

Formation of Female Subjectivity in TsitsiDangaremba's *Nervous Conditions*

Abstract

This research analyses TsitsiDangaremba's semi-autobiographical novel Nervous Conditions from the perspective of female position. The major thrust of this research is to study and establish how subjectivity of a woman is shaped and sustained by socio-cultural forces. The research finds that there is a formation of female subjectivity, through the character of Tambu, against the patriarchal African Zimbabwean male dominated society. Socio-cultural norms and ideological trends determine how women are required to perform their roles and how they are supposed to relate themselves to the emerging phenomenon. In the novel, the character of Tambu is subjected to different harrowing situations and horrendous trials set by patriarchal society. Despite all these setbacks, she manages to go ahead smoothly for the attainment of justice and good social standing. It is her adaptability and flexibility that help her to achieve good social position, freedom and justice. On the course of this study, the resercher came to know that Tambu was able to empower herself with varying levels of success dispite restrictions created by patriarchy. She was able to construct her subjectivity that that teaches every female aware like 'Tambu' about their nervous conditions and react in every awkward situation to establish their identity.

Keywords: Patriarchal system, Feminist, Feminism, Subjectivity, Psychology, Female, Identity

This research studies and analyses TsitsiDangaremba's *Nervous Conditions*, a thirteen years old girls's autobiography from the feminist perspective. Bringing into consideration from the female character, mainly Tambu, and her saga of the struggle to achieve 'agency' to speak against injustices she has undergone with, the research

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attempts to explore how a female derives her 'subjectivity' in due course of time.

Nervous Conditions investigates the struggle of Tambu in patriarchal society and how she has empowered herself and made her own identity. Tambu, the protagonist of the novel, gets an opportunity for education in her brother's place after his demise. Tambu knows only hope she has uplifting her family out of the poverty lies in education, struggles continuously despite of objections, threats and restrictions. And finally acquires her liberation, ambition, spirit and destiny through her own efforts. In particular, the study focuses on the novelist's motives behind creating character a character like Tambu as a protagonist in her novel, who forms subjectivity through her own struggle against traditional patriarchy. Tambu, being a child, shows protesting behaviour time and again whenever she feels something is happening wrong around her. In this novel, the novelist has shown *Nervous Conditions* of different characters in different situations but the protagonist is the only one character who does not hide her nervous conditions rather she boldly faces them.

In *Nervous Conditions*, Tsitsi Dangaremba has shown women have got the power and determination to speak out for themselves, stop male oppression and break the stereotypical and biased ideals practiced in their society. Here the writer has portrayed men and women who interact with each other in a definite way. Women in particular have been presented from a different view point comparing to earlier Zimbabwean literature in English. So, this study attempts to reveal the reason why has the novelist made a thirteen years old girl as a protagonist who holds different characteristics than that of her age. In most of the writing by females we find the subject matter is something which simply describes women's experience and in most cases such experiences are made noticeable in isolating, deceiving or humiliating ways. But in this novel, the author does not merely describe women's experiences

and leave them there, neither she simply describes the socialization of women rather she depicts some women who attempt to protest against their usual socially recognized roles while others engage in the argument on how they are being used or misused by the men-folk.

Tambu, the narrator, is unaffected by the death of her brother, Nhamo. The novel begins with this shocking confession from Tambu, "I was not sorry when my brother died" (1). There was an ambivalent relationship with her brother, Nhamo. He represents everything she is denied and principles failing of the social structure and simply because he is male and the eldest, he is known the family's hopes and ambitions. Tambu, regardless of her intelligence, talent, must be satisfied with a secondary role, understudy whose sole job it is to support and assist Nhamo as he makes his way in the world. The afternoon he is expected home at the end of his term at the mission school, he does not arrive. He dislikes taking the bus and then walking the rest of the way through the countryside to the family's homestead. Tambu is "relieved at his absence, as she does not need to kill and prepare a chicken to celebrate his return" (57). Tambu then reflects on the events leading up to her brother's death. Despite the family's poverty, Tambu's parents were able to raise the fees to send Nhamo to school. There was not enough money to send Tambu as well, so she decided to grow and sell vegetables and raise the money herself. When she discovered that her brother is stealing food from her garden patch, she attempted to beat him up while the two were attending Sunday school. Tambu's teacher, Mr. Matimba, took her to Umtali, a local urban center, to sell green ears of corn. A white woman, Doris and her husband pitied Tambu and gave Mr. Matimba ten pounds sterling to pay for her education. Tambu says, "I will use it to pay my school fees" (29). When Doris asked, "what do you do with it?" (29) That money stands as a

supporting beacon, the repository of all her hopes and ambitions to create her own subjectivity.

