

**ZIMBABWE'S BETRAYED LIBERATION STRUGGLE: A  
CONSIDERATION OF TWO NOVELS BY  
SHIMMER CHINODYA**

by

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Master's thesis is a product of my own independent work. All content and ideas drawn directly or indirectly from external sources are indicated as such. I certify that this work or any part of it has not been previously submitted for a degree or any other qualification at the University of North West or any other institution.

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### **Abstract**

This thesis examines Chinodya's novels, *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War* in the context of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. Using a Marxist/Feminist perspective, the thesis considers the novels with a view to establishing the writer's perception of the post-independence Zimbabwean society. Additionally, this study explores the role of women and children in the liberation struggle and finally interrogates the notion of betrayal of independence ideals.

To accomplish this project, reference material from the works of various scholars, newspapers and magazines has been borrowed generously to validate the veracity of the suggested views. For up-to-date reviews on Chinodya's works, information has been sought from the internet. For specificity and accuracy, communication has been made with the author either via e-mail or telephonically.

## Preface

The dissertation seeks to contextualize the history of the liberation struggle, interrogate the representation of women and children in the struggle, examine true heroes of the liberation struggle and trace the notion of betrayed trust in Chinodya's *Harvest of thorns* and *Child of war*. The novel *Harvest of Thorns* was published in 1986, about six years after the independence of Zimbabwe. It highlights the extent of betrayal of the independence ideals. Eleven years later, Chinodya published yet another novel that dramatizes the plight of a post-war citizen of Zimbabwe, but this time with a calculated emphasis on children. Reflection on the two novels reveals that Chinodya is adamant that the Zimbabwean independence ideals have been and continue to be betrayed. In *Child of War*, the protagonist is Hondo, a child who suffers a great deal during the war of liberation. Through Hondo, Chinodya seems to be arguing that betrayal did not spare the children.

Before I delve into a study of his works, it is necessary to place Chinodya in the context of this dissertation. Born in 1957 in colonial Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), he has earned himself high regard among his contemporary Zimbabwean novelists by winning several awards:

Shimmer Chinodya is one of Zimbabwe's most celebrated post-independence literary writers. In 2007 he won the Noma Award for publishing in Africa for his novel *Strife*. He won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, Africa region, in 1990, for his critically acclaimed novel, *Harvest of Thorns*. (...) He has received numerous writing fellowships. From 1995 to 1997, he was Visiting Professor in

Creative Writing and African Literature at the University of St Lawrence in the USA (Shimmer Chinodya, 2013: n.p.).

Chinodya's active presence on the Zimbabwean publishing scene has been felt up to the most recent past. He has written and published at least nine novels, a number of film scripts, several poems and short stories, some of which centre on the plight of poverty-stricken pre- and post-colonial Zimbabwe. In his two novels that I have selected, he has undertaken to trace the atrocities of the colonial regime and the entrenchment of neo-colonialism in the new Zimbabwe. His other novels include *Dew in the Morning* (1982), *Farai's Girls* (1984), *Tale of Tamari* (2004), *Chairman of Fools* (2005), *Strife* (2006), *Zwietracht* (2010) and *Tindo's Quest* (2011). Some of his short story collections are *The March and Other Pieces* (1983), *Can We Talk and Other Stories* (1998), and *Chioniso and Other Stories* (2012). Commenting on Chinodya's works, Gagiano describes Chinodya as a writer who is admired by most of his readers (Gagiano, 2013: n.p.). Undoubtedly, *Harvest of Thorns* is one of the works that elevated Chinodya's authorship, as is evident from the following comment by Abrahams and Humphrey:

*Harvest of Thorns* was published in 1989 and reprinted in 1990. It won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. Judges Ama Ata Aidoo, Professor Micere Mugo and Fungayi Mhonyera said Chinodya was an author with an imagination so daring that he evokes for us a fictional world that completely absorbs attention (Abrahams & Humphrey, 1993: 6).

Reflecting on *Harvest of Thorns*, hereafter cited as *HoT*, Gunner has argued that this novel is 'searching for a re-evaluation of the war years and the preceding era, and a means of linking it in people's consciousness with the present' (Gunner, 1991: 77). Contrary to the popular belief of

his generation of authors who have written extensively about the positives of the liberation struggle and its subsequent independence, Chinodya ignores these much acclaimed gains and chooses to focus on a host of the country's unsavoury experiences that were ushered in at independence. In spite of Chinodya's somewhat unpopular view, Moyana characterises *Harvest of Thorns* as a novel of vital value for a nation recovering from the wounds of war (Moyana, in Kurtz, 1997: 205).

In his works about the war of liberation and its aftermath, Chinodya adopts a rather critical tone and turns a blind eye to the celebratory view that is shared by most of his contemporary writers. He seems to be contesting the commemorative stance that is often taken by other authors such as Valentine Mazorodze, who writes:

As the gigantic Boeing-707 soared over Harare International Airport, he could see scores of women and children on the balcony chanting and waving colourful flags welcoming their heroes back home into the country they had freed. They were singing and dancing, dancing to the music of their own making, music of African freedom (Mazorodze, 1989: 185).

The jubilation marks the end of the war through a resounding welcome of the heroes of the struggle back to their homes. In contrast, when Chinodya's hero, Benjamin, returns from the war, he is greeted by a sombre atmosphere:

The day he came back, and she walked in obliviously from the shower-room with soapsuds on her hands and found him sitting in his big brown boots on the sofa, she cried so much the neighbours rushed in thinking she had received news of death; after they had gone and she could talk she looked at the ropes of dried

meat hung on a strip of newspaper and fished into her long skirts to send Peter to the butcher (*HoT*: 3).

The rather unforeseen and least expected return of Benjamin does not attract the kind of celebration that is described in Mazorodze's *Silent Journey from the East*. Instead, Benjamin's homecoming is an introduction to a deluge of woes in his household. Through his two novels, Chinodya seems to be maintaining a dissenting message against the 'celebratory approach' to Zimbabwe's independence. After eleven years of independence one would expect him to have at least registered progress, albeit insignificant; nevertheless, he remains discontented.

It sounds rather curious that Chinodya declines to celebrate independence with other authors like Charles Mungoshi, for example, who even wrote a post-colonial Zimbabwean poem:

*If you don't stay bitter for too long*

If you don't stay bitter

and angry for too long

you might finally salvage

something useful

from the old country (Mungoshi, 1975, in Malan, 2008: 199).

This poem suggests that people must forget their liberation war experiences together with the era of colonialism. Interestingly, Chinodya still remains very reluctant to embrace this view. Restating the idea of betrayal through a child protagonist by rewriting the story of the liberation from the point of view of a child seems to be a way of appealing to his readers who might not have appreciated the notion of betrayal when he wrote the novel *Harvest of Thorns*. Usually the

mere mention of child-soldiers or abuse of children attracts attention because of their vulnerability. This dissenting voice remains discernible through the reading of his two novels. This study is therefore undertaken with a view to interrogating it.

Zimbabwe's case is not unique across the African continent; there are similar catastrophes throughout the continent. To reinforce Chinodya's view, I shall borrow generously from other authors who have written about similar experiences in their own African countries. Authors like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, with his Kenyan experience, Chinua Achebe with the case of Nigeria, Njabulo Ndebele with the South African view, and many others who have written extensively about their countries will feature prominently in this study.

Poetry and music will also find space since artists in these genres have been on the agenda of pre- and post-independence periods of African countries since time immemorial. The liberation movement was sustained by song and dance until its culmination in the freedom of the people. As long as post-colonial woes continue to plague the African continent, song, dance and poetry have a responsibility to advise and admonish the errant leadership that has given birth to despots in the place of true custodians of African democracy.

## Chapter 1

### **Literary and political contexts of the Zimbabwean war of liberation**

This chapter traces the period of the war of liberation in Zimbabwe with a deliberate bias towards the novels *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War*. In these two works, Chinodya traces the liberation struggle from as far back as the first *Chimurenga* (war of liberation), which was itself a result of land expropriation by white minority settlers in the then Rhodesia. Land disputes were to become an overarching justification for the liberation struggle:

The antagonism that expressed itself finally in the form of a liberation war had been nurtured by a host of ever-growing grievances, chief among which was that of land-hunger. It was mainly on the principle of the recovery of the fatherland that the struggle was built (Martin & Johnson, 1981: v).

The discontent over land forced young men and women to join the struggle in order to reclaim their natural heritage. Land remains the reason for an African man's survival, and a symbol of dignity. It is depicted as a metaphor about life, a source of livelihood. About land, James Ogude (1999: 28) argues that it is 'both a metaphor for struggle and the physical space for political contest ...'. Ogude's assertion is given credence by the spirited resistance that is found in the fierce bush war that is recorded in Chinodya's works.

Several authors acknowledge that the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe dates back to 1893, then known as the Anglo-Ndebele War. That same war raged on in 1896-97, and was named 'The first *Chimurenga* war': 'From March 1896 to October 1897 the Ndebele and Shona took up arms

against the settlers in a more spirited and co-ordinated manner. There were several reasons why Africans resisted settler colonization in this manner' (Sibanda & Moyana, 2002: 47).

One of the most significant reasons why the Ndebeles and Shonas resorted to the armed struggle was land hunger. Chinodya suggests that almost immediately after their arrival in Zimbabwe, the whites quickly subdued and dislodged the bona fide Zimbabweans, and relegated them to barren land. This land expropriation enraged the entire nation, resulting in a protracted struggle that raged on from then to 1980. In *Harvest of Thorns*, through Baas Die, a leader of a group of guerrillas operating in Headman Sachikonye's area, Chinodya ingeniously gives an account of Zimbabwe's annexation. Baas Die satirises the infiltration of the white pioneers and their subsequent conquest of the Zimbabweans in a vivid and detailed story told in a voice that is charged with emotion:

Once upon a time, a long time ago, there came to a certain village a group of visitors. These visitors did not look like anyone the people had seen before. They stood at the stockade of the *musha*<sup>1</sup>, peering in. ... The next morning a group of men from the village went out to the forest and were surprised to find the visitors had cleared an area deep in the heart of the forest and put up three rough huts! The strangers did not come back to live with the villagers. They lived in the huts they built, and began to clear a field round the huts. The villagers were surprised (*HoT*: 175-6).

In the story, the visitors gradually grow intrepid to the extent of building their own huts in the village without seeking permission from the local traditional leadership. This is unlike the

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<sup>1</sup> An area surrounded by fences or walls which contains a group of buildings.

settlers who invade Mbanta in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Achebe's settlers at least have the courtesy to ask for land to build their church, although the elders decide to give them the 'evil forest', a land that is deemed economically valueless to the villagers, in the hope that the settlers will be killed by the supposed evil spirits that are believed to reside in this forest (Achebe, 1958: 133). In Chinodya's version, upon their arrival, the settlers immediately begin to repress the villagers, taking away their land and enslaving them in the process. In the excerpt above, Baas Die sketches the advent of white settlers who at first looked very strange, but harmless to the villagers. Naturally, the locals expect these 'sojourners' to leave, but it is never to be. Instead they seize more land and settle permanently. Owing to the language barrier, the villagers do not understand the intentions of the settlers until it is too late. Eventually the villagers are driven out of their own fertile land to live at the foot of the mountain:

Villagers stayed on the hills. They built new huts there, but the land was steep and barren. There was not enough land to plough or enough pastures for their livestock. They had lost their land and their livestock to the strangers. They could no longer grow vegetables in the valley. They could no longer fish in the river. They could no longer collect firewood or logs or grass in the forest. They could no longer hunt. The villagers needed food. They started working for the strangers again, to obtain food. First the men sent their sons then the men themselves went. Even the women went too. They worked all day in the strangers' fields and gardens and homes. The strangers brought their families and built more houses (*HoT*: 180).

This tale aims at elucidating the history behind the struggle. Apparently, as soon as they discovered the fertile land in Zimbabwe, the whites increased in number. This unprecedented multiplication of the white race had serious implications. It meant procurement of more land for the oppressor in order to settle his kindred.

The notion of land expropriation is also echoed in *Child of War*:

Our village was perched on the brow of a hill. The broken line of dotted huts lay in a wide arch in front of which stretched out barren, rocky fields we ploughed every year. The fields were broken by a huge blue mountain which towered over our village. ... Behind the huts the landscape was almost chaotic, terrifying. Every metre of ground was covered with sheets of rock which seemed to spread out every year. As a child I had often wondered why our cattle browsed on the barren slopes and why we wasted our time scratching the stony fields with our hoes instead of using the rich grasslands on the other side of the fence (*CoW*: 11).

The terrain is rocky and totally unsuitable for agriculture to the point of puzzling young protagonist Hondo because he does not understand why his family has to till barren ground, yet there is fertile land just across the fence. Peter Stiff shares similar views on the land problems that were experienced by the Rhodesians (Zimbabweans):

The importance of land in Rhodesia did not so much lie in the inequalities per se, but because inequalities in access to land were accompanied by a growing overpopulation, landlessness, land deterioration and escalating poverty in the

black areas parallel with severe under-utilisation of land in the white farming area (Stiff, 2000: 287).

The land problem is explained further in Joshua Nkomo's booklet, *The New Zimbabwe*, as one of the major reasons for the struggle. The late Joshua Nkomo was the Deputy-President of Zimbabwe, who had been a leader of a guerrilla movement called ZIPRA,<sup>2</sup> which operated mainly in the Matabeleland part of Zimbabwe:

The land question accounts for the anger that has become a characteristic feature of the old nationalists at the turn of the twenty-first century; the realization that even after more than half a century of the African nationalist struggle, the land question continues to stare at them in their face (...). However, nationalism per se has to be understood in the context of the land question and the economic and social racism that accompanied white settler colonialism (Nkomo, 1981: ii).

Still on the land crisis, Ibbo Mandaza, founder and Editor-in-Chief of a newspaper called *Zimbabwe Mirror*, outlines the land question as equal to racism:

For Joshua Nkomo, and indeed for all his contemporaries that led the struggle for national independence in Zimbabwe, colonial rule was a direct experience. They had seen their parents humiliated by the fact of colonialist arrival, endured personally the land alienation process that gained momentum, through the Land Apportionment Act (1930) at the end of the 1920s, and, as youth growing into

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<sup>2</sup> Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

adulthood, bore the brunt of a dehumanising and cruel racism (Mandaza, in Nkomo, 1981: i).

In addition to Mandaza's views, Terrence Ranger, a historian who has written extensively about the war of liberation in Zimbabwe, argues that land was the main reason behind the protracted liberation struggle. His study is based on a district called Makoni in Zimbabwe's Mashonaland province:

Plainly at the peasant level it is quite untrue that the struggle in Zimbabwe was not focused on the 'stolen lands'. The loss of land in the 1940s was bitterly resented most of all in those areas of infertility and remoteness where the peasant choice was impossible from the first moment of eviction and resettlement, but also in areas like Chiduku whose prosperity gradually fell away from the 1950s on as population pressure and destocking took their effect. In Makoni district during the guerrilla war, which raged there from 1976 to 1980, the claim to the lost lands was both the ideological and practical focus of resistance (Ranger, 1985: 170).

Similar problems that resulted from white infiltration are echoed by Njabulo Ndebele, who gives a South African version of land appropriation just across the border of Zimbabwe. He refers to the Native Land Act of 1913, which saw thousands of Africans losing their fertile land to white minority settlers: 'Remember the Native Land Act of 1913 when tens of thousands of Africans were thrown out "like dogs"? Many years later, influx control laws were passed and Bantustans were created; hundreds of thousands of African families were uprooted and moved "like dogs"' (Ndebele, 2007: 252). Ndebele helps to reinforce the idea that the white settlers created parallel

patterns of injustice across the African continent, further suggesting that the white man became a common enemy to African countries; that is why the African countries had to aid each other in fighting for their liberation.

In his dream, Hondo is shown the liberation movement that was initiated by his great-grand-fathers, who wish to perpetuate it by giving the baton to him, a youth:

He gave me an arrow from his quiver to make me go away. Still I sat there, watching him. He gave me two more arrows and placed his spear at my feet. ... I took the spear up to examine it. Watching me, he shook his head sadly and smiled at me as a man might smile at a child who has acquired a dangerous toy. At last he lifted his snuff box from his side and placed it in my hand. I looked inside his chest and saw that the heart, or the lung, had stopped moving. I knew he was dying. At last, I picked up the weapons he had given me and hurried away from the place. 'It might have been your great-grandfather,' Mother told me quietly, after I had calmed down enough to narrate my dream. 'It might have been him. They say he died during the first Chimurenga War. He was a warrior. Yes, it might have been him. Oh, my child...' (CoW: 7-8).

The most crucial aim of the dream that takes the whole of Chapter Two is to trace the roots of the liberation struggle, which is what Chinodya's contemporary authors agree with. The white people who invaded Zimbabwe back in the late nineteenth century appropriated land, restricted the black man's freedom and even undermined his cultural values. In *Harvest of Thorns*, Chinodya explains that even the spirit mediums were taken away, arrested and later decapitated:

‘The strangers came and took the *Svikiro*<sup>3</sup> away and hanged her. Now the villagers had no shrine. They were afraid to touch the strangers. They were the strangers’ slaves ...’ (*HoT*: 181).

In order to subjugate the villagers, the whites were aided by their very sophisticated weaponry at that time. In *Harvest of Thorns*, the villagers find it difficult to understand the mystery of the settlers’ hunting skills until they see one white man shooting a bull with a gun, which they perceive as ‘a shiny stick’. This idea of sophisticated weaponry is extended by the historian, Peter Stiff: ‘[In] the initial phases of the uprising in March and April 1896, (...) once the better armed settlers had organised, the warriors found themselves outclassed and retired to strongholds in the Matopo hills’ (Stiff, 2000: 284).

Stiff’s reference is based on the first *Chimurenga* war experience. The idea of weapons is heightened further in *Child of War*, in Hondo’s dream that has already been mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. In the war that Hondo dreams about, his ancestors are utterly defeated:

There were sounds of groaning and weeping everywhere in the valley. Men lay bleeding on the ground or crawling on their knees through the grass, among the discarded drums, amulets and feathers. [...] There was a big hole in his chest through which blood was gushing out. I could see his heart, or one of his lungs, fluttering inside him. [...] the whole valley was full of strange dying men and I was the only living soul in this valley of death (*CoW*: 8).

The image of many dying men reinforces the idea of superior weapons that far outclass the warriors’ own simple spear and shield. Chinodya and Stiff intersect in terms of the initial wars that were fought before the black people acquired the weapons that were later sourced from

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<sup>3</sup> Spirit medium

countries such as Russia that supported the black struggle for emancipation from the jaws of the colonists. The first wars that were fought were very lopsided; in very many instances the blacks underestimated the power of the gun since they had very little understanding of how it worked. In some very pathetic incidents, folklore has it that in an attempt to stop the gun from shooting, warriors would rush towards the mouth of a raging cannon in the hope of closing it with their animal skin clothes. In these highly unfortunate demonstrations of ignorance, the warriors were mercilessly wiped out while their commander kept on ordering, '*Vala ngebhetshu!*'<sup>4</sup> Which literally means: 'Close the muzzle of the gun with your animal skin.' Thousands of warriors were killed as a result of ignorance. Using guns, the colonists subdued the warriors who continued staging sporadic attempts at resistance until they finally matched their opponents in the late 1970s.

With a view to providing even more reasons for the insurrection, Chinodya explains through the same story by Baas Die:

The strangers made new rules now. The villagers' wives had to be counted. Their children had to be counted. The marks on their bodies had to be counted. Their cattle and goats and sheep had to be counted. No villagers could hunt without the strangers' permission. No villager could chop down a tree without permission. No villager could cut a roll of grass without permission. No villager could build a hut without permission. No villager could marry without permission (*HoT*: 180).

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<sup>4</sup> Zulu language: 'Cover with your animal skin'.

This excerpt vividly illustrates the malign influence that the colonists exerted on black people who had earlier relished unlimited freedom in using their natural resources, and whose lives were now suffering drastic changes at the hands of their colonial masters.

In addition to the new laws that were enacted by the colonists, the villagers were given new names that would make it easier for the colonists to identify or address them. This renaming process was convenient to the colonists for registering the villagers in the new dispensation since they could not spell or pronounce vernacular names. Some people earned names whose meanings they did not understand. A poem entitled 'My Name' by a South African poet, Magoleng wa Selepe, highlights the problems that resulted from the colonists' names for Africans.

### **My Name**

#### **Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa**

Look what they have done to my name ...  
 the wonderful name of my great-great-grandmother  
*Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa*

The burly bureaucrat was surprised  
 What he heard was music to his ears  
 'Wat is daai, sê nou weer?'  
 'I am from Chief Daluxolo Velayigodle of  
 emaMpodweni

And my name is *Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa*.’

Messiah, help me!

My name is so simple

And yet so meaningful

But to this man it is trash ...

He gives me a name

Convenient enough to answer his whim ...

I end up being

Maria ...

I ...

*Nomgqibelo Ncamisile Mnqhibisa*

(Bavasah, et al, 2008: 96).

The tone of desperation in the words, ‘Messiah, help me!’ intensifies the helplessness of blacks at the time. The colonists did not bother to study the meanings of names of individuals; all they did was to override everything that the black person did and impose their own culture, which threatened the black culture with extinction. This expedited the unprecedented elimination of the black person’s culture. The advancement of white culture, epitomised in the changing of names of places, trees, rivers and people, meant that Rhodesian villagers were being subjected to a process of acculturation. The norms and values of the Africans were severely compromised by

the new system. They were forced to embrace a foreign culture that would in some cases permanently alienate them from their ancestral obligations.

Apart from land, there were other pertinent issues that fuelled the insurrection. One of those was racial segregation. When the white settlers invaded Zimbabwe, they did not only usurp the land, Chinodya also finds them guilty of introducing racial disharmony. In the new order, the blacks were reduced to labourers, while their white counterparts elevated themselves to managerial positions at their workplaces. This meant that the whites remained privileged at the expense of the blacks, who were doomed to subservience. Racial segregation implies that job opportunities for whites and blacks were unequal. Terrence Ranger explains that the white settlers were impressed by the young black men because these young men could use the pop-riveting machines. This, in the opinion of the whites, stamped the men as versatile labourers because they made the work of the whites (training blacks) very easy (Ranger, 1985: 165).

One novelist, Isheunesu Mazorodze, who is one of Chinodya's contemporaries, in *Silent Journey from the East*, captures a scene during the peak of the war of liberation where guerrillas come across a white woman driving along the road, and order her to stop. The guerrilla leader, known as Zvabhandu-Zvabhenda tells the woman why the war is raging:

It is my intention, however, to explain to you exactly why we are fighting, who we are fighting for and who we are fighting. We are fighting oppression of Man by Man. We are fighting for equality of all races of peoples of Zimbabwe. We are fighting for the liberation of each and every citizen of our beautiful country,

black and white alike. We want to liberate everyone from the evils of racial disharmony (Mazorodze, 1989: 159).

In a voice that is calm and quiet, which does not match the stereotype of a guerrilla, Zvabhanda-Zvabhenda addresses the woman with considerable patience. One would have expected a confrontational approach considering the popular belief that the white figure represented racial disharmony. We would not expect them to intersect anywhere. Zvabhanda-Zvabhenda does not harass her because she is white, but shows racial tolerance, much to the disillusionment of the woman, who squirms uneasily on the seat of her car. This level of maturity of Mazorodze's freedom fighter deviates from the parochial, ideological nature of Chinodya's views, and underscores the maturity of Mazorodze's writing – there is no emotional attachment to the plot. In a quintessential Chinodya plot, most whites are colonists and enemies of the black people.

Oppression is yet another reason why the guerrillas find themselves in the struggle. In his address, Zvabhanda-Zvabhenda stresses the problem of oppression. The whites are accused of disempowering blacks by evicting them from their land and oppressing them at workplaces. They also shrink the numbers of their livestock through the abhorred destocking exercise. In *Child of War*, Farmer Taylor confiscates all the livestock that stray onto his farm. Ranger has been cited earlier as saying that all the blacks were crowded onto unproductive land. This overcrowding necessitated destocking, which was introduced as a measure to curtail overgrazing. Unfortunately this aggravated the problem by impoverishing black people because the wealth of the black Zimbabwean lay in the quantity of his livestock. Stiff confirms this position in his study of the Shona tribe in Zimbabwe:

The Mashonas, while measuring their wealth in cattle like other tribes, were skilled and tireless agriculturalists. When an area was selected for planting the annual crops, the trees would be chopped down but not stumped, the grass and undergrowth burnt, holes dug with a *badza*,<sup>5</sup> or adze, and the seeds planted. If crops were good, they would use the same land again. If not, or the land lost its fertility from overuse, another piece would be selected and the bush would quickly re-claim its own (Stiff, 2000: 282).

