

Constructing Nationalist Masculine Identities Heroism and Legitimacy in Joshua Nkomo's The Story of my Life

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to use the issues of legitimacy and heroic identities as a focus to demonstrate the inextricability of the form and content of a text. First, the article briefly outlines Joshua Nkomo's biography, then it examines the self-narration in his memoir, *The story of my life* (2001). To a lesser extent and for comparative purposes, Edgar Tekere's, *A lifetime of struggle* (2007) is discussed. Both writers were instrumental in building an independent Africa. In this article, the interplay between the imagination of the public and the imagination of the narrators, resulting in complicity with or rejection of the masculine identity created in the narration, is interrogated. Secondly, the workings and role of memory in life narratives are analysed. Characterisation in autobiography is also examined by interrogating motives in political action and self-report, setting, relationships, embodiment, genealogy and heredity, socio- economic background and historical forces, educational background, individual will and self-assertion.