

# Leadership Perception and Self-Construction in Autobiographical Narrative: A Study of the Autobiography of Nnamdi Azikiwe's My Odyssey

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**Abstract:** *Autobiography has arguably become the most effective means by which Nigerian political leaders project their voices. However, while novelists, poets, and playwrights enjoy adequate critical patronage, the story is not the same with non-fiction writers such as autobiography. This study looks at the autobiographies of the former Nigerian president, namely Nnamdi Azikiwe's My Odyssey, using New Historicist method of critical analysis. The focus is on exploring the link between autobiographical writing and the process of self-construction. This is followed by an elaborate textual analysis of the Primary text. After careful analysis of the texts, the research found the autobiographical subject is constructed in a subjective teleological order of his live. The construction of the 'self' is negotiated by means of narrated selective experience. The assumption that the autobiographical subject is presented as protagonist with impressive resilience and resisting an extremely hostile social environment is fully validated in Azikiwe's My Odyssey. Finally the research concludes with the notion that the self is constructed in and through the narrative which purports to represent it.*

**Keywords:** Autobiography, 'the self', self-construction, Azikiwe, Autobiographer

## 1. Introduction

There has been an explosion of literary depiction of postcolonial African leaders in the writings of many African novelists, especially of the first generation such as Achebe, Wa Thiong'o, Soyinka, etc. The depiction of African leadership is mainly criticisms of many excesses of political leaders ranging from public theft, maladministration, and dictatorship to military coups and unnecessary bloodshed as political corruption persists in Africa, Gakwandi (1982) is an excellent exposition of the critical perspective in question. Emerging writers like Chimmanda Ngozie Adichie, Helon Habila, Zaynab Alkali have not relented in their criticism of corrupt leaders. While there has also been sustained critical attention to fictional works depicting political corruption, there has been surprisingly no serious attention paid to non-fictional narratives especially autobiography and memoirs. This research attempts to fill a gap by offering to analyse some non-fictional narratives which have hitherto being a neglected area.

### 1.1 Questions of the study

These are the questions of the study:

How does the writer implicated in his work?

To what extent do the texts validate James Olney's claim that autobiography is a fascination with the self and its profound endless mysteries?

How the autobiographical subject is represented in the literary texts?

### 1.2 Hypotheses of the Study

- 1) The autobiography is retrospective narratives of the author concerning his own life focusing on unique selfhood, which is also the expression of universal human nature.
- 2) The texts attempt to offer a positive representation of the autobiographical subjects by providing a crucial link between his self-interpreting formations and national development.
- 3) The autobiographical subject is represented in the texts with impressive resilience and resisting an extremely hostile social environment. There is attempts to redeem the 'self' from scandalous reputation.

### 1.4 Objectives of the Study

The research is intended to achieve the following objectives:

To investigate using new historicism, the social and historical context of autobiography of one great Nigerian leader and how it acquires literary identity as self-writings.

To contribute to the understanding of consent or disparity between representation of leadership in non-fictional and creative writings.

To establish the extent to which De Man's proposition that autobiography veils a defacement of the mind features in the autobiographical texts under study.

## 2. Methodology

New Historicism was used as the theoretical framework in this study. As a critical procedure, it attempts to demonstrate

the veracity of attempting to situate literary and cultural texts, novels within the particular historical context in which the texts were conceived and eventually written. It proceeds by questioning, as it were, the kind of relationship that exists, or assumed to exist between a fictional text and its historical context.

In analyzing the text of the autobiographies, the researcher concentrates on the process of self-construction of the autobiographical subjects, whose thoughts, actions and inactions, selection and description of events and people becomes the primary object of focus.

### 3. Literature Review

It is pertinent to mention here that Nigeria, the most populous country and biggest democracy in Africa, has faced challenges of leadership since 1966. That year, the first regime which inherited power from colonial masters was toppled in a bloody military coup. The coup was conceived and executed on the basis of tribal sentiment. Regrettably, that infamous misadventure threw the nation in to three years of bloody conflict and further sharpened the blade of mutual mistrust and suspicion among the culturally, politically and religiously diverse ethnic nationalities in the country. Thus, the political climate has since been shaped by this mistrust and suspicion. Governance and political leadership in the country has often been driven by self interest and other primordial considerations. Successive governments in Nigeria, like in many African countries have failed to provide visionary leadership capable of repositioning the country for national development.

During the first Republic, which came between, 1960-1966 the country practical a parliamentary system of government was structured according to the British model. The government at that time, was largely democratic and federal in character. Power and resources were essentially decentralized, with the effect that the regional authorities were strong, and relatively independent and largely self-financing. The first military intervention era (1966-1979) terminated the structure. The second Republic (1979-1983) ushered in the presidential system of government which is obtainable in the united states of Africa. The government survived for only four years before it was overthrown in yet another coup. The second coming of coming of the military (1984-1999) was unique as it combined the features of military dictatorship and democratic dispensa-tion.

The democratic experiment came between (1992 and 1993), in which a military Head of State presides over a Civilian government. This period, later came to be identified as the Third Republic.

In the twenty years of the forth Republic, i.e. Since 1999, governance in Nigeria has continuously fall short of addressing the major challenges of the country such as the complexities of mutual co-existence, accountability and transparency and transparency, security and economic stability these developments have continued to be captured in novels, plays, poems and autobiographical accounts of Nigerian authors’.

#### 2.1 Autobiography

Autobiography is an important field for critics and scholars in literary studies. It deals with accounts of individuals written by themselves. It is part of branch of literary studies designated as “self-writing” which include memoirs, biography, diaries, autobiographical fiction, letters, writs, will, written anecdotes, court proceedings, lyric poems, scientific and historical writings etc (Leader 2015:1). The concept of autobiography has been recently adopted by Virginia Wolf who first used it in ‘*A sketch of the Past*’ (1939) in connection with the difficulties of conventional biography.

Earlier research by Linder Anderson (2001:7) which investigates the origin and development of autobiographical studies argues that the term is thought to have been coined by the nineteenth-century poet Robert Southey in 1809 in his study of the poetry of a Portuguese Poet, Francisco Vieira. As a style of writing however, autobiography has been around nearly from the beginning of written history. In particular, Peter Heehs (2013:31) finds that *The Book of Margery Kempe* written in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century by Margery was the first ever autobiography in England by anyone. It was according to Heehs, an account of the author’s journeys to the holy land, Italy, Spain and Germany which projected her as one of the great personalities of England of that time. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century biography and autobiography have become recognized genres in England with many of the writings coming from religious specialists copying the model of Augustine’s *Confessions*. Heehs further explored the theoretical link between fictional ad autobiographical narratives of the period.

As fictional and non-fictional narratives developed in tandem, novelists and autobiographers began to learn each other’s tricks. Novelists often claimed to be editors of their characters’ letters, diaries, or memoirs. Memoirists plotted their narratives like novels, treating their books as well as their lives as works in progress. Such memoirs should be read, according to one critic of the genre, not as expressions of a previously held self-conception but actively constructing a self-conception through the creation of life narratives (Heehs 2013:91).