The family assembled to rejoice the return of Babamukuru, his wife, Maiguru, and their children, Chido and Nyasha, back from studying abroad in England. Chido and Nyasha, Tambu's cousins, had lost their ability to speak their native tongue, Shona. Maiguru did not want them joining in the dancing and other celebratory events. At the end of the meal, Tambu was ordered to bring a bowl of water to each member of the family so they could wash-down their hands. Babamukuru's three siblings praised his success. He suggested educating a member of each family, focusing mainly on the neediest branch, Tambu's clan. They chose Nhamo to go to the mission school, but after his sudden death and unexpected death, Tambu's life takes a dramatic turn for the better. Because of his death she is selected in his place and she is offered at the mission school. The mission sets Tambu on a path of becoming strong, articulate adult as she dreamed to become.

Tambu, returning her focuses to the present, is excited and awed by her new life in her aunt and uncle's house on the mission school grounds. Maiguru warmly welcomes Tambu into her new home. She serves Tambu tea and pastries and gives her an entirely new wardrobe, all in preparation for her first day school. The coldness and emotional distance that once existed between Nyasha and Tambu quickly disappear. Tambu became absorbed in her studies. She soon learns the rhythms of the household, witnessing Nyasha and Babamukuru's frequent fights. She also learns that, "Maiguru is highly educated" (101). Tambu's concept of becoming a woman would be to imitate of her aunt, who was definite as the symbol of empowerment that enable Maiguru to hold down a decent job and a comfortable home.

To mark the end of the term, Nyasha, Tambu, and the children of white preachers attend to a dance. Tambu unwillingly joins the celebrations. In the late evening, Nyasha struggles coming inside, still trying to master a new dance one of the boys is teaching her. When the young people finally enter the house, a fierce argument erupts between Babamukuru and Nyasha, in which Babamukuru accuses Nyasha of lewd behavior. Nyasha strikes her father, who oaths to kill her for performing the taboo act of assaulting her own parent. Nyasha grows more separated in the following weeks, and Tambu tries to help satisfy her guilt. Tambu functions as a peace maker in the family and society which shows her habit in maginging the dispute peacefully.

During the school break, Tambu and her relatives went to the homestead. Maiguru laments the fact that, as elder wife, she is expected to cook and clean for the big family all the time. Babamukuru is distressed to find Lucia, Tambu's mother's sister, and Takesure, a relative of Tambu's father, still living at the homestead. To make matter's worse; Lucia is pregnant with Takesure's child. A family meeting is held to decide what action should be taken. Ultimately, the couple is permitted to remain, as Babamukuru shifts his attention to another moral issue that annoys him: his own brother's unsatisfied domestic status. Babamukuru declares that Jeremiah and Ma'Shingayi must be wedded in a proper Christian ritual as soon as possible.

Tambu's comes to the mission hospital and gives birth to a son. Lucia soon follows and asks Babamukuru to find her and find her an employment, which he follows. She cooks at the school and begins taking classes. Preparations are being made for the impending marriages. When it comes time to leave, Tambu, who is strongly opposed to her parents wedding, fakes illness. When Babamukuru tells her to be ready in thirty minutes, she refuses to attend. When he returns from the wedding,

he punishes her by lashing her and forcing her to execute the maid's duties for two weeks. Which shows power and significance of male punishes female in patriarchal society. Maiguru argues with Babamukuru "over the lack of respect that she gets and the fact that her economic contribution to the family is not recognized" (121). She leaves next day and stays with her son, Chido.

While the girls are preparing for last exams, nuns arrive at the mission school and administer a test. Tambu is offered a grant to study at the venerated mission school. At first, Babamukuru is opposed to her accepting the offer, but he eventually relents; the novelist writes: "the mission sets Tambu on a path to becoming the strong, articulate adult she destined to become" (161). Home for the holiday, Tambu discovers her mother ill. Lucia, Tambu's aunt arrives and nurses her sister back to health. When Tambu returns to the mission and prepares to leave for the convent school, she cannot find Nyasha anywhere. When she finally finds Nyasha, Nyasha is emotionless toward her, upsets that her best friends will soon be leaving and she will be left alone with her heartless father.

Tambu leaves for the convent school, where she shares a crowded room with other African girls. Busy with her studies, she soon falls out of contact with Nyasha. Tambu returns to the mission to find Nyasha transformed, frightfully thin and suffering from a severe eating disorder. One night, Nyasha appears to be a psychotic episode. Nyasha sees a psychiatrist and slowly regains her health. Tambu fears she is succumbing to the negative, colonial impact that made Nyasha psychologically ill. Her other Chido, has a white girlfriend, much to Maiguru's humiliation. Tambu declares her intention to being questioning her world and influences that exerts on her.