Stiff here emphasises that although the wealth of a black Zimbabwean man is measured through livestock, the Shona tribe needed land as well since they were skilled in agriculture. They even practised bush fallowing, which suggests that they needed many acres of land since some land would remain fallow following its loss of fertility. Stiff takes us a little further to what was termed the Land Husbandry Act. This act is understood to have infuriated Zimbabweans to the point of waging a war:

In an effort to prevent overgrazing and land abuse in native reserves, the 1950s saw the promulgation of the Land Husbandry Act. This highly unpopular legislation, bringing with it compulsory destocking, restricted the number of cattle peasant tribesmen were allowed to possess. The rising tide of Black Nationalism, accompanied by civil disobedience and the seeds of armed insurrection ensured the 1960s was a turbulent decade (Stiff, 2000: 268).

The armed resistance that Chinodya narrates in *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War* took place in the 1970s led by two distinct patriotic movements, namely, ZAPU (the Zimbabwe African People's Union) and ZANU (the Zimbabwe African National Union). The settings of Chinodya's two novels focus on the late 1970s, when the struggle was in full cry. It is when Benjamin, the

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<sup>5</sup> hoe

protagonist in *Harvest of Thorns*, whose war name is Pasi NemaSellout, joins the demonstrations such as burning down beer halls which intersect with Stiff's narration about Zimbabweans who filled dip tanks with rubble as a way of protesting against white minority rule. 'There were mass refusals to dip cattle, and dip tanks were smashed or filled with rubble' (Stiff, 2000: 286).

It could be argued that some young people joined the war for fun or just to escape their unpleasant past. In the case of Pasi NemaSellout, for example, his joining of the liberation struggle might be viewed as a way of escaping from his unsavoury past. After accidentally chopping off his younger brother Peter's leg, Benjamin is made to believe that he is possessed by an evil spirit. This religious excess of his parents embitters and fuels Pasi's desire to escape this emotional torture. As a child at school he also endures incessant taunts from the other learners because they believe that his parents are sell-outs. In order to prove to his classmates that he is not from a family of sell-outs, Benjamin joins the liberation struggle. Unlike the schoolboys who join the liberation struggle as a group in *Silent Journey from the East*, Pasi journeys and faces hardships alone. This determination measures the extent of bitterness that he harbours in himself.

Some young people just join the liberation movement instinctively – they do not even give it a second thought. Ropa, a young lady whom Pasi finds at the training camp, simply says:

I just walked out of school. Can you imagine that? A group of guerrillas came to our school and talked to us and six girls decided to come over. The guerrillas were so bold, calling a meeting although soldiers were patrolling the area. (...) I was one of the six. I was in my 'O' Level year too. I was fed up with our headmistress. She was a blatant racist. Even the other white staff members were

embarrassed by her. If I were a combatant, she would be the first person that I'd hunt down (*HoT*: 136).

If we are to juxtapose these reasons with those that were outlined earlier, Ropa's reasons reflect her childish ambition. Chinodya does not tell us what the headmistress does, but the reader can deduce from the context that the rest of the white teachers in the school were totally different from her. Perhaps they were not openly racist. We are not told exactly why the other five girls joined the movement, but the reader can infer their reasons from the context. It looks as if they shared Ropa's sentiments in just deciding to join the liberation movement more out of fun than anything else.

Chinodya's novelistic contemporaries cite criminal activities as some of the reasons why certain young men joined the liberation struggle. Mazorodze, in *Silent Journey from the East*, for example, centres on three boys: Donald, Alexio and Charles. They are always on the wrong side of the law at their boarding school, always sneaking out to drink and meet their village girlfriends. This happens until Donald accidentally kills his girlfriend's father. To escape the jaws of the law, the three boys leave school to join the liberation struggle. In those days some young people left school because they were afraid to go for 'call-up', an exercise that saw all the high school graduates joining the Rhodesian army before they could look for a job, or go to university.

There are those who joined the struggle because they felt it was their duty to bring back their stolen nationhood. The likes of Baas Die, who has been mentioned several times in this chapter, fall into this category. After a fierce altercation with one of his men, and when he has been

angered by his group of guerrillas, Baas Die brags: ‘I had a job before I came here. I wasn’t at school or at home looking for a job like you were. I know why I’m fighting. I didn’t leave home for this nonsense. I didn’t survive those bombs to bicker like this’ (*HoT*: 223). From Baas Die’s words it is clear that some young people joined the liberation movement because they were unemployed. This was one way to escape economic hardship caused by the economic transformation brought about by the racist government. It was necessary for adults to work because they were expected to pay certain taxes to the government. Stiff cites hut tax as one of the reasons for rebellion: ‘The Mashona followed the Matabele into rebellion in June 1896 for the same reasons and also because of the unwelcome imposition by the government of an annual hut tax of 10 shillings – a lot of money in those days’ (Stiff, 2000: 284).

Awareness of the implications of unemployment came about as a result of various taxes that individuals had to pay. This is evident in *Harvest of Thorns*, when Chinodya gives a brief description of the district office in Headman Sachikonye’s area just before the guerrillas attack it:

The district office consisted of three white buildings with neat roofs of grass thatch. Two of these were long like classrooms, with wide verandas. The rooms in these buildings served as offices where villagers came to pay poll, cattle and dog tax, to apply for registration certificates, building permits and so on (*HoT*: 187).

It was necessary for all adults to be gainfully employed in order to pay taxes even for animals such as dogs; so it is possible that some of the young man who joined the liberation struggle might have been running away from unemployment and subsequent failure to pay certain taxes. If one had a dog, for example, one was supposed to raise a certain sum of money annually for

one to keep the animal. Where villagers could not raise the money, their animals were impounded, or they could pay their debt using animals. For example, in *Harvest of Thorns*, ‘The villagers paid with cattle, sheep and goats’ (*HoT*: 179).

To a large extent, poverty forced some people to join the struggle. In *Harvest of Thorns*, poverty is traced back to the advent of whites. Chinodya claims that because the villagers were working for colonists, they could not work in their own fields, and as a result they became poor: ‘The villagers’ food ran out. They were hungry. They were angry. All along they thought they would get something from the strangers’ fields. Their cattle grew thin. Their babies wailed in the night’ (*HoT*: 179). The anger that we read about here contributed significantly to the armed insurrection. It actually shows that these blacks were grossly underpaid, because through the meagre earnings they could not sustain their families. The fields referred to in the extract may be literal or metaphorical, but still the issue remains – poor remuneration for black workers. It is clear that poverty contributed significantly to the cause of the struggle.

In *Child of War*, Chinodya introduces the reader to Farmer Taylor, who is notorious for torturing and abusing his village neighbours. When the guerrillas arrive in the area, they already have him on their agenda. The leader, who is not named, says:

And to add insult to injury – this robber Taylor, who has settled in our midst, has abused our people. Hasn’t he always stolen our cattle, merely for crossing the fence into his farm? Hasn’t he shot our young brothers and sisters when they went to gather the fruits and honey that abound in our land? Hasn’t he raped our sisters in a most shameful way? (*CoW*: 19).

The atrocities that are perpetrated by Farmer Taylor are described as disgusting. He is accused of murdering, stealing and raping. The guerrillas' resentment may have motivated many Zimbabweans to join the armed resistance. When Farmer Taylor commits these crimes, there is no record that the law has endeavoured to take its course. He is abusing people who cannot fight back because he wields more power. It is explained that he kills some villagers because he is in possession of a gun. In *Harvest of Thorns*, when the villagers stage a demonstration against the ill-treatment that they receive from the whites, they are utterly defeated: 'The villagers followed them there. But their weapons were no match for the guns. Five men were killed. The villagers fled into the hills' (*HoT*: 179). The whites that Chinodya presents to his readers are very callous. In fact, the very first time he introduces a white person is when the reader sees an old white couple in town in the mid-50s, before Shamiso is even married. Shamiso, who later becomes Benjamin's mother, accompanies her sister when she goes to town to apply for a birth certificate for her child. The incident happens on the street, when the rural, naïve Shamiso bumps into 'an old white lady':

The lady's white-haired husband stepped out and angrily shook his stick, shouting a string of insults.

'Don't you know that you should step off the pavement when you see white people coming?' her sister hissed when the couple went off. 'You nearly got us into trouble!' (*HoT*: 28),

The white man gets very incensed when Shamiso fails to act with decorum in the new order that lays down that blacks must never share a pavement with whites. Shamiso's sister is worried about getting into trouble. She assumes that Shamiso should know the laws of the country, but obviously she is wrong. When they eventually get to the district office, they are subjected to

further humiliation. The worst scenario comes as a result of the language barrier and ignorance on the part of Shamiso and her sister. When Clopas, who later marries Shamiso and fathers Benjamin, tries to help them get the birth certificate, the young white officer deals with him in a derisory manner. The reader is absolutely appalled by the way Clopas is treated by a person who is obviously far younger than himself: 'For God's sake speak *proper* English! If the Queen heard you she'd send you to the gallows!' (...) 'I wish my mom could hear this, she thinks our cook speaks rotten English!' (*HoT*: 31).

The harsh tone that comes from the white smacks of derision. One would not expect Clopas to speak English fluently because he is not a white person and not educated. It is very noticeable that whites dominate the blacks in all spheres of life. We have seen them dominating the rural scene, and now they are dominating urban life.

Later on, when Shamiso and Clopas eventually get married, we meet them enduring very dehumanising conditions. They are awakened at ungodly hours mainly because they are not supposed to house anybody who does not appear in the council records. They have to report all their visitors to the authorities. In *Harvest of Thorns*, the reader is given a scene that takes place after women have been humiliated by being awakened and searched very early in the morning:

Later that morning, the women in section 3 gathered to protest, with the furious clamour of hens after an eagle's swoop, the humiliation of being invaded in that naked, marital hour, and vented their wrath on prostitutes who tarnished their cause, while the men among them mumbled curses against the tyranny of

unpainted walls, high rents, crowded toilets, supervised relationships and the problems of acquiring marriage certificates (*HoT*: 61).

The growing concern that we have seen is over maltreatment that blacks receive from whites. The women in urban centres have to fight for their rights, but because the white man is a formidable force, the women have to fight among themselves. The point is that the system of government does not seem considerate since it does not respect their privacy as married couples. Being awakened and frisked as early as three or four in the morning undermines basic human rights. The colonisers enacted laws that belittled blacks, hence the blacks resolve to fight in order to reclaim their lost dignity.

However, Chinodya does not paint all his whites with the same brush. Among them, there are those who are aware of this social ill, such as the missionaries, who are seen giving aid to the guerrillas during the height of the struggle. In *Child of War*, Hondo and his friend Rindai are sent by guerrillas to the mission hospital to get medical supplies. They wonder whether they will get any help when they realise that the doctor at the hospital is a white person: “I had not realised that the doctor might be a white man, and even his missionary collar did not relieve me of my doubts. How could we be sure that he would take the letter we carried and not betray us?” (*CoW*: 72).

After reading the letter, the white missionary doctor organises medical supplies and packs them cunningly; he puts them inside a loaf of bread and the rest inside tins of skimmed milk. The tins are sealed with no trace that they have been opened before. This collaboration is not expected to come from a white person, considering that the blacks in question are fighting the white

government. Many missionaries who were discovered to be practising double standards were deported during the liberation struggle. In his report on the role of the clergy in the struggle, Randolph says, “The fall in the number of priests is due to various facts: 1 Bishop and eleven priests were killed during the war, while 1 Bishop and 8 priests were deported by the government” (Randolph, 1985: 128). The missionaries were deported for failure to support white domination. If the doctor who serves Hondo and Rindai is discovered, his will be a clear case for deportation because his behaviour is obviously contrary to the ideals of white minority supremacy.

Another reason that might have influenced the black resistance is the dehumanising treatment that they received at the road blocks. In *Child of War*, there is a road block scene when Hondo and Rindai are going back to their village after receiving the medical supplies:

They began searching the women, fishing wet napkins from the bottom of bags, tossing clothes, bread and sugar into the dust, slapping women’s bosoms and backs with the butts of their guns. And the women who were cleared dived for their scattered possessions and scrambled back at the doorsteps, clutching frantic armfuls of their goods in disbelief at their easy release (*CoW*: 77).

Their ill-treatment at roadblocks may have added to the fury that motivated the blacks to take up arms.

Chinodya, together with his fellow writers, outlines various ways the blacks are ill-treated so as to justify their reasons for the struggle. There was a general outcry for equal treatment that saw

Benjamin and other guerrillas engaging in guerrilla warfare to try to reverse the present situation to the *status quo ante*. There may have been other hidden reasons, as Irene Staunton explains:

Shimmer Chinodya in *Harvest of Thorns* and Charles Samupindi in *Pawns* look at the reasons why people, even children, went to join the struggle. Beyond the commitment and determination to bring down the colonial regime, there were other, sometimes more immediate (the violence of the Rhodesian regime; or unemployment); more romantic (a consequence from the broadcasts from radio freedom); more ambiguous (peer group pressure) reasons why young people and the children made their way to the camps (Staunton 2014: n.p.).

Peer group pressure, poverty and romanticising of the whole war experience played a crucial role for various individuals who joined the struggle. Chinodya's blacks had become so indigent that they could not take it any longer since they had to pay large amounts of money for rentals even if their tiny houses had no electricity.

An analysis of Chinodya's two novels, with the aid of several contemporary authors, has helped to illuminate some of the main reasons for black insurrection. The discontent that appears to have affected the entire nation embodied the urge to rebel against the white capitalist ideology. The urge to remove capitalism and replace it with Marxist/Leninist communism became the only pathway to follow.

## Chapter 2

### Marxist / Feminist ideology in Chinodya's two novels

Marxism is a political and economic philosophy that was founded by Karl Marx, a German philosopher, after whom it was named, and Friedrich Engels in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Marx was a renowned philosopher, economist, sociologist, journalist and revolutionary socialist. Some of his most popular works include *The Communist Manifesto*, *Capital* (Volumes 1-111), *The Civil War in France*, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *The Belgian Massacres*, *Theories of Surplus Value*, *Wage Labour and Capital* and many others published both during his lifetime and posthumously. He wrote extensively about labour reform, envisaging a world that would be free from economic classes after the abolition of capitalism. His seditious views drove him from Paris and Belgium, and finally to living in London as a stateless resident. His leftist beliefs and radical writings made him very unpopular with 19<sup>th</sup> century governments.

Marxists believe that revolution is the inevitable outcome of this conflict – a revolution where the workers will eventually seize political power in order to govern the country. The workers will then establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. The aim of such a takeover of power will be to allow the people to take control of the means of production (farms, factories and mines). Communism will be achieved when a society is created in which everyone has equal economic and political rights (Kallaway, et al., 1988:65).

His promulgation of a theory that evoked a spirit of rebellion among the workers caused political angst to the governments of the time, which were predominantly capitalist. The governments' paranoia would then cost Marx his citizenship. Marxist communism is an economic system in which resources and the means of production are publicly owned. It calls for society's progression from capitalist oppression to a socialist, classless society through a workers' uprising, which it deems as necessary for the annihilation of classes in the society. In the first section of *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx argues that

[T]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Societies have always taken the form of an oppressed majority living under the thumb of an oppressive minority. In capitalism, the industrial working class, or proletariat, engage in class struggle against the owners of the means of production, the bourgeoisie. As before, this struggle will end in a revolution that restructures society, or the common ruin of the contending classes. The bourgeoisie, through the constant revolutionising of production [and] uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, have emerged as the supreme class in society, displacing all the old powers of feudalism. The bourgeoisie constantly exploit the proletariat for its labour power, creating profit for themselves, accumulating capital. However, by doing so the bourgeoisie 'are its own grave-diggers'; the proletariat inevitably will become conscious of their own potential and rise to power through revolution, overthrowing the bourgeoisie (Marx, 1848:14).

Marx believed that history was a series of class struggles and uprisings. In a capitalist state, members of the working class, which he called the proletariat, are oppressed and alienated by the wealthy elite, whom he called the bourgeoisie. The wealthy own the resources and means of production, and they inevitably pay their workers a smaller wage than their true value in order to make profits and increase their wealth. As the wealthy get wealthier, the inequality between the classes increases, leading to even more widespread oppression.

Marxism is basically founded on means of production, and according to Karl Marx, it is because of the means of production that social classes exist. Marx advocates communal ownership of the means of production and total abhorrence of capitalism or individualism. According to Mihailo

Markovic, 'Marx opens up the prospects of a radical human emancipation by altogether abolishing the state and political bureaucracy as forms of social organisation' (1974: 10). Marx's approach thus prescribes a drastic revolution as the most effective way of taking possession of property from the capitalist in order to assume collective ownership as proletariat and abolish classes in the society. Terry Eagleton defines Marxism as

a scientific theory of human societies and of the practice of transforming them; and what that means, rather more correctly, is that the narrative Marxism has to deliver is the story of the struggles of men and women to free themselves from certain forms of exploitation and oppression (1976: vii).

Marxism, however, is not a panacea for the problems of class discrepancies in the world. In practice, the theory presupposes that man is impervious to corruptible tendencies, totally negating his carnal nature. The 1917 Russian revolution, satirised by George Orwell in his novel *Animal Farm*, shows the flaws in Marxism. The theory makes miscalculated assumptions that human beings are 'holy', and have uniform feelings about life in general. In Lord Acton's famous phrase, power tends to corrupt, as can be traced in the Russian revolution. A utopian society remains an elusive dream to most politicians.

At the dawn of Zimbabwe's independence, Mugabe announced that the country would assume a Marxist-Leninist stance (Randolph, 1985:80), which was understood to be the underpinning resolution of the liberation struggle. The guerrillas' vision, which was to own farms and live in a land of plenty, never came to fruition. The radical revolution which saw the diminishing power of white supremacy at independence unfortunately created a haven for power-mongers who in most cases were not even part of the liberation struggle. When the news of independence hit the

airwaves, all the people who had been exiled for various reasons returned to the country and claimed inheritance of most of the properties that had previously been owned by the erstwhile white ruling class. This created a class that seemed to be oblivious to the main reasons for the armed insurrection. Most of those who claimed to have been exiled came back an erudite generation – even more educated than the whites who had been in government. One wonders whether these people had really been exiled, or had they just skipped the country in order to enrich themselves academically in the hope that at independence doors would open for them to pursue their egotist goals, which obviously did not coincide with the Marxism that the country had hoped to espouse.

Pre-independence Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was predominantly capitalist, with the white colonisers owning land and industry. Conversely, black Rhodesians were systematically relegated to being workers, and could not by any chance negotiate joint ownership of land and other property. In *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War*, the privatisation of land exposes the white capitalist scandal. The unfortunate side of capitalism is that it impoverishes the working class to the basest level of indigence and condemns them to total dependence on the capitalist for livelihood. To resolve the capitalism problem, Chinodya in his two novels advocates Marxism, which actually forms the basis of most African countries' liberation struggles. Marx advocates violence as a possible route of settling economic inequalities between the capitalists (colonialists) and the proletariat (peasants). Swanepoel argues in favour of Marxism as a solution to African emancipation from colonialism:

In Africa, with its long and turbulent colonial history wrought in hegemony, discrimination and deprivation, it is understandable that Marxism was

embraced as a strong intellectual underpinning for the struggle for liberation (Swanepoel, 1990: 53).

In line with the Marxist ideology, Jones and Jones emphasise violence as the only road to political emancipation.

Independence and majority rule came to Zimbabwe through a bitter war fought by the indigenous people against the alien invader who had expropriated their land, demeaned their culture and enslaved their bodies (Jones & Jones, 1996:50).

In *Harvest of Thorns*, the guerrillas pay a nocturnal visit to Baas Mellecker's farm and murder him in cold blood. After the murder, the farm foreman, Msindo, wonders what will happen to the farm and the implements, and even the workers: '[I]t's pay-day today and who will pay the workers and what will happen to the workers, what will happen to the new tractor, to the farm...?' (*HoT*: 165). From Msindo's summary of events and point of view, the reader can deduce that Mellecker owns a large farm, and has many workers who solely depend on him for a living. Chinodya deliberately describes the setting at the arrival of the guerrillas at the farm gate:

Barbed wire runs along the flank of the road and at right angles from a silver corner post. A charred board in the shape of an arrow points out to twin car-tracks in the grass. The red lettering on the board shines in the beam of the car.

WHITE OAK

(est. 1907)

(Prop. J. M. P. Mellecker) (*HoT*: 157).

In his support for Marxism against capitalism, Robert Mugabe argues:

Accordingly, ZANU believes in socialism based on *Marxist-Leninist principles*. We are proud that this is our philosophy because its morality is collective and, therefore selfless. It is philosophy which demands that we always think of the whole of us, the whole people first, that is the total interest of the people before we consider the individual and his individual interests, an equation of man and a common social denominator. The land, forests, animals, rivers, the mountains, rivers and the waters, in short the fauna and flora which God gave us, are ours together. Let no one therefore claim that the land that is also yours and mine is his alone (Mugabe, in Randolph, 1985: 80-81).

The words by Mugabe are sugar-coated statements that were uttered during the honeymoon years of Zimbabwe's independence. While the words remain enshrined in the constitution of the ruling party, ZANU-PF, the country's woes continue to escalate. Zimbabweans are flooding the border gates of the country to go in search of the proverbial greener pastures. The world over is home to young and old Zimbabweans who are out to sell their labour in exchange for economic refuge. Some of the labour is sold at ridiculously low prices just because people need food to keep body and soul together. The form of Marxism practised under Mugabe was too radical: it totally ignored the reality that transition is a process. The unceremonious expulsion of white farmers, who were responsible for feeding the whole country, was a gross miscalculation by the former guerrillas. They should have shared and co-existed with the white farmers to study the ways of

food production and gradually reduced the size of white-owned farms to usher in new players in the economy so that the country's economy would not collapse. They should have studied the basic rules of economics before taking over industries. There was no need to perpetuate animosity between blacks and whites, especially when those same whites had much to teach the newly dominant Africans. I believe that African agitation over the agrarian reform was even contrary to the tenets of guerrilla warfare. The main idea was to eradicate racial disharmony (Mazorodze, 1989: 159), which they ironically perpetrated and continue to perpetrate. The new black farmers failed dismally, forcing the country's economy to decline alarmingly. The failure should have been predicted because those new farmers were just peasant farmers, inexperienced in large-scale farming. They were just subsistence farmers promoted to the ranks of commercial farmers without any means of production, and totally ignorant about farming administration.

From the Marxist perspective, Mellecker's individual ownership of land is capitalistic. The farmworkers are totally dependent on Mellecker to the extent that when he is killed, they feel deprived of a livelihood. The murdering of Mellecker in cold blood, although morally speaking not something to be celebrated, has given freedom and presented an opportunity of communal farm ownership to the workers. Unfortunately, because the workers have been indoctrinated to believe that only Mellecker has the ability to administer the farm and ensure their survival, they cannot decide on how to forge ahead even with tools such as the new tractor available.

In *Child of War*, Farmer Taylor is reported to be enjoying ownership of a huge farm with thousands of cattle. When the guerrillas arrive in the area, the reader realises that they have targeted Taylor. They seize the farm, butcher Taylor and slaughter the cattle to feed villagers in *pungwe* meetings. From their point of view, this exemplifies the communal ownership of property. The explanation is that the cattle and land belong to the community.

At the third or fourth *pungwe* – I cannot remember clearly which – we were surprised to find heaps of meat laid out on the branches of the trees. It was very good meat, freshly cut. The guerrillas invited us to help ourselves. We roasted it over the fire till our teeth ached. Afterwards, at the end of the meeting, women left with baskets of meat to dry in their huts. Mother brought two baskets of it to hang over the fire – I had never seen so much meat in my life. I asked mother where it had come from but she merely shrugged her shoulders.

Later, I guessed the truth. The meat had come from Farmer Taylor's beasts. The guerrillas had proved one point – that they meant it when they said Farmer Taylor's farm and the resources on it were ours to share (*CoW*: 24).

Killing cattle and sharing meat typifies Marxism at its grassroots level. Farmer Taylor's land and possessions have been seized and redistributed to the masses, behaviour that Mugabe condoned soon after his inauguration as the first black Prime Minister of Zimbabwe in 1980, in an interview that was published by *The Herald* on 18 August:

As a party we stand by the socialist ideology deriving, to an extent, from Marxism and Leninism. We don't hide that. At the same time we are not governed by those principles alone. ... But in respect of our society here we cannot ignore the reality of individualism which we have inherited. That means we cannot ignore the reality of private enterprise which exists in our society by seizing private property, and making it state-owned or by handing

it over to collectives. We can't do that without ruining the socio-economic base on which we want to found our society (*The Herald*, 18 August, 1980).

The new Prime Minister is warning against the grabbing of farms and industries from individuals for total communal ownership. In Chinodya's novels, the guerrillas start practising this policy way before independence. Many white farmers were killed during the Zimbabwean liberation struggle so that the land which they had occupied could be shared by the masses. The forceful acquisition which seeks to obliterate exploitation of man by man is basically Marxist.

