugabe, a common enemy, Tsvangirai engages in a war of words, just as the other MDC formation, seeking to discredit, fight and write the splinter group of the MDC out of the national narrative. This is also analogous to the PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF situation during and after the liberation struggle as shown in *Strategies of Representation in Auto/biography: Reconstructing and Remembering* (2014: 7) by Hove and Masemola which show how both parties reverted to their ethnic factional leadership structures during and after the 1980 elections. Therefore, Tsvangirai constructs the politics of deligitimation which remarkably undermines other political actors by discrediting their performance of power thereby making him a well decorated 'democrat' in the narrative of the nation.

An intriguing facet of *At the Deep End* (2011) is that it constantly constructs Tsvangirai as a symbolising self and a paragon of the 'democratic' struggle. However, the 'democratic' struggle had its own inadequacies. Firstly, it was invested in one person who ended up institutionalising a personality cult. Secondly, symbolisation was exploited to heighten the 'democratic' performance of power by the autobiographical narrator hence highlighted the politics of representation inherent in patriotic and hence, 'democratic' narratives. Lastly, the use of symbols was employed by Tsvangirai to justify perceptions and undermine his detractors. As

such the autobiographical narrator vilified other political actors in the same manner Mugabe and ZANU-PF did it. It is noteworthy, that the symbolic construction of ‘democratic’ narratives led to the politics of deligitimation as individuals were elevated and ended up hero worshipped. Finally, the recognition of the symbolising self as the party and vice versa led to misrecognition of other political actors.

2.5 Politics of recognition in ‘democratic narratives’

Tsvangirai attempts to recast the definition and meaning of what constitutes a hero from a democratic perspective. In other words, it is not a title reserved only for those who fought for liberation, but also for those who fought for democracy (Chan, 2008: 26). Nevertheless, Tsvangirai further perpetuates and maintains the ZANU-PF hierachisation of heroism. At this juncture, I reconsider Primorac’s (2006: 68-72) discussion of the Rhodesian chronotope which is instrumental in essentialising colonial and postcolonial identities. The same scholar explains further that heroes are constructed in a hierarchical and static fashion using fixed rules of crossing spatio-temporal boundaries hence are likely to be represented differently. This is akin to what Marechera in *House of Hunger* (1978: 12, 15) refers to as being not nearer to discovering the “authentic black heroes” of our time. However, Marechera’s candid observation does not consider the role of white Zimbabweans in the liberation struggle.

The same ephemeral recognition of white Zimbabweans by ZANU-PF is visible in Tsvangirai’s narrative. For instance, Tsvangirai does not confer hero statuses to white Zimbabweans such as Macheke farmer, David Stevens who was shot in the face and the first farmer to be murdered by ‘war veterans’ in 2000. Tsvangirai also fails to recognise Martin Olds, a known MDC sympathiser and Rancher who was shot and killed by state agents and ‘war veterans’ at his homestead in Nyamandlovu near Bulawayo (p.269-270). Instead the autobiographical narrator hails Tichaona Chiminya, his polling agent as a hero and his wife, Susan as a true national hero (p.532).¹⁹ In addition, Tsvangirai’s text has many unsung heroes such as Learnmore Jongwe, the young spokesperson of MDC whose role was glossed over because he committed suicide after being arrested for killing his wife in a domestic dispute. Tsvangirai laments that the murder case generated a lot of negative publicity for the party and, hence, does not regard him as a ‘hero’. This is also parallel to the politics of recognition that is prevalent in patriotic narratives. Mugabe did the same thing and refused to confer Canaan

Banana, a hero status because of his homosexual scandals. Moreover, Reverend Abel Muzorewa and Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole were denied hero statuses because of their alleged misperformances during the liberation struggle hence were shamefully stereotyped as saboteurs and sell-outs. Therefore, the appropriation of the hierarchisation of heroes by the autobiographical narrator hints on the politics of recognition and exclusion within the MDC.

Tsvangirai also stereotypes the rural electorate. As a political leader and presidential candidate, the autobiographical narrator struggled to get access to the rural-based citizens, owing to the machinations of the ZANU-PF divisive politics and establishment of enclaves that were no go areas for the opposition. The autobiographical narrator further bemoans that nothing could move without input and support from rural areas where villagers placed their exaggerated faith in ZANU-PF because of their exposure to the movement during the liberation war (p.209). He, however, justifies his failure to win the rural folk and stereotypes them as a “conservative lot” with a collective mind-set that requires considerable effort to shift. For this reason, the autobiographical narrator argues that the rural electorate especially elderly voters were brainwashed by ZANU-PF. This dismal failure is contrary to Tsvangirai’s pyrrhic victory of having won the war of hearts and minds of all Zimbabweans during the June 2000 elections. However, Tsvangirai and the MDC were not supposed to discredit and or take for granted the role that was played by the peasants in the liberation struggle. The misrecognition of the rural folk by the MDC reconfirms how they were denied agency and rendered passive subjects of history. This misrecognition created an urban bias in the campaign trail of the MDC as shown by how political candidates from the same party preferred urban constituencies because they were assured of clear wins (p.433) Consequently, the MDC became stereotyped as an urban based and elitist party, this bias made it easy for the MDC to be viewed as a stooge for the imperialist. What is interesting is that the rural electorate ritualises the nostalgic and symbolic memories of the liberation struggle. As such, the symbolic construction of ZANU-PF was constantly internalised by the rural folk as compared to that of the MDC because the former guaranteed a secure future as the country’s liberator whilst the latter assumedly threatened their hard won fruits of independence such as the land. Therefore, the appropriation of the politics of misrecognition of other participants by the MDC gave ZANU-PF leverage to be identified with the peasants as seen by their participation in the first Chimurenga, the second Chimurenga and the third Chimurenga.

As indicated before, Tsvangirai used to admire Mugabe but was later disappointed by the latter's performance of power. In an earlier effort, the autobiographical narrator regards Mugabe as his "idol" (p.101). Years later he describes that his first face-to-face meeting with Mugabe showed the former as a stubborn and frail senior citizen who reminded him of his late father, Dzingai-Chibwe and was desperate to be heard by a person young enough to be his child (p.500-502). It is worth mentioning that at the beginning of his narrative, Tsvangirai explains how his father wanted to raise a "clone" and "mirror image" of himself but instead sought his mother's advice on survival skills, independence and communal solidarity (p.3). Smith and Watson (2001) contend that autobiographies incorporate and reproduce models of identity, experience and agency which assist the reader to understand the complexities of autobiographical subjectivity and its performative nature. Quite interestingly, the relationship between Tsvangirai and Mugabe is a pedagogical and oedipal one. This is clearly shown by the depiction of ZANU-PF's public persona as that of a "caring parent", who openly displays intolerance towards dissent (p.85). In essence, the face-to-face meeting revealed that Mugabe considered himself a generous giver of power. For instance, Mugabe retorts: "You will soon be in cabinet, you have to learn! You have to know how government works. Why do you want everything now?" (p.504). Mugabe's remark underlines a slightly nuanced oedipal theme in which the son is refusing to learn from his 'father'. This transference of power is based on the negative stereotypes of Tsvangirai as a politically illiterate leader. The oedipal theme in Tsvangirai's autobiography is predicated on the notion that Mugabe is the Father-founder of modern Zimbabwe whilst Tsvangirai is considered as not yet politically mature. However, Tsvangirai refuses to be taught the performance of power by Mugabe even though he affirmed that he had "no knowledge of the unnatural world of politics and the associated complexities of power dynamics on such a national platform [...]" (p.205). This refusal can be taken as subversive opposition to the dominant power structures. Furthermore, it also highlights the hybridity of the oppositional discourse since it displays the "necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination" (Bhabha, 2012: 37-38 and Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013). As noted in the text, Mugabe is portrayed as a no nonsense, decisive and domineering father figure bent on individual and group discipline; and a strong male role model everybody was supposed to look up to for order and guidance (p.85). Mugabe is a quick reminder of Babamukuru in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (2004: 64) who is "educated beyond books" and concerned about the betterment and education

of all who look up to him. In essence, the refusal by the autobiographical narrator to acknowledge and recognise the leading role of Mugabe underlines his fixation on political differences and desire to project himself as a ‘democrat’.

Conclusion

The chapter’s focus on the different perspectives on the notion of democracy as conceived and practised by Tsvangirai and the MDC showed that Tsvangirai underwent substantial shifts of political experiences that influenced him to regress and mimic Mugabe and ZANU-PF’s elements. It is clear from reading the text that Tsvangirai’s popularity was tied to the role he played in authoring a counter-narrative that challenged Mugabe and ZANU-PF’s autocratic governance. Therefore, *At the Deep End* (2011) offers a counter-interpretation of patriotic history. However, the MDC selectively engages with patriotic history and clearly misunderstands its dynamics. I considered Tsvangirai’s *At the Deep End* (2011), in this chapter, to lay out some of the foundational issues encountered in the politics of narrating the performance of power from an oppositional standpoint. The self-representation of Tsvangirai as a democrat is contested by his colleagues who argue that the protagonist played a huge role in the *Zanufication of the MDC*. The autobiographical narrator envisions himself to be the founding father and an architect of democracy in Zimbabwe. However, the autobiographical act of narrating his performance is riddled with limitations and imitations of patriotic history as he de-emphasises roles of other opposition leaders and members of the MDC. The appropriation of undemocratic tendencies cannot be appreciated in isolation without considering that the majority of members defected from ZANU-PF and hence mimicked some policies and structures. As such, MDC structures relied on the benevolence of Tsvangirai who manipulated his appointees and in the process ended up resembling the government of Mugabe. MDC was a hybrid party with broad-based alliances from the student movements, civic organisations and labour movements and this posed more challenges such as consensus on policy matters. Consequently, this hybridity led to democratic deficiencies such as vote buying, intimidation, class exploitation, deligitimation of other political actors and a cult of personality politics.

Finally, a major observation from the analysis in this chapter is the paradoxical way in which the MDC politicised difference in order to create a ‘democratic’ identity. This project proved to be a futile exercise because the party and its late leader ended up emulating hate-

speech, violence and assimilating dictatorial structures. Tsvangirai also sought to recast the meaning of heroism, a title traditionally viewed and reserved for those who fought for liberation and by extension to include those who fought for democracy. The autobiographical narrator selectively recognises martyrs of democracy in a way that is akin to ZANU-PF's hierachisation of heroes. This politics of recognition is noted in how his wife, Susan and the activist, Chiminya are portrayed as national heroes whilst white Zimbabwean MDC sympathisers such as Martin Olds and David Stevens are depicted as mere victims of ZANU-PF's violence. Therefore, this chapter demonstrated that 'democratic narratives' essentialise differences in order to forge a 'new' narrative of the nation, however, the same discourse ends up perpetuating the binary categorisation and representation of power.

The next chapter analyses Msipa's *In Pursuit of Freedom and Justice: A Memoir* (2015). It concentrates on Msipa's impression of the land reform, democracy and what constitutes justice. What stands out is also his neutrality or what I will call narrating from the centre in the depiction of Zimbabwean politics.

End notes

- ¹ Tsvangirai died on the 14th of February 2018 after a long battle with colorectal cancer and was laid to rest in his rural home in Buhera.
- ² Here and below, I use this definition of hybridity because in this context it means that the ‘democratic narratives’ emerge from the process of hybridity.
- ³ Fictional works such as Hove’s *Bones* (1988: 187) highlights that “[to] refuse to die for the motherland is to refuse to wear the medal of birth which gave us this land”. Similarly, Chipamaunga’s *Feeding Freedom* (2000: 21-2) maintains, that “[e]veryone who had not fought Ian Smith using a gun was an outsider who must be excluded from the overall association of the ex-guerillas”.
- ⁴ Fictional novels and short stories about the war such as McLoughlin’s novel, *Karima* (1982), portrays young white boys such as Richard Viljoen, who call themselves conscripts rather than soldiers because they are serving in the war against their wishes. Also Benjamin Tichafa, the protagonist in Chinodya’s *Harvest of Thorns* (1989) joined the war in order to evade being re-incarcerated. In Ndlovu’s short story, “Stampede” (2008: 138) Jekoniya confesses that it is “sorrow of hunger” that made him to join the army.
- ⁵ Huddleston (2005: 31) records Tsvangirai’s argument that it is ironic that the anti-colonial war, which was waged to preserve Rhodesia as a sanctuary for whites gave him so many opportunities to advance himself. This statement makes Tsvangirai to be caricatured in patriotic narratives as a selfish coward.
- ⁶ Non-participants of the liberation struggle are labelled by Mugabe in the “Foreword” of *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (1981: vi) as on-lookers and non-actors.
- ⁷ Chan (2010) exposes the double standards of the West in his contention that a lot of Western support for Tsvangirai is simply the ‘anyone but Mugabe syndrome’.
- ⁸ Tsvangirai regards the internal criticism of Mugabe and ZANU-PF by Tekere, Zvobgo, Dongo, Mabhena, Msika, Msipa as largely inconsequential.
- ⁹ For a detailed analysis of how the ZANU-PF government instituted youth militia training camps see Ranger (2004, 2005)
- ¹⁰ Chan (2003, 2005: 87) highlights that there are a number of similarities such as patronage, vote-buying, factionalism, violence and class exploitation between Tsvangirai’s thinking and that of many ZANU PF thinkers.
- ¹¹ According to Mukoma (2013: 144) democracy that is not founded on equality, economic and social justice is a fallacy.
- ¹² Foucault and Deleuze (1977: 206) contend that the person who speaks and acts [...] is a multiplicity [...].
- ¹³ Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015: 2) also refers to Mugabe as a “chameleonic political character”.
- ¹⁴ Bhabha’s (2012: 121) notion of mimicry as a camouflage can also be taken as form of mystification to control and induce fear in the ordinary citizenry (Fanon, 1968).
- ¹⁵ Tendi (2010: 169) postulates that patriotic history is more than a historical narrative and a part of a political culture that outlaws alternative political positions from within and without, to those of incumbents. For instance, Tsvangirai and the MDC appropriate ZANU PF political cultures to rubber-stamp authority.
- ¹⁶ According to Weber (1995: 28) States are “written” effects of attempts to exert effective control over representation, both political and symbolic.
- ¹⁷ Tekere (2007:65) in his memoir, *A Lifetime of Struggle* mentions how Reverend Muzorewa was a creation of ZAPU and ZANU which indicate his liminal role in the Zimbabwean body politic.
- ¹⁸ Martin and Johnson (1981) and Tekere (2007) argue that Mugabe was received by an overwhelming crowd bigger than Nkomo’s.
- ¹⁹ Vesta Sithole (2006: 68) regards her husband, Reverend Sithole as a true hero and the father of the Zimbabwean struggle.

