

# SHIMMER CHINODYA AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF POSTCOLONIAL ZIMBABWEAN IDENTITIES

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## ABSTRACT

Postcolonial African identities are as complex as they are contested. On their part, creative writers have offered some of the most powerful descriptions of the quest for postcolonial African identities. They have painted some of the most lasting images of the struggles faced by Africans in response to colonialism and its attendant issues such as Christianity, and the demonising of African cultural belief systems. In this article, I examine Shimmer Chinodya's portrayal of the challenges of postcolonial Zimbabwean identities. Whereas some writers have made politics and economics the key dimensions to the construction of postcolonial Zimbabwean identities, Chinodya has largely confined himself to the cultural dimension. Where other authors focus on the nation, he concentrates on the family. I, therefore, argue that the decision to concentrate on the family has enabled Chinodya to describe the complexities of postcolonial Zimbabwean identities in more vivid ways. I conclude that Chinodya's attempt at resolving the puzzle is problematic, although he outlines the challenges in an informative way.

**Keywords:** Shimmer Chinodya, strife, chairman of fool, postcolonial, Zimbabwean identities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe has produced a number of award-winning creative writers. These include Charles Mungoshi, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Yvonne Vera and, more recently, NoViolet Bulawayo. Shimmer Chinodya has also emerged as an award winning and consistent

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creative writer, although his works have not attracted as much critical acclaim as those of his compatriots. In his insightful study of Zimbabwean literature in English, Rino Zhuwarara (2001:25) could only promise to do justice to Chinodya in a later study. This is unfortunate as Chinodya's works illuminate the search for identity in postcolonial Zimbabwe. In this article, I argue that Chinodya's voice deserves close attention as he probes in an informative way the tension between indigenous cultural beliefs and practices and the demands of Christianity, Westernisation and modernity. In *Strife* (2006) and *Chairman of Fools* (2005), Chinodya illustrates the numerous challenges that individuals and families have to negotiate throughout their lives. As one of the leading theorists on identity, Hall (1996) has argued, identity is not given once and for all: it is constantly worked and reworked. On the other hand, Magosvongwe (2013) has shown how the land question in Zimbabwe has been integral to the search for identity at various levels. Analysing the dynamics at the family level, Chinodya illustrates how the search for identity never ends; individuals and families are always groping for answers. The past is never buried; it obtrudes in the present and the dead make demands on the living. Identity is now being fashioned from multiple and often contesting forces, leading critics to charge confusion:

Your Dutch-reformed, English-washed, Indian-starched father, fooling himself that he can run away from his blood relatives and his past and solve everything with propriety and prayer. (*Strife*: 40)

Chinodya is sensitive to the challenges that young adults in Zimbabwe have to face. On the one hand, they are at home with the gadgets of the West and all the entrapments of 'civilisation.' This is the generation that is supposed to enjoy the fruits of the liberation struggle: political freedom and economic progress. On the other hand, they are also expected to hear the call of the ancestors. As Mutekwa (2010) has demonstrated, traditional spiritual beliefs, such as the belief in the avenging spirit, continue to receive attention. Whereas Malaba (1997) posed the dilemma as one of choosing between traditional religion and Christianity, the choices are not as bare. The generation of Zimbabweans that Chinodya addresses also has to contend with not only rival religious systems, but opposing health delivery systems and mutually exclusive ways of knowing. Although things do not fall apart (Achebe 1958) for them, they hardly hold together. Chinodya probes and stimulates, challenging Zimbabweans to make realistic decisions. He engages with postcolonial Zimbabwean identities in terms of how a specific family struggles with traditional cultural beliefs and practices in the contemporary period. Drawing from two of his works, *Chairman of Fools* (2005) and *Strife* (2006), I illustrate his sensitivity to the challenges around the construction of identity in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Below, I identify a number of questions that I contend underpin Chinodya's approach to the question of identity in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

## 2. WHERE IS HOME?

The notion of “home” has become pronounced in Zimbabwean literature due to the growth and expansion of the Zimbabwean diaspora. In particular, the mass exodus (Manase 2014) following the political and economic crisis from 2000 has led to the question: “Where is home?” Such a question has been prompted by the dislocation and disorientation created by moving out of the country. Stories in *Hunting in Foreign Lands and Other Stories* (Nyota *et al.* 2010) confirm the heart-rending search for one’s bearings. The implication is that Zimbabwe offers a stable understanding of home. However, this is a misleading concept. Chinodya’s works ask: ‘Where is home?’ within Zimbabwe itself.