In addition to Marxism, this study also examines the use of feminism in the works of Chinodya that I have selected. The study of the two works reveals evidence of transition from a predominantly patriarchal society to a new order where women are visibly 'recognised'. In creating defiant women, coupled with the diminishing stereotypical sense of patriarchy in both *Child of War* and *Harvest of Thorns*, Chinodya is advocating women's advancement. According to Charles R. Larson, feminism '[is] about our entire grounding as human beings seeking equal attention in all areas of our existence. It is vital for women to seek this resolution through their different voices' (Larson, 2001: 84).

Larson argues that 'the position of woman needs to be re-examined with the greater determination and a forceful idea for change' (ibid).

Feminism is a multi-disciplinary approach to sex and gender equality understood through social theories and political activism. Historically, feminism has evolved from the critical examination of inequality between the sexes to a more nuanced focus on the social and performative constructions of gender and sexuality. Feminist theory now aims to interrogate gender inequalities and to effect change

in areas where gender and sexuality politics create power imbalances (*Women and gender studies*, 2015: n.p.).

An American author and activist, Alice Walker, whose work is focused on the struggles of black people, particularly women, and their lives in a racist, sexist and violent society, creates in her novel, *The Color Purple*, characters known as Mr and Celie's Pa who are described as brutal misogynists. Throughout the first three-quarters of the novel, Walker paints Mr and Pa's horribly phallogocentric lifestyle. They reinforce brutal male sexism and patriarchal domination, whereas the female characters, such as Celie, are poignant and authentic. Celie's Pa exercises the most despicable expression of patriarchal power:

He never had a kine word to say to me. Just say You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't. First he put his thing up against my hip and sort of wiggle it around. Then he grab hold my titties. Then he push his thing inside my pussy. When I hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying you better shut up and git used to it (Walker, 1982: 1).

Pa has the nerve to rape his stepdaughter repeatedly without any remorse until she falls pregnant – twice. He then takes away the children who are the result of this (apparently, to Celie) incestuous relationship for adoption without even bothering to inform his daughter. The callousness of patriarchal authority is extended when the same girl is later forced to marry Mr, the man who is as old as her father: 'Pa call me. Celie, he say. Like it wasn't nothing. Mr – want another look at you' (Walker, 1982: 10). This abuse of masculinity shifts to Mr, who inflicts another version of patriarchal cruelty: in addition to sexual abuse, Celie is beaten, and has to do manual labour on the farm with Harpo, Mr's son, from morning to sundown, while Mr sits on the veranda of his house, smoking, and reading the paper:

‘Every day his daddy git up, sit on the porch, look out at nothing. (...) Harpo complain about the plowing he have to do. (...) Me and him out in the field all day. Us sweat, chopping and plowing. I’m roasted coffee bean color now (p.10).

The arrival of Shug Avery marks the beginning of a new life for Celie, whose character experiences a radical transformation. Shug is a free woman who has total control of her life and is seemingly oblivious to patriarchal exploitation. She goes about staging musical shows from town to town, a life that does not match the stereotypical ‘woman’.

Even the preacher got his mouth on Shug Avery, now she down. He take her condition for his text. He don’t call no name, but he don’t have to. Everybody know who he mean. He talk bout a strumpet in short skirts, smoking cigarettes, drinking gin. Singing for money and taking other women mens. Talk about slut, hussy, heifer and streetcleaner (p. 44).

The preacher thinks Shug despicable, a view responsible for the docility of women and their subsequent abuse by their men. However, this ‘manner less’ Shug gradually reconstructs and nurtures Celie until she is bold enough to challenge Mr. This comes after she discovers that Mr has been hiding her mail from her sister Nettie, who is now in Africa. What is interesting is that when Mr is faced with resistance from a once tractable Celie, he realises that he has been an abuser and decides to transform:

I’m really sorry (...) then the old devil put his arms around me and just stood there on the porch with me really quiet. Way after while I bent my stiff neck onto his shoulder. Here us is, I thought, two old fools left over from love, keeping each other company under the stars (Walker, 1991: 70).

Mr has learnt how to appreciate Celie after the sordid abuse that he has unleashed on her. This change of heart is welcome as a re-establishment of the place of 'woman' in this male-dominated society. Mr goes on to say, '...the fool I used to be,' (Walker, 1991: 271) to authenticate the demise of the patriarchal spirit in him.

The evolution that Walker illustrates in Celie is similar to the transformation that the reader sees in Shamiso in Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*. Walker is suggesting that black males are likely to be abusers of women because of racism that robbed them of their initial patriarchal position. bell hooks, another American author, feminist and social activist, in her book *Yearning Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* argues

[i]n the early seventies individual black women decided that they could repair the damages done to black man within this racist society by repressing their advancement and assuming a secondary, supportive role; they found themselves in relationships where black males exercised power in ways that were dominating and coercive. Black female willingness to assume a subordinate position did not transform male aggression or violence. Ultimately most of these black women ended up feeling as though they were in a 'no win' situation. (hooks 1991:76) .

hooks links male chauvinism with racism in America and Africa, whose history includes colonisation that inevitably gave birth to high levels of racism. The proposition here is that black males dominate women because they feel they have been emasculated by white colonists. For them to salvage their dignity, they have to demonstrate their masculinity by repressing women. Feminism has been championed by black male writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua

Achebe. In Ngugi and Mugo's play, *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, a teenage girl who has decided to resist male domination laments:

All my life I have been running. On the run. On the road. Men molesting me. I was once a dutiful daughter. A nice Christian home. It was the settled area. CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THIS HOUSE THE UNSEEN GUEST AT EVERY MEAL THE SILENT LISTENER TO EVERY CONVERSATION. I ran away from school because the headmaster wanted to do wicked things with me. Always: you remain behind. You take the wood to my house. You take this chalk and books to the office. Then he would follow me and all he wanted was to touch my breasts. So I left school. (...) But my father would have nothing of it. He called me an idler and sent me to pick leaves for that cruel settler, Mr. Jones. How he used to abuse and punish us! I had to run away from home, from my father, from Mr Jones ... In the city it was the boys. (...) A girl cannot run, run, run all her life (Ngugi & Mugo, 1976: 41).

The young girl is determined to take control of her life, and has thus decided to face her male oppressors head-on. This stance by Ngugi confirms that as a writer, he prioritises the advancement of women. A similarly grim story of patriarchal cruelty to a young woman from childhood is given prominence in another novel by Ngugi, *Matigari*, in which Guthera similarly traces her abuse back to when she was young. After her father has been arrested at the height of the liberation war for alleged collusion with terrorists, the chief police officer demands sexual favours so that he can facilitate the release of her father, but the girl remains resolute that she will never give in:

The superintendent came out smiling slyly. He said: My superiors do not know about this yet. We can settle this matter between us here and now. Give me your purity, and I will give your parent back to you. The young maiden remained silent. The superintendent explained further: You are carrying your father's life between your legs (Ngugi, 1987: 35).

The fact that the girl has total control of her life and finally chooses to remain chaste, even at the cost of her father's life, shows Ngugi's profound concern for women's recognition. In his earlier novel, *The River Between*, Muthoni, a young girl who defies her father's order to be circumcised, shows another break from patriarchal authority:

'Tell Muthoni to come back. If she agrees we shall forget everything. If she does not, then tell her that she ceases to be my daughter.' On the following day Nyambura brought the sad news that Muthoni had refused to return home (Ngugi, 1965: 36).

Even though Muthoni eventually dies from a wound that does not heal, she dies a proud woman, and her example is followed by her sister, Nyambura, who eventually elopes with Waiyaki. Although the rhetoric may be religious, one of the key issues in this narrative is the girl's refusal to bow to her father's domination of his household.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* highlights the importance of matriarchy. Achebe's hero, Okonkwo, an arch-patriarch, has to seek refuge in his motherland, Mbanta, after accidentally killing a kinsman, because 'Mother is supreme' (Achebe, 1958: 94).

There is an ever-growing concern about advancing the rights of women in today's world. This notion gets its mandate from a women's conference held in Beijing, China, from 4 to 15 September, 1995, when women's issues were dealt with extensively. Several views, most of which expound on the notion of the recognition of women, have arisen before and after that conference. This is the reason why in South Africa there are ministries which specifically deal with the interests of women and children. The need to empower women in all spheres of leadership and business is enshrined in the constitutions of most countries today. Some of the issues that were raised in the Beijing conference were that

[i]t is essential to design, implement and monitor, with the full participation of women, effective, efficient and mutually reinforcing gender-sensitive policies and programmes including development policies and programmes, at all levels that will foster the empowerment and advancement of women (Beijing Declaration 2014: n.p.).

After the Beijing conference, the Fourth World Conference for Women, it was evident that the need for advancement of women remains crucial, compelling several authors, including Chinodya, to entrench the ideals of feminism in some of their works. Afam Ebeogu, a Nigerian scholar, affirms that Chinodya's works promote the advancement of women: 'Zimbabwean women who fought the war reveal the image of the woman as long-suffering and courageous, and also as a kind of symbolic mother protecting the whole nation in times of crisis' (Ebeogu, 1993: 130).

The fact that women are found at the forefront in times of crisis such as war helps to elevate the position of woman in a typically patriarchal set-up. The inclusion of female guerrillas both as

fighters and mothers sets them apart as valuable in the entire process of nation building. Chinodya portrays various images of women in the two novels that I have selected for this study. Initially he depicts women as submissive and rather docile individuals devoid of a will to please themselves. Particularly in *Harvest of Thorns* they appear to have accepted their roles as second-class citizens. That is why they do not bother to question the male domination that is evident from the beginning of the novel. Shamiso, in *Harvest of Thorns*, is portrayed as a submissive woman who accepts her husband's infidelity without any sign that she has been betrayed. One would have expected her fight for her husband, or even to use the church to bring him back to his family, but she turns a blind eye, taking to vending in order to fend for the remnant of her family. The kind of woman that Shamiso is at this point in the novel is probably what prompts Masuwa's comment:

*Harvest of Thorns* appears in some instances to be sexist, portraying females who are silent, submissive and conventional. It also portrays, though, how women have been trained to believe that there is dignity in suppressing their feelings and their thoughts, and it tells the truth about men's attitudes towards women (Masuwa, 1992: 63).

Shamiso does not seem to have any will to fight or even argue with her neighbouring widow who, it seems, has taken her husband. It is only after the return of Benjamin from the liberation struggle that the reader is given a totally different image of what used to be a submissive Shamiso. The altercation that ensues between Benjamin and his mother seems to have taught her to fight and claim her rights as a wife:

'You knew about Muchaneta long before she took him away,' Benjamin said,  
'but you didn't put up a fight. You made him think you didn't care.'

‘What did you want me to do? Turn myself into the scandal of this township?’

‘You are the kind that would offer their enemy the other cheek instead of hitting back’ (*HoT*: 22-3).

When Benjamin returns from the war, he seems to have harboured anger towards his mother which he vents when she inadvertently provokes him. This exchange of harsh words also helps the reader to understand the inner self of Shamiso, who believes that fighting for her husband would turn her into a public spectacle. Her personal dignity is a virtue that she clings to in spite of the pain and hurt she experiences in a marriage that is obviously on the rocks. However, after the fierce altercation with her son, it dawns on her that pursuing dignity does not always bring about happiness. The reader is baffled by a sudden change from a timid mother to a very assertive woman who seems to have just discovered that she has been abused all along:

I’m done with forgiving people who dance on my toes. Yes, Clopas. I’m going to fight her at her own game. Everything is going to be equal between Muchaneta and me. If you spend one week with her you will spend the next one with me. You will split your pay equally between us. Whatever you buy for her you will buy for me and if you refuse I’ll go to court. I’ve been meaning to do so but my pride wouldn’t let me. Don’t think I don’t know my rights. This is not the old days any more. Women have laws to protect us now (*HoT*: 269).

The mention of laws that protect women reminds the reader about the world conferences that have undertaken to ensure that women are accorded their due status. Shamiso is aware that they now live in a new world that makes the interests of women a state responsibility. That is why she brags that if Clopas does not listen to her, she will take the matter to court. Through these words, Chinodya seems to be warning his male readers that they should not take women for granted

anymore, especially after independence. Shamiso surprises her husband, who finds himself compelled to accept her demands.

Shamiso authoritatively orders her estranged husband to bring his girlfriend Muchaneta so that she can express her mind to her as well. After a futile attempt at refusing, Clopas obeys and later returns with a frightened Muchaneta, who is not even sure of what is in store for her. The transformation in Shamiso, who now dominates her household, should come as a relief to Chinodya's critics, who felt that in his preceding novels, such as *Dew in the Morning* and *Farai's Girls*, Chinodya had promoted sexism. After reading the novel *Harvest of Thorns*, Angeline Ncube tries to exonerate Chinodya:

While it can be said to be true about most of his writings, critics have bombarded the novel *Farai's Girls* as being too patriarchal, gender insensitive and devaluating towards women, among several such aspects. (...) Following his affirmation to such patriarchal accusations, Chinodya has since tried to change his portrayal and treatment of the female persona in his fiction. For example, Guchu clearly notes that there is an enormous distinction amidst Chinodya's earliest works and his latest books (Ncube, 2014: n.p.).

In *Farai's Girls*, Chinodya's main male character, Farai, is very egocentric, has numerous lovers and treats all his women irresponsibly. After reading *Child of War* and *Harvest of Thorns*, the novels that followed *Farai's Girls*, the reader can acknowledge an astonishing shift from male chauvinism to feminism.

Similar to the views that are raised in Chinodya's works, two Nigerian women writers, Flora Nwapa in *Efuru*, and Buchi Emecheta in *The Joys of Motherhood*, have created heroines that openly protest against the dominant world of patriarchy. They seek to redefine the position of a woman as that of a leader; they carve what they believe is the true image of the woman in the African context. Nwapa has commented that, if you are a woman, 'you are oppressed at home, you are oppressed at work. Your husband oppresses you and then your society piles upon you double, if not treble suffering' (Newell, 2006: 155). Sharing the very same view is Emecheta, whose 'main concern is domestic relations and, more precisely, with the position of women in both traditional society, as presented by the village, and with traditional values as these are carried into complex city life and, in some respects, modified there' (Killam, 2004: 44). It is on account of this precise concern that these two proponents of the matriarchal movement write. Nwapa represents *Efuru* as a 'male daughter', powered by the lake goddess Uhamiri, and supported by true revolutionaries like Ajanapu, one of the dominant female characters in the novel. Emecheta, on the other hand, presents her 'male daughters' in the form of Ona, and the long-suffering Nnu Ego alongside Adaku and Kehinde, who measure up to women free from male domination.

In *Efuru*, Nwapa is bent on 'proving her own belief in the need for the African woman to be versatile for her own survival' (James, 1990: 110). *Efuru* deliberately obeys her father and marries a nonentity, Adizua, who does not even have money to pay her bride-price. Nwashike Ogene, *Efuru*'s father, is a respected man in the village, but *Efuru*, 'a daughter', has the audacity to belittle his authority by eloping with Adizua (Stratton, 1994: 93). *Efuru*'s cousin explains their desperate attempt to reclaim her. 'Efuru has brought shame on us, something must be done immediately to get her back' (Nwapa, 1966: 9). The young men who are sent twice to bring her

back, return empty-handed: 'We shall go, our daughter,' the spokesman said. You seem to be happy here and we wonder why your father wants us to bring you back. We shall tell him what we have seen' (Nwapa, 1966: 9).

Despite their two attempts at retrieving her from her 'illegal marriage', Efurū emerges a victor, and her will is done in spite of her being a woman.

Having been married to Adizua, and after the clitoridectomy, Efurū does not accept the pain as a woman's lot, and is intolerant of the mandatory period of confinement which follows the operation. Her refusal to remain secluded and be fattened, as is customary, foreshadows her ultimate revolt against her confinement in sexual roles. Longing to be 'up and doing', she insists that one confinement is enough, and she returns to her trade (Brown, 1981: 22). Subsequently she takes many decisions that indicate her consciousness that motherhood can interfere with a woman's attainment of social and economic power. She is, for example, resolute in her decision to take up trade as her vocation rather than join Adizua in farming. As a result, husband and wife live apart during the first few months of their marriage. 'Efurū refused to go to the farm with her husband. "If you like," she said to her husband, "go to the farm. I am not cut out for farm work. I am going to trade." That year the man went to farm while his wife remained in town' (Nwapa, 1966: 10).

The authority in Efurū's voice is characteristically masculine. In addition to disobeying her father, Efurū's arrogance escalates, and Adizua does nothing to coerce her to follow him.

When she finally falls pregnant, she insists on continuing to trade almost up to the time of her delivery. Furthermore, much to Adizua's annoyance, she spends what turns out to be the night she gives birth at an age-group celebration (Nwapa, 1966: 30). Evidently there is very little

stereotypical femininity in what she does. Finally, contrary to the advice she is given, she returns to her work almost immediately after the birth of her baby. Clearly, Efuru is 'rejecting orthodox definitions of gender' (Stratton, 1994: 99). After Adizua deserts her, in spite of Ajanapu's wait for a year plea, she leaves and goes back to her father's house and argues that the husband left her and not vice versa, despite the incessant correction by Difu and Nnona, two elderly women who seek to preserve male supremacy. 'Did I hear that you have left your husband?' 'Yes, he has left me.' 'Don't say that; we say that a woman has left her husband, but never say that a husband has left his wife. Wives leave husbands, not the other way round' (Nwapa, 1966: 45).

Efuru is endeavouring to correct this social ill that seems to be esteeming men even when it is clear that they are wrong. This direct confrontation is intended to nullify all the tenets of male chauvinism and female inferiority, and establish that men are not always right as most African cultures suggest. It posits that a woman must not be blamed for a man's wrongdoing. To reinforce this argument, 'Efuru uses the power she acquires to succour the members of her community, taking the ill to the hospital in Onicha, paying medical bills, and even lending or sometimes giving money to those in financial constraints' (Stratton, 1994: 99).

Nwosu, a man, has to debase himself by asking Efuru to lend him ten pounds. In this case, Nwosu as a man is admitting that Efuru is a woman who is more capable than a man in her abilities. The same Nwosu is assisted by Efuru to go to hospital. Again this sets up Efuru as 'a man': the duties she performs, from the African cultural point of view, are unquestionably masculine.

Later on, when she marries Gilbert, Efuru begins to worship the lake goddess Uhamiri, who then prescribes life for her. Efuru is portrayed as a woman free from conjugal obligations. Gilbert can

do nothing. Through Uhamiri, Efuru takes on the role of a man. She is able to worship Uhamiri and do her wishes, and not those of her husband. Uhamiri is a goddess who does not have children, but has wealth, which is power. For the goddess figure, not being an object of male desire is a symbol of freedom and independence for women (Brown, in Stratton, 1994: 92).

Stratton argues that

[m]ore crucially, Nwapa's narration of the myth places Achebe's characterization of Ibo society as strictly patriarchal and excessively masculinist under revision. For the myth of Uhamiri embraces both matriarchal and patriarchal principles. Upholding the principle of gender equality, it gives cultural legitimacy to female power (Stratton, 1994: 90).

In the novel itself we learn that

[a]t last Nwosu and the fisherman saw the waters of the blue lake mingling beautifully, majestically, and calmly with the brown waters of the Great River (...) Uhamiri, the owner of the lake, and Okita, the owner of the great river. The two were supposed to be husband and wife, but they governed different domains and nearly always quarrelled. Nobody knew the cause or the nature of their constant quarrels (Nwapa, 1966: 201).

Prominence is given to the notion that Uhamiri and Okita are equal since both of them rule certain domains. Nwapa feels woman must be given their rightful place, that of leading in life. Efuru epitomizes the very ideology that Nwapa wants to advance to her readers.

In an interview with Adeola, Nwapa's sentiments centred on the fact that in her works

[t]he message is, and it has always been, that whatever happens in a woman's life (...) is not the end of this world; Childlessness is not the end of everything. You must survive one way or the other, and there are a hundred and one other things to make you happy apart from marriage (James, 1990: 114).

Efuru is presented as in total rejection of a woman's roles being prescribed by men. 'What Efuru realizes, then, is that 'infertility' is a form of resistance to male domination which, however unconsciously, is practised by some women' (Stratton, 1994: 96). It is therefore through the creation of Efuru that Nwapa demonstrates the power of a woman and her total disdain for the male-dominated world. The punishment that Ajanapu administers to Gilbert suggests that women have taken the reins of power. Efuru's return to her father's house when her father is dead is a further assertion of eternal freedom from patriarchal hegemony.

On the other hand, Emecheta in *The Joys of Motherhood* presents Ona as a girl who always accompanies her father, a chief, to important male gatherings. This is a deviation from the expected norms and values of the society. The value placed on Ona is equal to, if not more than, that which is vested in a son. Stratton agrees that 'even though Ona's life too is circumscribed by the prescriptions and taboos of Iboza patriarchy, she enjoys far more freedom' (Stratton, 1994: 113).

In the novel Ona is termed, 'a very beautiful young woman who managed to combine stubbornness with arrogance. So stubborn was she that she refused to live with Agbadi' (Emecheta, 1994: 11).

Taunting a chief of Nwokocha Abgbadi's status shows that a woman has the ability to exercise her absolute power over men. Ona is often heard rebuking her father, Obi Umunna, and Nwokocha when they pick a quarrel about her:

‘Please, please, aren't you two happy that I have survived the birth? It seems nobody is interested in that part of it. I made a promise to Agbadi, yes: but, dear Agbadi, I am still my father's daughter. Since he has not taken a bride price from you, do you think it would be right for me to stay with you permanently? You know our custom does not permit it. I am still my father's daughter’ (1994: 26).

The fact that a girl can settle a dispute between quarrelling chiefs suggests that she has been elevated far above them. Ona then serves as a very significant signpost for matriarchal recognition. Agbadi gloats over her, but she never succumbs to his sexual desires; she remains in total control of her femininity, unlike the senior wife, who supposedly falls ill and later dies just because she is stressed when she hears her husband giving pleasure to another woman. Perhaps Emecheta, in line with Chinodya's assertions, is marking the demise of this dependency on the part of women. At the transformation of Shamiso in *Harvest of Thorns* the reader is reminded of this infamous Ona, the young woman who is described as obstinate. Ona is painted as ‘[a] woman who was troublesome and impetuous, who had the audacity to fight with her man before letting him have her: a bad woman’ (Emecheta, 1979: 21). The crime of Emecheta's Ona is that she is assertive, and takes charge of her life without considering some of the oppressive norms and values of the culture that is determined to keep women under the tight grip of men's rule. Ironically, the citation is a comment from a woman who actually believes that women were created to please men. Instead of ululating and even emulating Ona, the women condemn her behaviour as a taboo.

Unlike Efuru, Ona's daughter, Nnu Ego, brings about an anti-climax to the matriarchal movement, and unfortunately pays dearly for perpetuating patriarchy. Firstly, she is tossed from her first husband Amatokwu to the second one, Nnaife, after a humiliating beating for supposed barrenness. Her second marriage is arranged for her; she does not even love the man whom she sees as 'a man with a belly like a pregnant cow, (...). The belly coupled with the fact that he was short made him look like a barrel' (Emecheta, 1994: 41).

Even if she hated her new husband, Nnu Ego 'knew, even though her father was the best of fathers, there was such a thing as overstaying one's welcome' (Emecheta, 1994: 43). She has to force herself to live with this man because she desperately wants to be a mother and has to subscribe to men's views about women – women must bear children. Although she dissents time and again, it is just token protestation. Her constant nagging of Nnaife may seem a form of rebellion against the male domination simply because women are expected to submit to their husbands. 'Too timid to flout patriarchal authority, Nnu Ego accepts without question until her later years that there is no greater honour (...) for a woman than to be a mother' (Stratton, 1994: 114).

Caught in this double-blind that Ibuza patriarchy has created for her, she clings to motherhood as her ideal even in the face of starvation. At one point she nearly rejects patriarchy, but within a while she shudders back: 'God, when will you create a woman who will be fulfilled in herself, a full human being, not anybody's appendage?' (Emecheta, 1994: 186-7).

Even if she is armed with adequate ammunition to disentangle herself from Nnaife's authority, she admits that Nnaife owns her, so whatever she does belongs to him. 'Nnaife is the head of the

family. He owns me, just like God in the sky owns us. So even though I pay fees, yet he owns me. So in other ways he pays' (Emecheta, 1994: 217). This unprecedented submission is totally different from that which we see in her co-wife, Adaku, who says, 'Nnaife does not own anybody, not in Nigeria today, but senior wife, don't worry. You believe in tradition. You have changed a little, but stood firm by your belief' (Emecheta, 1994: 218). In spite of her insight, Nnu Ego continues to conduct her life according to the patterns laid down for her by Ibuza patriarchy. 'Try to forgive my condemning you for leaving Nnaife when I did. I am beginning to understand now' (Emecheta, 1994: 218). Taking comfort in all her travails in the fact that one day her boys will be men, it is unfortunate that she clings to this belief until her life grinds to a sad end. 'She died quietly there, with no child to hold her hand and no friend to talk to her' (Emecheta, 1994: 224).