Chapter 3: The politics of narrating from the ‘centre’ in Msipa’s *In Pursuit of Freedom and Justice: a Memoir*

This chapter focuses on the notion of autobiographical narration from the ‘centre’ and argues that Msipa engages in a ‘neutral’ autobiographical performance of power.¹ While Smith and Watson (2001): 10), as noted in Chapter 1, mention representational strategies such as chronicling events (making history), sociocultural contexts (conveying cultural information), performing rhetorical acts (justifying perceptions, upholding reputations, disputing accounts of others, settling scores and inventing desirable futures), narrative shifts and narrative tropes with regard to autobiography, I argue in this chapter that adding on to Bhabha’s (2012) postcolonial views on liminality as a discursive representation enables us to understand Msipa’s *In Pursuit of Freedom and Justice: a Memoir* (2015). This is because Bhabha’s concept offers ways of decoding the imposed cultural and political polarities that are evident in the national narrative. Therefore, the chapter focuses firstly, on the autobiographical narrator’s ‘in-between’ position that seeks to foster unity among political leaders through a revised patriotic imagination of nationhood. Secondly, the chapter examines how this self-representation leads to an overlapping of multiple identities.

3.1 Msipa and the political aesthetics of liminality

From the onset, Msipa’s autobiography re/presents the self being at the centre of the narrated past and present. As such, Msipa remembers and reconstructs himself as being at the ‘centre’ of monumental events such as the nationalist movement, the 1987 Unity Accord and the post-2000 Land Reform Programme. In order to understand better the autobiographical narrator’s liminal position, key elements of liminality such as “borderline engagements” and “discursive thresholds” (Bhabha, 2012: 2; 66) are brought to bear in the analyses of his background and political performance. Cephas George Msipa was born on 7 July in 1931 in the then rural Shabani District of the Midlands Province. The province is located at the heart of Rhodesia and composed of an ethnically mixed population. Furthermore, the province is vastly populated by the Shona, Ndebele, Chewa, Kalanga and Tsonga speaking people and thereby becoming a liminal space in the sense of multiculturalism. Msipa is constructed as incommensurable with being in-between languages, ethnicities and cultural traditions. This view is supported by the narrator when he travelled from rural to urban areas and observed the “wide diversity of people

and cultures” in the city of Que Que (p.14). Furthermore, the narrator describes his father, Elijah, as a product of an intermarriage between Shona and Ndebele parents. After the death of Elijah’s mother, who was of Ndebele extraction and the youngest wife of his grandfather’s several wives, the maternal grandparents were asked to take custody of Elijah and his sibling, Jeremiah as prescribed in cultural custom (p.2). Msipa notes that his father was groomed by his maternal uncle in Shabani and ended up using the Ndebele surname Msipa, which means muscle or ligament instead of the Shona surname, Gumbo, which translates to a leg (p.3). The autobiographical narrator’s father, Elijah, was born in Belingwe,² the nethermost part of the Midlands, sharing borders with Matabeleland South province whilst the mother, Anne, was born in Chibi in Fort Victoria, now Masvingo. This mixed parentage reflects the notion of liminality and as such Msipa is “the sum of the ‘parts’ of a difference” that is layered by ethnicity (Bhabha, 2012: 2). This background indicates the narrator’s claims to be a scion of mixed ethnic ancestry and what Bhabha (2012: 1) calls being “here and there, on all sides”, which identifies him with both Shona and Ndebele communities. For this reason, Msipa narrates the self as the sum total of cultural and political diversity that characterises the Midlands Province. In addition, this reality of double-belonging underlines the bicultural identity of the narrator.

The mixed ethnic background explained above influenced Msipa to nurture identity transitions that allow for multiple ways of re-imagining the nation. The Midlands Province is situated physically at the centre and symbolically shares allegiance between PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF. Msipa confirms this in the observation that the 1980 vote was more or less evenly split between the two parties in the same province due to this cultural diversity (p.92). The province is a transitory space that produces complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, and inclusions and exclusions (Bhabha 2012: 1). Correspondingly, Smith and Watson observe that:

Autobiographical acts of self-narration have always taken place at conflicted cultural sites where discourses intersect, contradict, and displace one another, where the *narrator is* pulled and tugged into a complex and contradictory self-positioning through performative dialogism (2001: 109; emphasis added).

What is pivotal here is that the province is a liminal space (a conflicted cultural site) where associations between (both) political parties and ethnicities are engendered, contested and

reformed. As a result, Msipa's memoir lends itself to the complex configuration of liminality in the narrative of the nation.

The autobiography starts by reflecting on the early years of the formation of Msipa's political vision. First, it describes his experiences as a student at Dadaya Mission School located in a mining town called Shabani (now Zvishavane), as a school teacher at Msipani Primary School in Shabani and Amaveni Primary School in Que Que (now Kwekwe) and as a former Headmaster of Mhofu Government School in the older part of Highfield Township and Crowborough Number 1 School in Mufakose Township, both in Harare. Secondly, the autobiography describes his experiences as a member of PF-ZAPU from 1961 to 1988 and secretary-general and later president of the Rhodesian African Teachers Association from 1958 to 1963. Thirdly, it outlines the narrator's experiences as Deputy Minister from 1980 to 1981, PF-ZAPU Minister of State from 1982 to 1984 and ZANU-PF Minister of State from 1995 to 2000 and Governor of the Midlands Province from 2000 to 2008. To this end, the narrator affirms that "After 84 years, I have decided to narrate what I did, with whom, and why I did what I did. It is time for reflections" (p.179). Narrating the self becomes an alternative form of education whereby the narrator learns from his experiences (Smith & Watson, 2001: 89). Notably, the narrator belongs to a "generation of liberators" who saw it happen and participated in the liberation of Zimbabwe (p.178). The reason for memorialising his contributions to the liberation struggle is that early nationalists such as Benjamin Burombo had been effectively suppressed from the memory of the nation and he laments that they should be re-buried at Heroes Acre (p.4).³ Thus, Msipa writes his memoir to avoid the risk of being forgotten and his narrative accords him a hallowed space to inscribe his performance of power in the national narrative.

Msipa ostensibly draws inspiration from people he met as a child up to the time he became active in nationalist politics. Here the narrator exploits the autobiographical act of relationality for two reasons. Firstly, it implies that self-narration is bound up with the historical contingency of others and significant figures (family members, friends and role models or mentors) of a collective past. Secondly, it is a narrative mode of self-inquiry and self-knowing which stimulates the modification of self-consciousness (Smith & Watson, 2001: 65). This formation of self-consciousness and ideological becoming can be inferred from the quotation below:

I believe firmly that I am what I am, firstly, because of the teachings of my parents, and secondly, the influences of other forces, such as the school I attended and the people I met in my long journey (p.12).

The self-understanding of Msipa's political identity is attributed to parental guidance and contact with his father's friends such as Benjamin Burombo, Chief Masunda and Wenning Moraka. Some of his father's friends rose to become significant people in society and shaped his political vision. These figures include Benjamin Burombo who became a nationalist leader and active critic of the 1951 colonial Native Land Husbandry Act, which sought to divide the country into Native Reserves and European Areas. Wenning Moraka was the headmaster of Sibozza Primary School who ended up in one of the few seats reserved for blacks in the Southern Rhodesian Parliament. Msipa further claims that he learnt a lot from Garfield Todd, the principal of Dadaya Mission School, liberal Prime Minister of Rhodesia, friend and advisor to Joshua Nkomo and later a Senator in Robert Mugabe's government.⁴ Msipa's upbringing and early socialisation and political conscientisation tacitly brought him to a position of national prominence when he became Governor of the Midlands Province in 2000 because of his position 'in the middle' during and after the liberation struggle. The narrator deliberately uses the literary trope of standing on the shoulders of giants in order to project his centrality and political potency in the national narrative.

The literary trope of standing on the shoulders of giants is also visible in Bhebe's (2004) biography of the late Simon Muzenda, who is recorded as having been inspired to participate in trade unionism after meeting Benjamin Burombo. Likewise, Msipa recounts how he was pleased to follow the footsteps of Benjamin Burombo and Leopold Takawira, the "bull of Chirumanzi" who had been a Headmaster at Mhofu School before him and later became the vice-president of ZANU-PF but died while in detention at Salisbury Prison in 1970 (p.23). It was during the narrator's teaching stint in Que Que where he quickly established himself as "the spokesman of African people" and "a fighter against oppression and a believer in African emancipation" (p.16). This spokespersonship constitutes the narrator's liminal performance of power and is exemplified by his first racial altercation with Mr Greenfield, a white Headmaster at Amaveni Primary School, in Que Que, whose behaviour is likened to that of a colonial master who treats black teachers as his servants (p.13). The clash improved the race relations between Mr

Greenfield and other black teachers and from then on they accepted each other as colleagues and worked harmoniously in the interest of the school (p.14).

Closely following Bhabha's (2012: 7) theorisation of liminality, one cannot help but observe how Msipa "inhabits the intervening space" or space of intervention in his performance of power. The narrator stands in the gap between blacks and whites and thus negotiates "strategies of selfhood that initiate new signs of identity and innovative signs of collaboration" (Bhabha, 2012: 1-2). In addition, Msipa's narrative exploits Smith and Watson's (2001: 73) strategies of self-representation such as multiple modes of emplotment through which the narrating "I" entwines a personal story with the stories of others, both individuals and collectivities. Thus, Msipa's individual and communal strategies, such as his intervention on behalf of black colleagues and collaboration with whites such as Mr Greenfield made him a liberal spokesman. Furthermore, Msipa's budding political activism made teachers and those around him admire his bravery and candidness in confronting those in authority. Owing to the narrator's ardent criticism of the marginalisation of black folk by the colonial government, Msipa was elected as a member and chairman of Que Que's African Advisory Board. Msipa's open criticism was, on one hand, fomented by the lack of amenities and facilities in a town which was surrounded by gold mines (p.16). On the other hand, he was critical of the incompetence and negligence of the white councillors who had been elected on the basis of colonial perceptions of white supremacy and attempts to legitimise the interests of the colonial government. For instance, the narrator laments:

I could not do so many of the ordinary things that are part of people's lives. It pained me. I hated being discriminated against because of the colour of my skin, because I was African. That is why in Que Que, for instance, I found the conditions in the African townships horrible and I felt I had to get involved and try to bring about change. (p.19)

Msipa's spatial representation of Que Que illustrates the glaring racial inequalities which constantly reminded him of his position as a black man. As such, the narrator discloses how he became the voice of the voiceless by advising a white councillor who would then take their grievances to the council. To this end, Msipa foregrounds his performance as a central figure in a racially divided society.

Msipa reconstructs the image of an activist who was shaped by his experiences as an African teacher during the race-based bottleneck system of education. The narrator was required

to undergo training under a white headmaster for him to be promoted to head a school. This race-based bottleneck system of education was contrary to the inclusive system of education that the narrator had received at Dadaya under the Todds (Woodhouse, 2018). However, the same requirement did not apply to white teachers and headmasters at certain schools under the Ministry of African Education. This colonial bigotry induced a “fighting mood” in the narrator and this characterised his approach to every organisation he joined. The organisations included the Rhodesian African Teachers Association (RATA) in which he was initially elected as Secretary in Que Que and later became national President in Salisbury in 1965 (p.20). The narrator was promoted to a Headmaster position in Highfield township which is depicted as “the home of African nationalism” (p. 21) and “a political melting pot” (p.24) where the self became initiated into nationalist politics. Msipa reports that during his term of office as the president of RATA, he addressed several meetings around the country and this exposure enabled the association to evolve into a wing of the nationalist movement (p.42). Inevitably, RATA, became aligned with the liberation movements, despite the fact that teachers were not allowed to take part in politics. Msipa portrays himself as a democratic leader who ensured that outside RATA teachers were free to belong to ZAPU or ZANU (p.43). As such, Msipa constructs RATA as a metaphor of a nation that embodies unity and freedom of association. It is also worth mentioning that the narrator’s life, marked by occupation of spaces and positions of power, is represented as embedded in the history of the nation.

Msipa’s memoir can be read as a narrative of agency because it focuses on his nationalistic convictions which became pronounced when he was expelled from his teaching position as a result of his political involvement as a member of ZAPU and during his tenure as President of RATA. On the same subject, Smith and Watson (2001: 45; 176) submit that autobiographical writing has often served as a strategy of intervention and *gaining agency* in colonial repression. That being the case, the expelled narrator resolved to openly fight against the Rhodesian Front after his expulsion, because prior to that he had been fighting the Rhodesian Front privately (p.41). Msipa takes offence at his unjust dismissal as a teacher and at the racial discrimination and oppression of black people at the hands of the Rhodesian government. The narrator also lost jobs at Lobels and David Whitehead Textiles in 1971 and 1979, respectively, because of his political involvement particularly, his support for Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo who were regarded as “terrorists” by white employers who preferred the Internal

Settlement which was signed in 1978 (p.76).⁵ This unfair treatment of Africans urged him to commit fully to nationalist politics in an attempt to bring about change. The narrator regards this motive as a “calling” and projects himself as one of the people who felt that they were duty bound to fight for their people’s freedom, rights, and dignity (p.21). The compulsion to fight made Msipa intimately express in the most acute way that he was “a teacher by choice but a politician by circumstance” (p.19). This highlights the political subjectivity of the narrator and how he renders his participation in nationalist politics as inevitable.

The narrator shuttles between the past and the present using multiple flash-back and flash-forward narrative techniques to weave his referential experience as a political activist and a nascent nationalist. The manipulation of the past and present also shifts the narrative tone from that of nostalgia to one of self-importance. This vacillatory tone highlights the modalities of self-positioning and self-making in the national narrative. A narrator’s investment in the “authority” of experience serves a variety of rhetorical purposes such as convincing the reader of the narrative’s authenticity, and validating certain claims as truthful, (Smith & Watson, 2001: 27). Such appeals to ‘authenticity’ entice the reader to either validate the credibility of the narrative or empathise. For instance, Msipa maintains in his memoir that the pursuit of freedom and justice is the driving force behind his political involvement. This in turn made the narrator to boldly declare that he was prepared to suffer for a great cause, even if it meant incarceration or death. In as much as the above claim can be considered as legitimate, it is also a politically motivated portrait of a selfless and fearless freedom fighter who is willing to sacrifice his life to become a political martyr.