In an essay entitled *Autobiography as Defacement* (1979) Paul de Man, having examined the many unanswered questions in the field argued that the end of autobiography has come. First, de Man considered that there has been no consensus on what constitute autobiography as distinct from fiction. Thus autobiography de Man claims is not a genre at all but “a figure of reading or understanding that is in operation not only within autobiography but across a range of texts” (de Man in Anderson 2001:12). Secondly, de Man contends that the issue of language is even more delicate in implicating autobiography generically. He argued from the premise that all knowledge, including self-knowledge, depends on figurative language or tropes. The identity of the autobiographical subject is thus established by the substantive trope of what de Man calls prosopopoeia’, that is, the “giving of face or personification”. Paradoxically then, this process also leads to disfigurement or defacement of the autobiogr-aphical subject. As the author becomes the

subject of his own understanding, he tries to inscribe in the text all the qualities of a face in order to hide his own fictionalization or displacement by writing (Linder 2001:13).

### 2.3 The Concept of 'The Self'

There has been a lot of intellectual perspectives on what constitute 'the self' or the human consciousness which often leads to further discussions on the possibility of 'the self' to articulate faithfully its life by way of autobiography.

It was not until the beginning of the fifth century AD when the works of St. Augustine on "the self", later known as Augustine's *Confessions* that philosophical perception of the inner self commenced. The self, according to Augustine is marked by knowing and remembering – memory. Memory he said, "is that which preserves in distinct particulars and general categories all the perceptions which have penetrated, each by its own route of entry" (Augustine 1998:180).

But it is also an inner *place*, a "vast hall" in which the 'I' can carry out actions, such as distinguishing lilies from violets, or wine from honey. In this inner space, Augustine wrote "I meet myself and recall what I am, what I have done and when and where and how I was affected when I did it... This is mind, this is I myself" (Augustine 1998:194). Thus Augustine wrote his *Confessions* by placing himself as the centre and making the struggles of his own mind and heart the crux of his story.

Augustine's exploration of the self was followed by a host of self-narratives mostly of Christian orientation, expressing the power of the divine.

### 2.4 Selfhood Verses Self-Presentation

Tsiga (2011) observed that the autobiographical act is a celebration of selfhood, "the literary outpouring of the consciousness" of the individual as a distinct being. The more writing we do, the more we write ourselves in to new horizons and new possibilities. Tsiga thus acknowledges that selfhood has thereby been accorded a central role in all self-writing and specifically autobiography, "as the individual turns unto himself to celebrate his own exclusivity and the glory of his personal life."

Moreso, certain autobiographic texts are concerned with rescuing the self from a scandalous reputation or the redemption of a tainted self-esteem or self-identity. One of the figures associated with the construction of self-representation, Robert Folkenfink, produced a book, *The Culture of Autobiography: Construction of Self Representation* in which he made a distinction between the self on the page and the 'I' self by drawing on rhetoric's and expository language thus creating a literary self. He for instance asserts that "Painting myself for others, I have painted my inward self with colour clearer than my original ones. I have no more made my book than my book has made me..." (Folkenfink 1993:63). However, this would appear to validate Anderson's argument that the linguistic dilemma of the author is that 'he made himself the text', but what he sees in the self-reflexive or spectacular moment is a figure or a face called into being by the substitutive trope or

prosopopoeia, literally the giving of a face, or personification (Anderson 2001:12). The effect of language, intention in one's mind to rescue oneself from scandalous reputation etc. makes it difficult for children's autobiography to be so theorized.

### 2.5 The Author

Nnamdi Azikiwe, often called Zik was the first indigenous Governor-General and later President of Nigeria. He was one of the foremost nationalists in Nigeria who fought for the country's independence from British Colonial Administration. He was a successful politician, business mogul and media practitioner. Born on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1904, he was educated at Howard University, Lincoln University and University of Pennsylvania in the United States. He founded and edited newspapers whose main thrust was opposition to colonial rule and political agitations. He also was the founder of the Nigerian Youth Movement and later the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroun (NCNC). It was under the platform of the NCNC that Zik was elected to the Nigeria Legislative Council, and later became Premier of the Eastern Region (1954 – 59) in the Federal elections of 1959, which preceded the country's independence, the NCNC went in to alliance with the powerful Northern People Congress NPC to form a national government which saw Nnamdi Azikiwe through the zenith of his political career i.e. emerging as Governor-General and later President of Nigeria and at the same time, President of the Senate.

In a twist of events however, the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 – 69 arguably exposed Zik as more of a tribal leader than a nationalist as he was said to have travelled across powerful nations of the world and some African countries clamouring for dismemberment of Nigerian nation (Encyclopedia Britannica). Notwithstanding, before the war ended Zik changed position and withdrew his support for Biafra to back Nigerian Unity. His next major political outing came in 1979 when he contested unsuccessfully in the presidential elections under the platform of Nigeria Peoples Party, NPP. He was fluent in the three major Nigerian languages i.e. Hausa, Yoruba and his mother tongue, Igbo. Until his death in May, 1996, Nnamdi Azikiwe was admired as a nationalist and foremost political figure.

## 4. Data Analysis

### 4.1 Textual Analysis of Nnamdi Azikiwe's *My Odyssey*

Nnamdi Azikiwe's autobiography, *My Odyssey*, is in many ways remarkable work to be discussed. Azikiwe displays a marked devotion in his narrative to the intricate and compounded difficulties he went through in the process of his emergence as an African nationalist of great significance, whose struggle for independence is arguably wider in scope and intensity than any other colonial subject in British West Africa at the time. His tale in the autobiography is not about post-independence Nigerian politics, but an extensive account of his childhood years, through to his conception of ideological and philosophical rejection of colonialism and its attendant evils, including racism, exploitation and deception. Similarly, the narrative explores his subsequent sojourn in

the United Kingdom and United States, where he studied under difficult racial and economic circumstances, before his eventual return to Africa to actualize his dream of salvaging the continent from colonial domination and ignorance. Thus, the thematic and stylistic structure of the autobiography corresponds to what Tsiga (2010:98) calls “the open mode autobiography”, a model through which South African anti-apartheid fighters reached out to their audience by deploying the stories of their struggles and difficulties in their quest for freedom. Perhaps, the only difference is that in the case of Azikiwe, having extensively captured his super achievements in academic, business, administrative and sporting spheres, his life at its zenith becomes, as suggested in the autobiography, a personification of political and cultural awakening in Africa. Thus, the theme of the autobiography, explored through analysis of the catalysts for his adventure and the structured tales of the difficult experiences he went through in life, involve formation of the self as a classical Victorian hero. Harris, J. in her book, *The Hero's Journey*, suggests that the “common perception of a hero include an individual who has the courage or conviction to perform feats that benefit the general populace... and has an altruistic spirit that urges him or her to act against evil and defend the greater good at all costs, even sacrificing his own well-being or life”. (p.2)

Within this specific context, the autobiography can be thematically structured in the form of patriotic heroic self-formation.