Contrary to the societal expectations of women, Emecheta punishes her conservative heroine and rewards Adaku for her radical action. Like Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War*, Emecheta's novel has two major roles: to valorise the emergence of a female literary tradition, and to refute conventional images of women.

By contrast, Adaku is redeemed when she decides to remain in the city and be a prostitute. Valorising the theme of empowerment in her treatment of Adaku, Emecheta also ridicules the notion of redemption through repatriation to the village in her treatment of Nnu Ego (Stratton, 1994: 118).

The success accorded to Adaku as a single mother of two daughters shows how much freedom pays. In this context, Emecheta is proselytising on the emancipation of women. 'Adaku...had left the family fold to strike out successfully on her own' (Nwapa, 1966: 172). Adaku manages to

send her children to good schools even if they are girls. This further affirms Emecheta's theme of empowering women. Nnu Ego sends her boys to school, but they totally neglect her, get married to white women in America and Canada respectively, and only return home to erect a shrine for her when she is dead.

Of interest is Kehinde, one of Nnu Ego's twin daughters. The fact that she gets married to her Yoruba boyfriend in spite of her father's displeasure marks a breakaway from male superiority to women's freedom. Kehinde's insolent answer to her father when he tries to arrange a marriage for her is indicative of the rebellion Emecheta seems to approve, 'I am not marrying that man' (Emecheta, 1994: 204). After this showdown, she goes on to marry the man of her choice; a Yoruba, against her father's will. The fact that Nnaife is eventually arrested, following his attack on Kehinde's boyfriend and family, symbolises the arrest of male domination in the society. The girl is later happily married. In the end Nnu Ego's girls support her, whereas the boys visibly desert her (Emecheta, 1994: 224). Emecheta proposes that sometimes girls are more responsible than boys, and the punishment that Nnu Ego suffers bears out this notion.

In *Harvest of Thorns*, one most notable fact is that Benjamin is actually responsible for his mother's transformation from being submissive into a woman who is described in the Beijing declaration of 1995. In this case it is the son who empowers his mother, although from the tone of his voice he appears to espouse the male chauvinistic belief that Clopas is a god who should be worshipped and fought for. The most striking issue here is that the son feels that his mother should take centre stage to solve her own problems. He encourages his mother to hit back at the woman who has robbed her of her marriage. There is a suggestion in Benjamin's speech that the church might have played a significant role in turning Shamiso into a kind person who is even willing to allow her enemy to bully her. The notion in: 'You are the kind that would offer their

enemy the other cheek instead of hitting back,' (*HoT*: 23) has biblical connotations, suggesting that the Bible or church has had a far-reaching influence in Shamiso's life. Most Christians are aware and share the view that the Bible teaches that people must not take revenge on others because God will do it on their behalf. It is possible that religious intervention may be partially responsible for Shamiso's supposed docility when the novel begins.

While some women remain inconspicuous, Shamiso's daughter, Esther, helps her mother to pressurise her father, Clopas, to succumb to her mother's will. When all the children have gathered, Esther supports her mother when she rants about Muchaneta. At this point, she is married, but does not care about the presence of her husband, Dickson. She does not even show any respect to her errant father in the presence of his son-in-law, something that would not ordinarily be permitted in a male-controlled world.

The reader should remember that this Esther who resurfaces towards the end of the novel is the same young woman who elopes with Dickson after her brother Benjamin leaves the country to join the liberation movement, 'Sometime after you left for the bush I ran away. ... I ran away with a man, Benjamin, and he is sitting next to me...' (*HoT*: 266). The act of eloping on Esther's part should be understood as a way of defying male domination. She takes charge of her life as a young woman, and decides to marry a man of her choice without seeking any approval from her father.

Another crucial image of 'woman' is that of a freedom fighter. In the war of liberation, women are treated as equal partners, playing the same roles as men. They cook together with men and do

similar training exercises. The myth about their menstrual cycles affecting the war fades when nothing happens as a result of their participation (*HoT*: 243). Kriger studied an area called Mutoko in Zimbabwe where she found very interesting developments in gender issues as a result of the armed struggle:

[W]omen fighters have demonstrated beyond all doubt that they are as capable as men and deserve equal treatment, both in regard to training and appointments. It is because of their proven performance that we have agreed to constitute a Women's Detachment with its own commander who should become a member of High Command. It is also necessary ... that ... we should promote more women to the High Command (Mugabe, in Kriger, 1992: 192).

Women won recognition through hard work. They had to fight alongside their male counterparts to prove their prowess and eligibility to occupy leadership positions in the insurrection. Kriger goes on to quote Naomi Nhiwatiwa, a former Zimbabwean woman guerrilla who expresses her satisfaction in the way women were treated during the liberation struggle, and still continue to be treated after independence:

She [Naomi] told her audience that women comprised one-third of ZANU's guerrilla forces, who numbered about 20,000 inside the country by December 1979 and at least 2,000 outside the country – a statistic reiterated by Sally Mugabe, [late] wife of Robert Mugabe, in an address to a conference in Copenhagen (Kriger, 1992: 191).

According to Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*, refugee and training camps were heavily populated by women who played various roles, including those that are prioritised in Naomi's list. Although Chinodya himself was not a guerrilla, his work should be credited for the graphic

descriptions of the war. One would bet that he was a combatant. He actually captures what according to most writers is a true reflection of what transpired in Zimbabwe's liberation struggle.

It is true that the images of women vary even in camps because some of them are mothers who have come to seek refuge, not as trainees, but as mothers whose roles are to look after the children. In other words, there are two types of women in the camps: those who have come solely to be trained in guerrilla warfare, and those whose main duty is to protect their children, making sure that they are fed, and that the war does not wipe out their race to extinction.

The femininity of some women is sometimes used to solve the crises at the camps. Women like Ropa, a young lady who falls in love with Benjamin, are used as teachers at the camps. They do not get the kind of training that the rest of the guerrillas get, and are sometimes earmarked for sexual pleasure by senior male officials in the camps:

‘He wants me, imagine, Ropa told Benjamin after the other man had left. ‘He is the one who brought me the cigarettes. But his wife is here, in the camp. She trains women. I think she knows he’s after me, but she hasn’t said anything to me.

If you were me what would you do?’ (*HoT*: 139).

This demeaning male practice always rears its ugly head, particularly with those males who view women as ‘other’, and therefore determine to reverse any transformation that seeks to advance women. Apart from the fact that some women are still viewed as sex objects, there is the positive element in the camps that some of them are involved in the training of guerrillas. Ropa actually

informs Benjamin that the wife of the man who is allegedly ‘following her’ is involved in the training of women.

There are some women who go out to fight while some are assigned to manage ammunition stores. This duty should not be viewed as lousy and unimportant because these women have to be very vigilant, and have to do proper budgeting of the ammunition. If they fail to budget properly they may run out of ammunition, rendering the whole guerrilla struggle a futile exercise. In *Harvest of Thorns* the reader meets girl comrades executing this critical duty:

On the plateau the dozen girl comrades who manned the arms depot came out of the trees to meet them. They all wore denim shirts and trousers and caps and were armed with bazookas. They shook hands with them in the same brusque manner, grunting slogans with guttural voices, brandishing sturdy, bangled arms in the air (*HoT*: 240).

At this point we see women occupying a very important position of responsibility in the hierarchy of the guerrilla war. The presence of women on the battlefield in *Harvest of Thorns* spells out the importance of women as key players in the liberation movement.

In *Child of War* Hondo is left in the custody of his mother when his father is shot and killed by Farmer Taylor. The mother who is mentioned as Hondo’s mother with no name attached to her is described as daring. She goes to look for her son during the curfew period, even when her son is trapped in the battle between the Rhodesian forces and the guerrillas. Like Shamiso in *Harvest of Thorns*, who goes to look for her two sons, Benjamin and Peter, in the middle of the night (*HoT*: 20), Hondo’s mother’s tries to find her son while the war is raging, her case is even more critical

as she has to risk being shot for the sake of her son. Shamiso and Hondo's mother here play the role of protecting their families in times of crises, a duty often ascribed to fathers. Hondo's mother eventually brings home her injured son, and nurses him until he completely recovers.

Among Chinodya's characters are young women who prepare food and take it into the heart of the bush to feed the guerrillas. They are the same women who sing at the evening meetings until their voices are hoarse. Walking into the bush takes a lot of daring from these women because they might meet the Rhodesian soldiers who might kill them:

From his post Pasi NemaSellout sees the glint of enamel-ware. A row of heads bob over the breast of the hill and then the figures, hands clamped to heads, come up, emerging out of the rocks in a single file. (...) The girls bring down their loads, crouch behind their pots and ask, one after the other, '*Maswera sei, Comrade?*'<sup>6</sup> (*HoT*: 166).

These young women are portrayed as valiant, with a role almost equal to that of the guerrillas. The guerrillas themselves are hiding, but these women risk their lives for the liberation struggle to continue. In a way they are as brave as the guerrillas, if not braver, and should be showered with the accolades that the guerrillas receive at the end of the war. Later on, Benjamin, whose war name is Pasi NemaSellout, reminds them: "Next time you come put on dark clothes – green, or brown. No bright colours, eh. Come again this time tomorrow" (*HoT*: 167). From these words one cannot doubt that the young women have been conscripted into the guerrilla army. They do not protest, and the reader believes that the young women will be in the hills on the following day. In a conversation with his civilian girlfriend, Pasi NemaSellout explains that everybody has a vital role to play in the liberation movement:

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<sup>6</sup> Shona language: Good afternoon comrade

‘Did you know there were girl comrades, fighting this war?’

‘I have heard about them, but never seen them.’

‘You’ll meet them,’ he said. ‘And they are tough! Girl comrades don’t like staying in the bush long so they fight to finish a war. Anyway, we can’t all carry guns. Some of us have to fight. Some have to cook and look out for *mapuruvheya*<sup>7</sup>. Others have to go to school so that Zimbabwe can have educated people to take over those jobs the whites are refusing to give us now’ (*HoT*: 232).

The role played by these seemingly inconspicuous characters is very critical in ensuring that the guerrillas are well fed in order to be energetic enough to fight the Rhodesian soldiers. It is unfortunate that the very same women are sometimes used to satisfy the lust of the guerrillas, a view that earned Chinodya criticism after his novel, *Farai’s Girls*, came out. It appears for a moment that Chinodya has relapsed into a view that he is a sexist, especially when he portrays young women:

She had been ready and eager to please, the way girls like her burned to please young men who had left home for this danger in the bush. And this eagerness, fuelled by her own keen adolescence into a loud, clinging heat, lit up his despair in himself. (...) They had kissed for a long time, large wet blundering kisses, during which his hands like dubious guests hovered, trembling, over the threshold of her keenly damp body ... (*HoT*: 233-4).

This graphic description captures Pasi NemaSellout with his civilian girlfriend Tunhidzai who is barely fifteen years old. The reader is made to believe that young women such as Tunhidzai are always eager to please guerrillas. This would be a rather unfortunate notion because these girls are too young and probably do not even understand the fundamental issues concerning sex.

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<sup>7</sup> Rhodesian soldiers

In *Harvest of Thorns*, when a man learns that his daughter is sleeping with one of the guerrillas, he lays a rape charge against him, Mabunu Muchapera, who superciliously responds: ‘I didn’t force her. ... She did it willingly’ (*HoT*: 219). This guerrilla does not consider that the girl is underage. At the tender age of fifteen, children cannot by law consent to sexual intercourse. It is regrettable that several young girls lost their teenage hood because of irresponsible behaviour from the guerrillas. Some of these unfortunate girls conceived and gave birth to children whose fathers they never saw after their encounters. Actually, the reader would expect Chinodya to condemn such inconsiderate acts just as he does in *Child of War*, where a guerrilla is severely beaten by his commander as punishment after a parent accuses him of rape:

He [the commander] even ordered the punishment of one of his own fighters when one parent had the audacity to complain about this fighter having sexual relations with his daughter. The accused guerrilla, on pronouncement of the commander’s irreversible verdict, laid down his gun to take the beating due to him. It was an awkward event, but demonstrated the commander’s strict code, and gained him our respect (*CoW*: 63-4).

When the commander publicly punishes a member of his group, the message that the reader should get is that men are not allowed to sexually abuse women. Women have got the right to be protected by the law. After all, the girl is a minor who has to be protected by adults in her community. The commander’s intervention foreshadows what is later reflected by Shamiso in *Harvest of Thorns* when she argues with her husband about women having rights that they seemingly did not have before (*HoT*: 269).

There is yet another woman called MaiTawanda in *Harvest of Thorns* who also typifies bravery, although hers is viewed as counterproductive in terms of the war of liberation. In the story, the reader learns that MaiTawanda has a son who is employed as a Rhodesian soldier. Her son allegedly gives her a walkie-talkie so that she can report all the movements of guerrillas in her village. The acceptance of a gadget such as a walkie-talkie for a rural mother with limited literacy gives the reader an impression that MaiTawanda is exceptionally daring. As if the walkie-talkie issue is not enough, MaiTawanda goes to the extent of poisoning the food that she gives to one of the guerrillas. She clings to her family and determines to help them, even if they work for a repressive government. She chooses to remain resolute in her belief that a mother must always support her family whether they are wrong or right. The bravery that MaiTawanda exhibits would be expected from a male character, but Chinodya is probably informing the reader that some women may even be bolder than men.

We cannot completely ignore the fact that some women remain unobtrusive, choosing to confine themselves to the comfort of their feminine duties. In this category there are women like Nkazana, Benjamin's wife and Shamiso's sister. These two remain stereotypes of females in a typically male-dominated world. They are subservient, taking seriously their roles as housewives. When the husband of Shamiso's sister falls ill and remains bedridden, the reader does not witness a change of heart in Shamiso's sister. Even though she takes the role of a breadwinner, she still keeps her traditional role as a dutiful wife.

To date, gender politics is still a tightly contested topic. The setting aside of August as a month for women suggests that the issue is an on-going debate. Some of the ironies in this debate,

though, are that women have not stopped to measure the extent to which feminism has been successful. If we consider the present-day 'woman', there has been notable progress towards gender equity.

### Chapter 3

#### Images of brutality in the struggle

The war of liberation in Zimbabwe, and in other African countries such as South Africa that took the same route to political freedom, is often portrayed as the most turbulent period in their history. Most writers who choose to focus on this period depict scenes of violence that always result in the loss of lives of the guerrillas, peasants and the security forces alike. Franz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, argues that ‘decolonization is always a violent phenomenon’ (1963: 27). The liberation struggle in Zimbabwe was characterised by scenes of bloodshed as can be traced in Chinodya’s *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War*. Several writers, including Muponde and Primorac, have followed Fanon in seeing violence as a prominent theme in liberation movements. They have classified it into two distinct categories: legitimate and illegitimate. What they view as ‘legitimate’ is the violence that is perpetrated by guerrillas whose mission is understood to cleanse the land of ‘colonial influence’. According to this view, the guerrillas’ violence has the blessings of the villagers:

The violence of the war is gruesome, but also a necessary and heroic sacrifice and the descriptions are mostly given through the voices of the freedom fighters themselves, as they address villagers at *pungwe*<sup>8</sup> meetings. Represented this way, the problem of guerrilla violence is minimised, and the text makes a basic point of asserting a basic sympathy and agreement between the point of view of guerrillas and that of villagers (Muponde & Primorac, 2005: 10).

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<sup>8</sup> Nocturnal gatherings where the guerrillas expounded the ideals of the liberation movement by agitating the villagers through lectures, song and dance.

The principles of the war of liberation are inculcated into the peasantry by the guerrillas. This suggests that the understanding of the tenets of the struggle is from the point of view of the guerrillas, which coincides, they hope, with that of the peasants. The *pungwe* meetings are always addressed by the guerrillas, who often manage, or so they believe, to convince the people that they have a legitimate cause to fight the settler government. From this standpoint, the violence that the guerrillas perpetrate is legitimated by the fact that the main objective of the struggle is to dislodge the imperialist government and consequently free the people.

Illegitimate violence, then, becomes what Muponde and Primorac (2005: 8) describe as “undisciplined terror against civilians or violence based on private motivation”. This form of violence is committed by security forces, youths and other war-related miscreants. Several authors, such as Terrence Ranger, Norma Kriger and Fay Chung, have hinted that some youths were guilty of illegitimate violence during the liberation struggle. Ranger, who was an adviser to Joshua Nkomo, a prominent nationalist and leader of ZAPU,<sup>9</sup> painstakingly paints pictures of brutality that were perpetrated by youths who either impersonated guerrillas or claimed to be on guerrillas’ errands. In her book, *Zimbabwe’s Guerrilla War: Peasant Voices*, Kriger cites Ranger:

Ranger also differentiates elders and youth to exculpate guerrillas from much of the killing of civilians and to blame youth for it. He refers to ‘a good deal of remembered resentment among elders and parents directed against the power exercised by the *mujibas*<sup>10</sup> during the war’, and cites an informant who says ‘most of the people who are said to have been killed by the guerrillas are the

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<sup>9</sup> Zimbabwe African People’s Union – a political party that fought for the liberation of Zimbabwe.

<sup>10</sup> Collaborators, runners and spies for the guerrillas.

direct victims of the *mujibas*. These sometimes robbed civilians, abused the populace at beer parties, and in most cases misrepresented the comrades' aims and commitments' (Kriger, 1992: 173).

Some of these delinquent youths were said to have torched people's huts and beaten up civilians for not possessing credentials such as party membership cards. It would seem that unruly young people joined the ranks of *mujibas* with totally perverted aims. Some of them had grudges against the elderly folk that they had long wanted to settle. In most cases these differences might have been a result of the youth's mischief. When the guerrillas arrived in villages, they were often warmly welcomed by these scoundrels who saw an opportunity to pursue their egotistic purposes.

Violence did not spare the urban areas. Youths, including Benjamin, burn down beer halls as a way of protesting against colonialism. Violence extends to pupils in schools where Benjamin is made a victim: 'They wrenched his head out and pushed his face against the urinal. He clamped his lips between his teeth as his face squashed against the slimy yellow tin foil and slid up' (*HoT*: 85). Benjamin is mistreated by boys in his school because he is thought to come from an apolitical family. This is viewed by the boys as treasonous. According to the boys, Benjamin is a sell-out because his family is not participating in nationalist strategies such as protests. In an attempt to align himself with his school mates, Benjamin later participates in most of the violent attacks on the colonists. This complicity lands him in police custody, and later forces him to join the guerrilla movement in Mozambique.

Township violence takes an even uglier twist, mainly because of its internecine nature. A similar narrative can be perceived in Fred Khumalo's *Touch My Blood*, where the South African

experience is highlighted. Khumalo focuses on violence that is perpetrated by brother against brother after accusations of selling out:

There were whistles of excitement, and shouts of ‘*Shisa inja! Shisa inja*<sup>11</sup>!’ Burn the dog! Burn the dog! The tyre was placed around the man’s neck and filled with petrol. Throughout a woman pleaded with the boys to spare the man until they screamed angrily at her, ‘What size of necklace do you take?’ (...) Somebody threw a match onto the bloodied man. My father took my hand and we walked home. From our yard we watched as the human torch writhed on the road (Khumalo, 2006:166).

Several people lose their lives in this kind of violence. Khumalo’s version of violence is similar to Chinodya’s. Both acts of violence are a result of angry mob ‘justice’ on supposed sell-outs. The narration in *Harvest of Thorns* takes the reader to a scene where gruesome murder has become a common spectacle in the townships. The so-called sell-outs are brutally murdered by their own kith and kin:

Once, when he (Benjamin) was seven, he saw a pool of blood under a hedge near a house. The house was at the corner of their street, next to the school fence. His mother had said they shouldn’t go out, but he ran out and looked. A man had been axed to pieces and loaded into a jute sack and dumped on the garbage heaps on the fringe of town. Axed to pieces, like a block of wood. Arms and legs and head. For selling out, people said. He didn’t know what ‘selling out’ meant then (*HoT*: 97).

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<sup>11</sup> Zulu language: burn the dog

The kind of murder that is described in the passage climaxes the extent of moral degeneration and the demise of human conscience. The depiction coincides precisely with Chung's description of township violence during that time. She writes that the violence had become endemic. Whereas the earlier violence was targeted at all symbols of the colonial regime, the new violence was between two major political parties, ZAPU and ZANU, fighting against each other in the townships. Chung picks another form of violence that is also mentioned in Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*:

The petrol bombing of each other's houses was becoming a daily occurrence. (...) The Smith regime was able to maximise violence by torching both ZAPU and ZANU houses. White agents, with their faces painted black, entered the townships to burn the houses of the political activists. Very cleverly, the Smith regime escaped blame, while the two nationalist parties blamed each other. This violence was particularly painful for the ordinary township inhabitants (Chung, 2006: 60).

The internal violence which was mostly perpetrated by the youth came as a godsend to the colonists who aggravated it by using Selous Scouts; the white youths who disguised themselves by painting their faces black with shoe polish so that they could not be easily recognised by their enemy. This enabled them to escalate the violence that was already reaching shocking levels in the townships. Khumalo's *Touch My Blood* centres on some nastier events in South Africa where there is fighting among the political parties such as Inkatha, Azapo and UDF. The leaders of these parties engage in unprecedented bloodshed in Durban's Mpumalanga Township. Among the party supporters there are some level-headed men who try to make their wisdom prevail, but in vain:

‘Comrades, intervened an older man, ‘don’t fight among yourselves now. We know that the Charterists are killing our people, Inkatha is killing our people, the system is killing our people. But we must keep in mind that both Azapo and the Charterists are on the same side, being attacked by the system which is using Inkatha as cannon fodder. But in any case, we must always remember that the Black Consciousness Movement also had a hand in the formation of this UDF thing, although some of their supporters do not know that’ (Khumalo, 2006: 130).

The bloodthirsty citizens cannot tolerate each other in the very crowded political space that is dominated by colonists. The irony is that they have obviously forgotten that they are fighting a common enemy. Inkatha is accused of advancing the interests of colonial powers. To a certain extent it is true that the desperate colonisers had become so cunning that they bribed and blackmailed blacks to fight against their brothers.

Fay Chung, who happens to be a former Minister of Education in Zimbabwe, refers to young people who terrorised civilians in a town called Gwelo (now known as Gweru), where Chinodya’s protagonist Benjamin grows up, participates in burning beer halls and gets himself arrested after a series of demonstrations:

The townships had become no-go areas, with violence not only against other races, but also against blacks, as gangs of youths went around demanding party cards. Frequent mass demonstrations through the city centre saw all shops closed as black demonstrators raged through the streets (Chung, 2006: 58).

In *Harvest of Thorns*, Benjamin is arrested after demonstrations and eventually leaves school to join the liberation movement in Mozambique. This happens during the years of Chung’s

portrayal of urban unrest, which was mostly perpetrated by the youths. The demonstrations and the precise period that Chinodya and Chung refer to reflect similar behaviour from the youths, since they are writing about the same period in history.

There is yet another form of illegitimate violence, that which is perpetrated by the Rhodesian soldiers, sometimes referred to (ironically enough) as security forces. Commenting on Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*, (Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 11) have this to say: 'Violence is a focal point – the novel contains some of the most brutal scenes in Zimbabwean literature. It is violence committed by Rhodesian forces ...'. This violence is illegitimate in that the Rhodesian forces are adjudged to be repressing free citizens. According to (Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 5) '[t]he violence of the security forces is ruthless and against nature, while the violence of guerrillas is sanctioned by the spirits and natural forces, and by their efforts to re-establish an authentic African life of dignity'.

This affirmation suggests that the Rhodesian forces are perceived as disrupting the natural order by perpetuating the interests of an oppressive regime, and robbing people of their basic human rights. That the guerrillas are sanctioned by the spirits accentuates the value of the struggle and exonerates them from some of the most brutal acts committed in Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War*.

*Harvest of Thorns* represents a version of *pungwe* violence perpetrated against civilians by guerrillas, including Benjamin, alias Pasi NemaSellout: 'Pasi NemaSellout took a step forward and struck her again, hard, on the waist. She writhed' (*HoT*: 206). Chinodya brings out the images of the war as tragedies and traumas which had been suppressed in the propaganda-style writing of the first years of Zimbabwean independence. Chinodya particularly focuses on the

scene where the guerrillas beat to death an alleged sell-out. The woman, Mai Tawanda, is accused of poisoning food that she gives to a guerrilla named Sub Musango. It is further alleged that she has been found in possession of a walkie-talkie which she was given by her son who works as a Rhodesian soldier.