Furthermore, Msipa chronicles that he assumed, during his first incarceration at Gwelo Prison, the same position and responsibility he occupied before being arrested, which is that of organising school classes and being an intermediary. The narrator would write letters to the families of illiterate political detainees and read them replies as part of their teaching exercise (p.57). In 1978 Msipa was imprisoned for the second time and taken to Wha Wha Prison near Gwelo, where they were split into two camps, one for ZANU-PF, the other for PF-ZAPU. The narrator depicts the prison as a space where the two parties talked to each other across the fence and political differences that separated them were suddenly removed by the prison walls (p.80). It is interesting to note that Msipa’s bicultural identity made it easy for him to find friends from

both parties at Wha Wha Prison. In light of this view, the prison fence underscores what Bhabha (2012: 36) refers to as a 'borderline' which mobilises and represents two (political) cultures and promotes conditions of enunciation and negotiation of difference typical of a liminal space. This provision of services to fellow prisoners and Msipa's ability to make friends from both political divides assisted in the constitution of the narrator's sense of his selfless sacrifice, which he considers a determinant of patriotic identity.

The underlying assumption for Msipa's interpretation of his patriotic identity, as inextricably linked to performances in either or both the nationalist movement and or the liberation struggle, is common especially in patriotic narratives. Exemplary in this regard is when the narrator refused to be an informant for the British South African Police in 1965, the result of which allows others to view Msipa differently after his release from prison and considering him "a hero" because he had suffered for his country and stood up to the oppressors (p.61). Conversely, people who did not participate in the nationalist movement, the liberation struggle and those who escaped imprisonment as well as those who colluded with Rhodesian authorities are labelled as sellouts and cowards. Msipa registers his regret, especially when he was tasked by Nkomo in 1975 to remain in Rhodesia to assist students seeking to go into exile for military training and to look after the party's interests in Rhodesia during the time when PF-ZAPU's Central Committee was heightening their prosecution of the liberation struggle in Zambia (p.70). Regardless of the justification for remaining behind, the notion of patriotic identity remains shrouded in obscurity because in an earlier effort, Msipa explains how he was instrumental in helping political activists, such as Boniface Gumbo, then a member of National Democratic Party in 1959 to escape incarceration in Highfield (p.32). To this end, Msipa's autobiography seems to be privileging the performance of a centred self in the writing of the national narrative. That is, it uses imaginative acts to rewrite a history that is both personal and national with the sole intention of endorsing the patriotic performance of only a few political actors. In essence, the grafting of the self into history hints on the interrelationship between the personal, the political and national.

Msipa also narrates about being at the intersection of power. He states that he acted as an intermediary between his two friends, Nkomo and Mugabe. This bond of friendship was grounded by their mutual passion for politics. The narrator describes his relationship with

Mugabe as close and personal but hints that both avoided meddling in each other's territory since they were members of rival parties (p.68). Msipa depicts Mugabe as a caring and sincere friend whom he also regards as 'a relative' owing to the revelation that Mugabe's mother, Bona, shares the same totem (Gumbo) with the narrator and to that effect the former calls him 'Uncle Msipa' (p.27). Ironically, Msipa obliquely regards himself as the only friend that Nkomo had and was there to commiserate with him when he felt betrayed after hearing the news that PF-ZAPU had only won 20 seats in Matabeleland and Midlands in the 1980 elections (p.94). In addition, Msipa represents Mugabe as always preoccupied with the "prosecution of war" (p.69) and Nkomo as a "man of peace" (p.68). This stark contrast between Mugabe and Nkomo highlights their ideological persuasions and how it ultimately led to their performance of power during and after the liberation struggle. Nonetheless, what is most striking in Msipa's autobiography is the appropriation of the trope of a conduit which shows how he situates the self between two leading figures of Zimbabwean history.

This trope of a conduit was also employed by Bishop Muzorewa in *Rise Up and Walk* (1978) where he outlines how his party, the United African National Council (UANC) was backed by PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF structures to mobilise people and oppose the Pearce Commission of 1972 since all veteran nationalists were imprisoned. This trope underscores the liminal subjectivity of both Msipa and Bishop Muzorewa who had to represent the interests of both parties. The same trope is further illustrated by Msipa during the proceedings of the Lancaster House Conference:

Shortly before I left London, I was approached by officers of the Rhodesian Special Branch, about five of them. They said there was no chance that the Patriotic Front would stand as a united organisation in the coming elections ... They didn't want the conference to succeed; they wanted to see a split in the PF...I also reminded them that as far as we were concerned, ZANLA and ZIPRA were one. Some of the members across the political divide were even very close relatives. (p.82-83)

Ironically, the Rhodesian Special Branch officers correctly predicted what happened during the 1980 elections. Nevertheless, Msipa draws attention to the imagining of a 'unified' Zimbabwe as he did not want the Patriotic Front to go to the 1980 elections separately and as a result he considered the unforeseen split as machinations of Rhodesian secret agents. Smith and Watson (2001: 45-48) approach autobiography as a performative act that incorporates transverse strategies such as exercising agency, exploiting the flexible network of language and navigating

into imagined communities which enable the narrator to gain access to other cultural scripts. Similarly, Bhabha (2012: 2) argues that the discursive threshold of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, is produced performatively. Perhaps, then, this notion of performing ‘affiliations’ comes closest to explain Msipa’s ‘neutral’ stance as he considers Nkomo a friend and Mugabe his ‘relative’.

3.2 The politics of neutrality

Msipa narrates his story as a crusader for social justice, a moderate and liberal politician who reconciled two prominent leaders who occupied two oppositional political spaces of power. Mugabe and Nkomo were nationalist leaders of the ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU, respectively. The narrator constantly exhorts Mugabe and Nkomo to transcend their personal differences, ethnic and partisan convictions in order to act as a united front in the interests of the people. Significantly, Msipa’s autobiography provides a point of departure from earlier patriotic narratives, such as Martin and Johnson’s *The Struggle for Zimbabwe* (1981) and Tekere’s *A Lifetime of Struggle* (2007) which obscured the performance of PF-ZAPU before and after the liberation struggle.⁶ Msipa juxtaposes his representations of PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF. As a result, he places Nkomo and Mugabe on an equal footing and in that way circumvents the essentialist and partisan constructions of Zimbabwean history as having been a Mugabeist triumphalism. This is akin to what Smith and Watson (2001: 112) call the writing of history through the paradigm of the “great man”. It is clear from the autobiography that Msipa understands the interplay between history and identity and does not yield to the temptation of incessantly glorifying Nkomo over Mugabe. For instance, when Mr Hillis, the Director of David Whitehead Textiles Limited, met Nkomo and Mugabe, he preferred Nkomo over Mugabe because the former’s ideologies would accommodate whites and yet Msipa supported both political leaders equally (p.76). It should be noted that the narrator’s uncompromising support for both Mugabe and Nkomo invokes the trope of sitting on the fence. Therefore, Msipa portrays a cross-cultural and anti-ethnocentric plural account of Zimbabwean history because of his liminal position.

In addition, Msipa’s autobiography can be signposted as a detribalised narration which seeks to change the narrative convention. It is a detribalised narration because Tekere’s (2007) memoir advances the heroic performances of Zezuru and Manyika tribes from the first and

second Chimurenga. However, the attendant danger of the so-called ethnically balanced historiographic approach is that it perpetuates the *big men thesis* in the national narrative as shown in Chapter 1. Msipa's rendition attempts to deconstruct the history of Zimbabwe using a liberal depiction of the past performances of the nationalist movement which rises above the realm of ethno-political conflict. Msipa's autobiography fits into Bhabha's (2012: 149) formulation of counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase totalising boundaries such as the political, cultural and tribal that are both actual and conceptual. The liminal position of the narrator is a contradictory space that interrogates his subjectivity and 'neutrality', which are key in foregrounding the leitmotif of cultural nationalism. However, this 'neutral' stance is political and subjective. Msipa regards his support for PF-ZAPU as "automatic" (p.39). Contexts are charged politically, hence, what is remembered is central to the cultural production of knowledge about the past (Smith & Watson, 2001: 18). This politics of remembering is shown by the projection of the narrator's unwavering commitment to reduce ZANU-PF's membership in Mufakose after the split in the nationalist movement in 1963. The split, however, created mistrust between Msipa and his former friends who had transferred allegiance to ZANU-PF. Msipa contextualises the rupture in the nationalist movement, as firstly a result of the diffidence in Nkomo's leadership style which was witnessed during his successive leadership of the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress, the National Democratic Party and ZAPU between 1957 and 1963. Secondly, he attributes this to what his detractors perceived as a self-imposed exile in a bid to avoid detention (p.33). Smith and Watson (2001: 13) interpret the autobiographical act of remembering as a historically inflected phenomenon that is both political and contextual and thus allows an interweaving of a retrospective narrative. In other words, the narrator chooses to selectively memorialise historic moments and events such as the split in the nationalist movement to counter these accusations. Such evocations of a centred self can be construed as negotiating a space within the nationalist movement and between Nkomo and Mugabe.

The affirmation of the narrator's liminal position qualified him to mediate between PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF, Nkomo and Mugabe, and between whites and the nationalist leaders. Msipa affirms that whilst working as a Public Relations Manager, he organised and invited Mugabe and Nkomo to a confidential meeting with John Hillis, the Director of David Whitehead Textiles Limited who wanted to know how the nationalists planned to run the country after

independence (p.69). Both attended the meeting probably out of respect of their friendship with Msipa. The narrator paints himself as a most sought-after nationalist who wielded influence across the political divide and as a result even attracted the attention of Prime Minister Ian Smith, who wanted him to relay the information of his surrender prior to the 1980 election (p.84). Msipa claims that he was chosen by Smith because of his liminal position as he could convey the message in “Shona and Ndebele” to the leaders of the Patriotic Front (p.85). It is not surprising that when the narrator returned from the Lancaster House Conference before its conclusion the Rhodesian media projected him as a spokesperson of the Patriotic Front, a coalition between PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF in Salisbury (p.83). Interestingly, in the run-up to the 1980 elections, Msipa as a “public representative of the Patriotic Front” became a marked man and started to receive death threats (p.84). Regardless of these death threats, Msipa welcomed both ZIPRA and ZANLA commanders who were returning from their military bases in Zambia and Mozambique respectively (p.90). These instances highlight how the narrator was entangled in the most monumental of events as a result of his ‘neutrality’. This Janus-faced orientation of Msipa defines him as a middle man who embodies the cultural and political values of diversity essential for nation-building.

The narrator succinctly portrays how the 1980 government of national unity between PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF was short-lived due to mistrust and discontentment which caused Mugabe to remove Joshua Nkomo and PF-ZAPU ministers in 1982. Paradoxically, the narrator and another nationalist politician, Clement Muchachi, were not dismissed as they were from the Midlands Province. Central to these exceptions is that both remained because they were imagined to be impartial. However, Clement Muchachi sent a letter of resignation in protest over the unjust removal of Nkomo and PF-ZAPU ministers whilst Msipa chose to remain in the government and was appointed Minister of Water Resources and Development in 1982. Msipa accepted the appointment on condition that he operated as a PF minister in the government (p.104). Liminality, according to Bhabha (2012: 230), is a direct result of “affiliative solidarities” that are formed through ambivalent articulations of consensus and conflict. In one respect, it could even be argued that these ‘affiliative solidarities’ are synonymous with the narrator’s political accommodation. Therefore, Msipa vindicates his decision to remain in government as an attempt to continue being an intermediary between Nkomo and Mugabe.

Most notably, Msipa's neutrality is questionable as he intimates his loyalty to PF-ZAPU as shown by his disappointment when he discovered in 1987 that his mother was a ZANU-PF supporter (p.11). This particularism stands in stark contrast to Msipa's claims of being a neutral political actor in the national narrative. According to De Waal (1990: 65) neutrality inevitably works towards the maintenance of the status quo. Similarly, Frederiske contends that:

Working within the system, for whatever reason, contaminates you, it wears down your defences, it whets your appetite for power. All the while it draws you closer, blunting your judgment and exposing your powerlessness by your "joining the system to fight the system" And what you call "compromise" for the sake of politics is in fact selling out your principles ... (1986: 147)

In this quotation, Frederiske underlines the politics of claiming neutrality, where good intentions, particularly in this one-party system of governance, led political actors to be complicit and pander to the whims of the majority. In other words, Msipa became vulnerable to impositions from Mugabe as he stood out as the lone voice of PF-ZAPU in an entirely ZANU-PF government. However, Msipa contends that he refused to be co-opted by Mugabe into ZANU-PF after both parties split in 1963 and when the latter was Prime Minister in 1980 because he feared his colleagues in PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF would condemn him as a sellout and an opportunist, respectively (p.36). Instead the narrator encouraged Mugabe to get Nkomo on his side rather than having defections from PF-ZAPU to ZANU-PF. It should be noted that the position of 'neutrality' is highly untenable as a result of the political heat in affiliations. By remaining in government, Msipa subjected himself to what Bhabha (2012: 1) designates as "the moment of transit" between space and time. It is little wonder that the autobiographical narrator describes the period from 1982 to 1987 as a time of reconciling Mugabe and Nkomo. Implicitly, Msipa accentuates that the salience of having multiple identities made him the last to be dismissed from government thus his memoir can be taken as a narrative of becoming 'united'.

Msipa hails the act of uniting ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU as the most important assignment he accomplished for his country. The narrator states that his attempts to foster unity between the two parties began when he was invited to attend the Malawian Congress Party Conference in 1971 and decided to go with his friend, George Kahari, a member of PF-ZAPU, former headmaster and a lecturer in African Languages at the University of Rhodesia, and with Nelson Mawema, a senior member of ZANU-PF as representatives of the two parties (p.62). The impression given here is that of a narrator who is a symbol of unity. Furthermore, Msipa recalls

how Reverend Canaan Banana, who was the titular Head of State from 1980 to 1987, had tried in vain to unite Mugabe and Nkomo. He notes that Banana eventually called on him to intervene as a last resort (p.127). Msipa also records that he was begged to bring the two together as noted in the Reverend's intimation that "I have been told that Mugabe and Nkomo are both your friends and if you can't bring them together, no one can" (p.127). A critical point here is that Msipa exalts his performance of power in conflict resolution, which he underscores as having made him to tower above Reverend Banana.

