



Independence, a Sheer Letdown in *Harvest of Thorns* by Shimmer Chinodya

Abib Sene, Ablaye Ndong

Laboratory of African and Postcolonial Studies, Department of English, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar, Senegal
Email: abib.sene@ucad.edu.sn

How to cite this paper: Sene, A. and Ndong, A. (2025) Independence, a Sheer Letdown in *Harvest of Thorns* by Shimmer Chinodya. *Open Access Library Journal*, 12: e13698. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1113698>

Received: May 30, 2025

Accepted: August 16, 2025

Published: August 19, 2025

Copyright © 2025 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Published in 1990, *Harvest of Thorns* serves as a bully pulpit through which Shimmer Chinodya unearths and lambasts at once the colonial pangs and the colonial legacy his people are doomed to carry and grapple with for the longest of time. Chinodya has brought to the surface the dead hand of Christianity aimed at breeding passivity and disguising colonial shenanigans. Its bringing about opposing and opposite mindsets draws a wedge between indigenous. As well, the dashed cruel and rough chickening out of fighters captures both the depth of social havoc and the level of traumatic exposure in colonial and post-colonial Zimbabwe. Delving deep as well into the Zimbabwean post-independent era, the issue of “failed independence” is given undivided attention. Thus being, this paper has, from a critical perspective, glared at the Chimurenga fighters’ gall and remorse. Forsaken by their new government and fellows that overtly gang up on them at a time-honoured liberating role of Zimbabwe, one-time fighters have been stuck with the stinking stains of history in a neo-colonial state. Bearing the stamp of murderers or rapists after war, that stigma has been an open sesame to their diverse trials and tribulations. Veteran’s plight as well goes beyond the pale due to families blaming them [veterans] for their own predicament.

Subject Areas

Literature

Keywords

Veterans, Colonial Legacy, Neo-Colonial, New Government

1. Introduction

Laying emphasis on the role and function of literature, Derrida takes into account

“the sociocultural embeddedness of literature [...]” [1], to appositely underscore the much agreed upon idea according to which ‘literature cannot develop in the vacuum’. Thus, going back to the past, Shimmer Chinodya spotlights the Zimbabwean social and political decay stemming from the white man’s fencing off authority and the indigenous topmost grit and mettle to sever for good the colonial umbilical cord.

Born in 1957 in Gweru, Zimbabwe, the author has been an eye-witness to the colonial chokehold and has opted for giving “a voice to the voiceless” [2], in unveiling the helluva downsides of colonial domination in both Rhodesia and Zimbabwe. Languidly groping for a way out of injustice, the uber-cruel chickening out of the indigenous is very well captured in *Harvest of Thorns*. Thereby, to respond to the no-nonsense effort by *the villagers* to ward off the colonial threat, the colonizer or rather “the strangers tore the roofs of the villagers’ huts. They went to the kraal and shot three bulls” [3] which stands for general deterrence as it “describes the effect that punishment has when it serves as a public example or threat that deters people other than the initial offender from committing similar crimes” [4]. Accordingly, having reached its pinnacle to weigh so very heavily on Rhodesians, oppression and violence from the white man were launched back to boomerang on him [the white man] at different levels and bring about “independence”, even though it was labelled a toothless bulldog not able to effectively dry up indigenous tears. Thereby, the author deals with the issue of dashed hopes for independence in Zimbabwe with one-time fighters left to lick their wounds.

In this work, it will be of primary interest to spotlight the short-lived glee of independence cum the dragged-on colonial trauma in Zimbabwe. Hence the country’s being a real bottleneck for veterans whose blunder, if there was any, was to fight for liberty.

2. Independence, a Sour Harvest

The issue of failed independence across Africa is discussed at length by intellectuals from within Africa. And ideological reasons but a neo-colonial agenda are singled out by many to be the root causes of this “second-rate independence the colonizing powers sought to implement in Africa by any manner of means possible” [5]. *Harvest of Thorns*, captures the level of woe and resentment for independence without freedom from the claws of a skewed colonial system.