The woman is beaten to death by the guerrillas themselves in one of the *pungwe* meetings. From the point of view of the villagers, this fatally undermines the ideals of the revolution and introduces a perverse type of moral integrity. The villagers regard Mai Tawanda as totally guilty of trying to subvert the nationalists' aim to emancipate the people, but still find it difficult to accept the kind of punishment meted out to her. It is not surprising, therefore, to hear the voice of Headman Sachikonye pleading for mercy on behalf of the woman. Baas Die refuses to listen to his pleas, even after women join in to plead for clemency. From the guerrillas' point of view, the woman deserves to die, although at this point the punishment threatens to lessen the much needed allegiance from the villagers. Unfortunately, the villagers find it difficult to celebrate the killing of one of their own simply because she is alleged to be in alliance with the enemy. When Baas Die orders them to ululate, they find it rather intriguing, but as (Muponde and Primorac, 2005: 9) argue, 'people become politicized against their will, or because they come to see a nationalist victory as the only possibility of bringing an end to violence, of taming this hostile world, torn with bestial killing'. Although the violence that guerrillas perpetrate may be said to have the blessing of the spirits, it does not reduce the pain that such violence causes to ordinary human beings. The guerrillas may be exonerated by nature, as Muponde and Primorac have put it, but still they do not escape the haunting injury that is the legacy of gruesome murder:

But Shungu Dzangu's face remained furrowed. He said, 'I have something to say.

Something about that woman, that traitor ...' 'What about her?' Gidi Ishumba

muttered, expressing the group's common distaste for the topic. 'The way she died' Shungu Dzangu said. ... 'A person doesn't just die like that like a snake or animal' (*HoT*: 226).

The violent killing of Mai Tawanda haunts the guerrilla platoon, and they fiercely quarrel until they point fingers at their commander, wondering why certain individuals had been chosen to slay her. They also have their own fears as human beings – that killing a person might not be as easy as killing an animal. They contend that such a murder may bring bad luck to them as a freedom movement. The reader is tempted to sympathise with them, particularly when some of the members of the group are filled with remorse after the murder, and begin to fear that a bad omen might be coming their way. Chinodya deliberately allows these young guerrillas to express their humane feelings in order to stress that the experience of a national liberation war which went on for about twenty years in Zimbabwe, killing over twenty thousand people, succeeded in numbing the spirit of a revolutionary conscience even among the freedom fighters themselves.

Similarly, in Chapter Fifteen of *Child of War*, the guerrillas take over the governing of the village. In their interim government, as Norma Kriger indicates, the guerrillas settle disputes in the village and preside over all disciplinary hearings that often take place in the *pungwe* meetings. It is a process that easily leads to terrible violence. A man named Gwara is accused of selling out information to the Rhodesian forces. After a forced confession, the guerrillas beat him the same way Mai Tawanda is beaten in *Harvest of Thorns*. Gwara eventually dies, but still the community finds it difficult to come to terms with violence directed towards one of their own. As in *Harvest of Thorns*, the villagers are forced to ululate as Gwara is being punished, 'We were made to sit and watch the grave punishment. Women were made to ululate as sticks crunched on to his bones. They beat him relentlessly, until he became unconscious' (*CoW*: 63).

The brutality of the punishment makes it highly unlikely for the villagers to accept it; they still pity the alleged traitor. At this point, although the war is considered to be a sacred cause, the guerrillas have only succeeded in alienating themselves from the villagers. The first chapter of Chinodya's *Child of War* opens with graphic details of violence in the form of Hondo's dream. The dream depicts the brutality of the first *Chimurenga*. Men are bleeding and dying in a valley after an encounter with the security forces. One man's heart and lungs can be seen after his chest has been ravaged by bullets: 'There was a big hole in his chest through which blood was gushing out. I could see his heart or one of his lungs, fluttering inside him' (*CoW*: 7). This holocaust magnifies the ruthlessness of a liberation struggle. Although it could be argued that death is necessary in the fight for liberation, it remains difficult for the reader to accept the violent deaths of the men in the valley.

Violence continues to intensify in Chinodya's *Child of War* with a sharp focus on Farmer Taylor's atrocities. Taylor, a settler, is described as notorious for shooting any person who trespasses onto his farm. It is also believed that he impounds any livestock that stray onto his farm. It is alleged, too, that he shot to death the protagonist Hondo's father after the latter sneaked onto his farm to save his stray bull from impoundment: 'There was a big dark smudge where the bullet had hit him. His body was limp. He was bleeding through the nose; his mouth was open. When the crowd of men opened out to let me kneel over him he pinned his eyes on me. He struggled to put his hand on my shoulder' (*CoW*: 16). The killing paints one of the cruellest kinds of murder that are perpetrated by settlers.

The notoriety of Farmer Taylor extends beyond the gruesome murders to another kind of brutality: phallogentric violence. Mr Taylor rapes and beats young women who find their way onto his farm to fetch firewood or pick wild fruit.

Unfortunately, and much to their bewilderment, Farmer Taylor had crept upon them, on foot, just as they were tying their bundles of firewood. He had allowed four of the girls to go free. The remaining two, the oldest in the group, he had kept behind. The two girls had returned home late in the morning, badly bruised, their dresses in shreds. (...) Some months after this, one of these unfortunate girls had been discovered to be pregnant. She had given birth to a coloured baby (CoW: 12-13).

Taylor is purported to have abused members of the community without receiving any form of reprimand from the white District Administrator. It is revealed that when the villagers report the ill-treatment that they receive from Taylor, they are accused of trespassing. This kind of violence vividly illustrates the vulnerability of the villagers during the liberation struggle, and emphasises their helplessness in suffering the injustices of a political war. Zakes Mda's novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, features similar acts of brutality in South Africa that are perpetrated on poor women. Mda focuses on farmers who, like Taylor, abuse women:

Deep in the sunflower field, Johannes Smit pulled off Niki's Terylene skirt. She tried to hold on to it, but he had the strength of ten demons. He threw her on the damp ground. Then he pulled down her panties and took them off. He sniffed them, which seemed to raise more demons in his quivering body. He stuffed the panties into his pocket. (...) He slapped her and ordered her to shut up. Her screams were now muffled with his hand on her mouth (Mda, 1996: 6).

Johannes Smit rapes a young woman in broad daylight, but nothing happens to him. The young woman, Niki, finds herself vulnerable and has no way of seeking justice. Actually, she learns from her friends that raping young women is Smit's hobby. The only thing that he could be afraid of at this stage is contravening the Immorality Act. Later in the novel, he continues treating Niki inhumanely:

'You of all the people have the cheek to trespass on my farm,' shouted Johannes Smit. And he released the leashes. The dogs attacked. She tried to run. But they grabbed her brown *isishweshwe* dress with their teeth and ripped it off. She fell on the ground. She swallowed her screams as the dogs tore into her legs and arms. She was going to die in silence. She was not going to give Johannes Smit the satisfaction of hearing her beg for mercy (Mda, 1996: 121).

The brutal attack on Niki by the dogs suggests that she is a lesser human being in the eyes of her tormenter. What worries the reader is Niki's vulnerability and inability to defend herself. She has to suffer all this human torture in silence because the system is so watertight that there is no room for her to be heard even if she could try to report the case.

One would suppose that the villagers welcomed the intervention from the guerrillas whose mission was regarded as emancipating them from their white oppressors. It is in this light that the guerrillas are understood to be fighting a 'holy war'. They are looked up to free the people from the hands of colonists. Commenting on the nationalist war of liberation in favour of the guerrillas, Isheunesu Mazorodze, a Zimbabwean novelist, argues that the guerrillas were fighting a war that was sanctioned by God, and for that reason they were bound to win:

Yes, the Rhodesians had the advantage of fire power, but alas for the Rhodesians, they had not the blessings of 'Truth'. They had no blessing from the God of revolutionary wars. (...) The truth in them (guerrillas), the God in them reminded them that they were fighting a holy war and those under the soil would protect them (Mazorodze, 1989: 170-1).

The claim is that the Rhodesian soldiers are fighting to perpetuate the oppression of villagers, whereas the guerrillas seek to emancipate them. Mazorodze contends that a war that is fought to oppress has no blessings from God. The idea of guerrillas coming to 're-establish an "authentic" African life of dignity' (Muponde & Primorac, 2005: 5) comes after farmers like Taylor and Smit have been found guilty of abusing a vulnerable community.

The same Taylor is later found leading the torturing of Hondo and his peers after they have been deceived by Selous Scouts. The narrative takes the reader to a scene where Taylor inflicts pain on the young boys who are accused of being *mujibas*. The boys are tied to trees, flogged and forced to confess their complicity in defying the incumbent system of governance. It is at this point of the narrative that Taylor faces a violent death at the hands of the guerrillas who have come to rescue Hondo and his friends. Taylor's demise is summarily described by Hondo: 'I saw Farmer Taylor rocking in the air in a welter of bullets, and then plunging headlong into the grass' (*CoW*: 58). Violence appears to take precedence in most of the chapters of Chinodya's *Child of War*. Parallel to the death of Taylor is that of Baas Mellecker in *Harvest of Thorns*. The guerrillas in Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* cut Mellecker's throat and use his blood as ink to write slogans on the walls of his house. This gratuitous murder leaves the farm foreman, Musindo, shell-shocked. In the narrative, Mellecker is accused of underpaying his workers and making them work for twelve hours a day. Musindo describes the gruesome murder: 'I saw Baas

Mellecker there lying on the floor in a pool of his own blood, his throat cut' (*HoT*: 164). Ironically, Msindo's view about Mellecker's death contradicts that of the guerrillas. Msindo views the death of Mellecker as a sacrilege. To him, Mellecker epitomises livelihood, and he therefore understands the death of Mellecker as a symbol of the demise of the farm. He finds the killing illegitimate for his own covert reasons. When the guerrillas knock at his door at night, they are received with less enthusiasm than they expect from villagers, who in their opinion are supposed to collaborate. Msindo is not aware of the nature of the farmworkers' exploitation as highlighted by the guerrillas. The amount of ignorance that Msindo has is hyperbolic and satirical. He is content to remain in ignorance. He represents the attitudes of the illiterate farm labourers who look at a paltry salary as a means to an end, in spite of its meagreness. He does not perceive the victory that the guerrillas celebrate after killing Mr Mellecker. In fact Msindo is living in a world of his own where there is no politics. This makes it difficult for him to understand the agitation of the guerrillas; instead he is anxious:

I sat there not knowing what to do, wondering if I should go into the house and pour water over him or bring him out, but I knew he was already dead and they had showed him to me so I just sat there thinking I should have told them he's away in town visiting or perhaps I should have made the dogs bark to wake him up or I should have let them kill me in his place (...) I went in expecting to find him on his feet, walking, or lying in his bed at least, and I said to myself this is just a dream I'm having, it didn't happen, Baas Mellecker can't be dead, it's pay-day today and who will pay the workers, what will happen to the new tractor, to the farm, but he was there, lying on the floor in his blue pyjamas with his throat cut and his eyes open... (*HoT*: 165).

In this long quotation, Msindo is torn between his allegiance to Mellecker and his present predicament. He does not yet understand the nationalist ideology. For example, he is the farm foreman and is obviously aware of how Mellecker makes money to pay his workers. There is a new tractor, but he does not know what to do with it. Msindo chooses to confine himself to his ignorance, and wants to maintain the status quo in spite of being emancipated from physical and mental slavery. For this reason he chooses to gratify himself by delegitimizing the violent demise of Mellecker. Kristina Masuwa argues that ‘Msindo, the farm foreman, portrays the grovelling gullible behaviour of black Rhodesians who learnt to make do and expect little of life under colonialism’ (Masuwa, 1992: 63). Msindo drowns himself in self-pity and sorrow instead of taking the lead on the farm and running it to pay the workers. He even contemplates phoning the neighbouring farmers, ‘I was walking around the house wondering if I should call Baas Devillers or Baas Van Dyke on the neighbouring farms and if they would drive him to hospital’ (*HoT*: 165). Msindo’s ignorance is reinforced by the fact that he is not aware that the fate that befell Mellecker may also have been planned for the other farmers. He does not align this violence with the liberation struggle. In the liberation period many white farmers lost their lives through the same violence that Taylor and Mellecker face. In her account of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle, Fay Chung explains:

Zimbabwe would be born of blood, unlike its more fortunate neighbours that had attained independence peacefully. The struggle to liberate Zimbabwe through violence began with the killing of Oberholzer, a white farmer, in 1966, by a group of ZANU activists who called themselves the Crocodile Group. White racism had given birth to its mirror image, black racism (Chung, 2006: 64).

Chung reiterates the issue of violence that started as early as the sixties and progressed into the late seventies, a period that is reflected in Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns*. Accordingly, the likes of Msindo should have been long aware of the massacres of farmers, but he chooses to remain solidly ignorant about the essence of the war. It is possible that he does not know anything about politics because he has lived all his life on the farm as a labourer for seven days a week, and twelve hours per day. This form of exploitation has totally shut him out of the real world. He has completely yielded to the world of servitude and has accepted the status of a second-class citizen. The brutal murder of his Baas does not invoke any spirit of liberation, no matter how much he imagines it. Chinodya leaves Msindo struggling with the death of his Baas without any hint that he will develop a revolutionary conscience in the foreseeable future. This perhaps calls into question the view that is held by the illiterate, who are fixated on white supremacy. There is a belief among the ranks of Msindo that white people are demi-gods, and have a superior, if not supernatural nature. In Msindo's view, the murder of such a person is sacrilege.

Although violence may end in death, traditionally death remains a revered subject. It can never be easily embraced as a panacea for any social ill. But the guerrillas are so indifferent to violence that they do not even mourn the death of their own member who dies while they are watching. This ostracises them; Headman Sachikonye finds it more difficult to understand the nature of the guerrillas. "[W]hat young men not to cry or flinch or show signs of pain, what young men to bear the weight of death on their own, how sad that the dead were just lying there," (*HoT*: 216). The Headman asks himself these and more questions after the death of Torai Zvombo, one of the guerrillas and a *mujiba* from a 'spray' on their way from the ammunition stores. It is believed that after the violent death of the two young men, the guerrillas just threw piles of wood on the corpses and left. This somewhat unusual interment of people's remains puzzles the elders,

although from a liberation struggle point of view, one would realise that it is obviated by the danger that the guerrillas always anticipate; there is hardly enough time to mourn or bury their late comrades for fear that they might be attacked and killed while doing so.

Another horrific incident of violence in *Child of War* is the use of landmines against the enemy. In Chapter Eight, the Rhodesian forces are annihilated by bombs that are planted on the roads. Hondo recounts after a landmine attack:

An incredible boom stopped me in my tracks. I turned and saw a huge mushroom of black soot and pieces of the truck shooting into the sky like popcorn. Bodies were flung in all directions; burning portions of the truck crashed down with a terrific noise. There were several further sharp explosions which showered bits of metal over the trees. Screams and yells from the blast area were followed by the sharp burst of gunfire from behind me, where the guerrillas lay (*CoW*: 39).

This kind of violence characterises the rest of the novel. The guerrillas planted landmines as one of their war strategies. The planting of landmines might have caused harm to ordinary civilians who may not have been aware of them. One then gets an impression that the war period endangered the lives of all and sundry. Hondo's account of an army truck that is completely destroyed together with its occupants is given in a celebratory tone. According to Hondo, the death of the security forces is to be acknowledged with gratitude. He does not feel pity for the soldiers who are caught up in this brutality.

Violence begets violence. In Chapter Nine of *Child of War*, the narration centres on the death of Headman Zijena at the hands of the security forces. According to the Rhodesian forces, Headman Zijena is responsible for feeding and harbouring the guerrillas. He has to be given a

punishment that should deter the would-be perpetrators. His feet are tied and he is dangled in the air by a helicopter which flies just above the heads of the villagers:

They grabbed old Zijena, who was almost unconscious by now, and tied his legs to a rope towed by one of the helicopters. The helicopter then took off, whipping his dangling, upside-down body into the air and flying so low that the grizzly white head was just a few feet above our heads. We all cast our eyes to the ground in shock (*CoW*: 42-43).

The death of Headman Zijena is narrated in awe. It is clear from the narrator that the whole community could not come to terms with it. Hondo goes on to say, ‘The haunting spectacle of Zijena’s body ... leaving us wailing in horror over the corpse of our beloved Headman’ (*CoW*: 43). The whole community grieves the loss of their Headman. The narration contrasts sharply with the celebratory mood that characterises the death of security forces. This further highlights the fact that the violence perpetrated by the Rhodesian forces is regarded as illegitimate by the members of the community who share the nationalist ideology. In the preceding chapter, Zijena has already suffered considerably at the hands of the security forces: ‘He himself moved his leg painfully, and had an ugly swelling on one side of his face’ (*CoW*: 29). He, together with the villagers, has endured several episodes of violence. Even before he is finally killed: ‘He was seized by the collar and kicked violently. He floundered on his feet before a blow from the butt of a gun sent him reeling to the ground ... He was kicked again and again ...’ (*CoW*: 42). The graphic description of the abuse of Zijena emphasises the demise of moral conscience that characterises the liberation struggle. One would expect Zijena to be exempted from the liberation skirmishes because of his age. He is too old, which generally makes him incapable of joining the liberation struggle or making a meaningful contribution to it.

Another scene of violence can be found in *Harvest of Thorns*, where camps are indiscriminately bombed, and many people lose their lives. The death of Ropa, together with hundreds of refugees and guerrillas, gives yet another aspect of the liberation struggle where even very young children die what one would refer to as innocent deaths. Ropa dies clutching a child in each hand when the camp experiences a surprise attack from the Rhodesian forces. The disembodied limbs that are scattered all over the scene paint one of the grimmest pictures of the liberation struggle in *Harvest of Thorns*. The narrative focuses on a camp that is home to thousands of refugees in the form of children, women and trainee freedom fighters:

The helicopter hovered on the centre, hovered there, spitting fire, and they dived again, outwards, spinning a new, bigger net. Behind him he heard the boom of the anti-aircraft guns and the roar of guerrilla AK 47s above the knock, knock, knock of Rhodesian FNs followed by the screech of metal. Two helicopters spun, belching smoke and plunged into the trees. (...) The forest was strewn with bodies and pieces of clothing (*HoT*: 145).

In this scenario, violence claims hundreds of lives. The violence that is cited is indiscriminate. The refugee camps catered for women and children who fled their homes to safe countries such as Mozambique and Zambia. The account emphasises that even in those countries where they had sought refuge, women and children were mercilessly attacked and killed. Chinodya makes it a point that his reader does not miss the graphic descriptions when he goes on to show women and children in all forms of bewilderment. ‘A naked boy lay on the rock, clasping an arm half-eaten away by napalm. He saw two girls crawl out of a toilet pit, completely covered with filth’ (*HoT*: 146).

The pathos of a boy who is obviously about to die extends the magnitude of violence and does not exempt the reader from feeling pity for the child. The girls who are covered with filth might seem amusing, but the grimness of the incident is recaptured in descriptions such as the following: ‘It seemed for every broken, fumbling figure stumbling through that smoke, there was a mangled body, a disembodied leg or hand, a mass of napalmed limbs, a chunk of charred flesh, on the ground in the bush’ (*HoT*: 146). The violence culminates in the death of Ropa who is a symbolic mother to the children and a prospective lover to Benjamin. Her death traumatises Benjamin, who magnifies the war-related violence even further. Benjamin finds it difficult to accept the death of Ropa. The war-related violence in Chinodya’s *Harvest of Thorns* is given more prominence when the narration catches Benjamin in his direst anguish:

Her face terrified him. It spoke of a strange language of blood and sudden death.

He slowly put her head down, in the dust, and suddenly he too was running, screaming at the sky with upraised fists, running everywhere and nowhere, shouting ‘Bastards! Bastards!’ (*HoT*: 147).

The pain that resonates in Benjamin’s words helps to intensify the degree of violence. This is worsened by the fact that he is not yet armed since he is still undergoing training at the camp. This explains the reason why he is described as raising his fists. His anger has totally engulfed him, but still he remains helpless; hence the use of derogatory words such as ‘bastards’. The violence that is almost apocalyptic in nature hardens the heart of Benjamin, who later finds violence a common spectacle in his life. A similar incident is narrated in *Child of War*. Apparently the bombing of refugee camps had become one of the colonists’ strategies to devastate the nationalist movement. In *Child of War* Hondo recounts:

Then to everybody's surprise, the enemy changed their plans. With the ceasefire possible and knowing that they had everything to lose if a settlement was reached, they decided to smother guerrilla camps both in and outside the country. We heard the news on the radios; dozens of helicopters and planes had swarmed over camps, killing guerrillas and refugees alike (*CoW*: 81).

The strategy of bombing the refugees was one of the colonists' Machiavellian reactions. The colonists killed many women and children in the camps, and left hundreds maimed. Hondo goes on to say that the commander of the guerrillas called a meeting of the villagers, and 'We mourned the slain heroes with song and dance' (*CoW*: 81). As a collective, the guerrillas and the villagers mourn the loss of lives in the camps. From the two narratives in *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War*, violence affected everyone indiscriminately.

The use of 'spray' as a war strategy also gives rise to more scenes of violence in *Harvest of Thorns*. When Baas Die's group has collected ammunition, two members of the group meet a tragic death. There is a spray in the bush that instantly kills a *mujhibha* and a guerrilla:

Torai Zvombo, who was on the far right, fell first, yelling and kicking in the grass and then the *mujhibha* next to him let out a bellow like a young ox, flapping his arms over his chest like a man mobbed by a hive of bees. 'Spray!' shouted Baas Die. 'Move back!' The other five took cover, diving behind the bushes. The *mujhibha* staggered before them. His hands clawed at his body wildly, ripping out strips of bleeding skin. Torai Zvombo thrashed in the grass. The *mujhibha*, face bathed in blood, fell and was quiet. In the grass Torai's noises faded to a whimper, then stopped (*HoT*: 244).

The bush was poisoned using the most lethal substances that tore a person's skin, resulting in instant death. The reader finds the 'spray' strategy to be one of the most callous inventions by the colonists. It should be understood that it endangered the lives of ordinary people because it indiscriminately killed anybody who passed through that particular spot. If herd boys, for example, happened to pass through a 'spray' zone, they would die the same way Torai Zvombo and the *mujhibha* died. These are some of the cruellest scenes of violence in the war of liberation.

Another incident of violence is that of the urban police officers who invaded houses in townships very early in the morning. The officers were supposed to be checking whether all the people in the houses were registered with council authorities. Apart from the invasions being viewed as a violation of human rights to dignity, they were coupled with harassing people. It is said that the occupants were sometimes kicked out of the houses even on wintery nights. It is not surprising that these daily abuses were perceived to be racist and colonialist in origin and intent.

At the road blocks there is another version of violence that is perpetrated against the villagers. This violence can be traced in both *Child of War* and *Harvest of Thorns*. Benjamin is severely beaten by the security forces when he boards a bus that will eventually take him close to the Mozambican border so that he can cross to join the guerrilla training camps. Apart from him, women are molested and some men are beaten until they urinate on themselves, 'Benjamin felt a wet trickle in his shoe. There, behind him, stood the culprit – an old man desperately clutching at his wet trousers' (*HoT*: 114). The old man urinates out of fear. There are several accounts from different authors on the 'roadblock tortures' that testify that these roadblocks caused trauma to travelling people. Some people are beaten to death:

‘They killed a suspected passenger right here last week,’ the bus conductor told him, with an I-know-where-you’re-going look. ‘You are lucky they let you go.’ Benjamin said nothing. He licked his bruised underlip and stared past the heads around him at the long yellow stretch of gravel ahead (*HoT*: 117).

Killing people who are suspected to be going to join the guerrillas happens very often. The soldiers are at liberty to inflict any punishment that they think befits the alleged would-be guerrillas. Benjamin escapes with a bruised lower lip and is considered lucky because he is not killed by the Rhodesian forces.

In *Child of War*, Hondo and Rindai escape death by a whisker when they are returning from a guerrilla errand to collect medical supplies from the hospital, ‘My ears were already filled with the thunderous explosion of that muzzle, my nostrils full of gun powder smoke’ (*CoW*: 78). Hondo is expecting to be beaten by the security forces who, fortunately for him, do not discover the tablets that are hidden under the skimmed milk in the tin.

There is another form of ironic violence when Benjamin finally arrives at the training camp. He is treated with suspicion and advised to go back in spite of having gone through terrifying ordeals at the roadblocks. He is detained in an underground cell and interrogated repeatedly until the commander relents and finally accepts him as a trainee guerrilla. Even then, he is treated with suspicion until late into the training. This form of violence can be condoned because Benjamin is said to have recruited himself, which makes it possible that he might be on an espionage mission. This precautionary violence is necessary because if all and sundry are conscripted without scrutiny, criminal elements may find their way into the camp and eventually betray the whole idea of the liberation war.