#### 4.2 Nobility, Heroism and Nationalism as Tools of Self-Formation

The autobiography begins rather philosophically, speculating on the question of life and existence and the multi-faceted approaches to it in the light of reason and experience. This should be considered not a mere display of an informed mind by the autobiographer; rather, it is an induction for the reader for the tale of struggle and success that is to be narrated by the one who personally experienced it. The story begins with the construction of the autobiographer's royal identity. As the case is for most African autobiographers, genealogies are carefully traced, sometimes to the distant past in order to establish a link with noble historical figures such as founders of important towns or progenitors of famous dynasties of kings and powerful warriors, whose exploits everybody would be proud to be associated with. Thus, the opening of the tale tends to evoke the image of honour and historical significance on his ancestry. The autobiographical narrator conducts a historical research on his origin as a member of a specific family and society, in addition to his personal recollections. The analysis of the archival sources and the narration of the family history interpenetrated both the maternal and paternal sides, as both are traced to the same genealogy. The narrative of the history of the family follows the order of the narrative's origin, descent and inheritance; and its objective is to create a creditable representation of an authentic self-surrounded by images of nobility. The father and mother of the autobiographer are both descendants of the founder and ruling dynasties of Onitsha.

Thus, Azikiwe traces his paternal ancestry to EzeChima, the founder of Onitsha, “who led his warrior adventurers when

they left Benin to establish Onitsha city state in about 1748AD.” (p.5) The autobiographer also identifies his mother as a descendent of six kings of the same Onitsha, beginning with Obi Odogwu, the thirteenth ruler of Onitsha. It is interesting to note that, despite the warning dropped by the author on the validity of his sources of these accounts, the purpose is to bring into focus what he considers to be a very profound aspect of his personality; and which might ordinarily have been overshadowed by his personal accomplishment. Indeed, Azikiwe underscores his superlative sense of self in the ties he establishes with the Onitsha royal family, when he proclaims that:

In tracing my paternal lineage, I could say that both parents of my father are direct descendants of EzeChima. As for me, I can trace my paternal ancestry in this wise: “I am the first son of Chuckwuemeka, who was the third child and the first son of Azikiwe, who was the second son of Molokwu, who was the third son of Ozomaocha, who was the second son of Inosi Onira, who was the fourth son of Dei, the second son of Eze Chima, founder of Onitsha”. (p.4)

The autobiographical narrator devotes much attention to every detail, which he knows for sure would prove to be significant in the construction of his self-identity. He presents the familial genealogy by mentioning names, locations and personal data. The extended lists of relatives and forefathers serve the purpose of consolidating the notion of his personal identity.

The collection and detailed presentation of the traces of the history of noble qualities in the lineage evoke some sense of pride in the narrative. The pile of information gathered about his ancestors illustrates a means of proving the validity of their noble qualities. He, thus, composes his portrait through identifying with the mirrored images recollected from the past of his familial memory archives.

Azikiwe projects the military exploits of his ancestors through the thrilling tales told to him by his grandmother and, by implication, inviting the readers to appreciate the imperial worth and nobility of his family. Autobiographical narratives in general tend to evoke the circumstances and images of place of birth. The recollection of the birth place is what prepares the reader of *My Odyssey* to the birth of a great man. The narrative fixes Azikiwe's date of birth as November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1904 in the Northern Nigerian town of Zungeru, where his father worked as clerk in the Colonial Civil Service. The eve of his birth, according to the narrative, was signalled by a comet, “which set the tongues of different sections of Zungeru community wagging. When I was born the following day... many soothsayers predicted a chequered future for me.” (p.7)

The autobiographer seems to be willing here to attempt to invoke a mythic or somewhat spiritual representation of the story. There is the suggestion here that there is some force superior to rational apprehension, which will assist in working out his life of intense struggle and success. This is a common phenomenon in the context of African belief system. Thus, the prediction of the soothsayers are reiterated as soon as the narrative concentrates on the mobility of the

subject, from his place of birth across to many destinations scattered widely in the northern and southern parts of the country.

In the spirit of self-formation process recurrent in the narrative, the title, *My Odyssey*, means that the crucial parts of the autobiography are shaped in eventful wanderings across the country and around the world, which the subject undertook. The title can be interpreted as capturing the deep structures of the plot with the resonance of the autobiographical subject's experiences. These experiences include his family, education, vocation and his emancipatory struggles from recollected the perspective of a heroic journey of life. Thus, the autobiographer chronicles his movement right from when he was an innocent child in Zungeru, where he was born, to Onitsha, his home town, then to Lagos; and to Calabar and back again to Lagos, where he began to conceive the ideological inspiration that propelled him into struggle for greater academic heights and the dream of the emancipation of black Africa. As a child, Azikiwe moved round across the nation along with his father who was a first class clerk in the colonial civil service. However, these movements should be interpreted not only as physical journeys, but also a quest for better understanding of himself and asserting his emotional and moral independence.

It becomes a necessary step in the identity building process. It was at this period that the autobiographer came to realise the existence of certain social barriers, which he must confront and overcome, in order to establish a sense of self and political freedom. Azikiwe remembers his elementary and high school days not only as exiting and happy occasions, but as a point in time when he acquired his ideological strength and social worldview. As a young boy, he had perceived the terrifying truth about his racial self, insulting and insensitive nature of the colonial administration and worse still, the indolent and receptive attitude of the colonial subjects in succumbing to these humiliating anomalies. Azikiwe also faults African intellectuals who could not, despite their consciousness of the need, rise above the mere level of apprentice intellectualism, by failing to rewrite the European texts of imperial domination across different fields of academic endeavours.

The thematic focus of the autobiography appears to take shape as the author recounts his unique experience at an early age. From Zungeru he was moved to Onitsha to get acquainted with Igbo culture and lores on account of his amazing fluency in the Hausa language, which his father feared might overshadow his Igbo worldview later in his life. He was enrolled into the Holy Trinity School, where as a child, he began to exhibit intense curiosity and critical mind, especially reading why certain things were selfishly fraught with anomalies. He later left this pioneer school for the Wesleyan Boys High School in Lagos, where his father was transferred. From yet another perspective, this movement also expresses the idea that the subject is a product of the inter-relationship between different socio-cultural impacts and natural determination. Thus, the events that occurred during this period, as reported in the narrative, are considered of primary importance. In recounting his