Msipa dubs himself a pacifier who had an overwhelming desire to reconcile Nkomo and Mugabe and as a result was given the praise name "*Umlamula nkunzi*", meaning the "one who separates bulls that are fighting" (p.117). Here, the narrator seems to project his bicultural identity as resonating with what Smith and Watson (2001: 36) consider to be multiply-positioned and continuously mobile. The signing of the Unity Accord between ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU in 1987, ended the second part of "a two-fold" struggle which was firstly a struggle against a 'common enemy' and secondly, an internal struggle for national unity (Banana, 1987: 1). However, Maunganidze (2009) slightly differs from Banana's (1987: 1) contention and further argues that effective unity is desirable in the furtherance of democracy rather than the vested interests of political leaders. For this reason, Msipa observes that the ZANU-PF government was more concerned with political interests than democratic ones (p.140). For instance, the 1987 Unity Accord created a one-party state which was characterised by authoritarianism rather than a representative democracy, in which power was going to be shared equally between Mugabe and Nkomo. The fortification of a one-party state is in line with what Bhabha (2012: 149) categorises as turning "Territory into Tradition", turning "the People into One" and authenticating those that were 'outside' into 'inward'. In essence, PF-ZAPU politicians who were previously perceived as 'sellouts', 'traitors', 'dissidents' and 'enemies of the state' were now regarded as patriots. Nevertheless, this 'sameness' proved to be problematic as it later resulted in factional infighting and disidentification.⁷ However, the historical significance of the 1987 Unity Accord is that it promoted peace, political stability and reduced tribal clashes between maShona and amaNdebele.

On the contrary, Tekere in his memoir claims that he could get along with both ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU and as such was able to organise a one-on-one meeting between Nkomo and Mugabe (Tekere, 2007: 152). Msipa validates his performance by using counter-claims such as

that he felt content and honoured to have joined thousands who worked behind the scenes but are neither mentioned nor recognised (p.131-132). Such evocations allow the autobiography to be read as a triumphalist narrative of an interstitial self who claims to have solved the enigma of unity through his ‘neutrality’. Liminality provides a place from which to speak both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal and the emergent (Bhabha, 2012: 149). By the same token, Msipa spoke on behalf of black Africans including teachers, PF-ZAPU in parliament when other Ministers were sacked, and the Patriotic Front while it was in exile and the ‘emergent’ self. The merger between PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF in 1987 can be lauded as ‘a rite of passage’ for members of the former party who transitioned into ZANU-PF politicians. Msipa further avers that his legacy is tied to his behind-the-curtain middle man approach when he brokered the Unity Accord.

Msipa, who was appointed Governor of the Midlands Province for the period 2000 to 2008, employs the same middle man approach and claims that he “wanted to put a human face to the land reform” (p.153). The overall aim of the land reform was to correct the imbalances of land ownership which had been established by the white Rhodesian minority government. Before taking the land from white farmers, the narrator would ask the former if they were “angry” and if they were being forced to abandon farming (p.154). Msipa maintains that as a result of his ‘neutrality’ and negotiating skills, he decided to spare dairy farms because of their highly technical nature and considerable finances required to run them (p.155). One possible explanation for the narrator’s decision is that he understood the plight of white farmers as noted in his intention, from the beginning of the land reform, to place an age limit that would protect the properties of owners who were over 75 years old.

Msipa argues that the implementation of the land reform programme in the Midlands Province was different from the violent and lawless way it was enacted in other provinces. Msipa further claims it was carried out peacefully and there “was no violence at all” (p.158). In this context, Msipa envisions his performance as peaceful and ethical yet there is evidence to the contrary. Jackson’s (2014) autobiography entitled *Another Farm in Africa* highlights the violence that accompanied the land seizures in the Midlands Province. Similarly, Pilosof (2012: 138) cites the death of Henry Elsworth, a prominent Kwekwe farmer, who was murdered in 2000 by unidentified assailants. This selective omission is symptomatic of the shortcomings of

patriotic narratives. To this end, wa Thiong'o (1986: 17) advances that a writer can adopt silence or self-censorship in which case he ceases to be an effective writer and becomes a state functionary. Similarly, Tendi (2010: 239) contends that what patriotic history advocates is as significant as what it is silent on. In rebuttal, Msipa postulates that an example of how land reform should not be carried out was demonstrated after he resigned from his governorship in 2008 (p.165). With this in mind, Smith and Watson (2001: 20) interrogate the motives for invoking a specific version of the past and on whose behalf it is remembered and hence they attribute memory to be an inseparable constituent of autobiographical subjectivity. Such acts of remembering may be made on behalf of the ruling party and at the same time project a peaceful and tactful self. Therefore, Msipa forges an image of a non-violent performance of the land reform because of his skillful diplomacy and 'neutrality'.

However, the narrator is merely interested in the significance of the recovery of the 'stolen' land in pursuit of justice. Msipa considers the performance of the Land Resettlement programme as a corrective justice and a remedy for past wrongs such as the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Land Tenure Act of 1969. In such a way, Msipa subscribes to the nationalist memory by evoking the early performances of Benjamin Burombo and links it to his own performance of power. This linking and ritualising of heroic and selfless performances points to the idyllic continuity of the patriotic narrative tradition. For instance, the narrator records:

The events of the time made me think of Benjamin Burombo and his campaign in the fifties against the Land Apportionment Act and the removal of black people from their homes in order to create space for white settlers. He had hoped against hope that the whole exercise would be reversed but his cry was a voice in the wilderness, and no one paid any attention. I wish he was alive now, so he could see the evil he had fought against had been destroyed. I feel sure that he would have supported the land reform programme, but not the violence that characterised it in the rest of the country. (p.161-162)

Msipa's claim to nationalist memory is shown in how the autobiographical narrator 'closes the circle' by concluding what his father and Benjamin Burombo failed to accomplish. As a result, he becomes 'a son of the soil' to use the title of Katiyo's biographical novel. This accomplishment is underlined by a restaging of past performances such as the first and second Chimurenga. The narrator re-writes and immortalises dead and forgotten heroes such as Benjamin Burombo and Josiah Tongogara whom he argues could have been ethical and democratic if they had lived. For example, the narrator also depicts Tongogara as a moderate in

his party and much more pragmatic than many of his colleagues because of his vision of a united people (p.91). The appropriation of Burombo and Tongogara's performances is akin to Bakhtin's (1987b: 20) observation that "the dead are loved in a different way".⁸ Viewed in this light, Msipa invests in the past in order to secure a position in the national narrative.

The underlying assumption of Msipa's yearning for political guidance from Burombo and Tongogara is that they were essentially going to be 'neutral' in their performance of power in post-independent Zimbabwe. As such, the narrator infers that if Tongogara had not died he could have swayed things in favour of the Patriotic Front (p.91).⁹ Likewise, Msipa takes his cue from Burombo and Tongogara and hence affirms that he "wants to continue to talk to people even after his death" (p.x). This suggests an endless mediation of the past and the present, and the dead and the living. For instance, the narrator asserts that the past is history, it is irreversible, and so is the land reform (p.163). These sensibilities collude with nativist politics that is often inserted in the political rhetoric by ZANU-PF. This explains why Msipa wishes the international community would understand that the land reform programme had to be done for sustainable development and stability of the country (p.163). Significantly, Msipa regards the land reform as a necessary evil for social readjustment and restitution. In essence, Msipa paints himself as an arbiter who ensured white farmers did not lose everything to the new occupants as noted in the way he negotiated with white farmers to agree to the downsizing of their farms and how those who agreed with Msipa were less affected (p.160). However, this does not exonerate Msipa's misperformances of power during his tenure as Governor of the Midlands Province.

Msipa, just as Smith, Mugabe and Tsvangirai, portrays his achievements as greater than his mistakes. The narrator does not mention that the land distribution process was politicised and skewed mostly in favor of loyal supporters and politicians like himself who became beneficiaries (p.164). Notably, Msipa claims that he 'averted' wanton destruction of houses in his province during the Operation Restore Order (Sweep out the filth) also known as *Murambatsvina* in 2005. Msipa drove Anna Tibaijuka, the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme when she visited Gweru. The latter was greatly surprised by Msipa's performance of power, particularly how he single-handedly restrained police in the Midlands Province from demolishing people's houses (p.168). The narrator straddles two different positions, which are representing the government, and protecting residents in his province from detrimental

government campaigns. However, Msipa's versions of the land reform programme and Operation Restore Order leave a lot to be desired. Apparently, what is omitted by Msipa has the power of unsettling his claim to 'neutrality'. Jackson's (2014) autobiography begs to differ with Msipa's version of both the land reform and *Murambatsvina* and regards them as twin evils that left a trail of destruction. Therefore, Msipa purports to have occupied a space of intervention in the national narrative which underlined his so called 'neutral' performance of power. Instead, his neutral stance vacillates and mostly suits the interests of the ruling elite.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how Smith and Watson's (2001) representational strategies such as making history, conveying cultural information, rhetorical aims, inventing desirable futures, narrative shifts and narrative tropes can be expanded further by including the elements of the liminal autobiographical self. It has been noted that the mere act of re-writing history was reduced by the narrator to a self-making endeavour that models a desirable narrative identity and historical position at the centre of events under narration. The chapter also argued that identities are dynamic, relational and positional. Msipa's fluid identity(ies) enabled him to navigate and negate cultural and political polarities which prevailed before and after independence in Zimbabwe. Hence, the narrator claims to have transcended the limitations and arbitrary designations of identity as noted by his evasion of ethnic and political singularities. The move beyond singularities (of history) led the narrator to be aware of his subject position in the narrative of the nation.

Msipa's narrative exploits the tropes of a conduit and of sitting on a fence as shown by how his self-representation as a circumstantial and moderate politician whose political performance is in-between Mugabe and Nkomo, ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU, and, the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups. In addition, these narrative tropes depict the liminality of the nation-space as it gives an inside-outside narration of the narrator's performance of power that places the self at the crossroads of Zimbabwean history. For that reason, Msipa's narrative authorises marginal voices and minority discourses that were previously glossed over. The narrator also highlights an in-between performance of power that is questionably 'neutral' because of his partisan bias. Conversely, Msipa would also criticise the performance of power of Mugabe and Nkomo and this explains why he was disappointed after being accused of being a 'dissident

sympathiser'. As alluded before, the notion of being neutral in politics is elusive and implausible yet Msipa's performance of power seeks to be lauded as such. The discussion also revealed the politics that come into play when one is constructing an interstitial self whose duty is to his people. Msipa's autobiography depicts Mugabe and Nkomo with their own idiosyncrasies and such a representation can be regarded as a testimonial of his friends because of its humanist element. In other words, it is a liminal narration that conveys crucial information and praises both Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo.

Ultimately, Msipa's narrative gives a subjective representation of his liminal role as a nationalist who was instrumental in the nation building and reconciliation processes. Msipa's liberal and influential role enabled him to be a mediator in the proposal for unity in 1987. However, the narrator also essentialises the roles of other political actors such as Reverend Canaan Banana and thus maintains the misrecognition and disidentification that manifest in patriotic narratives. Therefore, Msipa claims that his intermediary and influential role in the national narrative was equalled by none. In part this is because of a saintly depiction of a self that is an emblematic figure of unity. Furthermore, it also underlines the narrator's penchant for disputing accounts of other political actors in order to settle scores and uphold his reputation as a liminal autobiographical self.

The next chapter focuses on the postcolonial notions of belonging and writing the self in the nation's history in Coltart's *The Struggle Continues: 50 Years of Tyranny in Zimbabwe* (2016).

Endnotes

- ¹ The terms centre and neutrality will be placed in inverted commas throughout the chapter to indicate their mordant use.
- ² People from Matebeleland South are often mistaken for a joint ethnicity (Kalanga and Ndebele) and this explains why Joshua Nkomo who was a Kalanga and from the same place was often referred to as “Zimundevere” by ZANU-PF politicians see Nkomo (2001: 117); Munochiveyi (2011) and Msindo, (2012).
- ³ Msipa laments the politics of recognition in the national narrative and on the same note argues that if PF-ZAPU had won the 1980 elections, they would have appointed Garfield Todd a ministerial position (Msipa 2015: 8).
- ⁴ For a detailed reading of the performance of power of Garfield see Woodhouse (2018).
- ⁵ The Internal Settlement was an agreement reached between Prime Minister of Rhodesia, Ian Smith, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Senator Chief Jeremiah Chirau.
- ⁶ Counter-claims to the essentialised performance of the liberation struggle by PF-ZAPU were given by Nkomo (2001), Sibanda (2005) and Mpofo (2014).
- ⁷ Some of the PF-ZAPU politicians like Thenjiwe Lesabe and Welshman Hadane Mabhena were subsumed under the ZANU-PF government but later chose to be not aligned with Robert Mugabe and ZANU-PF due to the latter’s autocratic performance of power.
- ⁸ Coltart (2016: 517) records this irony by highlighting how Tsvangirai demonised Gibson Sibanda after the split in the MDC and later hailed him as a “unifier” after Sibanda’s death.
- ⁹ Similarly, Coltart (2016) in his autobiography depicts Tongogara as a reconciler and speculates that had if he had survived the war could have been a democratic leader.

Chapter 4: Narrating belonging and writing the self in the nation's history in Coltart's *The Struggle Continues: 50 Years of Tyranny in Zimbabwe*

The thrust of this chapter is on the politics of writing the self and the way in which the theme of belonging is treated in Coltart's *The Struggle Continues: 50 Years of Tyranny in Zimbabwe* (2016). The chapter closely follows Smith and Watson's (2001: 158, 172) delineation of autobiographical modes of narration such as self-interrogation, claims of citizenship, campaigns for human rights and social change which seem to fit well with Mbembe's (2002a, 2002b, 2015) conception of *African modes of Self-Writing*. In effect, I draw on Mbembe's (2002a: 241) notion of "different writing" to firstly consider ways in which this nuanced writing confronts and contests the postcolonial themes of Afro-radicalism and nativism. Secondly, I consider how this writing answers back to patriotic narratives that are silent on the citizenship of minorities such as white Zimbabweans. Also key to my analysis are Chennells' (1982, 1995) ideas on white writing, colonial ideology, settler myths and fixed perceptions of Rhodesia demonstrating how Rhodesians asserted their political identity and sense of belonging. Finally, I draw on McAdams' (2006, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2018) psycho-literary approaches to personal narratives which outline the transformative processes of self-understanding. In essence, McAdams' (2006, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2018) psycho-literary approaches are employed to critique the autobiographical narrator's personality traits, particularly the shift in behaviour and consciousness that reinforce our understanding of writing the self as a form of disrupting the essentialised notions of inclusion and exclusion.