The search for home did not begin recently with the mass movements of Zimbabweans to countries within the region and beyond. In *Strife*, the narrator’s family has moved to an urban centre, Gweru. Generally, therefore, one would think that 33 Hoffman Street has now become ‘home’ to the Gwanangara family. However, this is not the case, as the ‘original’ homestead in Chivi looms large on the horizon. Gokwe, the second home base, continues to demand attention. Does the movement from the rural areas to the urban areas constitute progress? Does upward social mobility liberate the individual from the extended family and contribute towards channelling resources towards the nuclear family? Is the urban setting peaceful and free from the spirits? In *Chairman of Fools*, the lyrics from the Harare Mambos are being consumed in a commuter omnibus:

Amainini handei kumusha  
Hupenyu hwemudhorobha hunoshusha  
Co-wife let’s go to the rural areas  
City life is a headache) (63)

In Chinodya’s works, the city does not represent progress and insulation from the demands of rural life. In fact, families have to retreat to the rural home periodically in order to accomplish outstanding rituals. In addition, indigenous spirituality remains powerful, even within the well-lit urban areas. For Muchemwa (2013:113), Chinodya portrays ‘unsettled identities in unsettling urban spaces.’

In *Strife*, it would seem that the plot in Gweru is haunted. The narrator’s sisters believed that it was ill-fated and should have been sold off (205). Mhamha Manyoni angrily declares; ‘I’ll leave this crumbling, rotten house and its curses and go back where I came from’ (191). Bramson, the young man who worked at the plot, commits suicide there and the house is burnt down in a fire that he starts. It is at the same plot that Tapera, a young and promising member of the Gwanangara family, is also found dead. In fact, the Gwanangara family has lurched from one crisis to another. The narrator is right to hear voices saying the following:

Perhaps the boy was possessed. To take his own life like that. Bewitched. That family is bewitched. The mother died of cancer. Such a growth. Her whole face eaten away. One of her sons went mad; the other is epileptic. And now this. Too much Bible and book education, that's what. Who can make them see sense? The spirits are angry and will not be appeased...(172).

The theme of madness runs across the two novels as if to suggest that postcolonial identities are characterised by psychological disorders. Chinyanganya (2014, 146) argues that:

In Chinodya's narratives the provenance of madness is rooted in African belief systems where aspects of tradition, history, ancestry and predestination collate with the vicissitudes that engulf his characters. Complications related to reconciling the forces of modernity and tradition, superstition and rationality, Christianity and traditional beliefs, the living and the dead, disease, life and death, and patriarchy are an impenetrable conundrum that drives them to the fringes of insanity.

Madness becomes a representation of the intricacies of postcolonial Zimbabwean identities, where characters fail to come to terms with external forces that are beyond their control. It is mainly Chinodya's male characters who go mad, in their different environments.

Home is very difficult to pin down for postcolonial Zimbabweans. Although they have built mansions in leafy upmarket suburbs, they do not call them homes. These remain, *kumba* (houses). On the other hand, they identify their ancestral homes or rural/communal areas as *kumusha* (home). A clear distinction is made between where one stays in town and where one comes from originally. In practice, however, most families now spend much more time *kumba* than *kumusha*. *Kumusha* (home) remains imagined, endowed with spiritual significance, but is now visited only for funerals and other family events. Even marriage ceremonies that used to call for retreats are now being conducted in urban areas due to the costs associated with travel. Chinodya brings out this tension very well in his works. Critics who operate from a strict financial perspective wonder if economic development can be achieved when families continue to hover between two 'homes.'

In *Strife*, rural places such as Chivi and, to a lesser extent, Gokwe, are associated with cultural authenticity and traditional ceremonies in honour of the ancestors. When faced with forces of misfortune, disease and danger, families retreat to these rural sites of authenticity to appease their ancestors in the hope of being cleansed and empowered. They are home to those who lived in the remote past and continue to invite the living to return regularly and commune with them. However, this creates logistical challenges for blacks who have moved to the urban areas and are pursuing careers. It is not always possible to return to the village and in many ways, this is experienced as a burden. The challenge becomes pronounced when their parents have died and there is no one at the homestead to visit. The younger people, brought up in urban areas, find it burdensome to run two 'homes.'