experiences in Lagos, for instance, the author stylishly establishes the foundations of the theme of the autobiography; namely, his adventures in the Western world and his eventual struggle for the emancipation of Africa. Lagos has greatly helped to shape his social chemistry, in the manner of becoming adept to accommodating people of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The narrative at this point hints the cosmopolitan nature of Lagos and Azikiwe's attachment to fellow students and playmates living in the same neighbourhood. Most of the students he recalled were sons of parents repatriated from numerous African countries, South America or some distant locations within Nigeria. The autobiographer explains that his father, a clerk, related with various tribes across the country and beyond, which establishes in him the love of unity in diversity. Azikiwe's motives in selfless service and hard work is linked in the first chapter of the book to his association with friends in Lagos, the motto of the Wesleyan Boys High School and, above all, the underlying virtues of selfless service to humanity preached to them by their teachers. The account of the father's involvement with polygamy, which resulted into his matrimonial troubles and eventual divorce of Zik's mother, is not meant to simply add local colour to the narrative. It is part of the identity construction process, because the autobiographer's honest telling of the tale, bringing out the characteristic shortcomings of his parents and the positive cast of his stepmother, all help to richly enhance his moral vision. The narrator identifies the basic difference in the emotional traits of his parents, where the mother is associated with unrestrained jealousy against his stepmother. He identifies domestic violence with unwarranted selfishness and, in a certain sense, contrasts it with benevolence. He tries to make sense of his aversion to the "evil stepmother syndrome", by projecting his in a favourable light, which could also be as an expression of repugnance towards his biological mother's matrimonial character. He is consistently offended by stupid conflicts and fights in the family. "My young mind revolted against polygamy. I saw my mother exchange blows with my father for no other reason than jealousy." (p.24) Unlike the usual ill will and bitterness towards a stepmother, his positive judgement of her expands his social and mental horizon beyond the ordinary. This is further reinforced by an intellectual analysis and interpretation of polygamy from the biological, sociological, historical and theological point of view, which the subject offers from the perspective of a grown up academic.

Three things basically connect and reinforce the unity of Azikiwe's tale. In the chapter entitled "*The Birth of a Dream*" he reflects on the circumstances that served as the ideological springboard for his eventual quest for knowledge, desire for social justice and the revolutionary vision, which became the thrust of the tale. Azikiwe consistently draws the attention of his readers to the social injustices perpetrated under the colonial government and the hopelessness of the colonial subjects in their failure to react with organised opposition against such an unjust social order. The dilemma of this hopeless situation is symbolically presented in the often comical interpretation of the acronym (HWI) which was sarcastically given as Hopeless Worthless Idiots, instead of the Hope Waddell Institute, the name of his school in Calabar. Beyond the comical, it is meant to point

to the reader that ignorance and lack of ideological focus among the colonial subjects had made it impossible for them to join together to fight and defeat the existing unjust social order. Furthermore, Azikiwe indicates that the psychological and social factors that influenced the development of his personality, as evident in his experiences in the schools in Calabar and Lagos, gave birth to a dream in him. The most obvious ways through which this occurred was the educational, social and moral training he received in the schools, which provided the boys with a sense of purpose and the social and spiritual morality that translated into the struggles against the unjust social order of the day. The High School experiences also acted as a link element to the otherwise separate discourses of patriotism, religious piety, racial and political consciousness etc; thus, binding them together as a combination of ideas and the intellectual focus that enabled him to perceive the core of the colonial domination and its attendant evils. As a school boy, Azikiwe's contact with James Aggrey, the young Ghanaians marked the beginning of his new sense of anti-colonial consciousness and self-hood for all African men and women, thereby creating a new perspective for his world. He was overwhelmed and fascinated by the stories of Aggrey childhood, his academic endeavours and his vision for Africa and Africans. Azikiwe recalls the influence of Aggrey's lecture on him when the latter came visiting in Wesleyan Boys High School in Lagos:

There was indeed something magnetic about the utterance of Dr Aggrey, 'nothing but the best is good enough for Africa', which I kept repeating until I became infatuated with it. I made a critical review of the achievements of our intellectuals and professional in West Africa. I thought of the leaders of the various occupations and professions. I observed that very few of them measured up with the best in their calling in the world as a whole. I was perturbed at this example of arrested mental development. Then I began to wonder why, irrespective of race, some people were born to rule others and why some people were born to be ruled. (p.38)

Azikiwe's record of initiation into the world of struggle and the discovery of his identity also included the story of how he by chance come upon the philosophy of Gurveyism through the weekly newsletter, *The Negro World*, a publication from the famous Marcus Gurvey. He was attracted to the sense of strong spiritual and moral force in Gurvey's ideology and the need for practical liberation efforts, as he explains further: "...the motto of Garveyism appealed to me. 'One God, One Aim, One Destiny' and I resolved to formulate my philosophy of life, fatherhood, universal brotherhood, and universal happiness". (p.35)

The autobiography of James A. Garfield, *From Log Cabin to the White House*, also plays a role in inspiring the autobiographer. The story of Garfield's journey of life through many obstacles to the White House was most inspiring. The book was given to him as a prize at the Wesleyan Boys High School, Lagos in 1920. In the autobiographer's view, the book "revealed the possibilities of will power in the face of abject poverty and the rewards of frontier spirit." (p.42) All these cultural influences were

quickly absorbed and helped to shape the autobiographer's revolutionary tastes and sense of life. They served as catalysts, which, according to Pividori, (2012:17), are the necessary ingredients for the birth of a hero. As the narrative follows the writer through his journey to the U.S.A, it is gently steered to establish a manifest sequence of recurrent heroic exploits in his journey of life. His departure to the U.S.A with the clear goal of attaining the necessary educational goals that would to enable him to transform Africa and elevate the social and political life of Africans, marked a turning point in Azikiwe's life.

So, while the author embarks on the journey, which structures the autobiography into departure, trial and return, he constantly reveals himself in a manner that gives him a touch of the heroic. Smaller details are never avoided in an effort to adopt the heroic posture in a deeper perspective. The title of the chapter in which he recollects his experience of the journey, "IN QUEST OF THE GOLDEN FLEECE", demonstrates his interpretation of the mission as a noble one. His quest is, therefore, a universal and timeless one and irreducibly heroic. The quest is, indeed, one of the core matters of Azikiwe's tale, shaping it thematically and structurally; and focusing on the intellectual, psychological, physiological, spiritual, religious and moral rigours of the autobiographical subject. Through this quest, Azikiwe moves away from locked possibilities towards self-realisation. "But we were social rebels and we had dreamt of self-realisation after passing through the rigours of hardship and of our academic life in America." (p.54) A direct reference to the wholesomeness of his mission and the potential risks involved is also present in the subtitle of the chapter captioned, "ADVENTURERS OF THE ATLANTIC". It foreshadows the dangerous undertaking of fighting the uphill battle against possible challenges. Placing a particular emphasis on the sense of heroic representation, the autobiographer recollects the circumstances of his departure with an explicit exuberant fervour: "At last, whilst six of us had dreamed and planned the adventure, only three of us were ready to take the plunge when the testing time came." (p.53) The risk taking imagery is most clearly conveyed in heroic proportion, as he describes the manner in which they set out. "We agreed, and the next day we sailed from Lagos resigning our future to the hands of providence. Not one of our relatives or closest friends knew when we left." (p.54) Although the journey started on a good note, their passage to America did not materialise. In fact, the three young men had to disembark the ocean liner in Sekondi, Ghana and eventually the autobiographer returns to Nigeria. The narrative gives description and exposition of their experiences in the ocean as they moved from Lagos bound for Liverpool, until they reached Sekondi in Ghana, where they disembarked. The ship and the journey are both symbolic, as they are particularly noteworthy as tools of constructing an identity that is essentially humanistic and with an international appeal. They are also the means by which the autobiographer is separated from the serenity of his home country and launched into the dangers and risks of voyage and the hustles of survival in foreign countries. They also at the same time, constitute the necessary vehicles which delivered him to his goal of emancipating the African people. Azikiwe had a strong sense of heroism, which he

carried from childhood and grew up to love being a hero and which his father so much supports as expressed in the narrative:

In my school days, we read the story of how Jason and his heroic companions sailed the Argo in quest of the Golden Fleece. Today, you are poised to sail to America in quest of the golden fleece of knowledge that is guarded by the dragon of ignorance, which you must destroy, as Jason did. (p.72)

The journey had terminated in Sekondi because his friend, Sidney, became sea-sick and insisted that they should disembark to enable him to recuperate. In fact, Sidney had threatened to expose the illegality of their being on board the ship to the authorities if they did not get off. They were illegal passengers as they had not paid the transport fare, but only bribed some official to smuggle them on board.

Although this reminiscence of the botched attempt of adventure reads like an ordinary story of exited teenagers curious to discover the world, it seems to have some ingredients of self-construction. It appears to be a conscious attempt to illustrate the sense of perseverance of the writer. While his two colleagues did forgo their ambition after the initial failure, he became more prepared and determined on his second attempt. The story also conveys to the reader the moral depth of the autobiographer. His account of Sidney's ill health in the sea and the role he played in saving Sidney's life are quite useful in highlighting his unique vigour as an excellent humanitarian. Azikiwe narrated how he consistently objected to John's proposal to dump the ailing Sidney in the sea. He recalls:

That afternoon we sailed from Accra bound for Sekondi. Sidney's condition had worsened. He was incoherent in his speech..... Then I convinced him of its inhumanity; and we agreed to bear with Sidney to suffer together in silence, and to pray to God for better luck. (p.55)

At Sekondi, his experience of a world outside his home country started. "Our experiences in an unknown country, whose people we knew nothing about and of whose language we were ignorant, can be imagined." (p.57) He was later to have a better understanding of the people and their ways of life. He discovered that the Ghanaian society was fraught with such evils against Nigerians as nepotism and tribalism, which he observed while he struggled for employment there. This discovery was to dominate his thoughts, encouraging him the more to march on with the struggle for his personal fulfilment. It can be noted that even while passing through this circumstance, Azikiwe was able to transcend the challenges and conquered his new environment. He secured a job with the Gold Coast Police after passing through the services of some private companies. He even "forgot all about tribal prejudice and started life a fresh, bubbling with ambition to achieve fame as a police officer." (p.60)

The autobiographical subject continues to create his identity in his personal recollections of his second attempt of going to the United States. There is a complex perceptual

expression of certain consciousness with self-interpreting formations, which allow for a kind of unity in the narrative. This is illustrated by the fact that the many recollections of several experiences in Africa and the United States relate only to the idea of freedom and the struggle for it. The preliminary stories of his father's decision to quit his job, which "had been chequered at times with (racial) insults of various kinds" (p.71), and the dialogues with Roberson on board the ship concerning the two American educators, Dr. Durkee and Dr. Mac Donald, "who were so sympathetic to the aspirations of African youth" (p.75), are formations in the process of establishing self-identity. From the narrator's perspective, it is meant to direct the attention of the reader to the subject's liberal consciousness. He devotes attention to the notion of freedom and its place in human existence. His recollection of Herper's Ferry in the United State begins with a manifestation of an ideological sentiment, where the autobiography projects the value of freedom through the story of the famous abolitionist, John Brown. Azikiwe cites the story at length, running through four pages, paying attention to the possibilities of similar experience in any community. John Brown had dared and challenged the authorities over slavery and its inhuman nature and, according to the autobiography,

His death was an impetus to the cause of the abolitionists, because four years later, President Abraham Lincoln emancipated the slaves, only to forfeit his life in 1865 at the hands of an assassin. During the American civil war, *the Abolitionists* sang: 'John Brown's body lies a-smouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on. Indeed, the soul goes marching on.' Indeed, the soul of John Brown still marches on where human being, breathe this free air of God. (p.83)

While Azikiwe paints the images of heroism and glory that made John Brown, it is worth noticing that, as a trope of literary representation, he has utilized the figure of John Brown to underpin meaningfully, his aspirations for the soul of the hero. Azikiwe is to remember that at John Brown's Fort, "I was awe-stricken and bowed my head in humility to those who died that other might live and enjoy the good things of the earth." (p.84)

He again brings up a similar point involving the statue of liberty in the United States. Impressed by the magnificent statue when he first sighted it, he pondered on the question of liberty from the perspective of race, religion and job. He could not be help thinking that it was possible for those who dared to conquer the idea of impossibility and yearn for liberty and personal fulfilment, no matter the situation on ground. Consequently, three issues were to remain outstanding in his mind from the experience of encountering the statue of liberty: race, religion, education and job, because they represent the forms through which liberty is conveyed. He seems bent in the narrative, on repeatedly bringing to the fore the issues, which illustrate his passion in awakening the people to the burning racial, religious and social prejudice that afflict the black race, not only in his homeland, but in the Western societies as well. Africans and everyone considered as being racially inferior are constantly subjected to humiliation, injustice and exploitation all over the world.

Reflecting on the dimension of racism, which constitutes a recurrent motif in the development of the story, and against which he had to struggle even in the United States and seek grace and dignity like every human being, Azikiwe establishes himself in the form of a psychological fighter. This is observed in his open hostility against the worrisome psychological confusion exhibited by some black Americans, as they were thoroughly indoctrinated with the idea of denigrating racial characteristics of Africans. He noted during his journey to Herper's Ferry, for instance, how much Africa and Africans were misrepresented in the colonial discourse. He was perplexed by how an individual of African descent would be made to conceive his original home as "a place where people naturally walked naked and feed on one another". (p.80), a view he described as "a revelation of strange mentality." (p.80) He wondered how an African

Could not believe that Africans were civilised enough to wear trousers, coats, ties, shirts and shoes, much less to speak English. When I looked at him for some time without uttering a word, he told me that he meant no harm. He said that most of the missionaries who he had heard and the Hollywood films he had seen had given him the impression that Africans were still in a savage and primitive state. (p.81)

This shocking discovery spurred him to challenge that kind of impression with the fervour of an activist. "I will not tolerate any practice from anybody, however high or low his position, which would tend to relegate me to the background, simply because of my race." (p.206) The autobiography, thus, relentlessly portrays series of encounters the writer had with racially misguided whites, in order to show his aversion for their warped and distorted sentiments against the black race and his interest in social justice and spiritual regeneration.