4.1 Mapping the politics of white belonging in *The Struggle Continues: 50 Years of Tyranny in Zimbabwe*

David Coltart, a white Zimbabwean lawyer by profession, former government minister and opposition Member of Parliament, begins his narrative by setting the record straight that he is "not originally indigenous to Zimbabwe..." despite having been born on 4 July 1957 in Gwelo, (now Gweru) in the then Rhodesia (p.2). Furthermore, the autobiographical narrator is a first generation and a fifth generation African on his paternal and maternal side respectively.¹ The narrator's father, William, was born in Scotland and his mother, Nora, was born in the Middelburg district of the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa but both emigrated to Southern Rhodesia in 1952. In this light, Coltart does not consider himself as a European but employs

American parlance to ascribe the self a European African identity. This specific understanding of narrative identity is akin to what Smith and Watson (2001: 60) perceive as neither unified nor stable but split, fragmented, provisional, multiple and always in the process of simultaneously coming together and dispersing. Coltart's narrative identity does not fit into all these categories but is provisional and always in the process of coming together and dispersing depending on context, place and time. For instance, the narrator before and after independence considers himself as a white Rhodesian (p.65), white Zimbabwean (p.107), Zimbabwean (p.551) respectively and when abroad as an African (p.163). Mbembe (2002a) observes that *African modes of writing the self* are inseparably connected with the problematics of self-constitution. People construct and share stories about themselves, detailing particular episodes and periods in their lives in order to convey to others who they are now, how they came to be, and what those experiences mean to them (McAdams, 2008; McAdams & McLean, 2013: 233). The ideas proffered by Mbembe and McAdams connect with how Coltart introduces the self as a non-indigenous person but at the same time showing his belongingness. The quest for belonging by the narrator is a major dimension of his struggle over the nativist turn in ZANU-PF's politics of nationality, 'nationness' and citizenship. However, it should be underlined that the politics of locating the self is bound up with the narrator's allegiance to Africa and Zimbabwe (p.10). Therefore, I will read the narrator's sense of belonging as mapped and rooted in his genealogy.

It is interesting to note that Coltart aptly gives his first chapter the title "Roots." In this chapter he traces his genealogy in a bid to historically position the self in the land of his birth in the late 1950s. The narrator's great-great-grandmother, Rhoda Trollip, had sailed from Portsmouth, England to the Eastern Cape of South Africa in 1820 fleeing the massive social upheaval that was caused by the aftermath of the Napoleonic and American wars (p.2). Furthermore, Coltart's great-great-grandfather, Robert Coltart, was a weaver in Rhonehouse in Scotland and his grandfather, James, rose from humble beginnings to become a politician, Deputy Lord Provost of Edinburg in 1938 (p.8-9). Genealogy then acts as one's "certificate of origin" (Mbembe, 2002b: 635). Smith and Watson (2001: 195) posit that genealogy authenticates identity by constructing a family tree of descent which cites ancestral evidence based on documents and inter-generational history. Hove (2014: 36-37) pursues further the same perspective but notes that in narrating a genealogical self and inscribing its position relative to social power and political spaces, autobiography and memoir insist on transitory

rather than permanent identities that cumulatively shape the narratorial identity. Such inscriptions of the self are shown by the narrator's spatial representation of a nation in the making (p.6). Coltart traces the birth of Rhodesia, a settler state that had preferential policies, as one territory racially segregated and governed by a white minority which forced black citizens to wage a protracted liberation struggle in order to attain majority rule.

Narratorial identity can be equated to a life story and thus becomes a performative practice and multilayered process of self-exploration. Coltart places the self at the centre of Zimbabwean history as exemplified by how he regards the last six decades as an era of great turbulence through which he lived and concurrently highlights where the nation has gone awry (p.xiii-xv). Similarly, McAdams (2018: 361), McAdams and McLean (2013: 233) regard *narrative identity* as a person's internalised and evolving life story that integrates the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose. The self and the nation become synchronous and interwoven. It is also important to bring to the fore Benson's contention that:

National identity, like the nation, is an ideological construction: it is the nation to which one believes that one belongs. It is important to recognise, for instance, that one can believe that one belongs to more than one nation. ... And it is important to recognise that it is possible to adopt a number of different stances towards the nation to which one belongs and one can be proud of one's nationality, ashamed of it, or indifferent towards it. (2005: 202)

What is significant here is that the narrator belongs not only to two nations but to two continents namely Europe and Africa but adopts a patriotic stance towards Zimbabwe. For instance, the narrator recounts how he firstly developed subconsciously his deep love and passion for Zimbabwe when he was travelling from Gweru to their new home in Bulawayo (p.2). Correspondingly, Smith (1997: 67) in his autobiography, *The Great Betrayal: The Memoirs of Ian Douglas Smith*, contends that his roots were not in Britain, but in Southern Africa, and therefore he regards himself as a white African.² In essence, Coltart understands identity as contextual and subject to revision/s, hence, he writes the self or his roots to disrupt the organicist interpretation of national identity and assert his belonging.

Belonging as a recurrent motif in patriotic narratives is always contextualised and used to selectively include the indigenes, patriots and heroes and exclude those regarded as sellouts, villains or the so-called outgroup. Autobiographies such as Buckle's *African Tears: The*

Zimbabwean Land Invasions (2000), Lang's *Place of Birth* (2006) and Rogers' *The Last Resort: A Memoir of Zimbabwe* (2009) also contest this notion of belonging.³ In addition, the narrator accentuates that if any unknowing person would read patriotic narratives in isolation they would assume that Joshua Nkomo and PF-ZAPU had played a minor role in the liberation struggle (p.530). The same patriotic history underplays the role of white 'democrats' such as Garfield Todd, who the narrator regards as his mentor and a visionary ahead of his time (p.13). Consequently, one is left with the impression that most white people were racists and did not contribute to the liberation struggle. In addition, the narrator deplores how the Zimbabwean constitution that was enacted in 2013 guaranteed "indigenous" Zimbabweans the full compensation for the value and improvements on land that was compulsorily acquired by government during the post-2000 land reform programme (p.543). Coltart despises how the two MDC factions conceded to a racially discriminatory clause in the constitution which ostracised white Zimbabweans from being compensated. It is also noteworthy that the term "indigenous" is shrouded in obscurity and is not properly defined in Zimbabwe's constitution. Accordingly, Yuval-Davis (2006: 199) defines belonging as both an act of self-identification and identification by others in a stable, contested or transient way. In like manner, Anthias (2008: 7) regards belonging not as a totalising concept but as "who you are, to what *extent*, and with whom, one is a member, where and by whom one is accepted and feels attached to." Mbembe (2015: 14-15) slightly differs from Anthias (2008: 7) and argues that the conflation of racial and territorial authenticity forecloses the possibility of recognising Africans who are not blacks. Furthermore, Mbembe (2015) stresses that it is impossible for nativist discourses to conceive the existence of Africans of European, Arabic or Asiatic origins or that an African might have multiple ancestries. Thus, in pursuance of this argument, claims of belonging by Coltart are nullified in patriotic narratives that perceive whites as outsiders, out of place and not 'natives' because of their race. This reductionist perception of African identity/ies is fraught with the politics of exclusion that played out in colonial and postcolonial Zimbabwe.

Coltart's sense of belonging in Rhodesia is derived from his race, place of birth, ancestry and performance in the 'bush war'. This point is worth emphasising since Rhodesia was a stratified society in which racism ran deep and also existed between different sections of the white community such as Greeks, Afrikaner, Jews, Italians and Portuguese (p.41).⁴ Ironically, the young autobiographical narrator reveals that he was chastised by his father, William, a

military veteran of the Second World War for constantly making anti-Semitic comments against Jewish students who were leaving school early to avoid the Rhodesian national service (p.52). Avoiding the national service was considered by the narrator as unpatriotic and an act of cowardice (p.53). On the contrary, there were gentile boys (of Rhodesian descent) like Rob Hill who evaded their call for national service because he was a pacifist (p.179). By the same token, the young autobiographical narrator's inimical attitude towards Jews sprang from the rationale that being a Rhodesian meant being white, born in Rhodesia,⁵ having British or Scottish ancestry and enrolling for national service.

Chennells (1982: xiv, 1995) also highlights how settler myths inherent in the Rhodesian master fiction made Rhodesians assert their Britishness always when it suited them and proclaim that they were a heroic people endowed with a discrete identity. Intimations by Coltart's narrator indicate that members of his Squad 7/75 had British roots as they had been born in Rhodesia and there was not a single Afrikaner among them (p.56). What also emerges from the text is a certain mythology that had built up among Rhodesian conscripts that white English-speaking Rhodesians were a cut above everyone (p.32), and were the best trained, bravest and brightest young men in the world (p.65). The same settler myths made Rhodesians to perceive the liberation struggle as a terrorist incursion and "a criminal activity, not as a war" (p.78) as shown by how guerrillas were treated as "criminals instead of soldiers" (p.68). This also explains why Coltart interprets enlisting in the national service as "a necessary evil" (p.53) towards defending his motherland. Coltart's patriotic conviction, which is the antithesis to the later post-2000 and ZANU-PF black nationalist idea of patriotism, was influenced by the predominant view held by white Rhodesians that national service meant defending one's country.

It is pertinent to note that Coltart's claims of belonging were informed by his early socialisation. For instance, the young version of the narrator depicts how pervasive the Rhodesian Front (RF) propaganda was, particularly how it inculcated and fostered a white supremacist attitude that made him to assume he could easily and naturally command experienced black policemen (p.61). Moreover, the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation would feed the Rhodesian public with a steady diet of horrendous photographs and stories of atrocities committed by ZANLA guerillas (p.47). Consequently, the narrator's sense of attachment to Rhodesia induced him to leave school early when he was seventeen years old and join the British

South African Police (p.54). Given this context, the narrator was convinced that he belonged to Rhodesia unlike Jews, Greeks, Italians and Portuguese who had to perform their belongingness to prove they are patriotic.⁶ It is ironic that the younger Coltart excludes other white ethnic groups in the same manner that Third Chimurenga discourses described other ethnic minorities such as whites, coloureds, Asians and migrant workers from neighbouring countries as not belonging. The parameters of identifying and qualifying who is a Rhodesian set by the narrator are derived from the imperial discourse which depicted the colonial space as unsettled in order to deny the ‘indigenous’ black populations a place of belonging. In stark contrast as has been alluded in Chapter 1, Kahari (1980: 6); Zimunya (1982: xi) and Zhuwarara (2001) interchangeably use the term African or Zimbabwean to refer to blacks only. Auret (2009: xvi) eptomises this exclusion in his autobiography, in which he concedes that he would never have called himself a “white Settler” until it became clear that the majority of the people in Zimbabwe considered anyone of Rhodesian background to be an interloper. However, Hove (2014: 36-37) argues that these “(in)consistencies” of imagining or (re)positioning the self, reveal the fragility and elusiveness of an appropriated identity. To that end, the exclusivist imagination of colonial and postcolonial identity/ies by white and black Zimbabweans constantly shaped and shifted the discourse of belonging and citizenship in Zimbabwe.

There is a way in which Coltart’s autobiography addresses the ‘(in)consistencies’ of patriotic narratives’ imagining of who is a Zimbabwean that led to the othering of minorities using the prescriptive boundaries of class, ethnicity, sexuality, political affiliation and race. Coltart teases this politics of belonging by narrating that the only “indigenous” people are the San people and any attempt to include some of the Nguni people, such as Ndebeles, would assist a claim that whites be included, because both settled in Zimbabwe in the same century (p.543). Such posturing highlights how the notion of belonging is invariably a site of contestation. This explains why the narrator was devastated by the decision made by his parents and other white Zimbabweans to emigrate to South Africa in the first weeks of 1980 after being unnerved by ZANU-PF’s anti-white political rhetoric (p.108). Although Nora, the narrator’s mother was returning to her “roots”, Coltart still felt that he was losing his home and could not live in Apartheid South Africa (p.108). Despite having failed dismally to persuade his parents to stay in Zimbabwe, the narrator intimates that he was excited by the thought of a new nation and regarded this stance as being blinded by optimism (p.107). It should be noted that the narrator’s

perceptions of belonging and strong preference for a home in Zimbabwe as opposed to South Africa is tied to his opposition of Afrikaner nationalism. Similarly, Chennells (1982: 264) in his seminal thesis on “Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel” contends that a distinguishing characteristic of Rhodesians was their fixation on Britishness and myths of invincibility as well as their dislike of being identified as South Africans.