Going back to the colonial days of Zimbabwe, the writer sheds light on the predicament of a Christianized family, their devotion and disillusionment. Born in an exaggerated Christian family, Benjamin Tichafa is derided by his classmates as aspersion is cast on his family for their seeming nonchalance before the colonial threat that brings the country to its knees. His father’s saying: “We’re church people, [...]. We’re interested in the spirit, not the flesh” ([3] speaks volumes to testify that their saying and doing nothing against the colonial injustice they face even at their doorsteps. They bear, indeed, the stamp of collaborators to be called names. At school, Benjamin and his bosom friends go separate ways owing to his family’s

notoriety. Thus, he is trivialized and assaulted at school as the narrator informs:

Children had been pointing at him and his sister and whispering things about them and their church. When the two boys who had been tracking him all through the break followed him into the toilet, he guessed they wanted to do something bad to him.

Arching himself forward against the urinal, he quickly emptied his bladder. ‘Sellout!’ the boy hissed.

Lick the urinal!’ the other said, stepping forward.

He ducked his dripping little pecker into his shorts and swung round to face them.

‘Sellout!’ they hissed again, edging towards him to cut off his scape.

He made a rush for the door but his foot slid across a pool of water and he crashed into the door, landing on his back.

‘Lick it!’ the boys hissed.

He tried to get up. They each grabbed him by the leg and heaved his head at the urinal.

Another face sneered in front of him.

‘Sellout!’

He hit out at the face with balled fists. The boy plunged back among the hisses of the spectators. Suddenly it was quiet [3].

This passage spotlights the horrendous treatment and violence meted out to the Tichafa family due to their religious bent or rather their colonial mentality, for Christianity egged them on to submissiveness. The family’s devotion and closeness to the church and therefore the White man draws a line between them and their neighbours. Though young, Benjamin is harmed as he both goes through the colonial tortures and the hunt by his then bosom friends at school. This situation brings about an almost same reaction in the family, that of running away from social pressure and injustice. Eloping with a man she falls in love, Esther Tichafa feels that the further away she is from gossip, and injustice, the better her life will be. Yet, in Benjamin’s early courage to fight back, the seed of a potential tomorrow freedom fighter reads very easily. Thus, there is no shadow of doubt that this aforementioned trauma faced by the schoolboy will entail writ large decisions such as joining the guerrillas.

With “a big blob of blood bouncing from his nose” [3], the bruised boy denies his fact to make of Benjamin an innocent guilty person who will have to “scrub the toilet after class” [3] as punishment. Rubbing salt in the wound, his father according to whom ‘a sellout’ is not worth beating one’s classmate, takes off his belt to castigate him. As matter of fact, Benjamin is raised by cowards whose minds have been captured by a hegemonic religion. However, there is no getting away from the fact that he [Benjamin] is recusant before injustice, which is evidenced by his “burning down government property” [3]. From this outlandish and hurtful life led by Benjamin, the author pictures the people’s compounded trials and

tribulations entailing an opening of old wounds. For, the *Chimurenga* rise has been a set of struggles over land, cattle, etc., which supports people's existence. The grabbing and impounding of those resources by the British triggered off natives' fighting tooth and nail to snatch back their dignity: the *Chimurenga* war.

As for Benjamin's trek to the border to join a guerrilla camp, it is hastened by a black call-up, targeting merely drop-outs in the Rhodesian army. Yet, that commitment and zeal to fight the colonial system is viewed differently by his father, a 'God-fearing' Christian who cowardly feel betrayed: "Oh Benjamin! How can you shame us like this!" [3]. Understandably, Benjamin's father cannot behave differently for, the psychological impact of Christianity, he works flat out to please his white boss, the colonizer. Whereas, his child's sense of patriotism is mind-boggling, he feels that his father's making tea and carrying files for the white man only stiffens the shackles of colonial oppression. He vows that he will never be seen in his father's shoes as he deems:

Carrying files from one office to another and making tea for the 'baas'. I did not know until I was much older than that's all he did. I thought he was some kind of officer or clerk. But he ran a family on the pennies they paid him [...]. What I was saying about my father, oh yes, that he, in carrying those files, in making the tea that wetted the baas's throat so that the baas could harass our people better, he too was propping up the system [3].