There are battles that are fought in both *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War* that lead to loss of lives of guerrillas and security forces alike. Chinodya awards most of the victories to the guerrillas, who lose a few or none of the members of their platoon. As for the Rhodesian soldiers, they are killed through the landmines and bombings that were mentioned earlier. One fatal incident of bombing happens in *Harvest of thorns* where the Baas Die group attacks the District Administrator's office. At the end of the attack, security forces lose their lives, and the guerrillas are victorious. The last battle episode in *Child of War* remains the only one where extreme violence is experienced by both the security forces and the guerrillas. At the end of the battle in which the protagonist Hondo almost loses his life, most of the guerrillas are killed and buried in a mass grave that he has to visit later after his recuperation. In *Harvest of Thorns*, the last scene of violence is similar to that in *Child of War*. The village, which the reader understands to be Nkazana's, is caught up in a conflagration which destroys huts and kills a lot of people: 'Ahead of them the fires loomed larger as they approached the burnt out village. The acrid smell of carnage – of burnt cloth, baked enamel-ware and roasted grains in the bins – swept up to their noses' (*HoT*: 252).

In this very scene, the reader is served with violence that is committed by the security forces and later by Benjamin himself. The narration ends with Benjamin killing one of the Rhodesian soldiers in a church after he stalks him there. After killing the soldier, 'He took one last long look at the man's face, pulled the cloth off the pulpit and covered as much of the body as he could, then stepped back slowly' (*HoT*: 254). This paradoxical form of violence takes place right inside the church where the reader would expect forgiveness and salvation even from death. It is ironic that Benjamin kills a person in a church building because as a child he was taught to be reverent in church, and that God resides there. The murder that is committed right inside the church

shows the extent to which the guerrillas' morals have degenerated as a result of war. The wounded soldier might have chosen to seek refuge in the church in the hope that nobody would dare to touch him there; but to his utter amazement, violence follows him, finally killing him in the holy edifice.

Contrary to Kriger (1992), Ranger (1985) and Chung (2006), Chinodya's rural youths, who also act as *mujhibhas*, are disciplined, and regard their parents with respect. In Chinodya's narrative, some young men are killed as they help the guerrillas in the battlefield, or as they run genuine errands for the guerrillas. In *Child of War* Hondo's several friends are killed during the encounter with the Rhodesian security forces, and in *Harvest of Thorns* one fighter is killed by the 'spray' as he leads the guerrillas from the ammunition stores up to their base.

There is also violence among the guerrillas themselves. In *Child of War*, the commander beats a guerrilla as a form of punishment after the latter has been accused of sleeping with a minor in the village. Although this kind of punishment is welcomed by most of the villagers, it leaves the guerrilla humiliated and bruises his ego as a gallant fighter of the liberation struggle.

The two novels, *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War* are full of graphic images of legitimate and illegitimate violence. Chinodya's violence spares nobody: women and children are the worst affected, especially in the refugee camps and the rural areas. Although the violence that is committed by the Rhodesian forces is said to be delegitimized by the context of the liberation, there are several instances of illegitimate violence that are perpetrated by the guerrillas as they preside over cases in the rural areas. Sometimes the guerrillas get themselves drunk, and in their state of inebriation cannot reason properly. They endanger the lives of many innocent villagers; for example, Baas Die's group gets drunk and starts shooting in the air, scaring the villagers:

They drank and drank – and on their empty bellies they soon were all fiercely drunk. When the villagers came they made them sing, hitching up their guns to dance with them, and during one of the songs Mabunu Muchapera fired twice into the air and caused the crowd to scramble for cover (*HoT*: 245).

The shooting that occurs here could easily have been fatal. Mabunu lets off a volley of shots into the air because he is drunk, and does not realise that his shooting might have attracted the attention of the Rhodesian forces who could easily exterminate them in their drunken stupor. Kriger confirms that ‘Many killings occurred when they (comrades) were drunk. Once they shot ten people ...’ (Kriger, 2006: 182). This violence is caused by irresponsibility and negligence on the part of the guerrillas themselves. Chinodya’s works explore some of the worst scenes of violence during the liberation struggle.

## Chapter 4

### The betrayed independence ideals

At the end of Chinodya's *Child of War*, Hondo, who had been transmogrified into temporary adulthood, is supposed to reconfine himself to roles that are prescribed for childhood and relinquish the pseudo-adulthood that he has been living during the struggle. There is a tone of loss and regret in his voice as he realises how retrogressive the war has been to him – he regrets that he has to repeat a grade because of the war. However, he appreciates the new developments that take place soon after the liberation struggle:

Machines came to drill for water, so we now have two taps in the village, providing clean water. We also have new schools, built by parents, with the help of the government. We moulded the bricks and the government provided timber and roofing material. More children are going to school, but qualified teachers are hard to find. (...) We also have a new clinic in the village, roads have been widened, and our little town is growing (*CoW*: 98).

From Hondo's description of the new Zimbabwe, the reader understands that there is immediate development soon after independence; but Hondo's idea of development might be limited by his childhood, which obviously lacks clarity on the fundamental issues of a liberation struggle. Another development cited by Hondo is that of the redistribution of previously white-owned land. He is excited by the fact that the farm that had belonged to Farmer Taylor has been subdivided for the resettlement of villagers. 'Farmer Taylor's farm was given to us to live on, his huge fields divided among us. My mother got a fertile three-acre patch that we hope to plough next season, if the rain falls well' (*CoW*: 98). The farm that is shared was abandoned when the

farmer was killed. Peter Stiff concurs with Chinodya about redistribution of land that was abandoned: 'It was easier then than later, because most of the farms involved had been abandoned during the Bush War, or they were virgin land' (Stiff, 2000: 288). The question still remains about those farms that were not abandoned, and is even complicated by the Lancaster House agreement, part of which reads:

Every person will be protected from having his property compulsorily acquired except when the acquisition is in the interest of ... the development or utilisation of that ... property in such a manner as to promote public benefit or, in the case of underutilised land, settlement of land for agricultural purposes. When property is wanted for one of these purposes, its acquisition will be lawful only on condition that the law provides for the prompt payment of adequate compensation and, where compensation is contested, that a court order be obtained. A person whose property is so acquired will be guaranteed the right of access to the High Court to determine the amount of compensation. ... Compensation will, within a reasonable time, be remitted to any country outside Zimbabwe, free from any deduction, tax or charge in respect of its remission... (Stiff, 2000: 288).

Other than the lawful acquisition mentioned above, land could only be attained through 'willing buyer – willing seller', which left the nationalist government in a serious predicament concerning the land as the primary cause of the insurrection. The question of land goes beyond simple acquisition: in spite of all the attempts to redistribute the land that the nationalist government could make, there remained the issue of its maximum use. Most people who clamoured for land did not have the relevant agricultural skills to ensure that the land was used to its maximum capacity. In most cases the need for land was for settlement, and this initiative totally

compromised food production for the entire nation. Most of the newly resettled farmers could not sustain the economy through farming, even though the farms that were designated for resettlement had previously been active in the country's food production. Using productive farms for resettlement proved to be an economic disaster because it immediately plunged the country into food shortages that it had never experienced, even in the colonial era. Another challenge was that the banks were sceptical about the land reform programme, so they could not give loans to the budding farmers. This was further complicated by the fact that this newly acquired land could not be used as collateral since the new farmers were on lease agreements. This meant that even those who were capable of maintaining farms were faced with financial handicaps in their attempts to work as productive commercial farmers. The entire land reform programme became an economic tragedy.

There was also another twist to land reform. Farmers in Matabeleland had a totally different view: they maintained that they wanted additional land only for cattle grazing, and opted to remain in crowded settlements as long as their livestock had enough grazing land. Furthermore, they refused to leave the land of their ancestors for fear that resettlement was going to erode their highly valued culture. At a meeting with the then Deputy Minister of Lands and Resettlement, Mr Mark Dube, '[O]ne district councillor after another leapt to their feet and demanded the government to give priority to the provision of grazing land instead of resettlement' (Stiff, 2000: 290). Some chiefs dismissed the government's resettlement as useless. For example, in July 1982 Chief Ndiweni, of a village called Ntabazinduna in Matabeleland North, had this to say about resettling villagers: '[U]n-African and against the wishes of the people ... all they want is an extension of the communal lands' (Stiff, 2000: 291). I should point out at this juncture that the Matabeles were still seething with anger after their party, ZAPU's defeat by ZANU-PF in the

1980 elections. They set out to frustrate all the efforts by ZANU to entrench its leadership in the region. They believed that ZANU-PF had rigged the election, although the truth was that ZANU was a predominantly Shona party, and that the Shonas constituted more than 70 per cent of the electorate at the time.

The unparalleled corruption in the whole land fiasco which implicated top senior government officials also played a major role in compromising the land reform programme. Some very productive farms were listed for acquisition only to serve the interests of those in influential government positions, and yet the beneficiaries never lived on those farms; in fact some of them knew nothing at all about farming. These are those farmers whom Chung describes as ‘telephone farmers’: ‘The age of the “telephone” farmers had begun. Telephone farmers were those rich politicians and bureaucrats who remained in Harare to promote their careers and interests, but now owned farms controlled and operated by telephone’ (Chung, 2006: 274). They were driven by the mere excitement of owning a farm and the prospect that a farm might one day turn their economic fortunes around. This measures the extent to which greed and corruption riddled the country soon after independence. The leader of a political party called ZUD, Margaret Dongo, publicised a list showing how 413 farms or plots amounting to 451 428 hectares of land had been distributed to the ‘landless poor’ (Stiff, 2000: 294) soon after independence. The poor in the list were high-ranking government officials. With the escalating corruption, donors were discouraged and opted out of funding, dealing land reform its hardest blow.

The land that was designated for resettlement was inaccessible, necessitating the need for infrastructural development in the form of roads in most areas. There were no schools and other amenities, and these needed huge sums of money. The continual bickering of the nationalist government about the sovereignty of Zimbabwe led to a complete shutdown of the donor

community, which brought the economy of Zimbabwe to its knees. People who had already acquired land resorted to subsistence farming since they did not have any implements to turn the land into a productive national asset. With their reduction to peasant farming, a large number of hectares could barely feed a household.

The forceful acquisition of productive farms sent a shock wave, not only to the farming community, but also to the banks and the whole economic reform system. This led to an unprecedented downturn of the economy and frustrated the nationalist leaders who desperately clung to their usual agrarian reform rhetoric in spite of its disastrous outcome. When Chinodya's Benjamin in *Harvest of Thorns* hints that the real war has not yet begun (*HoT*: 272), his premonition is understandable because the economic war is a mammoth task. Before the erratic acquisition of land, the nationalist government had been a darling to the European Community and the World Bank. Stiff maintains that 'The European Community and the World Bank, unimpressed with Mugabe's shenanigans, promptly froze desperately needed loans and aid' (Stiff, 2000: 295). Relations soured when the nationalist government amended the Bill of Rights on 12 December 1990, ten years after the Lancaster House agreement. The amendment allowed the government to confiscate land and give whatever compensation they deemed sufficient, and landowners had no right to appeal. This amendment was responsible for all the corruption that took place immediately after its enactment. Stiff argues:

Britain, which had funded (...) the acquisition of about 3.5 million hectares of commercial farm land for resettlement, discovered that the programme was plagued by mismanagement and corruption. It was certainly not benefiting the needy peasant. Mugabe and ZANU-PF had been parcelling out the best farms

acquired under the scheme to friends and relatives, political cronies or themselves, often for free or for a paltry few dollars per year (Stiff, 2000: 293).

In Chinodya's *Child of War*, the likes of Farmer Taylor made the work of resettlement easy, but those white farmers who were still in possession of their farms declined to give them up for government resettlement programmes. In fact this was to culminate in unprecedented farm invasions and eviction of white farmers by war veterans (former guerrillas), as has been mentioned earlier. One scholar, Wolfgang Hochbruck, attempts to justify the quandary in which the nationalist government found itself:

Within the decade after the termination of the hostilities, only a minor portion of the land base could be turned over to landless people and returning refugees. One reason for this lay in the fact that a substantial portion of the gross national product was produced by the white-owned farms (Hochbruck, 1994: 132).

Hochbruck's assertion endeavours to highlight some of the dilemmas of the liberation struggle, but these may not be understood by a layman. Hochbruck gives credence to Mhanda's view that the economy remained in the hands of the former colonists. Lack of foresight and failure to systematise farm acquisitions plunged the country into an economic crisis that later gave birth to opposition parties such as the Movement for Democratic Change. The uprisings and formation of alternative parties indicated that the people had sensed their betrayal by the nationalist government:

The people's basic freedoms became as constrained as they were during the colonial era. Political intolerance characterised the new political culture [in which] opposition and dissent were elevated to hostility, antagonism and enmity.

The ruthless suppression of ZAPU soon after independence, and later of the new Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), the private media and civil society activists bear eloquent testimony to this. The distinction between the party, the government and the state became increasingly blurred. Tendencies towards autocratic rule took a turn for the worse and the so-called national and sovereign interests became justification for all kinds of authoritarian excess (Mhanda, 2005: n.p.).

According to the populist view, the post-war Zimbabwean experience has followed a trajectory of betrayal. The nationalist government appears to have disappointed the guerrillas and the people who rallied behind them during the taxing years of liberation. It is hinted by several authors that the independence that was bought through the blood of all and sundry was beneficial only to a handful of bureaucrats. The idea of betrayal runs through most African countries, and remains the continent's dilemma. As Kitenge-Ngoyi, in Losambe, writes:

Unfortunately African independence did not live up to all these expectations. Those who had founded their hopes on the revolutionary dynamism of the young independent states, those who expected to see the disappearance of extreme poverty, privation and hunger could only be disappointed. The pitiful spectacle that some African countries present almost 35 years after gaining their independence is far from encouraging. Analysts of African politics all over the world are wondering what has gone wrong. No one seems to understand why and how the revolutionary that led to Africa's independence has been betrayed (1996:161).

Kitenge-Ngoyi contextualises betrayal as an African problem seemingly because most of the countries in the continent continue to suffer the same fate. Achebe suggests a solution to the continent's prevalent woes:

First we have to nurture and strengthen our democratic institutions – and strive for the freest and fairest elections possible. That will place the true candidates of the people in office. Under the rubric of a democracy, a free press can thrive and a strong justice system can flourish. The checks and balances we have spoken about and the laws needed to curb corruption will then naturally find a footing (Achebe, 2012: 253).

Achebe believes that re-empowerment of democratic institutions may be a lasting solution. This means that institutions such as the press and the judiciary should operate without any interference from presidential power or the ruling elite. According to him, this will provide fertile ground for stamping out the 'evils' that have robbed Africa of its fruit of hard-won independence.

Two among the most crucial areas of concern after independence have been unemployment and the unequal distribution of land. In a paper that he presented at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in September 2005, Wilfred Mhanda, a former Zimbabwean freedom fighter, argues that

[t]he misguided and parochial position adopted by the nationalists set the stage for the subsequent unprincipled compromise and betrayal of the ideals of the national liberation struggle and the aspirations of the African people for self-determination at Lancaster House in 1979. Britain could not have wished for a

better outcome as it ensured the entrenchment of its imperial interests in Zimbabwe ... (Mhanda, 2005: n.p.).

Mhanda's assertion is that for African nationalists the attainment of power was an end in itself. Once in power they did not bother to undo the state instruments that were designed to serve the interests of the former colonial regime. In other words, Mhanda argues that the African nationalists became neo-colonialist 'watch-dogs' for their imperialist masters in European countries. Mhanda's view agrees with Benjamin's in the last chapter of *Harvest of Thorns* when he finally opens his heart to Dickson, his sister's husband: 'We won the war, yes, but it's foolish to start talking about victory. All this talk about free schools and free medical treatment and minimum wages is just a start. The real battle will take a long, long time; it may never even begin' (*HoT*: 272). Benjamin acknowledges that they may have attained political power, but still nothing has changed. The only change is that political power has been delegated to African nationalists, while the white settler minority still clings to economic power. Contrary to the objectives of the nationalist struggle, independence brings despair to the expectant Africans whose role in the struggle was not intended to be limited to the extinction of white minority rule. Benjamin is a disillusioned freedom fighter who perceives, with great sadness, the entrenchment of neo-colonialism and the inability of the nationalists to disentangle themselves from the influence of the former colonists.

Kamurai Mudzingwa comments, after reading a short story, 'Queues', by Chinodya, which he wrote after *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War*: 'Shimmer Chinodya ... traces the socio-economic and political deterioration of Zimbabwe in his story, 'Queues'. The unending queues become the symbol of shortages and the epitome of the downturn of the economy' (Mudzingwa, 2014: n.p.).

The concerns that Chinodya raises in his story begin in *Harvest of Thorns* where he assesses the post-war period with a view to highlighting its economic problems. Benjamin's observation that 'nothing has changed and that the real battle has not yet begun', or may never begin, agrees with concerns that are raised by Hochbruck (1994), Mudzingwa (2003), Gunner (1991), Mhanda (2005) and many other authors. In his talk with Dickson in the beer garden, Benjamin expresses his scepticism about winning the battle. He is fully aware that free education is not all that they fought for (*HoT*: 272). Unlike Hondo, Benjamin is mature enough to understand the essence of the struggle. In fact even the free education that is mentioned does not remain free for long. Hardly a decade after independence,

[f]ees were introduced for hospital and clinic services: as a result the poorer half of the population could no longer enjoy even the most rudimentary of medical services. In the education sector, I managed as minister to stop the introduction of primary school fees in rural areas where 70 per cent of the population lived, but they were introduced in the urban areas (Chung, 2006: 266).

Chung explains that the benefits of independence were short-lived mainly because the economy of the country still remained under the control of the former oppressors and their donors. A similar view is maintained by Hendricks, Ntsebeza and Helliker (2013) who argue that:

[t]he very bases of colonialism and apartheid remain intact, since racialized inequalities in both access to and ownership of land persist in the present. With state driven attempts at land having failed to meet even their own modest targets, a fundamental change in approach is clearly necessary... (2013:1).

White attitudes on the economy are sharply epitomised when Benjamin goes shopping with his wife Nkazana and his young brother, Peter. The young white cashier does not believe that Benjamin has enough money to pay for all the groceries in the three trolleys that they present at the till. The altercation that ensues underscores Benjamin's dismay at the fact that life has not changed; blacks are still expected to be poor and are not expected to buy groceries of that quantity (*HoT*: 9). Benjamin battles for recognition as a former freedom fighter, but he is judged according to the clothes that he is wearing, and is downgraded to the ranks of a hobo. His wife, Nkazana, hints that the colonists learnt nothing from the war. The young couple is driven to despair when they realise that nothing has really changed. It is after Benjamin has been around his home town for several months that he acknowledges, '[O]f course, when we went out we thought our guns would change things overnight. And then we came back to find the whites could still shout at us because they still have the money and the ex-combatants have to scrounge for jobs like everyone else' (*HoT*: 272).

Randolph cites the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, immediately after independence expressing the same sentiments as Chinodya's Benjamin:

In Lagos in December 1980, Mr Mugabe had said that the economy was still being controlled and manipulated by those who had been dislodged from political power, 'They retain the reins of our economy and continue to manipulate it; they seek to invest in our economy in a manner intended to bring about economic control now that they have lost political control (Randolph, 1985: 46).

Mugabe realised after barely a year in office as Prime Minister that the country was still ruled by the colonists because they clung to the economy and could manipulate it any way they wanted.

The white minority still controlled the industries, determined the prices of commodities and decided the wages of employees. They still hired and fired employees as they saw fit. Benjamin actually falls victim to their domination, 'I worked for a day as a hand at a construction site last month, but when the white foreman heard that I was an ex-combatant I was told that the company had employed too many casual labourers by mistake (*HoT*: 272). Benjamin is shunned because he is a former freedom fighter, but there is nothing he can do. He is even afraid that within five years the war will be forgotten. He finds himself unemployable because he has no educational qualifications, which of course he could not get while he was fighting. In this way, the war has robbed him of a job that he might have had all this time. The chances of his getting a job seem even dimmer when he reads the advertisement column in the newspaper.

He flipped to the vacancies section. The jobs advertised in big letters were for managers and accountants and directors and the ones in very small print were for mechanics, engineers, secretaries and the like. He folded the paper neatly and gave it back (*HoT*: 14-15).

While still in the quagmire of his plight, Benjamin realises to his horror that he cannot even join the army with the qualification he has – experience. 'You can register at the recruiting office if you want but I wouldn't promise anything. There's a limit to the numbers the army can take right now ...' (*HoT*: 17); Academic qualifications might have helped, but the army had deprived him of those. Benjamin's predicament is taken a little further when he realises that the only option he has is to join a cooperative where, together with his former comrades, he can rear chickens or other livestock, or even grow vegetables. This is a rather unpromising option since he does not have any knowledge of agriculture. This simply means that he has to acquire agricultural skills first, and so he has to join a group of people who might have contradictory views on how to run

their enterprise. Soon after independence, the ex-freedom fighters who formed cooperatives eventually gave up the whole idea after they cheated each other, or could not get on with their comrades. Most of the cooperatives that were based on transport or agriculture barely survived for twenty-four months owing to the lack of managerial skills in those who ran them. Most of their cooperatives ground to a halt because of mistrust, dishonesty, and an overall lack of expert guidance. In the light of these radical deficiencies, it seems that Benjamin might never realise his dream of fending for his child. In addition to unemployment there is the issue of accommodation, which stands out prominently in the case of Benjamin and possibly the rest of the guerrillas. At the end of the bush war, Benjamin goes straight to his father's house because he has no house of his own yet, and the chances that he will get one are very slim since he has even been denied a demobilisation grant. His father suggests that he can stay in the family house with his mother, but this infuriates him, and he asks his father where else he can go. The truth is that his father is trying to inform him that he should find alternative accommodation now that he is married. Staying in his father's house reduces him to childhood, and being treated accordingly. This explains why his mother walks out at night to look for them when he takes Peter to drink beer at his friend's house (*HoT*: 19). The issue of accommodation further heightens Benjamin's predicament, forcing him to be recalcitrant as a way to compensate his losses. His parents might be blamed for his intransigence, though. He has explained earlier that they were religious extremists, and that this prompted him to join the bush war in order to prove to the community that his family was not a bunch of sell-outs: 'At school there was always talk of our family being sell-outs. I tried to fight that down by joining school demonstrations. Once I helped burn down a beerhall and I got into trouble with police' (*HoT*: 273).

In other words, going to the bush was a way to absolve the whole family from communal blame. We should not forget that during those years, the houses that belonged to the people who did not openly support the struggle were torched as it was believed that they were sell-outs. Maybe it could be said that Benjamin saved his family from persecution that could have come their way. As a way of showing his family that he fought for them, Benjamin becomes very hostile, particularly to his father whom he openly accuses of abandoning his family in pursuit of an extra-marital affair.

However, after the struggle Benjamin seems to have lost all his opportunities to better his life. Unlike Hondo in *Child of War*, he thinks he is too old to go to school. One can also blame him for his fate because at this time he is barely twenty years old. In the early eighties schools in Zimbabwe were heavily populated by people who were much older than he was. I remember that when I at high school, the pupils in my class were far older than we few whose education was never interrupted by the war. In *Harvest of Thorns*, Benjamin stresses the need to be educated in spite of one's age. He says to Tunhidzai, his bush war girlfriend:

We are going to win this war, soon, and all schools will open again. And when we take over this country there'll be many schools and all children will go to school, not just white children or the children of the rich people. No one will be too old to go back to school (*HoT*: 231).

The need to get educated remains very crucial, and the reader expects Benjamin himself to take the initiative about it. Most of the young former freedom fighters retraced their steps to the classrooms, and some were later admitted to teachers' colleges such as Hillside, Gweru, Belvedere and Mutare, or even the University of Zimbabwe, where there was a special

arrangement with the then Vice-Chancellor, Professor Walter Kamba. These are the same young gallant fighters who were later involved in the strikes that hit the University of Zimbabwe in the nineties. The government was supposed to create permanent jobs for the war veterans instead of encouraging them to form ill-organised and unsupervised co-operatives. This is the muted contention that the reader can decipher from Benjamin's argument. Although his ineptitude accounts for his consequent unemployability, he still feels that the former freedom fighters are not accorded adequate gratitude.