As a construction labourer, a fireman, a janitor (taking care of student dormitories and toilets), a factory worker etc., Azikiwe went through varying labour conditions and the evils of economic exploitation underpinned by racial factor. "I was shocked that an economic system upon which human lives depended could condone such inhumanity". (p.98) Labourers were hired and fired not only at will, but also at the convenience and financial advantage of the recruiting agencies and the companies employing the work force. The labourers were often subjected to periods of frequent joblessness, which were sometimes prolonged and dangerously exposed them to untold hardship of survival. As was demonstrated in Azikiwe's experiences, the agony of joblessness had one day led him to attempt suicide as a way of relieving himself of his predicament. "I bore the humiliation of starvation for two days in silence, and could not convince myself of the necessity of begging anybody for money or for food." (p.100) This was coming after the humiliation he went through in the hands of his landlady, who could no longer accommodate him for his inability to pay rent. "You can go brother, because you may get hungry one day and I may miss one of my babies," (p.99) In the presentation of this event, the trauma and dilemma of survival under the inhuman economic and racial environment are described vividly. The narrative dramatizes

the horrific experience of racism and capitalism in the writer's struggle for emancipation against the life-denying injustices and immoral ways of the white man. It is, indeed, in this suicide attempt in the wake of joblessness and fading enthusiasm that the pressure of racial prejudice against the black race is vividly conveyed. It is equally worthy of attention that after the tragedy of the suicide was, fortunately, averted, the race prejudice, which stood at the core of Azikiwe's moral philosophy, is visualised in the narrative, as it presses the racism motif. "The conductor having satisfied himself that it was only a 'Nigger' who wanted to die, continued his journey as the passengers gossiped about the incident." (p.102). The narrative presents even more extensively and intricately the "extremely dangerous and hazardous work" (p.106), which the autobiographer had to do, in order to survive. The agents of this inhumanity again, are the administrative workers of companies, who are presented in the narrative as often dishonest in dealing with the non-white labourers. This is demonstrated, for example, in the paymaster, who was devoid of moral or human civility and had an overbearing drive for dishonesty. A revealing and dialogical fashioning of a "self" derived from, but paradoxically set against the image of racism and exploitation is clearly indicated in the following conversation between the narrator and a dishonest and racist white American

'You seem to be an intelligent Nigger; where did you learn your 'rithmetic from? Down daw in Mississippi?' he interrupted. 'Look here, red rose, 'I replied, 'it makes no difference where I learned my mathematics. I worked hard and honestly for six weeks; and I know what I made during that period. Now you are trying to take away from me even the modest earning I made, despite my sacrifices down themines, whilst you were up here riding in high-powered cars and thinking of your ill-gotten gains.'..... (p.106)

One of the central constructs of Azikiwe's tale is the expression of his attempt to connect this extremely inhuman condition in the spheres of his life and the experience of social struggle which he recounts in a heroic formulation. The story continues to follow his progress in the journey of life through difficult moments and how he persevered and became more daring and political, openly challenging the idea of racism and criticising social injustice in all its ramifications. As the reality of the social situation became increasingly evident in working conditions, rigours of programmes of study and general account of everyday experiences, one also senses in the narrative some adjustment in his response to the realities of the situation. The story continues to follow his progress in the climate of resistance, especially how he became more daring and outspoken, addressing student congregations with African ideological disposition. His consciousness about the efficacy of the struggle and perseverance grew more obvious in the recollection of how he managed to overcome his financial constraints and secure admission into the Howard University. After satisfying the financial and other statutory requirements for admission, the die was cast: "I was now poised and fortified in spirit to fight my way to the top." (p.115)



### 4.3 Redefining the Self through Knowledge

Thus, the desire to achieve knowledge for the liberation of the oppressed colonial masses, which had practically provided him the motivation to leave Africa for U.S.A, once again prompts him at Howard University to “concentrate on social science courses”, with political science being the “main field of specialization.” (p.116). It was here that he learnt the need to organise resistance to political misrule, which implied hard work and personal sacrifice on the part of the organisers. The range of courses he studied gives the reader of the autobiography a clue to the salient factors behind the relatively greater success of the writer’s political and business adventures. Prior to this, there has been an elaborate description of Azikiwe’s academic accomplishments as a student in Howard University, a description intended to launch his project of real political activism on the one hand and create a noble image of the ‘self’ on the other.

To summarize: at Howard, I absorbed the following as part of my equipment for the battle of life: in political science to seek for the good life, by fighting for individual freedom, under the rule of law, in a liberal democracy where the judiciary must be independent..... in philosophy, to be pragmatic and allow reason and experience to influence my thinking and way of life; in psychology, to trace my mental behaviour to the workings of my biological apparatus; in sociology, to make all policies for the progress of my country sociocentric, that is, that the public welfare should be the highest law. (p.122)

Within this new dimension of Azikiwe’s worldview on social, economic and political spheres, it is quite apparent that Azikiwe’s motive is far less informational than the desire to point out in a representational mode, a subject who is educationally charged and constructed as a counter element against colonial social formation. In order to apprehend fully the desire of the autobiographer to project the ‘self’ ingrained in the life experiences, which ultimately prepares him intellectually, it is important to note the narrator’s the-self-as-hero psyche, which drives and establishes every experience as potentially a step in the journey of self-construction. As the autobiographer dwells on his educational accomplishments and the contexts in which those feats were achieved, it is easy to perceive a personality constructed with African spirit who’s imaginative and creative gift stand him as a potential tool for greatness. The feeling he has of himself as a budding intellectual, after passing through Howard, was quite stimulating for him to fight for fellow Africans and achieve the inward desire for fame. He commented at the time of completing the programme that, “I was exposed to those academic disciplines which challenged my mental faculties and facilitated the process of self-expression and thus developed my personality.” (p.121)

As a member of the Political Science Club at Howard University, Azikiwe also had occasions to observe and participate in the operations of political campaign and elections. He recalls in particular when the club decided to hold mock elections, as a yardstick to assess the opinion of

students in respect of the chances of the four presidential candidates during the American presidential elections of 1928. As a radically-minded and politically ambitious student, he had an eye opener on the physical workings of political ideas in practical terms. The narrative also beams the spotlight on Azikiwe’s ideological thrust, as the contest was among four candidates whose parties were radically different in their ideology; namely, the Republicans, Democrats, Socialists and Communists. The narrative hints that, like many foreign students, Azikiwe had pleaded the cause of the socialist party during the campaign, because the socialists “emphasised the shifting of emphasis in the definition of economics from the welfare of the individual to that of the group... they advocated a new society based on the idealism of universal brotherhood and co-operation.” (p.131)

The narrative documents the captivating details of the author’s personal encounters with great men of African origin, most of whom later became intellectual vanguards in the liberation of Africa and African Negroes in diaspora. In tracing the author’s initiation into politics and the struggle for fair play and improved living condition for the underprivileged people of African descent, the autobiographer underscores his initiation into the sigma fraternity, which had in its membership renowned intellectuals and activists of African origin; and whose philosophy was basically structured on black consciousness. The fraternity, which consisted of scholars, intellectuals, writers, artists and politicians, thus, became an intellectual space for the fermentation of ideas. In recounting the history of the fraternity, together with the names and details of African liberation movements, which are projected as offshoots of the fraternity, the narrative seems focused on establishing the personality of the autobiographer in the calibre of such great African-American activists as Robert Russa Moton, author of *What the Negro Thinks*, James Weldon Johnson, author of *Book of American Negro Poetry* and *Black Manhattan*; Dr. Alain LeRoy Lock, the first American Negro to become a Rhodes scholar and study at Oxford University; and the two African heads of state, being William V.S Tubman of the Republic of Liberia and Kwame Nkrumah of the Republic of Ghana.