The identity challenge brought about by the need to run two ‘homes,’ namely the urban home and the rural one, is made emotional by the Shona philosophy that a collapsed home, *dongo*, represents the ultimate disaster. When one says *misha yave matongo* (our homes have become desolate), this is an expression of the complete loss of vitality. Chinodya, however, does not celebrate the rural life. Speaking for the generation of those who came to maturity after independence in 1980, he paints a realistic image of the village in *Strife*:

*My uncle chatting about everyone and everything back in Chivi, about drought, the scarcity of vegetables, dysentery, malaria, my cousins dropping out of school, one by one, graves appearing every season behind the cattle kraals...* (143, italics original).

If the village is associated with pain and death, one might be forgiven for thinking that the urban home represents peace and tranquility. However, this is far from the case as I have already demonstrated in relation to the plot in Gweru. In *Chairman of Fools*, Chinodya utilises the same concept and shows how the Chari plot has become desolate. Where home is associated with love, peace and security, the Chari plot now negates these values. This is how Farai feels when they arrive in Gweru:

His heart fluttered when they approached the final garage and the turn off to the Chari plot; and felt his recognition of the old muunga (an indigenous tree found in Zimbabwe) trees lining the road and the old primary school, now overgrown with grass, which his sisters had attended. While their parents were still alive the family had gathered here, almost ritualistically, three times a year, but now only he and Garai had come once in twenty months (145).

Where is home? Chinodya does not resolve this question, but he uses it to open a dialogue on challenges associated with the construction of postcolonial identities in Zimbabwe. One might be a citizen of the country (Kaulemu 2012) with rights and responsibilities, as well as the resident of a particular city such as Gweru and Harare. One might own a house in these cities, but one is also, simultaneously, a subject under a specific chief. Periodically, one is summoned (spiritually and physically) to retrace one's steps back to the place where one's umbilical cord – or that of one's parent – lies buried. For Chinodya, home is indeed a vague concept and place.

### 3. WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE PAST?

Built into the concept of home is the concept of the past. For Chinodya, another pressing question for today's generation is: what do we do with the past? Two opposing views of the past are demanding attention: one is Western and suggests that the past ended in the past. The other is African and suggests that the past is woven into the present. Whereas the former calls for the past to be buried or at least forgotten/minimised, the latter requires that the past be interacted with and remembered. Building on the flashback technique that Mungoshi (1978) used brilliantly in *Ndiko Kupindana Kwamazuva* (How

time passes), in *Strife* Chinodya juxtaposes the past and the present in a compelling way. He makes it clear that for the majority of black Zimbabweans, the past does not go away.

The identity of present-day Gwanangwaras is very much a product of those who lived a long time before them. Zevezeve, the forebear from the long-ago past (9) continues to have a bearing on the living. When Gwanangwara's family tries to cut the umbilical cords of their ancestries (8), they experience strange and tumultuous happenings. Chinodya suggests that postcolonial Zimbabwean identities cannot be imprinted on a clean sheet of paper. This would be fake and misleading. Rather they must contend with ancestral lineages and roots. This echoes Oliver Mtukudzi's advice: *tichasvika riinhi tichitiza mimvuri yedu?* (How long shall we continue to attempt to run away from our shadows?). Chitando and Madongonda (2014:74) maintain that through the use of a rich linguistic repertoire of the Shona language, Mtukudzi's song tells a story. In this case the rhetorical question utilised by Mtukudzi above serves to underline the importance of respecting and coming to terms with one's ancestral ties and origins. Chinodya argues that the past is not gone and that yesterday was not buried last night. The past has a definite bearing on the future, Chinodya appears to suggest. However, he appears not to be forthcoming in endorsing this interpretation fully, as I shall indicate below.

Those who subscribe to the idea that there is a prevalence of 'circular' thought in Africa, leading to the alleged underdevelopment of the continent, would be disturbed by the prominence given to the past in *Strife*. They would urge the postcolonial Zimbabwean generation to let go of 'myths and outdated beliefs' and embrace modernity in its totality. They would challenge an emerging generation of Zimbabweans to stop looking in the rear-view mirror and fix their gaze forward. This presents a challenge for the construction of postcolonial Zimbabwean identities. What do we do with the past? How much of the past should be embraced and how much of it should be discarded? What are the principles that will inform such a selection? Biakolo (2003:9) questions the dominant narrative when writing:

But the model of history, the history of the West for instance, as one continuous upward swing in progress, is little more than a pious fiction. Every national history is an uneven topography, with plains, hills, and valleys: periods of rapid material development, longer or shorter moments of stagnation, and times of more or less decline.