Chinodya lays naked people's consciousness notwithstanding the devastating effects of religion striving to render meek and tractable before the colonial hardships. Therefore, that awareness from the downtrodden geared toward tackling head-on the colonial system picked up speed to result in bloodshed.

Once in a guerrilla camp after days and nights of risked life to cross the border, it did take guts and stamina to Benjamin to prove that he is not a spy before being trained and referred to as *Pasi Nemasellout* [3], his war name. Therewith, he is summoned by the commander to answer to seemingly tricky questions meant to gauge the authenticity of his coming to fight:

The commander moved his pistol carefully on the map.

'I am giving you the last chance. You were foolish to come. Because you're a young man I'm willing to help you. I'm giving you the last chance to leave to this place. My men will accompany to you the border. I am letting you off only on one condition - that you tell whoever sent you that you did not find information they wanted you to find.

'No I don't want to go back [...].'

'You're wasting my time, my friend. Do you know what I normally do with spies?'

'I'm not a spy! I came here to fight. I left school... They wanted to force us into the army. I can't go back. Please, let me stay' [3].

His dogged determination takes roots in the multifaceted colonial violence and injustice that actually jelled in his mind the idea to nix and veto this nefarious

enterprise with the gun. However, this resoluteness to call time on a colonial enterprise paved the way to traumatic experiences and exposures. Indeed, *Shimurenga* fighters' endeavour to break free from the claws of such a skewed colonial system is marked by a nip and tuck violence from both freedom fighters under the aegis of their women and the Rhodesian army striving to fence off western privilege and authority. Thus, to the trauma related to the bludgeoning of fighters into submission, one should factor in the debilitating effects of epidemics wreaking havoc in the guerrilla camps. The author pictures the health-related hardships in the fighter's hideout:

The epidemic shook them from their slumber [...].

So when, the drugs ran out they turned to the forest.

They dug roots from the ground. They crushed them and mixed them with water and drunk the portions.

The epidemic raged rebelliously—six, eight, eleven, died—crushing hope in the camp. There was a lull, root fighting germ; nature versus nature, while humans waited. Perhaps it was simple, desperate faith [3].

Chinodya brings to light the various challenges faced by guerrilla fighters, which their jolly unfathomable resoluteness and single-mindedness overpowers. In fact, diseases and epidemic added to the atrocities meant to stifle and quell indigenous aspirations. Wedged between the harmer of colonial strictures cum injustice and the anvil of western deterrent violence, Benjamin epitomizes the plight of *Shimurenga* fighters in Zimbabwe. Again his boldness and resourcefulness before the dire episodes of western takeover lead to conclude that freedom fighters' courage in Zimbabwe outstripped western will not to sever the colonial umbilical cord. Even though, at bottom, the latters have been out of whack in terms of medical supplies and other subsidiaries, which is evidenced by the above-mentioned epidemic in the guerrilla camp.

Thus, from both sides, freedom fighters' and the Rhodesian army's different agendas have been wedded to deeds, which finds evidence in things' going awry in the guerrilla camps. The narrator informs of Benjamin's experience:

The helicopters converged on the centre, hovered there, spitting fire, and they dived again, outwards, spinning a new, bigger net. Behind him he heard the boom of anti-aircraft guns and the roar of guerrilla AK 47s above the *knock, knock, knock* of Rhodesian FNs followed by the screech of metal. The two helicopter spun, belching smoke and plunged into the trees. The guns boomed again and the remaining helicopters spread out, made one last blazing sweep over the camp and vanished into the horizon [3].