Moreover, when the narrator was chairman of the Zimbabwe Society in 1981 at the University of Cape Town, he organised an Annual “Focus on Zimbabwe” which would highlight future prospects to students who were “wondering whether they would be welcome home after completion of their studies, especially those who had served in the military under the Rhodesian Front” (p.115). The narrator’s anxiety of losing a home in Zimbabwe stemmed from how the so called terrorist incursion and black majority rule had disrupted their sense of belonging and assertion of Rhodesian identity. Incidentally, the narrator received a telegram from the then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, which informed students about the new nation’s policy of reconciliation and urged them to return to their home, Zimbabwe (p.123). McAdams (2008: 244) contends that the stories we construct are fundamentally about our struggle to reconcile what and who the self imagines itself to be. Exemplary in this regard is how Coltart had been forgiven by thousands of black Zimbabweans despite having served in the British South African Police (BSAP), and those who voted for him and considered him a patriotic Zimbabwean (p.470). Consequently, the pursuit for belonging by the narrator is in itself subject to conflicting interpretations at different intervals.⁷

Essentially, Coltart writes the self to express his sense of belonging and legitimises his attachment to Zimbabwe as shown by his return from South Africa, his resolve to stay and work as a lawyer when other white Zimbabweans left the country. What is most striking about the politics of reconciliation in Zimbabwe was engendered by the seamless relationship between the ruling ZANU-PF party and state. Coltart laments that ZANU-PF had tried to make support for its organisation synonymous with loyalty to Zimbabwe (p.207). Ingham-Thorpe (1997: 487) expostulates that the policy of reconciliation was a spurious stratagem which maintained the institutionalisation of violence, repressive laws and structural inequalities of oppression. This is exhibited by the observation made by Coltart, who after his return to Zimbabwe in 1982, handled ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU cases of assault at the Bulawayo-based legal firm, Webb, Low and

Barry, law firm. He observes that ZANU-PF youths received preferential treatment and were always acquitted whilst youths from PF-ZAPU were imprisoned without trial (p.165). As a result, Coltart started taking more PF-ZAPU cases in which he legally represented PF-ZAPU politicians such as the party's Secretary General, Welshman Mabhena, the Chief Whip, Sidney Malunga, Stephen Nkomo, the brother to Joshua Nkomo, and Kembo Mohadi, who previously served as Deputy Minister of Local Government, and was also former Minister of Home Affairs. This made him to be singled out as a person of interest. The narrator's shift of focus in legal representation coincided with the passing of a new Citizenship Act in 1984, which outlawed dual citizenship.⁸ Consequently, the narrator was compelled to renounce his British and South African foreign citizenship because his father was a Scottish and his mother was a South African by birth (p.171).⁹ Coltart then applied for a Zimbabwean passport which took long to be considered. A Senior Passport Officer told Coltart that his application was under "consideration" because he was viewed as "an enemy of the state" (p.171). This selective application of the rule of law by ZANU-PF highlights the politicisation of belonging and the farce of the policy of reconciliation as the daily practices were fraught with racial and political undertones that were not focused on social cohesion. In this context, anyone who was deemed disloyal to ZANU-PF such as the narrator was persecuted because they did not belong to ZANU-PF.

The autobiography also reflects the way in which discriminatory discourses such as nativism and Afro-radicalism, were exploited by ZANU-PF as discursive practices of memory making that ensured that white Zimbabweans were never considered as patriotic nor insiders in the country. A case in point is how ZANU-PF made attempts to prevent Coltart's nomination as an MP in the 2000 election and in 2004 tried to use his dual citizenship status to bar him from standing (p.283). The nomination court still queried his citizenship in 2004 even after the narrator had won elections before. Pilosof (2012: 71) in his study on the voices and experiences of white farmers in Zimbabwe observes that the claiming of citizenship by white Zimbabweans could not be done without being political and their involvement in national issues would enable them to be accepted, and assume a position and right to be Zimbabwean. Yet, this upsurge in political interest by white Zimbabweans made them vulnerable to ZANU-PF's nativist programmes and policies such as the post-2000 fast track land reform and the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act of 2008. According to Manase (2016: 23) land was defined as a national resource, belonging to black Zimbabweans and had to be liberated from white farmers.

Despite having formal rights of citizenship, white Zimbabweans and their farm workers were displaced and systematically denied access to own the land during the post-2000 land invasions.

The displacement of “foreigners” also resulted in the exclusion of some white Zimbabweans and thousands of Zimbabwean farm workers from the voters’ roll (p.414). However, the crossing-out of people in the voters’ roll is analogous to a Derridean typological device of deconstruction in which ~~citizenship~~ and ~~voting rights~~ were ‘under erasure’ (Derrida, 1967). This erasure of citizenship and voting rights excluded many people, especially minorities, from voting and having a sense of belonging. This erasure resonates with Mbembe’s observation on the various exclusions and resultant estrangements from one’s home suffered in the statement that:

Being consigned unilaterally to a sort of minority without foreseeable end, he/she cannot be a subject of politics, a citizen. Since the notion of citizen overlaps with that of nationality, *therefore*, being excluded from the vote, is not simply being consigned to the fringes of the nation, but is virtually a stranger in his/her own home. (2015: 35; emphasis added)

Central to its focus, Coltart’s narrative describes how ZANU-PF targeted descendants of immigrants from Asia, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia and ethnic minorities such as whites, coloureds and Asians who were unilaterally taken off the voters’ roll during the 2002 Presidential elections (p.348). Comparably, these minorities particularly white farmers and farm workers lost the right to vote as they were displaced during the fast track land invasions. The same position is shown by Manase (2016: 28) who argues that patriotic history seeks to justify the land seizures and to erase the personal memories and ties to the land that are held by whites and those that are deemed as unpatriotic black Zimbabweans. Therefore, the national narrative is a site of struggle over inscriptions of citizenship, voting and land rights and belonging.

Coltart loathes how ZANU-PF construes belonging as a metaphor for blind allegiance to the party rather than the nation. The narrator illustrates how whites who chose to be apolitical and those who did not associate themselves with the ruling party, ZANU-PF were threatened and labelled as unpatriotic and unbelonging (p.222). Perhaps this explains why the narrator was initially hesitant to enter into politics because he was white, had fought under the Rhodesian Front and was sceptical of how the black electorate would receive him considering his past (p.261). In particular, Coltart submits that the wounds of racial discrimination and a ghastly war had not healed and thus writes the self to atone for his past. This is a form of internalised guilt,

which makes the narrator to act and remain an outsider in his own country due to his past performances as a Patrol Officer in the British South African Police. This kind of guilty conscience is also regarded by Mukherjee (1988: 8) as “the exile of the mind”. Furthermore, this resonates with McAdams’ (2008: 246-247) notion that auto/biographies assist both the reader and narrator to trace later problems, back to earlier conflicts, and in this case Coltart’s guilt as result of his role in colonial Rhodesia.

Coltart’s past performances in Rhodesia and his (racial) identity negatively impacted how he was perceived by black Zimbabweans in post-independent Zimbabwe. The autobiography shows how for instance, the narrator’s criticism of Vice President Joshua Nkomo for stating that corruption only existed in the civil service in 1993, resulted in Nkomo labelling him a “racist” that should get out of the country (p.217 -218). Another incident occurred in 1994 when Nkomo warned of “a civil war” between whites and blacks, particularly whites who did not identify themselves with ZANU-PF, who were then supposed to leave ‘their’ country before it was too late (p.222). In a way, Nkomo’s remark highlights how Zimbabwe was racially construed and imagined. Mbembe (2015: 13) advances that, to a large degree, race serves as the proof and sometimes the justification of the existence of a nation. Comparably, McAdams (2008: 247) pinpoints that counter-narratives can be found in different cultural venues and are especially salient among minorities. In essence, the refusal to join ZANU-PF by whites was taken as a treasonous act that was synonymous with rejecting to belong in the nation. Nonetheless, such self-awareness made Coltart to be reluctant and to calculate when and how to enter into opposition politics with a view to authenticate his belonging.

Perceptions of belonging and not belonging are socially, politically and ideologically constructed and influenced through the media, third Chimurenga discourses, curriculum development, political manifestos and repressive pieces of legislation. This is foregrounded by how ZANU-PF used propaganda, the judicial system and parliament to entrap and imprison white Zimbabweans who were regarded as closely aligned to the opposition in order to end their careers and make them leave the country in the early 1980s and post-2000.¹⁰ For example, the narrator bemoans how ZANU-PF between 2001 and 2002 unconstitutionally enforced the resignation of two whites and an Asian Supreme Court judges, Chief Justice Antony Gubbay, Nick McNally, and Ahmed Ibrahim, respectively, because they were regarded as racists and pro-

opposition (p.304-307). The supreme judges had unanimously ruled against the fast track land programme in 2000. Similarly, Mike Auret, a former Rhodesian Military Intelligence Officer, former director of the Catholic Commission for Justice, Human Rights Activist and member of the MDC resigned his Harare Central parliamentary seat in 2003 and emigrated to Ireland after relentlessly being intimidated by Mugabe's secret service and ZANU-PF (p.383). White Zimbabweans who considered themselves as 'indigenous' and dared to criticise the ruling ZANU-PF would not be accepted in an authoritarian state. Thus, ZANU-PF brooked no criticism from anyone suspected of supporting the MDC. Known and perceived political opponents were silenced in one way or the other through intimidation, violence, malicious prosecution, imprisonment, racial slurs, forced retirement and evictions, which would force them to translocate into exile.

Of greater importance is how the narrator abhors state-sponsored newspapers such as *The Chronicle* and *The Herald* which published opinion pieces entitled "Coltart has no place in Zimbabwe" because he had urged Western countries to impose targeted sanctions (p.318). The lobbying for sanctions by the narrator aroused the ire of Mugabe, who vehemently criticised him:

"... whites who have been asking Britain to impose sanctions... do not deserve to be in Zimbabwe. These like Bennet and Coltart are not part of our society. They belong to Britain and let them go there. If they want to live here, we will say 'stay', but your place is in prison and nowhere else. [...]" (p.357)

Specifically, these sanctions were intended to target ZANU-PF political elites and act as stringent measures against human rights abuses. The sanctions were also meant to ensure transparency on electoral and constitutional reforms. Consequently, Roy Bennet, a white Zimbabwean who was born in Rusape, a former member of the British South African Police, former commercial farmer, elected Member of Parliament for Chimanimani in 2000 and later the Treasurer General for the Tsvangirai-led MDC faction, was imprisoned for alleged contempt of parliament for assaulting Patrick Chinamasa, the Justice Minister in parliament. The narrator states that Bennet was "exiled to some decrepit prison" in 2004 (p.409) and later fled to South Africa in 2006 when he was alleged to have planned an overthrow the government (p.439). Virtually, white Zimbabweans who opposed the ruling party were not accorded representations of the self and they were displaced politically, socially and economically, with some being hounded to prisons or forced into foreign lands as political exiles. Coltart's resilience to stay in

Zimbabwe was inspired by the advice he was given by Nelson Mandela in 2002 “to remain in the country and continue fighting for justice” (p.390). The autobiographical narrator’s conviction to withstand injustice is akin to Smith and Watson’s (2001: 3) self-referential practices that engage the past in order to reflect on the identity of the present. Therefore, Coltart remained in Zimbabwe and endured constant ZANU-PF-initiated intimidation in order to counterbalance claims that white Zimbabweans did not belong and anchor himself in the narrative of the nation.

A salient and remarkable aspect of Coltart’s memoir is that it reveals the complex and dynamic nature of belonging in a post-2000 home suffused with opposition politics. The narrator intimates that the intimidation of all political opponents by ZANU-PF coincided with the factional squabbles within the MDC over the 2005 Senate elections (p.430). The faction infighting within the MDC perpetuated the same territorialisation of political spaces in the party along ethnic, ideological and racial lines. Coltart decided to be cautiously neutral and not take sides in a bid to broker an “amicable divorce” between the two rival factions but his attempts were futile (p.435). As a result, Coltart felt isolated and wrote to the exiled *Daily News* editor, Geoff Nyarota, expressing his sense of isolation:

At present I do not have a happy home anywhere. In any event I have felt that it is necessary for some of us to stay out of the fray in the hope that we can speak to both sides. You say I must get off the fence. I do not believe there is any fence - it feels more like being [in] a political wilderness, a desert, between two sides [...]. (p.435)

The narrator experienced the consequences of first being isolated because of his indecision to choose a faction and second, for not casting his lot with the Tsvangirai faction. Coltart further uses vivid visual imagery to describe his detachment or self-alienation. For example, he refers to his experiences after the split as “a Hellhole in the Wilderness” (p.442) and “being between a rock and a hard place like a child whose parents have divorced and who has to choose which house to live in” (p.443). Coltart’s decision to join the MDC-Mutambara faction got him to be regarded by former colleagues of the MDC-Tsvangirai as “a white dissident”, someone who was “living in [a] utopia” and who was “trying to live a normal life in an abnormal society” (p.444). It is interesting to note that the narrator’s former colleagues in the Tsvangirai-led faction deploy utopian chronotopes to denounce his political (un)belonging and performance of power in the MDC-Mutambara.

Ironically, ZANU-PF's recourse to nativism and Afro-radicalism which had been used to collectively ostracise white Zimbabweans as a "third force of former Rhodesian troops" working to destabilise the government (p.325), "former Selous Scouts making a come-back on the political scene" (p.329), "white masters" (p.357), "unreconstructed Rhodesians", and "hardline racists" (p.386) became re-appropriated by colleagues in the mainstream MDC. Coltart's political identity and assertion of belonging is thus constantly contested and reconfigured by ZANU-PF and MDC Tsvangirai (MDC-T) politicians in Fanonian terms as a "colonial personality" (1968: 122). The Tsvangirai led faction appropriates the way ZANU-PF have used race, ethnicity and political affiliation as determinants of patriotism and belonging. In essence, the narrator's defection to MDC Mutambara (MDC-M) can be regarded as a dual loss of any sense of belonging in which his performance of power was not accepted by both ZANU-PF and MDC-T.

4.2 Writing the self and personal transformation in the nation's history

Self-writing can be taken as the practice of portraying one's past and present experiences in a bid to understand the writer, his society and influences of other people. Coltart chronicles the politics of Rhodesian/Zimbabwean state-making in a manner that implicitly shows that he has, at the back of his mind, some sense of ownership of the grand narrative of who belongs and who is Zimbabwean. Seen in this light, the narrator uses verifiable sources to place the self in the long history of personal memories of presence, participation in history and uses some letters as evidence of the political act of asserting authenticity and thus countering the grand narrative of patriotic identities that excludes him. For example, the narrator inflects newspaper articles such as *The Herald* (p.208) and *The Daily News* (p.435), personal letters to his parents (p.107), a telegram from then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe (p. 123) and an open letter to Mugabe (p.231), bible verses from the book of Jeremiah (p.220), family photographs (p.208), Human Rights Watch Reports (p.329), public speeches (p.521) and his own poems p.524) as veritable indicators of his vacillating sense of belonging. Evidently, the memoir is written in an experimental style that fuses chronological history, narrative journalism, poetry and the epistolary to project the troubadour that he incarnates. Smith and Watson (2001: 6) state that life-narrators employ multiple forms of evidence such as personal memories and archival sources because of their usefulness in validating or complementing the narrator's idiosyncratic acts of

remembering. In light of this argument, the act of remembering forms part of a self-exploration that often produces lessons and insights gained and enriches a person's life in the long run (McAdams & McLean, 2013: 235). This explains why the narrator perceives his narrative as “an autobiographical political history” covering a period of six decades (1956 to 2016) of Zimbabwean history (p.xiii), which projects Coltart as a participant of the history he narrates.