The challenge of what to do with the past when constructing postcolonial Zimbabwean identities is that the past is contested and is not innocent – and this brings up serious debate. Chinodya highlights these issues by showing how the Gwanangwara past is not one neat and continuous narrative. This is not simply because of the literary style that he has chosen to deploy; it is primarily because this is how the past is actually experienced in the present. Who killed whom, what was done with their possessions, and how may this be redressed are contentious issues in *Strife*. If these issues would be appropriated to

the national discourse, they would be applied to the problematic of inter-ethnic, race and gender relations in Zimbabwe. Chinodya succeeds in showing that the past is important but that it is also contested.

What to do with the past is a question that haunts young Zimbabweans as they seek to propel themselves, their families and their nation forward. Is the past binding on the present? Of the material and spiritual heritage bequeathed by their forebears, what should they retain, what should they refashion and what must they discard? Chinodya teases out these questions and asks his compatriots to devote themselves to finding answers to them. The construction of postcolonial identities will be informed by the extent to which the past is negotiated with and appeased. The Gwanangwara family, an epitome of Zimbabwean families, is left wretched and yearning for peace in large part because it has failed to handle its part.

Even those who do not think that the past is relevant need to take some time to reflect on how it continues to influence the present. The unknown woman tells Godfrey Gwanangwara the secrets of his life, highlighting the reality of mystical knowledge. In addition, in the play at the end of the book, Tradition offers convincing arguments as to why it is important to acknowledge and accommodate the past. Tradition declares, 'You can't run away from your past' (217). However, the submissions by Modernity and Education need careful consideration as they call for rationality and balance. In the end, Chinodya is left sitting on the fence. The burning question that postcolonial Zimbabweans searching for identity would ask is: on which side of the fence would he fall if the fence were to be shaken?

#### 4. WHERE SHALL WE GET HEALING?

One of the major challenges relating to the construction of postcolonial Zimbabwean identities relate to the medical system to be embraced. This is directly connected to the foregoing and forthcoming sections. Zimbabwe is characterised by medical pluralism. There is traditional medicine that is tied to ancestral beliefs and conditions that are given the name *chivanhu* (indigenous) and Western biomedicine. The latter is sometimes wrongly called 'scientific.' The third option comes from African churches where prophets provide another therapeutic system (Dahlin 2002). These medical systems are depicted as mutually exclusive. Decisions relating to which one to approach in the search for healing are an integral part of the identity question in Zimbabwe.

In both *Strife* and *Chairman of Fools*, Chinodya confirms that many black Zimbabweans struggle with illnesses and events that are interpreted as unnatural and mysterious. In particular, mental illness is a major challenge. There is a lot of stigma associated with mental illness. In *Chairman of Fools*, Farai finds it difficult to adjust to life as 'a returnee from the annexe' (161). One, therefore, senses schizophrenia on the part of postcolonial Zimbabweans. On the one hand, they want to posture as educated and sophisticated. They want to be seen as guided by medicine and science. On the



other hand, they remain under the heavy influence of indigenous beliefs. Mental illness is associated with witchcraft and often calls for the intervention of traditional healers or prophets. Pills from the hospital are used alongside ritual treatment.

Chinodya's works show that, for the majority of black Zimbabweans, misfortune, diseases and death are seen as requiring the intervention of the spirit world. The world of science, technology and medicine is thought of as inadequate. In the African worldview, everything that happens has an underlying spiritual cause and explanation. Nothing ever happens on its own without a spiritual force driving it. Consider the following discussion between Farai and Fatima in *Chairman of Fools*:

My mother died in my house, well, almost. Dzimai spent his last months in my house and died at the plot, just after we had buried my father. How could Dzimai die within the same week as my father?' he said. 'Why should all these tragedies come straight for me, as if I were the only living Chari left?

'Because the people down under and up there know you have the means to solve the problem and have chosen you (141).

This conversation echoes the one below, in *Strife*:

Tell me, Mr Fourteen Points, what happened to our brother Rindai on his wedding night? Tell me about the trip to Chivi. Why did I get arrested on the day we were supposed to go to Gweru? Why did we miss the ride in Baba Tariro's car? Why did we have a hard time getting to Chivi and why was the ceremony over when we arrived? (40).