This passage mirrors the depth of the havoc wrought by western domination and the second *Shimurenga* conflict, which, in actual fact, buttresses Nehanda's words during the first *Shimurenga* war before her life was cut short by the British invaders: "My bones shall rise again" [6]. Indeed, she strongly believed in the loudly speaking of guns for the liberation of her people. Since both *Shimurenga*

conflicts have nearly had the same yearnings and purposes in Zimbabwe, the likelihood for the former to influence and inform the latter is very high. Having then driven a wedge by his courage between him and his family, his father's taking him to a mission school means to set him on the straight and narrow. Yet, he sticks to his guns despite his father's social walk and chooses to participate and witness the very traumatic episodes of war: "The forest was strewn with bodies and pieces of clothing. A woman wrapped in a blanket ran into him, hands clamped to her head, screaming and stamping the ground with her feet. A naked boy lays on a rock, clasping an arm half-eaten away by napalm" [3], which again pictures the heart-rending circumstances stemming from western hegemon will and guerrilla fighters' bottomless desire to veto the colonial status quo.

However, the Zimbabwean independence's having to bear and cope with the colonial pangs is jaw-dropping even though one cannot afford to pooh-pooh the efforts by veterans who went through blood, sweat and tears to veto the colonial enterprise. Knocked for six by the on-going colonial status quo, veterans have come near to regretting their having been out to fight. In other words, for its inability to rid the people of colonial throes, independence has been a setback, viz., it brought a few to laughter and many to tears. Yet this gut punch does not appear unique about Zimbabwe for, despite the endeavour of nationalist movements, independence has been a sheer let-down in a bunch of African countries. Among the truths of this matter is that "a good number of the first leaders of post-colonial Africa were not the right ones as most of them had not been chosen by the masses they governed. And almost each newly-independent African state could be set as an example [...]" [5]. Being under the aegis of their erstwhile colonial masters, most leaders in newly independent Africa only paid lip service to their people's dearth. It means that "This crop of African leaders are mere surrogates as stooges merely representing their Western imperialist masters on the African soil rather than representing the African people over whom they governed" [7]. Nevertheless, there is no getting away from the fact that post-colonial African leaders did have the required mental wherewithal for the new leadership job and paradigm shift.

That being the case, veterans after independence have nearly come to the conclusion that they fought to only inherit a system that shores up the former colonizer's authority and privilege. Benjamin Tichafa, a war veteran spews his venom against independence that fails to roll back the then colonial normalcies:

The worst thing is to come back and find nothing has changed. I look at my father and mother and brother and sister, at the house in which I was born, at the township in which I grew up, people prefer to call it a suburb now—and I see the same old house, the same old street and the same old faces struggling to survive. We won the war, yes, but it's foolish to start talking about victory [...]. The real battle will take a long, long time; it may not even begin [3].

Political independence has mistakenly been perceived as a downright panacea

for the colonial wound. And that is reminiscent to Africa's having been given the crown while the jewel remains in the former colonizer's hand. In Zimbabwe, this idea finds evidence in the white minority's clinging to the country's economy and the resources despite the so-called independence. The real battle to fight after independence according to Benjamin must be against poverty. In *Bones* (1990) by Chenjerai Hove, undivided attention is given to this post-independent social inequalities and therefore the continual western power over natives in Zimbabweans. Hove undercores the people's plight and disappointment at once to be drowned in poverty after the cease fire. The narrator reveals:

But they had seen much poverty that it became harsh to their eyes. Let us leave they said to each other. Let us look for better areas where there are fields that can give something to the farmers. Our hope will die if we continue to see children dying every day and the cattle licking the soil as if it contains salt [8].

The conspicuous issue of independence without sovereignty in Africa could hardly be eschewed as it took root in the natives' playing a peripheral role in the economic realm.