Coltart narrates the past in a manner that is reflective to serve two purposes. Firstly, it explains what happened in Rhodesia without seeking to be an apologist. Secondly, it interrogates the self in a bid to learn from his past (mis)performances of power (p.xiv). Coltart's writing fits into what Mbembe (2015: 14-17) regards as a “different writing”, which stimulates a rethinking of the postcolonial African subject's history and present and at the same time writes the African past not as a fiction but in the harshness of its destiny, power, and eccentricities. For instance, the autobiographical narrator submits that:

...I have written about my contemporaneous thought and actions through the different chapters of my life, some of which will be offensive, particularly to people who have suffered under the oppression of white minority rule. ... I warn that some of what I write about will be difficult to digest. (p.xiii-xiv)

This stern preface and warning to the reader serves as a disclaimer that is crucial in highlighting the inherent subjective rendition of the past by the narrator. This narrative disclaimer is parallel to what autobiographical narrators establish for their readers as a different pact and a different set of expectations (Smith & Watson, 2001: 12). To amplify this, McAdams (2006: 244) instructively highlights the functions and goals of writing life narratives such as to entertain, educate, inspire, motivate, conceal and reveal, organise and disrupt. Coltart's text confirms in one sense McAdams' (2006: 244) views of writing the self to 'reveal' his personal transformation in the nation's history and 'disrupt' the organicist interpretations of patriotism, belonging and citizenship. In other words, the autobiographical self manages to show signs of transformation and growth as a human being that ultimately makes him qualify to be just as Zimbabwean and a patriot as anyone else. Importantly, and in line with Mbembe's (2015: 14-17) postulation of postcolonial (African) subjectivity, is the use of the narrating “I/eye” which produces an apparently continuous chronology from birth to adolescence to adulthood (Smith & Watson, 2001: 64). To be more precise, the same Smith and Watson's (2001) subjectivity made

Coltart to profess the difficulties encountered while writing about his life and in his wishes for the memoir to be considered as a true record of his performance of power.

Nevertheless, Coltart acknowledges that he could “have massaged the past or left vast chunks of it out” but he felt it necessary to confront the past (p.xiv). This narrative confrontation differentiates patriotic narratives from oppositional narratives. Between the two narratives, the patriotic ones focus on the monolithic and state sponsored version of the past in which only heroic deeds are projected and misperformances of the past are conscientiously glossed over, or in Foucauldian terms, left unsaid. In contrast, oppositional narratives debunk authorised versions of history and privilege national issues such as human rights violations that were omitted or left unresolved in the grand narrative of the nation. This politics of writing the nation is demonstrated by how Mugabe is infuriated by the publishing of the Gukurahundi Massacres report entitled *Breaking the Silence*,¹¹ which was compiled by David Coltart and Mike Auret in 1997. Subsequently, Mugabe castigates the report and maintains that “the wrongs of the past by whoever should not be allowed to come into the future of the nation” (p.242). As such, patriotic narratives can be inferred as a “historiography of sorcery”, “hallucinatory” consciousness or a “hallucinated writing” that commands what ought to be written and read (Mbembe, 2015: 164-165, 243). Coltart reconstructs the past by teasing out ambiguities that manifest in patriotic narratives and memorialises historic events that were censored and suppressed in the national narrative. Self-writing, as noted by McAdams (2006: 244) should be considerably regarded as a fit vehicle for dealing with trauma and offering an alternative form of education. Therefore, the politics of writing the narrative of the nation is predicated on the control of the past and modes of memory-making such as the media and school syllabi.

In a way, the Zimbabwean history syllabus can be equated to a ‘hallucinated writing’. Coltart, in his activities as the Minister of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture for the period 2009 to 2013 observes that the existing history syllabus remains to this day a key channel for the ruling ZANU-PF propaganda because it was drafted in a partisan manner (p.529). ZANU-PF politicians interfered with the curriculum reform process in order to distort historic events and indoctrinate students. To that end, Smith and Watson (2001: 12) accept that any utterance in an autobiographical text, even if inaccurate or distorted, characterises its writer at that narrative moment. Heeding this insight complicates the distinction between patriotic and oppositional

narratives because both discourses have shortcomings such as intended and unintended misrepresentation of facts. For instance, Coltart's narrator discloses that he intentionally omits and distorts some names and events for the fear of endangering innocent people (p.xiii). However, even if we are to read Coltart's text within and against his deliberate use of pseudonyms and fictionalised events, it still does not undermine his story. This value of the story is shown through the way the narrator meets McAdams' (2006: 244) narrative goals of *revealing* suppressed events, *disrupting* the grand narrative through reconstruction of the past, yet at the same time *educating* the reader and *concealing* some events and names. It should be noted that some events and names of people mentioned in the autobiography were fictionalised for two reasons. Firstly, the use of ethical conventions such as pseudonyms to protect people in question against further intimidation and secondly, events such as the Gukurahundi Massacres ought not to be forgotten as depicted in patriotic narratives. Therefore, the narrator employs the motif of self-censorship which can be interpreted as signifying the autobiographical act of authorial excision.

It is noteworthy that the first seven chapters of Coltart's memoir are written in a confessional tone that registers the narrator's pointed critique of his past. For instance, the narrator criticises his childish hero worship of Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith when he was ten years old (p.34). We discern Smith and Watson's (2001: 70) templates for autobiographical storytelling such as the narrative of education and conversion in the way Coltart conveys his story. In addition, McAdams (2008: 254) augments Smith and Watson's (2001: 70) templates of storytelling by arguing that people construct difficult transitions from childhood to adolescence through learning, growth and positive transformation. Thus, the narrator professes that writing the self helped him to reflect and change the beliefs he held in the past (p.xiv). One can state that Coltart narrates his story "as a young person full of illusions subsequently lost by the adult narrator" (Smith & Watson, 2001: 12). For example, the narrator changed from a teenager who thought that Ian Smith was a hero into an adult who believes Smith's policies were both disastrous and morally wrong (p.xiii). Regrettably, the young version of the narrator believed Smith against the views of his teachers from the Christian Brothers' College (p.34) and his parents for so many years, to an extent that he was in the uncomfortable position of realising his error (p.63-64). This realisation makes Coltart's text fit into the scope of what Watson (2001: 70) calls the narrative of education which unfolds through self-interrogation, encounters with

mentors, renunciation of youthful folly and eventual integration into society (Smith & Watson, 2001: 70). Hence, writing the self enabled the narrator to summon some self-introspection, particularly on his impulsive decisions and youthful naivety.

Coltart's treatise of the nation in the making records how the young version of the narrator's racial identity prevented him from understanding the plight of black people and the nature of race relations in the 1960s. The youth version of the narrator categorises his superficial relationship with young poor black caddies as fitting that of master and servant because of his obliviousness to the reality of life for most blacks (p.40). Subtly, the narrator's experiences as a BSAP Patrol officer in 1976 and then as a Joint Operations Command (JOC) Research Officer in 1976 disillusioned him. A haunting encounter is depicted after Coltart's transfer to the Criminal Investigation Department in 1977 where he escorts black junior policemen to dispose the body of a dead and unknown guerrilla by throwing it down a disused mine shaft (p.80). This incident traumatised the narrator and triggered in him an abhorrence of war. This change in consciousness resonates with the views held by Smith and Watson (2001: 70) that the conversion narrative develops through a linear pattern - descent into darkness and conversion to new beliefs and worldviews, and consolidation of a new communal identity. Thus, the performance in the 'bush war' was initially taken as a patriotic measure to secure a smooth and gradual transition to majority rule, and later Coltart felt trapped in a cause (war) in which he no longer had confidence(p.85). As a result, the entrapment of the 'bush war' compelled the narrator to shorten his three-year contract as a BSAP officer and pursue a degree in Law at the University of Cape Town in 1978. Coltart's transition here reminds us of Smith and Watson's (2001) characteristics of the autobiographical narrative that include imaginative cognition which constitutes self-creation, self-disclosure, inquisition, self-defence and self-erasure. In similar vein, McAdams (2008: 254) elucidates that the transformative process of self-exploration is influenced by life transitions. However, Coltart's renunciation of his youthful folly earmarked what was merely the beginning of a process of self-discovery and social change. In essence, the narrator's growing sense of disquiet led to his gradual change in outlook.

Critically, the narrator's major turning point in his life came in three stages. Firstly, it came unexpectedly in 1976 through Stevie Wonder's album *Songs in the Key of Life* which contains songs that speak against racial discrimination, hate and injustice that struck a deep

chord within him (p.76). The album challenged the narrator's entire belief system about racial superiority, his patronising attitude towards black people and role in the war. Secondly, Coltart's war experiences formed the foundation for his absolute opposition to the use of violence in any conflict and this led to an intense hatred of war itself (p.85). Inevitably, the brutality of war led the young narrator to be mortified and this is exemplified in his recollection that:

... my years at UCT saw a 180 degree in my attitude towards Smith and the RF. Having had the benefit of studying the Rhodesian Front's (RF) conduct through more objective lenses at UCT I had become deeply critical of the RF. In addition to its racist policies, it had negligently squandered several opportunities to avoid war. I felt bitter that so many lives had been lost in a needless war and blamed the entire RF leadership for the loss of friends and even for my parent's emigration. (p.145)

The corollary of this view is that the University of Cape Town became a sanctuary which enabled the narrator to purge his previously held convictions such as his hero-worshipping of Ian Smith and racial intolerance (p.40). Thirdly, the narrator's way of thinking was transformed at UCT in 1981 when he experienced a "Damascene moment" regarding the evolution of his Christian faith and political outlook (p.xiii, 121). Coltart depicts how studying the Bible challenged him to confess he was a sinner, seek forgiveness, speak the truth to power, show kindness and to be humble like Jesus Christ. Here confession becomes a method of self-justification and social indictment, as well as a medium for posing radical individuality (Smith & Watson, 2001: 59). Comparably, Nuttal and Michael (2000: 298) observe how personal disclosure becomes part of a revisionary impulse and a pluralising project in which the individual emerges as a newly legitimised concept. It should be noted that war experiences, Stevie Wonder's music, tertiary education and new found faith facilitated the narrator's escape from the clutches of an institutionalised racist culture. All these resonate with Smith and Watson's (2001) discussion on confession and how it forms part of experiential history that motivates people to write the self in order to reconcile with the wronged party and to be socially accepted.

Finally, Coltart's compulsion to change was induced by taking stock of his past and reconfiguring the self. The narrator projects this self-actualisation when he remarks that:

Writing about the past in the manner I have is not intended to justify all that I and others have done-it is more to explain it. I regret some things I have done; if I could have my life over I certainly would not have some of those things. ... Suffice it to say that there are many things, especially prior to independence in 1980, I would have done differently, had I had the benefit of maturity, perspective and hindsight as I have now. (p.xiv)

Considered in this quotation is how the narrator's recollection of his past experiences generates a new belief system that forges new identities such as being a reformed and ardent Christian (p.122), a pacifist (p.145) a voice of the voiceless (p.224) and a whistle blower (p.402). Coltart's text is akin to what McAdams (2012: 22-23) categorises as the narrative of the "redemptive self" which consists of five interrelated themes. Firstly, the narrator enjoys a *special advantage* early in life such as his racial identity and growing up in a moderately wealthy middle class family as opposed to black Rhodesians (p.14). Secondly, the youth version of the narrator witnesses *suffering* or *injustice*, for instance most black boys of his age would miss out on education and work as caddies as a result of colonially-induced poverty (p.40). Thirdly, the narrator consolidates a sense of *moral steadfastness* by the end of adolescence; for example, he joins the national service early and later realises the depravity of war (p.81). Fourthly, the narrator repeatedly encounters negative events that are transformed into *redemption sequences* such as enduring ZANU-PF's racist invectives (p.353) and assassination attempts (p.312). Lastly, the narrator sets forth pro-social *goals* aimed at improving the lives of others and leaving a positive legacy of the self, for example, championing unity (p.441), human rights (p.242), the abhorrence of the use of violence (p.405), war and torture (p.81). Therefore, the autobiographical act of writing the self can be taken as a site for seeking atonement, inclusion, recognition and justice. This is a self carved in retrospect, a self that maximizes trauma and therefore seeks atonement from those that were wronged in the process of becoming.

Coltart's narrative shows the transition from childhood to adulthood which is marked by transformation in character, morals and beliefs as a result of self-reflection and learning from his mistakes (p.xiv). Seen from this perspective, the narrative of the redemptive self reinforces our understanding of self-writing as a performative [and creative] process of life transitions. As a result of this complete transformation, the narrator is later regarded by his nemesis, Mugabe, as a patriot (p.550) and a Zimbabwean (p.551) despite belonging to the white community which was once not considered as such during the post-200 land invasions. All this indicates how the narrator writes the self to poke holes in the grand narrative. Hence, Coltart's round character and redemption proves his social-justice based citizenry, love for the nation and hence should be regarded as a patriot.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how writing the self, belonging, personal transformation and agency in the nation's history is subject to different interpretations and, is socially and politically constructed. Coltart's identity performances, through memory, relate to the prevailing modes of memorialising whiteness in white autobiographies which depict Rhodesians as having a mythic and heroic consciousness and a discrete identity that was unique and superior as compared to that of Afrikaners, Jews, Greeks, Asians, Italians and (black) Africans. Rhodesian nationhood and political identities were predicated on imperial impulses and settler myths of invincibility that covertly registered their insecurity and also worked to mask their vulnerability (Chennells, 1982, 1995). This vulnerability emanated from the failure of Rhodesians to perceive the 'bush war' as a counter-insurgency rather than a liberation struggle. Hence, perceptions of self-understanding, state-making and belonging in Rhodesia were disrupted by historic events in the national narrative such as the liberation struggle, attainment of independence and later by the post-2000 land invasions.

Coltart's autobiography can be read from Mbembe's (2002a, 2002b, 2015) *African modes of Self-Writing* as noted by the narrator's deconstruction of patriotic history through narrating the liberation struggle from a white Rhodesian's perspective. This in turn qualifies Coltart's narrative as a 'different writing' that does not glorify the performance of the war but reveals its dehumanising nature on both fronts. It also does not gloss over the roles of white liberals such as Garfield Todd, the narrator's mentor and other significant nationalist leaders such as Joshua Nkomo. Coltart's outline of his past performances indeed compel the revision of his character, beliefs and values from a naïve and impulsive child narrator to a relatively selfless and dedicated adult narrator.