Another view supposes that the freedom fighters went to fight for the equality of the whole nation, and therefore the likes of Benjamin should not sit back and expect to be employed even when they do not qualify. Benjamin says to Tunhidzai while the war is still raging, 'Anyway, we can't all carry guns. Some of us have to fight. Some have to cook and look out for *mapuruvheya*. Others have to go to school so that Zimbabwe can have educated people to take over those jobs the whites are refusing to give us now' (*HoT*: 232). These words suggest that Benjamin is fully aware that when the war is over, those people who went to school during the struggle will take the reins as soon as the colonists are dislodged. It should not come as a surprise when the events unfold as he has predicted. The reader senses an omen when Benjamin bemoans, 'And then we came back to find the whites could still shout at us because they still have the money and the ex-combatants have to scrounge for jobs like anyone else' (*HoT*: 272). Benjamin's words suggest that ex-freedom fighters should be given preferential treatment, whereas earlier he mentioned that others must get educated so that they can be employed. This irony serves to highlight Benjamin's plight. It is evident that he might have expected to be offered a job, but obviously the national army, if only they would take him, has the only jobs he is qualified for.

Benjamin will have to survive on piece jobs that may last for a day or even less owing to his stigma. Chinodya goes on to deride Benjamin further when he is jabbed by a briefcase that is carried by a young man who is dressed in an immaculate suit, 'A briefcase knocked him on the side and when he turned round he faced a young black man in a blue suit. The young man scowled at him and strutted on (*HoT*: 17). Benjamin sees black men coming to pick their mistresses up for lunch, 'Black men in flashy cars stopped to pick up mistresses waiting, newly perfumed and lipsticked, on the pavements (*HoT*: 17). Life is good for the rest of the people in the city. Men are driving beautiful cars and obviously enjoying the independence that Benjamin helped win for them. When he decides to enter a bar, 'People looked up at him when he came in. They made him conscious of his clothes and he wondered if he would be asked to leave.' (*HoT*: 17). At this point Benjamin is disillusioned; that is he when he realises that his dress code has attracted attention. However, he also realises that these bars were formerly no-go areas for blacks, and the fact that he can now enter them to some extent compensates for his languishing in the economic doldrums, while many people are living their lives to the full. These constitute the millions that he mentioned during the altercation with his mother earlier in the chapter.

After independence blacks took over some key positions in the economy of the country, but only as puppets for the whites who were not too sure of the turn of events at independence. These blacks were mere 'watch-dogs' for the former colonists, and were only there to ensure that colonisation was perpetuated economically. The blacks who are seen frequenting expensive hotels with their mistresses in equally expensive cars have a story to tell. While the freedom fighters went to fight, they went abroad to study, anticipating the country's need for educated citizens at the dawn of independence. Some of these people took over the white-collar jobs that were vacated by whites as they migrated to countries like South Africa, where apartheid was still

at its peak. Benjamin and his fellow former freedom fighters will live to lick their wounds as they watch the well-heeled beneficiaries of independence enjoying the fruits of freedom.

Like Hondo in *Child of War*, Benjamin is aware of the retrogressive nature of the war. He mentions his former classmates who are currently at university, and sadly admits that he will never catch up with them. His is an even sadder story because he laments losing his teenage years in a manner that he still fails to understand (*HoT*: 273). In the last chapter of the novel Benjamin is a father. The sudden transition to and the responsibilities of fatherhood further plunge him into a deeper difficulty. He has to fend for his new-born son, whom he names *Zvenyika*, a Shona name which means ‘the world and its problems’. This name suggests that Benjamin is already fed up with the world barely half a year after joining civilian life.

In Chapter Thirty-five of *Harvest of Thorns* Chinodya describes Benjamin like this: ‘He’s only twenty and he has no job or house of his own yet, but he tells himself he’ll do all he can to raise the little bundle of humanity in the cot. He’ll do all he can, even though all he has is a pair of chapped hands’ (*HoT*: 277).

Benjamin is faced with abject poverty, owns nothing, but is determined to support his child of whom he says, ‘Zvenyika will use his head and hands and grow up to be somebody’ (*HoT*: 277). Apparently Benjamin is aware that his son has to get educated in order to survive in the new Zimbabwe. It has dawned on him that only educated people earn recognition. As his hopes of getting a job continue to fade, Benjamin affirms:

[A] guerrilla is only a hero while the war is raging. Once it’s over the regular soldier in the smartly pressed camouflage kit takes over (...) those of us who

went to fight will carry the scars for the rest of their lives. We were heroes during the heat of the war but now we are left to lick our wounds (*HoT*: 274).

Benjamin seems to be saying that the government does not recognise guerrillas any more. He contends that once the war is over, everything belongs to the ruling class and the guerrillas' sacrifices are lost in memory lane. Chung concurs with Benjamin's view: 'Many of those who had participated in the liberation struggle of the 1970s felt that the revolution had been betrayed' (Chung, 2006: 299). The status of the war veterans began to deteriorate as Benjamin had predicted. In fact, as time went on, they even had to hide their identity if they wanted to be employed or, in some cases, married. They remained with a stigma that alienated them from the societies in which they lived. For women it was even worse because they had to reconfine themselves to the general roles of women such as being housewives or mothers, as expected in an African society. More often they found themselves rejected by communities that treated them with suspicion. For many female freedom fighters there was a serious social divide between them and the world that denied them freedom to be married to men who were not freedom fighters. Perhaps this explains why most female war veterans are married to former freedom fighters. In her book about post-independence setbacks, Chung confirms this situation:

Over the years, the position of the war veterans also began to deteriorate, and war veterans, particularly women war veterans, began to hide the fact that they had participated in the war. The post-independence mores did not value women who had held positions of authority during the war or who asserted their independence (Chung, 2006: 299).

After the war, communities did not trust the former guerrillas. Some were accused of ‘having blood on their hands’, and for this reason they were alienated from the communities where they had once lived happily before joining the armed insurrection. Most of the war veterans remained mute about their war experiences, further creating a wider chasm between them and the general public because it was believed that they were always brooding over their war-related atrocities. It was only later, seventeen years after independence, that the war veterans regained their lost glory and pride. It was after they forced the government to give them compensation and invaded white-owned farms that the nation began to recognise their presence. The compensation that the government granted them was to go a long way towards destabilising the Zimbabwean economy and plunging the country into unprecedented economic crises which have now lasted almost two decades. In his long conversation with his brother-in-law Dickson, Benjamin admits that there is really nothing to talk about as far as the war is concerned. He refers most of the questions that are asked about the war to the bush itself, which supposedly witnessed everything (*HoT*: 273).

A concern which fills the reader with pathos is Benjamin’s acknowledgement that he never really enjoyed his childhood. On behalf of all the young people who joined the liberation struggle, Benjamin accuses the war of robbing them of their basic steps in growing up:

I never had the chance to experience what other young men experienced. The church robbed me of my childhood and the war took away proper school, friends, holidays and all that. One day I was a teenage student doing prep in the dorm. The next I was a guerrilla shooting Smith’s soldiers in the bush. And before I knew it, I was bringing home a wife (*HoT*: 273).

Apparently Benjamin feels that the church played a critical role in denying him the opportunity to savour his childhood. The reader should note that in *Harvest of Thorns* Chinodya makes his parents overzealous about Christianity. It is this religious excess of his parents that Benjamin blames. He feels that his parents introduced him to too many constraints because of their church.

Benjamin is aware of the progress that his former classmates made while he was in the liberation war. They are now at university and have brighter chances to live life to their satisfaction (*HoT*: 24). Although he does not want to admit it openly, it is evident that Benjamin regrets joining the liberation movement, which, in his estimation, has been very regressive. His sentiments are echoed by his mother when she pours out her anger at him when he behaves irresponsibly by allowing his younger brother Peter to drink beer to a state of total inebriation. Benjamin's mother feels that the war was a complete setback, and that her son will never catch up with his friends, who are already too far ahead of him. To exacerbate his dilemma, his mother believes that by killing people in the liberation war, Benjamin has brought a curse on the family: 'This whole family is damned by all the blood on your hands' (*HoT*: 24). This view is rather too devastating for Benjamin, who has already experienced the disillusionment of ostracism from most of the people who knew him before he became a war veteran. It is sad that at this point he is snubbed by his own mother. The reader may argue that his odd behaviour soon after his arrival from the bush war is responsible for his mother's merciless verbal attack, but Benjamin clings to his position: '[T]here are millions in this country who are having it good because we went out. You just don't happen to be one of them' (*HoT*: 24). The millions that are mentioned could refer to the illegitimate beneficiaries of independence, those whom Chung refers to as *mafikizolos*.<sup>12</sup> This means that they were not there during the 'hot days' of the struggle; they surfaced only when the

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<sup>12</sup> Literally: 'those who arrived yesterday'. This refers to people who were not there in the beginning, and only surfaced when there were benefits.

war had been won to bask in the glory of independence. One such *mafizikizolo* is Benjamin's father, who has a party card, but never suffered the pangs of the liberation struggle. According to Chung, these are the people who bought properties at giveaway prices when some disillusioned colonists decided to leave the country since they could not face the idea of black leadership. Benjamin's father has benefited with a car:

The battered Zephyr Zodiac swung off the road and bumped up the narrow stone path to the house. (...) The driver, Clopas Wandai J. Tichafa, opened the door a little, careful not to bang it against the wall, and squeezed out. 'Surprised?' Mr Tichafa grinned at his son. 'Yes, I thought you'd be. It's a 1962 model. Can you believe it's been on the road for eighteen years now? It looks almost new, doesn't it? I got it for just six hundred dollars from a white man who was emigrating to South Africa!' (*HoT*: 259).

The whites who were disappointed at the inception of a black government packed and left the country. At their departure, they sold some of their property to some 'fortunate' blacks at giveaway prices. These blacks unfortunately became the new 'whites' as they aimed to perpetuate the white culture through adopting lifestyles that they had copied from their former colonisers.

Another evil of post-independence is corruption which became endemic immediately after independence. Corruption reared its ugly head from all sectors and threatened to paralyse the country in its infancy. Young people were the worst affected by this social ill:

The two frustrations facing the young were the lack of employment opportunities after the first decade of independence, and what they saw as the growing corruption within the ZANU-PF government. Corruption and lack of employment

opportunities were closely related, as they reflected on the ZANU-PF policy of redistribution of existing wealth, but without due emphasis on increasing wealth to cover the whole population (Chung, 2006: 287).

At the demobilisation office Benjamin is turned away on the pretext that he might be a fraudster. The same officer who turns him away expresses concern at the number of people who have defrauded the demobilisation office. Corruption started at the beginning of independence when thousands of people faked documents that proved that they had been freedom fighters in order to unlawfully get demobilisation compensation. The iniquity of this was that those who were genuine war veterans, like Benjamin, could not access the fund because of corruption. Later on we see corruption even in government departments. Chung describes some of the ordeals that she went through as a Head of Department in the Ministry of Education in the late eighties, just before she became the Minister of Education:

I was very politely requested by my superior officer to promote a young teacher to become an officer in my department. I interviewed the young lady and found her reasonable, but without the requisite experience, so I did not promote her. I was surprised to find that this led to a huge conflict, during which I was accused of not 'following directives'. It turned out that the young lady was the girlfriend of my superior officer (Chung, 2006: 271).

Chung goes on to argue that having spent more than five years in the liberation struggle, she would not accept relatives being promoted, especially when they were not suitable for the posts. In 2001 the then Minister of Education, Edmund Garwe, took his life in an unusual case of self-

sacrifice after his 14-year-old daughter leaked Zimbabwe Junior Certificate examination papers. The papers had been in the Minister's custody when the whole scandal took place:

Garwe knew the enormity of the crime that had been committed and he couldn't stand the shame that would go with it. He knew that the integrity of any education system lies in the way it handles its examination co-ordination (*Newsday Zimbabwe*, 10 November 2014).

There was also a scandal about cars, dubbed the 'Willowgate scandal', which rocked the country during its honeymoon days of independence. Several Ministers endured public humiliation, and some even went to the extent of taking their own lives. Corruption is one of the most dangerous enemies of independence. The corruption in Willowvale Motors prompted singers like the late Solomon Skuza, who composed a song entitled *Love and Scandal* in which he vehemently criticises the corruption of ministers' importing cars – the Toyota Cressida was the car that was fashionable at the time - very cheaply through Willowvale Motors because of the government subsidy, and reselling them at a profit of 200%. In his song Skuza says: 'How can someone buy a car and sell it again? Everybody wants to know! Even the *povo*<sup>13</sup> wants to know! I don't know why, I don't know why. ... The information has been leaking...' (Skuza, 1989).

Another singer called Thomas Mapfumo released an album entitled *Corruption* in 1988 after the Willowvale scandal and other versions of corruption that were prominent during those days:

The 1988 song 'Corruption' officially opens Mapfumo's rift with the regime of Robert Mugabe, turning a government financial scandal into a pop culture

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<sup>13</sup> Poor man in the street

sensation. 1999's '*Mamvemve*'<sup>14</sup> accuses leaders of betraying the promises of the liberation struggle and reducing a rich country to 'tatters,' and 2003's '*Marima Nzara*'<sup>15</sup> takes the government on over Zimbabwe's most prolonged and vexing challenge (Thomas Mapfumo 2, 2015).

Ever since the singing of these songs, Mapfumo has been at loggerheads with the Zimbabwean government because of his songs that highlight the entrenchment of corruption in the young Zimbabwe.

Apart from corruption, there is an issue of street urchins who were 'born' with independence. While democratisation of Zimbabwe was envisaged to give birth to a warm country that would look after orphans whose parents had perished in the liberation war, there still remain even today children whose lineage can only be traced to the streets of Harare, Bulawayo, and other towns. It is understood that children lost parents during the liberation struggle. One such example is Nkazana, a young girl who eventually becomes Benjamin's wife. There are numerous cases that are similar to Nkazana's and those who were born in refugee camps. 'In the bush hundreds of girls had babies without anybody knowing' (*HoT*: 9). Hundreds of children lost their parents in the bush war. The former Minister Chung writes about children who were orphaned in the camps, but at the end of the war they had nowhere to go since they could not even trace their relatives, some of them were those who were born in the bush:

I went to the social services department to see if they could provide food for the children. I was told by a white official that since these children were 'communists', they should not be allowed to remain together, and that the best

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<sup>14</sup> tatters

<sup>15</sup> You have sown hunger

strategy was to force them to disperse by not providing them with food. (...) The strategy to starve them into dispersal partly worked: those students who could find any relatives left the temporary camps. However, there were many thousands who were orphaned or had lost contact with their families. They were now starving (Chung, 2006: 275).

The repellent nature of Zimbabwe's hospitality saw a huge rise in the number of children who found streets the only suitable habitat. The nationalist government bureaucrats busied themselves with amassing wealth and totally ignored the spirit of Ubuntu that had been a common theme of song even before the advent of the colonists. Contrary to the ideals of Marxism that they preached to the electorate before attaining leadership, the country's leadership developed the capitalist mentality that had characterised the former colonists. The increase in the number of street urchins could have easily been combated through building centres for such children, or even encouraging adoption and supporting foster-parents through government grants. Even later, after independence, the nationalist leadership exacerbated the problem of street children by introducing school fees. The impoverished and unemployed masses could not afford fees. The only alternative for children who could not afford school fees was to roam the streets. 'This eventually led to the problem of "street kids" without schooling, a problem that had existed in colonial days but had disappeared during the first decade of independence' (Chung, 2006: 266). In the light of Chung's assertion, and considering the situation on the ground, the nationalist leadership was fully responsible for the street children problem. It went with some of the crises that Benjamin perceives in *Harvest of Thorns* as constituting an indisputable form of betrayal by the nationalist leadership.

Ngugi's *Matigari* shares Chinodya's views in *Harvest of Thorns* as far as poverty and corruption are concerned. In the beginning of the novel Ngugi portrays stark poverty in his representation of the homeless children, who scavenge for food and other items that they can sell to earn a bit of money. They scramble for food with the dogs, crows and vultures at the dumping sites, and brave the weather around the wrecks in which they sleep. The children are dehumanised to the level of scavenging animals. Ngugi compares these children to vermin in order to heighten the plight of the poor.

After the children, we meet Guthera, who has surrendered her life to prostitution, driven to it, says James Ogude (1999: 114) by poverty and the need to feed and clothe herself and her siblings. Through Guthera's case Ngugi shows the extent to which poverty can morally corrupt its victims. 'From the day that she decided to walk the streets, she was able to feed and clothe the other children' (Ngugi, 1987: 36). Guthera was brought up as a devout Christian, but her morality has deteriorated because of indigence.

This theme of poverty is further reinforced in the prison scene when the detainees take turns to explain why they have been arrested. One of them has been arrested for stealing, and he confesses that he was forced into theft by hunger. He says, 'What could I have done? I was famished, my friends' (Ngugi, 1987: 54). Ngugi reveals that poverty turns otherwise scrupulous people into criminals.

In some extreme cases poverty leads its victims to death. A good example is Muriuki's mother, whose landlord ruthlessly burns her to death when she fails to pay her rent (Ngugi, 1987: 25)..

Ogude argues that

[i]t is the ideological poverty of this new class that Ngugi caricatures in his later novels through the grotesque images of the body, while at the same time drawing attention to how the old social relations are reproduced in the present; how colonial relations of production reproduce themselves (Ogude, 1999: 52).

At the end of colonial rule Ngugi expected economic ills such as poverty to completely vanish, but because of a betrayed independence freedom from its shackles remains very remote. Neo-colonial masters perpetuate impoverishment against fellow countrymen. Ogude states: 'Ngugi seems to be saying that the history of the postcolonial state in Kenya is one in which peasants grow poorer,' (1999: 32). Throughout his novels Ngugi 'uses his pen to assert that the disparity between rich and poor is accounted for by the entrenched and neo-colonial Moi government in Kenya' (Killam, 2004: 97). As a Marxist, Ngugi prescribes revolution as the only possible solution to the problem of class exploitation.

Marxists believe that revolution is the inevitable outcome of this conflict – a revolution where the workers will eventually seize political power in order to govern the country. The workers will then establish a dictatorship of the proletariat. The aim of such a takeover of power will be to allow the people to take control of the means of production (farms, factories and mines). Communism will be achieved when a society is created in which everyone has equal economic and political rights (Kallaway, et al., 1988: 65).

At the end of *Matigari* we see Matigari rushing to the bush where he had buried his AK-47 in order to exhume it and return to fight corruption and poverty in the country. When he realises that he might not make it in time, he sends the youth Muriuki, who because of his age is still

strong and energetic. When Matigari delegates the task of fighting to the young, the reader begins to realise that this revolution is bound to succeed, or at least to continue much longer, because Muriuki symbolises continuity of the struggle against social evils, and the gun shows the violent nature of this struggle.

Commenting on poverty in Ngugi's *I Will Marry When I Want*, Bjorkman says that '[b]ecause it was critical of the social inequalities of the country the play was soon banned, and without formal charge or trial Ngugi was imprisoned' (Bjorkman, 1989: 2). For exposing poverty that resulted from neo-colonialism, Ngugi found himself behind bars. On his arrest, Mazrui comments that 'Kenya was moving in the 1970s towards greater intolerance than had been deemed necessary before' (Sicherman, 1990: 4). When the play *I Will Marry When I Want* was written, poverty had escalated to alarming levels. To explain why he was arrested, and to justify his writing the play, Ngugi claims:

In particular, I believe that I am where I am because I was involved in the writing of a play in the Gikuyu language, *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, a play that looks at the Kenyan history of struggle against imperialism with pride, delineating the traitorous role of those who sold out and the heroic role of those that held out (Ngugi, 1981: 188).

The play referred to in the extract is *I Will Marry When I Want*. Ngugi insists that he was arrested and detained without trial for exposing corruption in Kenya through this play. To heighten their plight, he allows the peasants to sing as follows:

Leader: We belong to the sect of the poor.

Those without land,

Those without plots,

Those without clothes (Ngugi, 1982: 8).

In *I Will Marry When I Want*, Ngugi emphasises that the masses are suffering from penury. The gap between the rich and the poor is very wide. In the play, when Kiguunda's daughter falls in love with John Muhuuni, Kioi's son, it is unfortunate that Kiguunda and his wife cannot realise that the Kiois will never allow John Muhuuni to marry their daughter Gathoni because of their different economic backgrounds. Kiguunda's family cannot even afford to buy salt, a basic necessity for every household. When they want to prepare food, Wangeci realises that they have no salt and has to beg from her neighbours. In a speech filled with agitation, Gicaamba grumbles, 'We the workers in factories and plantations said in one voice: "We reject slave wages!"' (Ngugi, 1982: 68). They are paid meagre wages; their lives epitomise all forms of poverty.

Gathoni, just like Guthera in *Matigari*, plunges into prostitution when she realises too late that John will never marry her. In her dire move, caused by poverty, she has no alternative but to sell her body in order to earn a living. Wangeci's words, 'Gathoni, my child! To become a whore?' (Ngugi, 1982: 104) are charged with impotent bitterness. Through Gathoni's plight, Ngugi shows how poverty morally wrecks its victims. To pacify Wangeci, Gicaamba advises her,

Let's not call our children prostitutes

A hyena is very greedy

But she does not eat her young (Ngugi, 1982:104).

To further reinforce the element of poverty, Njooki, Gicaamba's wife rants on,

Gathoni now has no job.

She has no other means of earning a living

And she would like to dress up

Like any of her age-mates (Ngugi, 1982: 103).

In another work, *Detained*, Ngugi still contends that *I Will Marry When I Want*

is a play which correctly reflects the true social conditions in Kenya today, especially in its comparative depiction of the styles of life of the privileged thieving minority and the labouring majority (Ngugi, 1981: 188).

The play ends on a grim note with Wangeeci lamenting,

Kiguunda has no job.

He has tried to sell the goods

We foolishly bought with the loan money

And they are not fetching much.

So the radio announced that

The piece of land will be auctioned (Ngugi, 1982: 108).

Kiguunda also sadly realises: ‘Now we have only our hands’ (Ngugi, 1982: 111). After selling property and losing their land to the imperialists, Kiguunda only remains with a pair of chapped hands, like Benjamin in *Harvest of Thorns*. He takes to drinking and eventually loses his morals. Drinking increases his quarrelling, forcing him to stay at loggerheads with his wife. Material poverty drags him to moral degradation. In the end Ngugi shows us a man who becomes morally, physically and spiritually bankrupt because of poverty.

Chika Onyeani, in *Roar of the African Lion*, argues that most African states tend to blame their former colonisers for the country’s economic misfortunes, but he thinks African leaders are to blame:

Most African countries have been independent for more than forty years. The promise of independence is yet to be fulfilled. We thought that manna would fall from heaven, but instead what we have in Africa are wars, famine, disease, military dictatorships and violations of human rights. We have despotic leaders who prefer to loot the people's treasuries for their own personal aggrandisement, leaders who prefer to force the adulation of the masses through the barrel of a gun rather than through the provision of simple amenities – like good roads, health care facilities and good environments for learning and opportunities for employment (Onyeani, 2015: 7-8).

Onyeani's view suggests that African countries still remain poor, and in some cases even worse than they were during the colonial period, simply because the leaders have totally forgotten the people: they are busy enriching themselves. This view can be traced in most African countries; in South Africa, for example, where there are numerous strikes that seek to address corruption in the issuing of tenders and outsourcing of workers for menial jobs by certain institutions. The recent 'Fees must fall' campaign, that saw violent protests at various universities across South Africa, indicates a reaction to privation. Students at several universities had to take the law into their own hands, barricading all university entrances, and barring even Vice-Chancellors from entering their offices. It was only after this radical protest against poverty that the South African President decided to suspend all university fee increases for 2016. However, Onyeani's argument still finds fault with leadership: he heaps all the mishaps on their shoulders,

When African leaders squander people's money in buying palaces in Europe rather than building infrastructure in their countries, and the masses revolt, they blame the former colonial masters. When, in this country, we allow others to

come into our neighbourhoods and buy up our businesses because we are stupid enough not to patronise our own people, we blame it on racism, forgetting that those who came into our neighbourhood started with almost nothing. But, through our generosity and patronage, they become rich, and then turn around and insult and disrespect us (Onyeani, 2015: 9).

Onyeani goes on to refer to the Chinese who are given multibillion dollar projects in African countries. He claims that these Chinese bring their own food and clothes, and then Africans shun their own products in favour of foreign delicacies. His observation is that local people find it easier to buy anything sold by whites rather than what is locally manufactured by their own black people. This view is true to a certain extent. Black people still have the notion that anything that has the ‘touch’ of a white person is superior.

Unfortunately, you and I, as a people, have always believed that whatever a black man produces must be inferior. It is ingrained in us. We may not be conscious of it, but we believe it nevertheless. For example, if we were to have two people, one Black and one white, open a store offering the same quality of goods and service, we would not patronise the Black store; rather, we would go to the white person’s store, because we believe it is offering a superior product and service – just because of the colour of their skin (Onyeani, 2015: 13).

This notion of white superiority is so embedded in black people’s mentality that it will take extraordinary persuasion and a great deal of time to let go of it. This, according to Onyeani, is the cause of poverty for black people even after years of independence.