Thereby, in post-colonial Zimbabwe, people kept on being economically preyed upon by the white minority. Benjamin doubles down in spewing his venom against the economic pitfalls in his nascent country: "Of course, when we went out we thought our guns could change things overnight. And then we came back to find that whites could still shout at us because they still have the money" [3]. This statement from a veteran rings very loudly to tell about the Zimbabwean's continued pangs, as it also heralds the gloomy and trying episodes indigenous are liable to go through again. Chinodya distinguishes himself in rapping at the blood-thirsty and sneering British power undermining peace in his country. Because of people's economic dependence, Zimbabwe fell into the category of independent countries without sovereignty. Besides, this colonial festering wound, viz., the African political independence that undermines the then colonized agency is well captured by Cheikh O. Diagne, a Senegalese intellectual. He deals with issues that undermine independence in many African countries in his *La République Privée du Sénégal* (2019) [The Private Republic of Senegal]. As the book title itself is very eloquent, Diagne deems that the independence without sovereignty plan in Africa resulted in private republics after independence, even though the words *république* and *privée* sound paradoxical. His analysis derives Africa's problems from its relations with the former imperial powers. Therefore, he refers to any African country where this political, economic, and cultural harassment is subtly kept up by the former colonial masters with the complicity of African leaders as "a private republic". This means that citizens hold less power and are voiceless regarding the way their country is governed. He mentions:

People who are supposed to be sovereign are not ruling anything and get stuck into systems they neither can change nor improve. Are we at a turning

point for systems falsely presented as deliverance while they subtly drag on everything evil our for-fathers were fighting with their very own lives? [9]

Such an analysis is relevant to the political, economic, and social atmosphere of post-independent Zimbabwe. The colonial heritage in Africa is to subtly propel western imperialism and therefore, the subjugation and exploitation of the people, hence Zimbabwe's perennial uneasiness and the widening social gaps. Fay Chung validates that idea about her own country Zimbabwe as she mentions that: "Independence meant the beginning of another liberation struggle, possibly even more difficult than what we had just gone through" (Chung 2006: 254) [10]. Independence was thought to have paved the way to new bigger challenges while older ones had not been wholly taken up. It is indeed true that the force that surrounds power is the real power, viz., the white minority's economic power in Zimbabwe made of them decision-makers, which still wrong-footed indigenous people and made the country a ring where the majority is still to be fattened upon. In a nutshell, independence in Zimbabwe as well as in numerous other parts of Africa, has been a sheer *Harvest of Thorns* despite the freedom fighters' endeavour for liberation. However, if people in post-colonial Zimbabwe were only victims of the colonial heritage, war veterans seemed more wedged between the anvil of neo-colonialism and the harmer of bearing the stamp of the then killers and rapists.

3. Veterans from Hero to Zero

"We were heroes during the heat of the war, but now we have been left to lick our wounds" [3]. These words from Benjamin, a former freedom fighter speak volume about veterans' having been in a downward spiral and their compounded trials and tribulation. Indeed, the new government's playing fast and loose with one-time fighters, their employment to boot, is akin to betrayal. Accordingly, after the liberating role, veterans did come near to rueing their having fought to bring about independence. For, the nascent country utterly became a hostile environment for them to live. Guerrilla fighters' discomfort mainly hailed from economic marginalization by a new government that seemingly worked hand in glove with the white minority. Benjamin testifies: "The truth of it is that those of us who went out to fight will carry the scars for the rest of their lives" [3]. The white minority's economic power offered them [the Whites] a chance to avenge veterans and make them eat humble pie through unemployment and marginalization at different levels. Thus, the pseudo-independence of the country never bothered to undo widening social inequalities. And veterans' plight worsened when their efforts and sacrifices for the country have actually been off-limits. Hence Benjamin's forecasting that: "Five years from now the war will be totally forgotten" [3]. Not only did people underestimate and forget about the efforts that brought about independence in Zimbabwe, but the political leadership closed doors for employment and better living conditions to former freedom fighters. Devoid of plans for survival, veterans wrapped up caving in even though they won the war against the Rhodesian army. The failure of Zimbabwean post-colonial leadership and veterans' pov-

erty and unemployment have been a foil to their lionheartedness. The post-independent regime and the white minority did overtly gang up on the former liberation fighters to make them fall prey to trauma.