It has also been noted that Coltart writes the self to register his presence and participation in the history of the nation which constantly sought to exclude and translocate him into exile. To that end, the autobiography can be taken as a counter-narrative to the nationalist concept of patriotic identities, belonging, citizenship, and voting and land rights. This is illustrated by how ZANU-PF politicians haphazardly evoked notions of belonging during the early post-independence reconciliation years and the post-2000 land invasions period to accept or reject who belongs and who qualifies to occupy space in the narrative of the nation. In essence, ZANU-

PF used race and land as powerful symbols as discussed by critics such as Manase (2016); Ndlovu (2017) and Mararike (2018) to convince black Zimbabweans and other African leaders that the MDC was merely a front to return Zimbabwe to Rhodesia. The same grand narrative constantly sought to memorialise his past performances in the 'bush war' yet at the same time turning a blind eye on his personal transformation and contribution to the nation building processes such as his Ministerial duty which highlights his patriotic commitment. Therefore, Coltart's narrative offers a counter-interpretation of Zimbabwean history and envisions a literary and political discourse of multiculturalism which acknowledges, accommodates and endorses the citizenship status of migrant and ethnic minorities.

End notes

¹ The complex nature of the politics of belonging in Zimbabwe is discussed by Msipa's (2015: 148) during the launch of the Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act. However, the same autobiography laments that the term 'indigenous', is exclusive and should include particularly the position of third- generation white Zimbabweans.

² Freeth (2011) also uses the same term, White African as a biographical title for *Mugabe and the White African*.

³ For a detailed discussion on white narratives see Hove and Masemola (2014); Tagwirei (2014) and Manase (2016).

⁴ See Coltart (2016: 41) on how Chinese people were considered as "honorary" whites in Rhodesia.

⁵ See Smith (1997: 327) who opines that there is only one white tribe, the Rhodesians who are indigenous to this country.

⁶ See Alexander (2006: 75) for the strongest statement of this case of 'Rhodesianism', which appealed to a sense of patriotic duty but did not entail moving all races together in the narrow world of the Rhodesian Front.

⁷ Manase (2016: 2) outlines that the Rhodesian settler perceptions of land and belonging were located in British and imperial discourses and were based on European scientific and geographic values, while the Ndebele and Shona based their perceptions on utilitarian, land and conservation, social and religious values.

⁸ See De Waal (1990: 4) who notes that Guy-Clutton Brock was imprisoned in trial, denounced in Parliament, stripped of his citizenship and expelled from the country by the Rhodesian government. Similarly, Coltart (2016: 436) observes that Roland Topper Whitehead, a MDC supporter, Human Rights Activist and Voter's roll Analyst was born in Harare, then Salisbury in 1940 was arrested in Registrar General Tobaiwa Mudede's office and deported the following day after he had been declared "an undesirable inhabitant" in 2005 by the then Home Affairs Ministers, Kembo Mohadi. Whitehead was stripped off his citizenship and deported as an effective way of ensuring that no further incriminating evidence of electoral fraud by the MDC against Mugabe would be produced in court.

⁹ Subsequently, in 1996 the 14th Amendment of the constitution removed birth rights, diluted the right to privacy, and the right to have their non-citizen spouses live with them. In 2001 a Citizenship Amendment Bill was tabled to tighten up rules against dual citizenship and to strip Zimbabweans who had been out of the country of their citizenship.

¹⁰ It should be noted that black opposition members faced the same predicament.

¹¹ The report is entitled *Breaking the Silence Building True Peace: A report on the disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980-1988*.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Zimbabwe's political trajectories over the past decades have been characterised by a historiographic revision of patriotic narratives and as such, this deconstruction revealed varying ideological perceptions and positions of political actors. This is shown in how patriotic narratives were firstly written with the sole purpose of countering colonial or imperial discourses (decolonisation) but later repudiated alternative narratives that questioned ZANU-PF's misperformances of power. The purpose of this study was to examine the continuities and disjunctures in the national narrative through an interpretive, thematic and performative analysis of Zimbabwean political autobiographies. As such, the foregoing chapters have argued, from a multi-historical perspective that patriotic history cannot be taken as the yardstick of interpreting the past but should also consider competing claims proffered by 'oppositional' narratives. This multi-perspectival approach is two-pronged in that, firstly, it reconsiders the current shifts in the Zimbabwean historiography and focuses on the politics of positioning the self in the national narrative. Conceptualised in this way, the grafting of the self in history is an autobiographical act that reinforces our understanding of the complexities and politics inherent in writing and in the interrogation of the self and the nation. Secondly, it circumvents the essentialist and partisan constructions of the past. As a result, Tsvangirai, Msipa and Coltart narrate to confirm their presence, position and contribution in the nation's history. Each writer depicts their past performances of power in a way that portrays them favourably and destabilising as well as disputing other accounts, particularly the ZANU-PF's grand narrative about the nation.

This dissertation also draws attention to the inter-textual relationship between patriotic and 'oppositional' narratives. This is demonstrated by an analysis of the three autobiographies that critique the performance of power. What is also common in these autobiographies is that they also perpetuate 'the dangers of single stories' (Adichie, 2009) of the self and the narrated past and present performances of power. Furthermore, they foreground the blind spots of self-narration as noted in the way Tsvangirai, Msipa and Coltart appropriate, castigate and transmute each other's work in order to re/position the self.

Significantly, the study employed postcolonial ideas such as Bhabha's, (2012), hybridity, mimicry and liminality and, Mbembe's (2002a, 2002b, 2015) conception of *African modes of Self-Writing* which are useful in analysing political autobiographies that have a colonial and a

postcolonial setting. However, the aforementioned postcolonial theories are not sufficient to tackle the dynamics of autobiographical self-representation and subjectivity. Hence, they were complemented by Smith and Watson's (2001) delineation of autobiographical modes of narration and McAdams' (2006, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2018) psycho-literary approaches to personal narratives. Such an eclectic theoretical exposition allows a dialectical and critical analysis of postcolonial politics and life narratives. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the genre of autobiography is highly controversial and opportunistic in nature thus it is often used by political actors to conveniently position the self, manufacture consent and jostle for legitimacy. Evidently, all the three autobiographies were motivated by a central imaginary that seeks to transcend rigid and fixed conceptualisations of the 'I/eye'.

Postcolonial power is relational and a product of cultural and political entanglements. As such, this study also concurs with Mbembe who advances that:

... postcolonial African regimes have not invented what they know of government from scratch. Their knowledge is the product of several cultures, heritages, and traditions of which the features have become entangled over time, to the point where something has emerged that has the look of "custom" without being reducible to it, and partakes of "modernity" without being wholly included in it. (Mbembe, 2015: 24)

This excerpt shows how postcolonial power is relational and is a product of hybridity over time from the settler administration to Mugabe's government. To that effect, ZANU-PF and the MDC were politicising difference in order to be considered as the sole country's liberator and custodian of democracy respectively. However, a discernible consequence of this hybridity made political actors from the MDC to mimic a system of patronage, intra-violence, hate-speech, binary categorisation of power and a cult of personality politics that was endorsed by ZANU-PF to exclude them as well as other races, classes and ethnicities. Accordingly, Coltart (2016: 600) laments that the culture of personality politics that started during the tenure of Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith, outlived the postcolonial Prime Minister and President, Mugabe, to the extent that Zimbabweans remain a people who are constantly searching for the next messiah, be it Tsvangirai or the current President of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa. Likewise, Tsvangirai imitated this hero worshipping through the super-imposition of his face on the party paraphernalia and the use of a slogan that championed his name.

It is evident in the dissertation that Tsvangirai positions himself in the national narrative as a ‘democrat,’ yet his narrative ends up emulating and reproducing the same sinister ZANU-PF’s politics of exclusion. What all this implies is that Tsvangirai imitated ZANU-PF’s narrow nationalist discourse of making rhetorical claims, such as that of Africans solving their African problems, and as a result occluded white Zimbabweans in the MDC who were not considered as African and therefore not belonging to the narrative and archive of the nation. This critical reflection by Coltart depicts how Zimbabwe can be envisioned as a site of inclusion and exclusion, affiliation and alienation, unity and dissension. Furthermore, Coltart writes the self in order to recover the voice of those who were deemed by ZANU-PF and its supporters as outsiders and non-citizens fit only for marginalisation within the national discourse of belonging. The chapter that analyses Coltart’s autobiography returns to some of these themes in more depth and traces the political polarities that engendered reconstructions of the nation and narrowing of spaces of belonging and citizenship. One can thus conclude that demonisation discourses reconfigure and legitimate emasculation, socio-racial victimisation, displacement, violence, tribalism, regionalism and cultural marginalisation. Seen in this light, a plural and revisionist historiographic approach transgresses ZANU-PF’s imaginaries of politics, revolutionary tradition and the past performances of power which forestall the aspirations of a political incumbent whether from a minority tribe, younger generation, feminine extraction, race and either ZANU-PF or MDC to be a future President.

This study also interrogated Msipa’s evocations of a ‘neutral’ performance of power within the context of conflicting political opposition. Msipa wants to maintain a middle ground by rising above the realm of ethnic politics and is thus noted as holding a liminal narrative position, which according to Bhabha (2012), acts to problematise and deconstruct the binary categorisation and representation of political cultures (PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF or MDC and ZANU-PF). In other words, Msipa was placing himself at the centre of nation and imagination as a way of showing his unifying capacities across racial, cultural, ethnic and political boundaries. The antithesis of this polarisation in Zimbabwean postcolonial politics is inclusivity and (national) unity which is what Msipa and Coltart are noted as clamouring for in their narratives. Nevertheless, Msipa’s liminal and liberalist counter-position is shrouded with contradictions since ethos of neutrality are often politicised and highly contested due to partisan bias. Msipa’s revisionist writing of the past does not ritualise the performance of the liberation struggle of the

war but shows an interesting dynamic of the nationalist movement in Zimbabwe when prominent leaders such as Nkomo and Mugabe were either incarcerated or in exile. In addition, Msipa's subjective account fails to question some misperformances of power by Mugabe, and hence can be subsumed into patriotic narratives.

Another central premise of patriotic history and oppositional narratives, considered in this dissertation is the hierarchisation of heroes, whereby some actors were suppressed and written out of the national narrative. The corollary of this view made Msipa to rewrite and memorialise Benjamin Burombo's performances of power so that he becomes recognised and re-buried at the national shrine. The national narrative is constantly becoming a site of erasure and validation of prominent figures, which are either added partly because of their personal association to the autobiographical narrators at the expense of others. For instance, Msipa chooses to memorialise his father's friend, Benjamin Burombo's contributions to the liberation struggle as an early nationalist and deliberately omits to include Tennyson Hlabangana, who closely worked with Burombo. Such silences in the nation's history show how other political actors were effectively erased from the memory of the nation. It is interesting that what patriotic history advocates is as significant as what it is silent on (Tendi, 2008: 239). This historical amnesia is what Mbembe (2015: 16) calls an absence of those presences that are no longer so and that one remembers (the past) and absence of those others that are yet to come and are anticipated (in the future). The same trend of selecting heroes who are close to the narrator highlights that the personal is political and it is also visible in Tsvangirai's autobiography. However, the current ZANU-PF government, has for the first time since independence, backtracked on its criteria for conferring hero status to only participants of the liberation struggle and loyal party members by giving a hero status in 2019 to Oliver Mtukudzi, a musician who was apolitical. Such an impetuous brand of the politics of inclusion and commodification of funerals by ZANU-PF calls for more research which underlines these contradictions.

Currently in vogue is the re-writing of the dead and forgotten heroes by either their friends or children. Some of the texts falling within this body are Woodhouse's *Garfield: The End of the Liberal Dream in Rhodesia* (2018), Marembo's *Murongiwa Stanslaus Marembo: The Forgotten Hero of Zimbabwe Liberation* (2014) and Silundika's *Tarcus Malan George Silundika: The Story of a Freedom Fighter* (2013) respectively. These recent biographies are

immortalisations that indicate a growing interest in re-membering the heroic deeds of the nationalists who are no longer pedestalled in the national narrative. Connected to this deification are the controversial deaths of Herbert Chitepo, the first black lawyer in colonial Zimbabwe and chairman of ZANU and ZANLA army commanders, Josiah Magama Tongogara and Solomon ‘Rex Nhongo’ Mujuru. The aforementioned continue to have currency in both patriotic and ‘oppositional’ narratives such as Martin and Johnson’s *The Chitepo Assassination* (1985: 134), Stiff’s *See You in November* (1985: 83, 217), Flower’s *Serving Secretly* (1987: 173), White’s *The Assassination of Herbert Chitepo: Texts and Politics in Zimbabwe* (2003: 62, 96-97) and Chung’s *Re-living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from Zimbabwe’s Liberation Struggle* (2006: 95), George’s *The Death of Rex Nhongo: A Novel* (2016), and Tendi’s *Ashes and Fire: Life of Solomon Mujuru* (forthcoming). The sudden interest in these heroes indicates a mere yearning for a reincarnated past which would subvert the present.

Significantly, Tongogara and Chitepo were posthumously portrayed as more heroic, more charismatic and more judicious figures than they had ever been considered in their lifetimes (White 2003: 96). The same view is depicted in the ending of Kanengoni’s *Echoing Silence* (1997) in which the spirit of Chitepo and other dead heroes such as Jason Moyo and Leopold Takawira are invoked to bemoan the post-independent disillusionment in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, what remains unresolved is the ambivalent interpretation of their deaths, an issue that has created accusations and counter-accusations (White 2003: 2). Furthermore, it is only in patriotic narratives that one will find ‘dead man telling tales’ as evidenced by Tongogara’s autobiography, *Josiah Magama Tongogara: In His Own Words* (2014), a collection of speeches and letters compiled and published by The Josiah Magama Tongogora Foundation. These re-inventions of Tongogara and Chitepo as ‘democratic leaders’ if they had lived (White, 2003: 96) is also referenced in primary texts under study.

The study also charted the way in which the dynamic link between self-making and state-making, power and performance, and the past and the present can be examined. It is hoped that this approach may inspire a more in-depth analysis of recent and forthcoming succession narratives from those who are within Zimbabwe and in exile as a result of political violence and purges such as Geoff Nyarota’s *The Graceless Fall of Robert Mugabe: The End of a Dictators Reign*, Ray Ndlovu’s *In the Jaws of the Crocodile* (2018), Arthur Mutambara’s *Path to Power:*

An Autobiography of Thought Leadership, Volume 2 (2018) and Jonathan Moyo's *Letters to My Father* (n.d) respectively.

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