Although most black Zimbabweans would want to be associated with modernity and new spiritual systems, Chinodya suggests that they remain influenced by traditional approaches to health and prosperity. Individuals suffering from epilepsy and mental illness are taken to traditional healers for cleansing and healing ceremonies. Actually, such medical conditions are classified as spiritual conditions. Spiritual solutions are then sought after and applied. Chinodya confirms the constant movements across the different therapeutic systems as families seek healing for their members. Even if the most sophisticated hospitals were to be built, traditional healers would remain viable. According to Chavunduka (1978), traditional healers serve as medical doctors, counsellors and spiritual consultants to indigenous Zimbabweans from all walks of life.

Accidents and misfortunes are not interpreted as natural occurrences. This conflicts with Western notions of causality where events do not have supernatural explanations. Chinodya shows the extent to which traditional systems of meaning and explanation continue to inform many black Zimbabweans. As I shall demonstrate below, the church has emerged as a possible source of healing. However, Chinodya questions the capacity of the church to provide healing. Chinodya seems to suggest that forms of illness such as epilepsy and mental illness are beyond the ability of the church. The reader gets to understand the powerlessness of the church in the following scene in *Strife*, featuring the family patriarch and his son who is unwell:



And then he prays, 'Jesus, show us the way in this moment of darkness. Jesus, show us light in our dilemma...' The prayer is broken by a thud. We open our eyes and Rindai is face down on the floor, having a fit. Mother, Bhudhi Tavengwa and I grab him and hold him up while he stiffens and shakes. It is half a fit, almost noiseless. He slowly regains consciousness with a confused, guilty expression on his face. Mother makes him open his mouth to see if he has bitten his tongue and Maiguru Mazvita searches in her bag for his pills (109).

By placing failed prayers side by side with searching for pills in handbags, Chinodya confirms the search for an effective healing system by postcolonial Zimbabweans. However, these systems are in competition and families move freely across them. The other alternative of traditional healers is always close by, even for families that appear to have cut off links with the ancestors. This is confirmed by Baba Tariro in *Strife*; 'We black people go to church and to hospitals, but sometimes help is closer at hand' (89). The complexities of identity emerge when one considers that these systems contradict each other and the choice of which one to pursue at a particular point in time is never straightforward, even for those armed with academic degrees. In *Strife*, the medical doctor who attends to Kelvin after his bout of mental illness makes it clear that the different medical systems can be in tension:

You may have a *bira* if that pleases you. I am black too and know how you feel about such traditions. But sometimes *biras* will unsettle the patient and can only make him worse (91).

This is reinforced by the matron in *Chairman of Fools*:

'Are you two happily married?' the matron asks, bluntly. 'Because if you're not, it would be like throwing the pills into a river – plop – the medicine won't work. And the traditional option won't work either. Your folks can brew as much beer as they want and you can visit the best herbalists in the country but without the two of you understanding each other, the patient will never fully recover from this illness (128).

The underlying indigenous worldview makes it difficult for blacks who want to position themselves as 'modern and sophisticated.' When faced by major challenges in life, they are forced to brew beer in honour of the ancestors (*bira*). They may have lived abroad, have fancy jobs and houses in urban areas, but they cannot ignore their spiritual backgrounds. Chinodya exposes them, suggesting that no matter how much they may try to run away, their shadows will always follow them. Medicine can talk about bipolar disorders and explain the physical processes that trigger epilepsy, but Chinodya argues that the traditional spiritual explanations remain. Even when individuals and families possess the latest medical knowledge, they may still back this up with a visit to the prophets or traditional healers. When epilepsy strikes, indigenous Zimbabweans, including the well-educated, hesitate to assist and only white women run to help Rindai when he collapses in a supermarket (*Strife*:18). They remain suspicious of the likelihood of 'inviting another family's evil spirit/s' into their own worlds.