To worsen the liberation fighters' plight, the people too held a negative view about them, which is understandably due to the then Rhodesian government's negative propaganda. Civilians during and after the struggle for liberation took the soldiers of *Freedom Cliff* as their murderers, rapist and therefore their enemies. Albeit they fought and won the battle against the Rhodesian army, their unfathomable love for Zimbabwe and having been going extra mile for its liberation was downplayed if not questioned. Hove pictures this unfounded hatred for veterans stemming from propaganda against them. The author lays emphasis on veterans' setback due to their pooh-pooled role of liberating the country cum stigmatization. In next to no time after Zimbabwe's political independence, veterans were to be on another sticky wicket. Thus, they sadly share their trauma with the people for the purpose of restoring the reality about themselves:

'You have heard about us, from dirty mouths full of hatred for us. Now we want to tell the story from our own side'

'Yes, we heard all sorts of bad things [...].'

'That we kill and eat children while their mothers look on.'

'Yes, and many more bad things.'

'That we rape daughters while their mothers dance *mhande*?'

'Yes, and many more bad things, very bad things which any mouth is ashamed to speak.'

'That we sleep with our own mothers and make them wives.' (Hove 1990: 61)

[8].

This very negative image about freedom fighters was very well meant to drive a wedge between them and the people they fought for. They did mistakenly bear the stamp of rapists, murderers, and even collaborators with the colonial regime. However, there is no getting away from the fact that the erstwhile guerrilla fighters happened to deal ruthlessly with spies or members of the rural community who ever tried selling out information about the anti-colonial war. Mabunu Muchapera, a former fighter evidences that from his vow to their chief Baas Die: "I will crush traitors' heads any time you ask me" [3]. In fact, this violence and cruelty with which veterans dealt with spies and collaborators have had boomerang effects to make them bear the stigma of killers or terrorists against their own people.

After the war, it was incumbent upon the new government to discharge its duty of paying veterans their dues. Yet, Benjamin's failure to get his demobilization payment, let alone integration in the national army speak loudly of their betrayal by the new government. Indeed, after the liberation war in Zimbabwe, social and economic integration could only mitigate the quagmire of *Shimurenga* fighters whose top priority has been to fight and pull the country back from the brink. It sucks, however, that army officials of the new government have a down on Benjamin who stalwartly fought for the country. Again, that captures the depth of

veterans' predicament and how hostile the country was for them after independence. As a former freedom fighter, he grins and bears, to no avail, the rudeness and off-putting attitude of national army officials to get his demobilization payment. Benjamin has been at *Freedom Cliff* with his comrades during the hottest times of the war, yet he sadly faces a lot of hassles to get his due. Leaving the camp on urgent family business, he is opposed discharge papers without which his claim is actually a waste of time, the narrator informs:

'Have you got your discharge papers with you?'

'I left on urgent family business.'

'Do you have your discharge papers or not?'

'No.'

'I can see your file is in order but without discharge papers there is nothing much I can do' [3].

Veterans' betrayal and economic exclusion have seemingly been a tit for tat at the hands of the white minority that still had control over the country's economy. Insisting on the veterans' failure to get their demobilization payment, the writer gives undivided attention to *Shimurenga* fighters' move from hero to zero, which signals the hindrances and hassles they are doomed to grapple with for the rest of their lives. Fighters the majority of whom were dropouts, viz. they did not further education, have had to lead a wretched life after independence. Yet expectations to be integrated in the national army would hardly be met in an independent country without sovereignty. Employment was made quasi-impossible because of the government's demanding diplomas. Former liberation fighters were asked special skills or academic certificates for job, knowing that the country robbed of them their possibility to attend school when it was under the colonial yoke:

'I want to join the new national army.'

'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. Mechanics and so on. What certificate do you have?'

'I was about to write my "O" level when I left for the war.'

'So you have only a Junior Certificate?'