In practice, as in the narrative, Azikiwe sees his position through the perspective of these people, whose lives and intellectual pursuit came to symbolise hope and liberty for the black race. The personal stories of these great men and many others of like minds in the book throw much light on the rough road of crusade for human freedom in Africa. It is a commentary on the obstacles on the way of the anti-imperial struggle treaded by Azikiwe and his fellow compatriots. Apart from adding richness to the narrative, the commentary is also a means of organising the autobiographer’s self-perception of the events surrounding his life. It is revealing how he presents the images detailing how he came to interact with notable members of the sigma fraternity. “I was impressed by the work and activities of the great men whom I have just mentioned.” (p.135) His recollection of the sigma fraternity activities points to a subtle acknowledgement of his indebtedness to those great men.

It was during this period that the actual nationalist fervour matured in him in respect of his personal choice to communal service. He started exerting some influence through his writings on Liberia and in several other published periodicals and journals, which dealt with human freedom. "I took the opportunity to explain to my audience the nature of our crusade for human freedom in Africa." (p.135). Unlike some of the elite at home who had succumbed to forces of ethnic politics, opportunism and moral and intellectual cowardice, Azikiwe now began to entrench himself in the brand of campus-based radicals and dissidents and foremost black intellectuals who were identified as leaders of thought and who "laid the foundation for the resistance movements of the 'forties, 'fifties and 'sixties." (p.134). He felt most comfortable among those intellectuals whose attitude in principle became an impetus to his own. Thus, by the time he completed his studies at Lincoln and Pennsylvania, he had become infatuated with the most personal characteristic features and roles of such famous Negroes and black Africans. He took to writing poetry and delivering ground breaking lectures on the history of the Negroes and African historiography.

As a graduate assistant at Lincoln University, Azikiwe showcased his changing definitions of the self as he tutored and inspired so many students to take pride in their ancestry. Such students had subsequently, "gone to their homes either in Africa or in the West Indies or in Canada and are playing an active part in the social reformation of their communities." (p.159). The autobiography discusses at length Azikiwe's personal meaning to the subjects of history and political science, which he taught at Lincoln and their significance in contemporary life. He had moved for the development of a syllabus for African history and demonstrated the rich literature that was available in the field. His awakening in African history coupled with his revolutionary fervour had also brought him "into contact with youths and older people of different temperaments, ideals and outlooks, who are uniformly ambitious, to make a mark for themselves in the world." (p.158)

The reader notices here that Azikiwe provides a sharp insight into the joining point between him and his contacts – the ambition to make a mark for themselves in the world. He remembers the occasion of his departure from the U.S.A for Africa not as a customarily exciting experience for him and his students, but an occasion for by sober reflections and the painful awareness of the moral burden which lay ahead for them, i.e. of liberating their respective societies. He recalls that his students pledged at his send-off "to crystallise economic determinism among Africans when they returned to their homes and to give up their lives as a sacrifice for the ransom of the many who were ensconced in intellectual darkness." (p.188)

Three experiences further dramatize Azikiwe's awareness of the self and his world and help him to work out new patterns of selfhood and personal direction. He had brought out the question of race and racial prejudice when he was asked to say his most exciting and most horrifying moments during his sojourn in the U.S.A. Three separate experiences of lynching of black men on account of unconfirmed allegations of wrong doing against them constituted his

unforgettable experiences in the U.S.A. This revelation confirms Azikiwe's determination to take up the issue of racism as a valuable direction for his stately ambition.

Before his return to Africa, Azikiwe had to confront and overcome one other obstacle, so that he could begin to find his place in the movement for African liberation. This problem related to securing a gainful employment befitting of a vibrant African intellectual, poised for a radical break with the established pattern of employment that was akin to slavery in most public and private sectors of colonial African societies. For months, Azikiwe sent employment application letters to the governments of countries, such as Liberia, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Egypt. Apart from this he had also written to individual and corporate bodies, excellent business proposals, which were painfully turned down. Even the much anticipated cooperation from Christian missions in Africa became a heavy disappointment. He recalls in the autobiography that,

I now thought of contacting the missions in America and Europe, to see if they could give me the opportunity to add whatever humble contributions I might make to the sum-total of social progress in Africa.... I wrote, and the lesson I learnt from all the replies gave me a rude shock and made me reassess the role of missions in the contemporary history of the African continent. (p.166)

Azikiwe provides illustrative examples of the hypocrisy of the colonial authorise, including the Christian missions, towards the educated African, as part of the broad process of representing the nature of society and picturing the concerns of the radical educated elite. In the autobiography, as in the Christian doctrines, racism and racial prejudice are roundly condemned. Azikiwe however, takes issues with the Christian missions, both in the U.S.A and Africa, on the basis of their open demonstration of nepotism and racial prejudice against the blacks in the discharge of their affairs. Thus, out of the thirty applications for job he had written, he only managed to secure the editorial chair of a daily newspaper in Accra. As a matter of fact, this was also another way through which he unveiled the collective racial agenda of both the colonialists and missionaries to keep Africans to the margins in all spheres of life and society. He was compelled by the prevailing circumstances to accept the editorial offer, while also believing that it would help him to project his vision of freedom and give critical sensibility and voice among the African elite.

#### **4.4 Structures of Experience in Politics**

In reading and digesting of Azikiwe's experiences and events after he had left the U.S.A and settled in Africa, one could read the plausibility of IstyanDobos's (2010:62) statement that, "writers of autobiographies undertake the task of directly understanding themselves by attempting to sum up the symbolic meaning of their life path up the point of writing about it... its objective is not simply a victory over the crisis of the autobiographical subject but the creation of a personality."

The end of the sojourn in the U.S.A was for Azikiwe a turning point in his academic life of intense economic and

social discomfort. The new odyssey was to now focus on the autobiographer's passage from the U.S.A to Africa and involved settings in London, in the ocean route Africa; in Ghana; and, finally Nigeria. It was also no less a difficult period for the author, as he recalls the many challenges and hardships he encountered. However, he had the dream of possessing the necessary personal economic fortunes, which he considered the prerequisite for meaningful political struggle, he must, first of all, strive to earn reasonable income as a journalist in the Gold Coast, while pursuing his own personal independence and direction economically.