## 5. THE CHURCH IN *STRIFE*

Like many other Zimbabwean and African writers, Chinodya is not sympathetic to the church. He portrays the church as a divisive and ineffectual system. In *Strife*, it has paralysed the patriarch from giving his family guidance that is in keeping with indigenous beliefs and practices. It is also insensitive, insisting on a rigid and unrealistic ethical code. In *Chairman of Fools* (2006) it has become preoccupied with the quest for prosperity. It is also divisive, especially in its Pentecostal mode. Worse still, as discussed above, the church is unable to provide healing when faced with 'African illnesses.' Chinodya shows the dilemma that postcolonial Zimbabweans face when he describes the tension between the new religion and the demands of ancestral traditions. According to Chitando (2014: 245), 'from the deceased Chinua Achebe to the rising stars of the contemporary period, many African writers complain that Christianity causes "things to fall apart."' This results in dilution and paralysis as observed by a group of elders in *Strife: Midzimu yepi yaDunge? Midzimu yepi yechiKristu* (What Dunge's spirits? Dunge's Christian spirits?) (107). Others will also comment negatively; *Kubatira church pamusoro!* (Putting too much belief in the church, when in actual fact one does not understand all the dynamics involved!) (22).

The church can retain the membership of black Zimbabweans only for as long as they have not faced African challenges. Once they encounter suffering, misfortune and death that are interpreted as 'traditional,' they retrace their steps back to the ancestors. Dunge Gwanangara is a case in point. When his son has an epileptic attack on his wedding night, he falls back on the ancestral beliefs that he has neglected for 40 years.

For forty years he has placed his complete faith in the Bible, and throughout his life God has shielded him from trouble, but the incident on his son's wedding night has shocked him; rent him like an old cloth. But he carries the bad news like a man, smiling to colleagues and customers at work, respecting his Indian bosses, hiding his fatigue behind mountains of shirt boxes and trousers, the backbone of his job for three decades. Forty years of faith have not dulled his fear; like a true black man he listens to the words of his neighbours (3).

Dunge is not alone. Njiki and Tachi convert to the Apostolic sect when Njiki falls ill. However, when she recovers, they revert to their old ways. Mkwasha Phiri used to be a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Church until he fell sick and was visited by an old, old man in a dream. He subsequently became a traditional healer. The church does not appear to offer concrete spiritual security to its members. As a result, they vacillate between Christianity and traditional religion. Chinodya presents this as one of the major challenges that postcolonial Zimbabweans have to grapple with.

Although the church has attracted many black Zimbabweans, it does not treat them with respect. A young priest refuses to let Dunge's body lie in state at the church. He charges that Dunge died when he was no longer attending church, although he had sacrificed for the church to be built. In *Chairman of Fools*, the church has become preoccupied with prosperity. Its young leaders have invested in getting money from

their members. They own flashy cars and enjoy life because of the tithes paid by their long suffering members.

His name is Pastor Wiseman Phillip Matambo and he drives a gold Mercedes. Today he is clad in an immaculate grey suit and red tie. In the bright light his forehead glistens with good health and clean living (79).

The quest for postcolonial Zimbabwean identities becomes acute when one realises that young women who have converted to the mushrooming Pentecostal churches are divisive. They threaten family unity as they do not believe in ancestral traditions. Neither do they allow their husbands to drink beer at home. In both *Chairman of Fools* and *Strife*, Pentecostal young women are too tied to modern ideas to contribute meaningfully to the traditional way of resolving family crises. They are too distant to assist the families they have married into to resolve “African problems.” Chinodya accuses Pentecostal churches of brainwashing young women, denuding them of their Africanness. Instead of appreciating their cultural roots, they have swung to the other extreme of dismissing their cultural past.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Chinodya’s work shows the constant and ongoing challenges that different generations face as they seek to come to terms with their changing contexts and, in *Chairman of Fools*, he reveals Zimbabwean attitudes towards mental illness. Individuals who experience mental illness have to live with stigma and discrimination for the rest of their lives. No matter how much Western education that Zimbabwean society imbibes, old prejudices will continue. In *Strife*, Chinodya exposes the tension between Westernisation and tradition. The short drama at the end does not provide any final resolution, other than showing the influential powers of tradition, modernity, medicine and education. To this end, therefore, Chinodya has succeeded in identifying the complex struggles for postcolonial identities in Zimbabwe. For him, postcolonial Zimbabwean identities appear to be permanent work in progress.

Chinodya’s approach, however, has some limitations. First, his description of young, educated Pentecostal women is negative. They are portrayed as too educated for their own good. They are unable to look after their husbands who end up hooking up with less sophisticated women who are more caring. They do not drink with their husbands, preferring to sulk and drink Fanta in the kitchen. They are too ‘holy,’ always criticising traditional beliefs and practices.

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