'Yes' [3].

The preceding passage better lays bare the trickiness of the neo-colonial government towards former fighters in Zimbabwe and the deaf ear that was very quickly turned to their having brought about independence. This situation itself tells much about the survival of social inequalities veterans have gone extra mile to even in Zimbabwe. Left to their own without jobs for a lack of skills or diplomas, they won the struggle for liberation to begin a new other for survival. Considering that paradox and irony at once, Safiso Sibanda deems that: "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 to find employment" [11]. This hard time for veterans to contend with

is the fallout of economic dependence in a nascent neo-colonial state. Freedom fighters' endeavour for employment and integration have been to no avail owing to the white minority's absolute power of hiring and firing employees. Epitomizing one-time fighters' gut punch in Zimbabwe, Benjamin falls victim of that economic discrimination as he testifies: "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 the company had employed too many casual labourers by mistake. Is that fair?" [3]. Regarded as wrong weed to pull and get rid of in independent Zimbabwe, the victimization of former guerrilla fighters through economic discrimination must have been informed by sour recollection of the struggle for independence by white settlers. In a word, the failure of economic decolonization in the country seemingly resulted in the new government's turning a deaf ear to the former liberation fighters' claims, which brought them very close to regretting even their contribution in the struggle for independence.

Therefore, to *Shimurenga* fighters' sorrow factors in the fact that their parents held their financial instability against them. Failed by the new government, veterans's overt punishment echoed in family relationships to breed intolerance from their parents. In other words, *Shimurenga* fighters' plight has been unbearable to parents who compared them [freedom fighters] to their fellows of the same age who furthered their studies, and therefore, whose education paid off. Due his helplessness and his still being under his parents' roof, his mother reaches the highest level of hatred for him. Dived in a capitalistic world after independence, Benjamin's economic instability victimizes him big time. Consequently, Shamiso's lashing out at her son for the slightest mistakes on his part is informative of how veterans were treated and how their predicament was aggravated by their families. His going out with his younger brother Peter at night appears to be an alibi nay an opportunity for his mother to spew her venom against an unemployed ex guerrilla fighter:

'Lies, lies, lies. That's all I have heard from you since you came back. I was out there half the night looking for you two!'

'Who are you to talk to me like that? Who are you to criticize anything I say?'

'Just because things have gone wrong in this family doesn't mean I wasted my life. There are millions in this country who are having it good because we went out. You just don't happen to be one of them.'

'I can't understand your bitterness, why are you so hardened. You keep trying to blame me for your failure. Look at you friends who finished school and started working. You will never catch up with them!' [3]

This passage helps discover families' failure to psychologically strengthen veterans and solace their gut punch in post-colonial Zimbabwe. *Shimurenga* fighters have been pariahs doomed to daily face the sourest experiences of 'failed independence'. Their financial instability in post-colonial Zimbabwe was unbearable to individuals they should have looked after, which generated contempt and exposed them to daily criticism and accusations. Besides, if ex-combatants' predic-

ament is a punishment by the new government, there is a sense in which their offspring could not get away scot-free. Veterans' children grew up in poverty, which had a negative impact on their education. The Zimbabwean post-independent government was not criticism-free for turning a blind eye to the expectations of veterans' children as they needed to be financially backed up for their educational fees. In actual fact, Zimbabwe's political independence made poverty an item to be passed on from father to son, which is exemplified in veterans' innocent children's being in a downward spiral. Even if the government was often brought to promise to pay school fees for the children of veterans it always failed to honour its promise.

4. Conclusions

Through this aforementioned work, Shimmer Chinodya has laid bare the colonial turmoil preying on both people's minds and bodies. Wrong-footed by western trickiness even after independence, Zimbabweans' dragged on pangs fall within the ambit of the colonial legacy. As it mirrors a bunch of African countries, the fight for liberation in Zimbabwe has seemingly failed to roll back the white man's edge over natives.