Another highly prominent challenge that emerged with Zimbabwe's independence was tribalism. Before the ousting of the colonial government, it would seem all blacks had a common enemy in the white settler, but after the colonists had been deposed, the tribal divide became noticeable and threatened to destroy the country's hard-won independence. Tribal tolerance deteriorated to the point where minority tribes such as the Ndebele suffered unprecedented tribal prejudice. The defeat and subsequent repression of the Ndebele immediately after independence raised international concern. Thousands of people were massacred on the pretext that they were dissidents. The tribal massacres lasted for about five years. There was a brigade specially trained by the North Koreans whose main task was understood to be the extermination of the Ndebele. Since then, indelible tribal lines remain in the country, and are reflected in mistrust among the tribes. This went even further, from physical extermination to employment according to tribal origin. Employment, especially in government enterprises, was open only to particular tribes and certain political inclinations. This became one of the betrayals that the country never imagined could threaten to reverse the gains of independence.

There was also the issue of whites who undermined and consequently trivialised the independence of Zimbabwe. They became very crafty in using blacks as their fronts in order to access everything that they really wanted. Many blacks were used by whites to acquire or retain the land that they already had. Some farms were quickly 'sold' to blacks, but the whites still had complete control of those properties. Some subdivided their farms and settled blacks on them to protect them from being listed for government acquisition:

Many Rhodesians realised that it was essential to form alliances across racial lines with the new leaders, and they were not slow to do this. Beautiful houses and farms were changing hands. For those in power, there was a special price,

often a fifth of the market price. This was not considered as corruption, but as a bargain. (...) The new leaders were also offered directorships in old-established companies. ZANU itself was offered a number of free shares in companies that sought government patronage (Chung, 2006: 258-9).

This strategy by the former colonists ensured that their influence remained unimpaired in the new Zimbabwean power structures. In effect, the colonial spirit was transferred to the nationalists, who were thus transformed into new colonists. The only difference between them and the former colonists was skin colour. Having black colonists has quenched the hopes of true liberation, and perpetuated a dystopian society.

The issue of land distribution in Zimbabwe is often misconstrued as being a potent source of Mugabe's political angst. This confusion tends to veil the true nature of the land revolution. Most comments centre on Mugabe's Machiavellian political tactics, and totally ignore the authenticity of land redistribution, whose primary aim is to restore land to its true ownership. Onyeani suggests that we should disentangle politics from a true land redistribution exercise. He argues:

In Zimbabwe, while white farmers are still defying the order issued by the government of President Robert Mugabe that they should vacate farmlands that the government has targeted for takeover, others have decided to obey the order. Unfortunately the issue of land redistribution, or 'seizure', as the foreign media would have us believe, has been the most misunderstood, to the extent that it has been lumped together with the politics of President Mugabe. But the issue of politics in Zimbabwe, and ultimately that of Mugabe, should not be allowed to becloud the attempt by the country to equitably redistribute land stolen by whites

in the first instance without compensation to its rightful African owner (Onyeani, 2015: 63).

Mugabe has been presented in various images by various media from various worlds, but the underlying truth is that although he may be a fallible leader, the external media should not impugn his intention to redress land imbalances.

Chinodya's Benjamin seems to show foresight when he discusses the dilemma of a former freedom fighter with his brother-in-law, Dickson. Benjamin argues that within a few years the war will be forgotten because the freedom fighters will have faded out of the liberation picture altogether. 'It's not being given the chance to catch up that makes me bitter. What is there to talk about when people are too busy to listen and too quick to forget? Five years from now the war will be totally forgotten' (*HoT*: 272). Benjamin feels that as freedom fighters, they have no role to play in the economic turnaround of the country. This view agrees with Chung's findings about the guerrillas soon after independence: 'Many of those who had participated in the liberation struggle of the 1970s felt that their revolution had been betrayed,' (Chung, 2006: 299). The concern was that they were not given any role in the restructuring of the country after independence. Since they had played a very significant role in liberating the country, they expected to take part in decision-making, and probably to be included in the new government.

In South Africa, military veterans are seemingly given recognition by the state. They fall under the ministry of defence which is headed by Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, who has to articulate their concerns to parliament. They are benefiting from government-initiated projects; for example, the launching of the Lukhanji housing project in the Chris Hani region of the Eastern Cape on 29 September 2015. Unfortunately, the definition of military or war veteran, according

to the South African Military Veterans Act No. 18 of 2011, includes only those who offered military service for the liberation of the country from 1960 to 1994. This unfortunate bracket excludes many unsung heroes like women and youths who contributed to the struggle in other indispensable ways such as those who looked after the children when their spouses had gone to fight, some had to give support to military veterans in various forms. When looked at from this angle, most of the people who contributed to the success of the war of liberation at the time should qualify to be military veterans, and be included in the list of beneficiaries. Most African countries choose to ignore those who fought in the background, and concentrate only on those who bore arms.

Chinodya is suggesting that the new governors looted national resources while the ordinary people who had suffered in the struggle remained unrewarded. Through Benjamin, Chinodya has managed to highlight the plight of the war veterans who became disillusioned about their political leaders after independence. 'Blast politicians talking forever in posh hotels,' says Benjamin. 'As if they can tell the muzzle of a gun from the butt. Sending their children to schools in USA and UK' (*HoT*: 237). From the evidence in the writings of Chinodya and other authors, the guerrillas remain the most disadvantaged people of all after participating in a war whose victory had promised paradise for them as well.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

In the novels *Harvest of Thorns and Child of War*, Shimmer Chinodya traces the betrayal of human ideals which culminates in what he views as the bitter experience of post-colonial Zimbabwe. He contends that the people remain dispossessed, and suffer under various kinds of corruption and intimidation. The two novels explore the ideological cartography of Zimbabwe after independence with a view to articulating Chinodya's conviction that Zimbabweans have not yet realised their full democratic rights, even after thirty-four years of so called independence. In Chinodya's view, the collapse of the dream for a better future after independence has created a longing for possibilities that remain far too remote to achieve.

In *Harvest of Thorns*, Chinodya reveals his animus against Zimbabwe's governance issues and the state's ingratitude towards the war veterans for their contribution to independence through the insurrection. Chinodya's tragic hero Benjamin endures total indigence. Through Shamiso, Benjamin's mother, Chinodya shows how the role of the war veterans was downplayed. According to her, engaging in the armed struggle has been a sheer waste of time. She aggravates Benjamin's predicament when she says, 'Look at your friends who finished school and started working. You'll never catch up with them!' (*HoT*: 24). Benjamin is compared to his contemporaries who did not join the liberation struggle, but now possess big houses and live lavishly. The likes of Benjamin are further alienated from their communities because it is believed that they bear the stigma of being killers during the bush war. The same sentiments are voiced by distraught South African military veterans in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*:

‘Everything now ... the fruits of liberation ... are enjoyed only by those from exile or from Robben Island,’ he overhears a man from the group of dagga-smokers complain. ‘Yet we were the ones who bore the brunt of the bullets. We threw stones and danced the freedom dance.’ ‘Yes, while they were having a good time overseas we were dying here. We were cannon fodder for those who are eating softly,’ adds another (Mda, 2000: 34-35).

This citation captures a group of military veterans who are at a night vigil for a late acquaintance in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. From their tone, it is evident that they are dissatisfied with the life they are living; they have to smoke dagga as a way of passing the time and as a means to sooth their wrecked nerves. Sometimes these fractured individuals are mistaken for rogues, yet they represent the casualties of unappreciative government. Ideally, these men should have been properly documented and accorded their rightful status as freedom cadres. Disgruntled voices of this nature are common across most African countries. When the war of liberation ended, the military veterans who comprised those who were in the forefront, dodging bullets, were completely forgotten by the new governments whose primary aim was personal enrichment.

In line with Chinodya’s view, this perpetuates suffering among the freedom fighters as they are marginalised by the people whose freedom they fought for. Chinodya tries to highlight the plight of the war veterans, using various images of their suffering during and after the war, but unfortunately the freedom fighters have since been forgotten because their role of liberating the country is over; they have to be content with crumbs that they pick from the garbage bins.

Upon his return from the war, Benjamin is told that he does not qualify for demobilisation payment. This baffles the reader because Benjamin’s documents are in the file, yet he is still

dismissed after threats that his claim might be fraudulent. Through this narrative, Chinodya further heightens the plight of the likes of Benjamin, who are now labelled 'war veterans', by graphically explaining the nature of the advertisements for current jobs, pushed far beyond the reach of the war veterans: 'The jobs advertised in big letters were for managers and accountants and directors and the ones in very small print were for mechanics, engineers, secretaries and the like' (*HoT*: 15). The reader is surprised that when Benjamin arrives at the demobilisation office, he is interrogated by people who manage to get all the answers and reasonable proof that he is a genuine freedom fighter, but they still dismiss him. The officer actually confirms Benjamin's claims when he says: 'You see, comrade, we're having trouble with people who are coming forward claiming they were combatants when they were civilians. The army has already lost thousands of dollars paying out these false claims' (*HoT*: 16).

To worsen Benjamin's plight the officer advises: 'Even if your papers were in order that would take time. The recruiting officer has a long waiting list. They are taking people with special skills first. Mechanics and so on. What certificates do you have?' (*HoT*: 16). The irony here rests on the fact that most of the war veterans are school 'drop-outs' making it highly unlikely that they may be in possession of special skills, or any recognised academic qualifications. In this instance, Chinodya is expressing utter dismay and criticising the government for being insensitive in dealing with the war veterans. At this stage in the young country, very few people have had a recent education because the war ensured that schools and most of the colonialist service points were totally shut down. Education was seen as a symbol of white colonisation, hence the closure of schools, especially in rural areas. It should be borne in mind that the guerrilla war necessitated the destruction of various amenities, including those that would be used in the emancipated country. There was very little consideration of the future needs of the young democracy that was

being so painfully brought to birth through the struggle. It is therefore sarcastic that immediately after the war, veterans who were directly responsible for closing, and in some cases even burning schools, are required to produce evidence of their education in order to get employment. It is as if they are now being punished for some of their conduct during the insurrection.

The closure of some schools in certain rural communities is responsible for inequalities that exist even to this day. The rural people who bore the brunt of liberating the country were left behind in terms of education because their schools were closed, and there was no way of getting educated to meet the needs of the country at independence. The remoteness of the rural communities also denied them access to knowledge on how to skip the country in order to get education abroad. Those who managed this feat faced hostility when they came back at independence: ‘At his first job interview he had them comment, “Who is he? We didn’t see him when we were dancing the freedom dance.”’ (Mda, 2000: 31). Those who had left for an education were accused of having advanced their own interests at the expense of liberating the country: Zakes Mda’s Camagu in *The Heart of Redness* faces this predicament when he returns to his home country, South Africa, after studying in America during the liberation period:

Only then did Camagu understand the full implications of life in this new democratic society. He did not qualify for any important position because he was not a member of the Aristocrats of the Revolution, an exclusive club that is composed of the ruling elites, their families and close friends. Some of them were indeed leaders of the freedom struggle, while others had used their status and wealth to snake their way into the very heart of the organisation (Mda, 2000: 36).

Social ills such as nepotism and other forms of ‘-isms’ have plagued most African democracies. Sometimes those who are truly deserving are side lined because they are overtaken by those who are wealthy enough to buy their way into the ruling party elite. In most young African democracies, one has to know high-ranking politicians in order to be appointed for certain jobs. One might have to bribe one’s way up the social ladder by paying money or sleeping with those who occupy influential positions. Just recently, in December 2015, in the North-West Province of South Africa, the national Minister of Education was reported to have frozen all appointments in the Department of Education because of scandals such as sex-in-exchange-for-work and payment of monetary bribes to certain officials in the department.

In Chinodya’s *Harvest of Thorns* Benjamin’s plight will apparently be inherited by his new-born baby boy. This child is born to parents who cannot be gainfully employed as a result of their lack of skills. The birth of this child undoubtedly confirms that the poverty in Benjamin’s home will carry on through the child. In his e-mail to me, Chinodya contends: ‘As for the guerrillas and the job market – isn’t that obvious? I think there is a lot more to it than getting jobs – fractured lives and futures, emotional scars, and a wounded national conscience’ (Chinodya, 2012). His unconcealed feeling is that those who went to fight wholeheartedly will have to wallow in poverty.

Still in *Harvest of Thorns*, when Clopas, Shamiso’s husband, eventually comes to meet his son Benjamin after the war of liberation, Chinodya paints a caricature of a man who is in his own right a ‘petit bourgeois’. Clopas praises his newly acquired car, an old, battered Zephyr Zodiac which ironically betrays his trust by breaking down in spite of the sentiments attached to it. By showing Clopas in this predicament, Chinodya highlights the level of illusion among the post-independence masses. The satire extends to the highly idolised dog, Bingo, which feeds on milk,

yet the owner is on pension, and can hardly afford to buy milk on a daily basis even for himself. Clopas believes that the departure of whites marks the advent of the 'rich blacks', who should replicate the erstwhile white regime. This is why he struggles to propagate the white culture by inheriting the dog and the car from migrating whites. Chinodya seems to be satirising those blacks who envied whites and eventually took it upon themselves to acculturate themselves into pseudo-whites. It is also suggested that these are the same blacks who did not participate in the bush war, but at independence they occupied influential positions in the new Zimbabwe. These are those who were named 'mafikizolos' because they only emerged when the war was over to enjoy the spoils. The underlying discontent in Chinodya's voice suggests that many people who did not go to the war were quick to loot wealth immediately after independence.

*Harvest of Thorns* was published in 1986, six years into the independence of Zimbabwe. About 11 years later, Chinodya published another novel that highlights the plight of a pre- and post-war citizen of Zimbabwe, but this time with a concentration on children. The study of the second novel reveals that Chinodya still has his view of betrayal, which he extends to the youth. In *Child of War*, the protagonist is Hondo, a child who suffers all the trials of the war of liberation. Through Hondo, Chinodya seems to be arguing that the scourge of betrayal did not spare the children. He seems to be rejecting the celebratory stance on independence that other authors have taken

Reiterating the idea of betrayal through a child protagonist, and rewriting the story of the liberation struggle from the point of view of a child seems to be a way of appealing to those readers who might not have grasped this notion from the novel *Harvest of Thorns*. Usually the mere mention of child-soldiers or child abuse attracts attention because of the vulnerability of children. In *Child of War*, Chinodya underscores the importance of the role played by children in

the war of liberation and the government's ingratitude to them. The protagonist Hondo is conscripted into the struggle at the tender age of eleven, but he collaborates with guerrillas until the end of the struggle. Most of the sporadic acts of defiance in the novel are staged by young people through organising *pungwe* meetings and playing the roles of *mujhibhas* and *chimbwidos*. They are very conscious of the consequences of supporting the guerrilla movement, but they are daring enough to remain focused even after the deaths that are suffered by their friends.

Unlike in *Harvest of Thorns*, in *Child of War* the young people take over the baton from their forefathers in order to perpetuate the *Chimurenga*. In Chapter Two of the novel, Hondo receives a spear from his dying ancestor:

I knew he was dying, the whole valley was full of strange dying men and I was the only living soul in this valley of death but I was reluctant to leave him. At last, I picked up the weapons he had given me and hurried away from that place (CoW: 8).

On the critical role played by the children in Chinodya's novels, Muponde and Primorac write:

Children played a central and active role in the struggle in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa. In Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), the brutality of the colonial government's armed forces created a great determination on the part of the nationalist guerrillas to fight and change this (Muponde & Primorac, 2005: 119).

When Hondo takes over from his supposed ancestor, it is assumed that the struggle will continue because of the energy bestowed upon young people. The task that Hondo accomplishes is far greater than the reward that he receives at the dawn of independence, when he is expected to re-confine himself to the role of childhood. The only reward that Hondo gets is free education that

is only ephemeral. Some of his friends are killed, but no compensation is given to their parents. After their enormous contribution, the reader cannot belittle the involvement of young people in the struggle, but it appears that Chinodya believes that the government has definitely downplayed their role. Even in *Harvest of Thorns*, a *mujhibha* meets a terrible death when he is on a guerrilla-mission from the ammunitions base, ‘The *mujhibha* staggered before them. His hands clawed at his body wildly ripping out strips of bleeding skin. (...) The *mujhibha*, face bathed in blood, fell and was quiet (*HoT*: 244). This young man is accompanying the guerrillas to the ammunition base because he knows the topography very well. The guerrillas use this *mujhibha* as their global positioning system (GPS) since the young man is gifted in the knowledge of the land. About this *mujhibha* Chinodya writes:

A *mujhibha* from the village accompanied them, showing them a route through the farms. (...) Beyond the mission school they began the ascent into the bewildering tangle of mist-caped, mystical hills that looked so alike that without the *mujhibha* they would have spent days going around in circles. An athletic eighteen-year-old with a sombre face, the *mujhibha* knew the area as he did his own village. He had escorted another group to the supplies camp before and moved with the sure-footedness of a mountain goat, guiding them through the mists and the showers and great blue whales of rock (*HoT*: 239).

The knowledge that this *mujhibha* has is undoubtedly invaluable to the efficiency and precision of the bush war. The *mujhibha*’s knowledge is free, although it costs him his life. It is obvious that such deaths were never recognised, and will remain at the back of the memories of those freedom fighters who survived the war. At the end of the bush war, no one would mention the likes of this vividly described *mujhibha*’s parents for compensation. In *Child of War*, Hondo

recounts how he and ten other *mujhibhas* were deluded and later tortured by the Rhodesian soldiers. As *mujhibhas*, they had to support the bush war at all costs, but their knowledge of the tactics of guerrilla warfare was sometimes inadequate. When one soldier disguises himself as a guerrilla, Hondo and his friends fall for the trick and are arrested and summarily tortured:

They lit cigarettes and rolled our bodies to sitting position. Then they held the burning cigarettes close to our faces. Hot ashes seared our skins, as they fired a volley of angry questions at us. (...) My vision became weaker, weaker, and the burning cigarette stabbed my face, hands, chest, thighs, until my whole body became a tight knot of pain, yelling for release. (...) They poured buckets of chilly water over us and left us to lie on the floor in pain (*HoT*: 55-6).

Hondo and his friends have gone through the whole scope of the bush war. Sometimes their suffering transcends that of some guerrillas. This account would definitely categorise Hondo and his friends as true cadres of the struggle, automatically qualifying them for end-of-the-war benefits like the rest of the guerrillas. As Hondo goes on to give an account of the death of some of the young men, the reader is engulfed in the pathos of a parent who will never see his child: ‘As we scurried away from the whizzing bullets another of my mates sank down on the grass’ (*CoW*: 58). Sadly, many youths contributed to the liberation struggle, but were never acknowledged at the dawn of independence.

There are several young men and women whose names are mentioned in the war. Their sacrificial participation serves as evidence that they contributed immensely to the success of the liberation struggle. Girls are sexually abused and some eventually give birth to children whose fathers they will never identify. Benjamin remembers most of the relationships between young

girls and guerrillas. These relationships exist in spite of several warnings that guerrillas must never have sex with civilians:

Before that, he had seen Maritha and Chenzira, Baas Die and Gidi Ishumba's respective girlfriends, sneaking in and out of the base. At first he had not suspected anything and then slowly, it had dawned on him that everyone carried on their faces the furtive looks that said they knew (*HoT*: 230).

Girls play several roles in the liberation struggle, and among those roles is giving sensual pleasure to the guerrillas. Considering the crucial nature of the liberation struggle, girls cannot refuse to give pleasure to those who are key players in the war; in fact to them it is a prestigious role. Even if this is against the rules of the bush war, it apparently serves as the only entertainment for the young guerrillas. Children are born long after these guerrillas have been transferred from their operating zones, or been killed. Chinodya is suggesting that the lives of these young women were fractured beyond repair, more so as the new government turned a blind eye, and focused on looting the state. The children who were born greatly increased the street children population that was already a problem even before independence. These are some of the grey areas that Chinodya is endeavouring to highlight.

Some parents of the young people who were involuntarily conscripted into the war lost their children, but the new government never had time to dress the wounds that were left by the war. The reader finds it amazing that even the women who bore the brunt of the liberation struggle were never compensated, let alone recognised as co-freedom fighters. Women prepared meals for the guerrillas, and often endangered their lives by so doing. Chinodya has undertaken to speak for those whose lives were broken by the bush war, but cannot speak for themselves.

These are the same people who continue to be invaluable voters during elections. During voting periods their votes become so meaningful, yet their contribution to the liberation has completely faded from memory.

The young and elderly folk from the countryside contributed immensely to the struggle. In *Child of War* Chinodya maintains:

Women and the girls were called upon to cook food for the guerrillas. Every family was asked to contribute money to buy food for the guerrillas, who liked to eat well. Meat was their favourite delicacy – it was not unusual for them to refuse meatless vegetables! Thus villagers' stock of chicken and goats dwindled steadily and would have continued to do so, had the fighters themselves not come up with an ingenious plan to meet the needs of both themselves and the people who supported them (*CoW*: 24).

The guerrillas could not cook for themselves either because they did not know how, or had no money for food. The onus to ensure that the guerrillas were well fed rested squarely on the villagers. These poor folk went out of their way to buy expensive food for the guerrillas. This meant that the villagers were sometimes stripped of their little wealth to the point of total indigence. Having to feed the guerrillas who often ate large quantities of food meant that women had to work full-time to ensure that the guerrillas were fed good meals. The rural communities contributed immensely to the struggle, sometimes even more than the guerrillas themselves, but when it came to the actual distribution of power, it was the urban leadership that took precedence, in spite of the fact that the urban folk did not contribute as much as the rural.

Another challenge was that at the close of the bush war, the youths were expected to play the role of tractable youngsters after having been entrusted with the responsibility of liberating the country, even though most of the elders who became leaders were in their eighties, and some were even suffering from senility. The exclusion of young people from leadership justified their misdemeanours. They felt left out of the whole leadership structure after their immense contribution. The old people at the head of affairs are often found guilty of social crimes such as nepotism. They did not value education because they were not educated themselves, so they would shoot down any new ideas that came their way. This is one of the major challenges that countries like Zimbabwe are facing. There is absolutely no room for young people to contribute to the governance of the country, and yet, ironically, the freedom people enjoy is the result of their collective sacrifice. When Chinodya writes his two novels, he places the young characters so prominently that the reader cannot help but appreciate their contribution to the struggle, and then condemn the system of governance for not recognising them. In Chinodya's view, the youth and rural women are highly marginalised. This explains why the young democracies are plagued with various forms of service delivery protest. The poor were promised heaven on earth that the new democracies are finding difficult to provide because their leaders continue to stuff their bellies at the poor's expense. The plight of the African post-independence people is summarised in a poem by Syl Cheney-Coker, of Sierra Leone, that was published in *The Heritage of African Poetry: An Anthology of Oral and Written Poetry*, edited by Isidore Okpewho:

Peasants

The agony; I say the agony!

the agony of imagining their squalor but never knowing it

the agony of cramping them in roach infected shacks

the agony of treating them like chattel slaves

the agony of feeding them abstract theories they do not understand

the agony of lugubrious eyes and bartered souls

the agony of giving them party cards but never party support

the agony of marshalling them on election day but never on banquet nights

the agony of giving them melliferous words but mildewed bread

the agony of their cooking hearths dampened with unused

the agony of their naked feet on the hot burning tarmac

the agony of their children with projectile bellies

the agony of long miserable nights

the agony of their thatched house with too many holes

the agony of erecting hotels but being barred from them

the agony of watching the cavalcade of limousines

the agony of grand state balls for God knows who

the agony of those who study meaningless 'ism in incomprehensible languages

the agony of intolerable fees for schools but with no jobs in sight

the agony of it all i say the agony of it all

but above all the damn agony of appealing to their patience

Africa beware! Their patience is running out!

(Cheney-Coker in Okpewho 1985:45)

This poem underscores the plight of the marginalised poor whose woes are aggravated by those who were entrusted with overseeing their welfare – the presidents and cabinet ministers. The promise of democratic equity remains very elusive. The promises that were drummed into the peasants' ears at independence are consistently revived every five years when canvassing their votes is crucial, but are never fulfilled. This marginalised group includes women, youth and military veterans who were impoverished by the liberation war after being fed with hopes of better days after independence.

Zimbabwe continues to be entrapped in economic woes that are a result of maladministration, greed, corruption and tribalism. The number of expatriates from Zimbabwe on the globe are alarmingly high. The economic migration of educated people from Zimbabwe to countries such as the United Kingdom, America, Australia, South Africa and many others has contributed to the brain drain that has dealt Zimbabwe its hardest economic blow. The definition of 'liberation hero' has remained at the mercy of the politicians. The war veterans and the masses whose lives were fractured by the war of liberations have joined the ranks of the marginalised poor in the rest of the continent. It is therefore not surprising that Chinodya clings to the view that most if not all of the independence ideals have been severely betrayed.

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