Upon his arrival back in Nigeria, the autobiographical narrative turns to explaining his new place in the scale of the Igbo social hierarchy; and how powerful his voice had now become. This time he was not only a budding intellectual, but a powerful political voice, eager to make himself heard for his own sake and for the sake of the nation. Azikiwe describes how his communities had received him on arrival from the U.S.A and the story is intrinsically bound up with his self-formation process, so that by telling it he maintain the heroic image that the narrative bestows upon him. He reminds the reader that he was identified as the first Igbo university graduate; and uses the autobiography to uphold the pride he brought to the Igbo nation, by detailing the numerous receptions organized in his honour. The impulse for self-construction is even more implied when he describes how he was received on arrival.

The motorcade then headed for my father's house in Old Market Road, followed by a huge crowd estimated by the Nigerian Daily Times to be about 10,000, which was so thick that we had to move at a speed of less than five miles an hour. The heat was intense not to speak of the dust raised by the feet of this amazing crowd of admirers and curiosity seekers, who pushed our car and intermittently roared 'welcome' as they sang, danced and sweltered. (p.234)

With this compelling detail of exceptional recognition by his people, Azikiwe implies that he has already found an outlet to voice out his new philosophy for Africa. Believing in the subversive potential of the awareness campaign, he utilizes the occasion of the receptions and parties organized by clubs and associations in his honour to send the message of constitutional resistance to foreign rule; and to inculcate in the indigenous people the spirit of psychological discipline necessary to facilitate the organization of such resistance and the realisation of political freedom. These lectures and similar ones delivered in the Gold Coast located Azikiwe's towering intellectual personality in the West African broad socio-political context. Beyond that, and supplementary to the verbal attack against colonialism and its attendant evils, he established a newspaper consortium i.e. Zik Group of Newspapers which he brought to bear in his onerous task of defeating colonialism and its entrenched structures. For Azikiwe, the battle for freedom against the colonial establishment in Africa started in the Gold Coast, where he edited *The Africa Morning Post*. He thought of the Sedition Ordinance, which inhibited freedom of expression, as an obstacle in the way of political freedom, which must be destroyed. Therefore, he started campaigning for its repeal. His editorial punch hit hard against all the elements which sought to slow down the progress of the Gold Coast

freedom, while encouraging trade unionists and other African to assert their rights to freedom in writing.

He also ventured into politics to feel the pulse of the political terrain, when Accra started becoming politically awake. For the most part in the Gold Coast, he had a new warmth and the excitement of pursuing a new destiny, until when he was sued for publishing an alleged seditious writing by political opponent. He spoke of his travails in court before, until he was finally acquitted, after a long and tedious judicial procedure.

He maintained a similar perspective after he relinquished his appointment with *The African Morning Post* and started the *West African Pilot* in Nigeria. This newspaper blossomed into a new consortium, the Zik Group of Newspapers, emerged and sparked off the crusade against all forms of social and political injustice.

Similarly, Azikiwe ventured into the business of journalism, for the reason that "It was incumbent on me to turn the search light of publicity on the courses of action affecting my country directly or indirectly, leaving the people to decide for themselves what attitude to adopt and what action to take under that guidance".

The *West African Pilot*, was implied to mean "*the Pilot*", as the navigator who knew the way on land, at sea and in the air. The pilot understands all the rough places and commands knowledge of the weather conditions. This suggests that the newspaper was meant to lead and actually set the people on the right track to their desired political destination. Azikiwe coordinated the operations of the *Pilot* and other newspapers until 1954, when he was sworn in as Minister of Local Government; and, later, was inducted into office as Premier of Eastern Nigeria. In recounting the roles of his newspapers in opposing external control over the peoples of Africa, Azikiwe never fails to portray the struggles he undertook to keep the newspapers afloat in terms of the frequent litigations against certain publications, which often resulted into colossal waste of their resources and energy.

Thus, while *My Odyssey* portrays the negative social and political texture of pre-colonial African societies and the mixture of good and bad aspects of life for the Negro and black African in Western Societies, Azikiwe, like the other Nigerian autobiographers, establishes how Nigeria and Ghana, as independent nations, bore the imprint of his political struggles. Besides, through the reminiscences of his furious encounter with white American and Black African racists, he conveys his consistency in opposing all forms of racial prejudice and aversion to injustice.

Equally, the reader of the autobiography readily perceives in the narrative, the connectedness of some ideological pursuit by some celebrated nationalists and activities, clubs and societies, to the autobiographer's perception of leadership. Notably, this as a direct bearing on the seeming goal of self-construction in the narrative. It is against this goal also, that the reader can better situate the writer's glorified intellectual prowess, commitment to a broad based freedom of Africa,

sound moral judgement and an unparalleled perseverance in the pursuit of his life ambitions.

## 5. Findings

One conclusion of the study, which logically flows from this insight, is that the autobiography studied evokes its uniqueness in the opening sections of the texts with the images of its place of birth, their familial memory i.e. in terms of paternal and maternal heritage. In fact, the writer begins with a manifestation of impending greatness in life upon which the narrative of self-construction is built.

The research also discovered that *My Odyssey* invites us to discover not only the making of an African nationalist, but to appreciate his distinguishing quality through the journey motif. As the plot of the text unfolds, the reader perceives the author's "songs of the self" his struggle for knowledge, job and the challenges of survival in distant lands. Thus Azikiwe's sojourn in the UK, USA and later Ghana, situates his life writing within the parameters of a hero's journey. Details of his failed attempt to cross to Europe, his second successful attempt, facing the challenges of survival, including his attempted suicide, brilliant academic and sports record, his initiation into the struggle for emancipation of Africa and the roles he played in that respect, his record as the first graduate among the Ibo nation and his ability to initiate and develop a powerful business consortium, are all modulated to unveil the uniqueness of his life.

The study of the work of Azikiwe also shows how the writer uses autobiography to define his quest for human individuality, identifying his personal struggle with the general condition of Africans. He seem equally, to be claiming a representative role in not only the anti-colonial struggle but the very ideology behind the struggle. Thus, through the study of *My Odyssey* one gains a closer access to other African nationalists such as James Aggrey, Kwame Nkrumah, etc. who were in the same shoes with Azikiwe.

Another conclusion of the research is that Azikiwe's *My Odyssey* has validated Suzanna's claim that the writing of autobiography has most often been engendered by crisis. Both texts take their form from the historical moments of their production. The reality of colonial experience in Africa is repeatedly portrayed as the inaugurating moment of Azikiwe's autobiography. The form of his narrative has characteristically structured our understanding of his self-as-hero psyche and his world view on social, economic and political issues. Life Azikiwe, text is equally a response to the historical moment of its production as it cannot be detached from what it is meant to address i.e. crisis of identity.

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