Being an eyewitness of colonial domination even at its full swing, the writer has rapped point-blank at the colonial Christianity, the purpose of which has been to fence off the colonial agenda nay encourage passivity or egg natives on submission to the intruder. Having served as an opening gambit to multifaceted pitfalls for Africans, religion did "distance Africans away from riding the crest of commonness and togetherness" [4]. Christianity has been misused against innocent African people to serve as a weapon to divide and conquer. Due to this galloping harm, *Shimurenga* fighters' no-nonsense endeavor has been geared towards nixing the colonial system. Colonialism has been a social, cultural, political, and even economic burden that has weighed so very heavily on Rhodesians and has resulted in a fight for liberation. Thus, before this social and economic havoc, Benjamin's patriotism and readiness to die for his land had been a foil to his parents' will to grin and bear the colonial injustice. He perceives the battle as legitimate and feels compelled to fight even though the fact of leaving his mother to her own in a country where violence and injustice are the rule traumatises him big time. He always carries an imaginary letter for his mother:

You'll never see these words or hear them because I have no pen or paper on which to write [...].

I am saying these words to myself only because you must be worrying about me though I don't feel now I belong to anything other than this soil on which I sleep. I am saying this because they must have given you trouble after they found I'd gone but I think you're OK.

I know you worry about me but you shouldn't [...], if you saw these little children dead under the trees with their arms eaten away and those naked mothers running through the bush [...], you'd know there's no other but this

[3].

This treatment of Zimbabweans by the colonizing power has been launched back to result in violence between the natives and the colonizing power. Emanating from the people's thirst for freedom and the British quenchless hegemonic desire, the *Shimurenga* war has made Zimbabweans witness very traumatic episodes.

The writer goes beyond observing the political independence the war yielded very keenly to lambast the economic pitfalls his people will have to contend with for the longest time. The erstwhile colonizer's economic power in independent Zimbabwe has been to shore up Western supremacy, which is reminiscent of neo-colonialism in Africa. Therefore, independence without sovereignty cum ongoing economic dependence on the former settler has made the then fighters pariahs in their own country.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Vanbrabant, J. (2021) Ingarden and Derrida on Empty Space in Literature. *Phainomenon*, **32**, 197-208. <https://doi.org/10.2478/phainomenon-2021-0019>
- [2] Dalvit, L. (2021) The Voice of the Voiceless? Decoloniality and Online Radical Discourses in South Africa. In: Karam, B. and Mutsvairo, B., Eds., *Decolonising Political Communication in Africa*, Routledge, 207-223.
- [3] Chinodya, S. (1990) *Harvest of Thorns*. Heinemann.
- [4] Sène, A. (2019) The Moot Issue of Crime and Deterrence in a Grain of Wheat by Ngugiwa Thiong'o and Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe. *The Journal of African and Postcolonial Studies*, No. 1, 40-49.
- [5] Dieng, G. (2019) The Cold War and Africa: A Critical Evaluation of the "Failure" of African Independence. *The Journal of African and Postcolonial Studies*, No. 1, 306-324.
- [6] Collier, S. (2022) The Revolutionary Legacy of Zimbabwe's Nehanda Charwe Nyakasi-kana. *Scholars Portal Journals*, **15**.
- [7] Yongo, D.D. (2021) Post-Colonial Leadership Failure and the Future of Africa. *International Journal of Comparative Studies in International Relations and Development*, **7**, 47-57.
- [8] Hove, C. (1990) *Bones*, Heinemann.
- [9] Diagne, C. (2019) *Omar, La République Privvée du Sénégal*. SIRIUS Éditions.
- [10] Chung, F. (2006) *Re-Living the Second Chimurenga: Memories from the Liberation Struggle in Zimbabwe*. Weaver Press.
- [11] Sibanda, S. (2020) Post-Imperial Imaginaries in Zimbabwe: Interrogating Betrayal in the Pre- and Post-War Years in Chinodya's *Harvest of Thorns* and *Child of War*. *Lit-erator*, **41**, a1606. <https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v41i1.1606>