This research contends that the novelist Tsitsi Dangaremba actively constructs the protagonist 'Tambu' as a revolutionary person. She is her dream character through

whom she wants to present how that life is to be lived and shaped by every women of the world where male system of government and race tries to show their dominance by creating interference on the way of the progress, liberty and freedom. For the author, Tambu is not only a girl who represents the ordinary female of the country but she is an ideal person whose activities, behaviours and revolutionary ideas shocks and influences every person who blindly accepts the existed traitional norms and values and can't imagine of a new world.

The sole objectives of the study is to explore the novelist's purpose and cause behind creating ideal characters like 'Tambu', the protagonist of the novel. After this publication in 1988, this novel has gained a wide range of critical considerations from a number of academicians, scholars and researchers alike. Some critics have viewed this novel from different standpoints. In this connection, Pauline Ada Uwakweh claims that an individual is a conscious being no matter whether it is male or female. In her opinion Dangaremba shows the point that *Nervous Conditions* presents a perspective through which women are glorified for their courage in dismantling the traditional authority:

Voicing is self-defining, vibrational, and cathartic. It proclaims an individual as a conscious being capable of independent thought and action. Dangarembga illustrates this point in the status of Tambudzaias narrator or "implied author" of *Nervous Conditions*. The narrator occupies an interpretive position, a perspective that is necessary for our appreciation of the new insights she acquires about her experience as female in a patriarchal and colonial society.

(75)

Uwakwehstrongy argues on behalf of Dangaremba that the women are equally capable of mental as well as physical labor. The claim that Uwakweh puts forward

supports the hypothesis of the study of Uwakweh lacks in describing the relation between black and whites which largely affects the socio-psychological behaviour of Tambu's father.

In addition, Landsay Pentilfe Aegerater claims that African women do not merely react; they act. In that very action, as Aegerater observes them refusing to live their lives only in response to oppression. Aegerater sees resistance in Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel. She puts forward her claim:

The African women of *Nervous Conditions* do not merely react; they act. And in their very action lies their resistance. By defining themselves within African and women centered spaces, Tsitsi Dangarembga's female character become none "other" themselves, with all the complexity and contradiction "self" entails. (231)

According to the Aegerater *Nervous Conditions* not only show the resistance of women, it also puts forward challenge for phallogocentric world order. When African women realize that self is being poisoned by the patriarch and racial norms, they stand completely against it. The beliefs and norms as defined by the traditional authority have largely been challenged by Tambu. In this respect, the idea suggested by Aegerater largely helps in farming as well as proving the hypothesis of the study. On the other hand, Aegerater's study simply claims that women are on the way of exploring their self, but it lacks in property addressing the inner strengths and treacheries too. Remark on the issue of Tsitsi Dangarembga's multi-layered textuality is homogenizing effects of recuperating a recuperating a singular voice Sheena Patchay argues:

Nervous Conditions uses a multi-layered textuality to negate the homogenizing effects of recuperating a singular voice from the margin. The novel uses the

voices of four female characters and a female narrator-focalizer to tell their interweaving stories. It may therefore be seen to privilege diversity and heterogeneity where the emphasis is “not on (a) naïve return to origin but on retrieval, rediscovery and reinvention”. (145)

Patchy speaks that Dangaremba's novel includes the voices of African women. She even sees their effort not as a new phenomenon or discourse but just the retrieval, rediscovery of the 'self'. In this connection, Patchay's idea does not merely simplify the issue of prejudice to quest and longing of women for something lost. Thus, the argument put forward by Patchay only lights the illustrative view of the *Nervous Conditions*. On country to Patchay's opinion, the researcher strongly argues that Dangaremba's novel evokes the sense of women to challenge both the patriarchal as well as racial ideologies which have long been rooted not to make progress but to create the domain on behalf of their own.

Another noticeable literary writer and critic Christine W. Sizemore observes *Nervous Conditions* differently than others. She claims that Dangaremba's novel is most celebrated novel in exploring the racial topic. She explains her own experience as:

Tsitsi Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions* is sometimes taught in African literature course and in a freshman course on the African diaspora, I have used it with enthusiastic student response in an interdisciplinary comparative literature course on contemporary women's novels that paired novels by women of European descent with novels by women of color. We investigated the way young girls negotiate their search for identity in both *Nervous Conditions* and Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*. (68)

Sizemore views that *Nervous Conditions* deals with the vibrant years of Tambu's fight for rights,

liberty self and humanity. It is also important to note here that Sizemore sees diaspora in African people. The comparison and contrast with Atwood's novel *Cat's Eye* also adds taste to racial subject. Sizemore is more focused in her study to analyze the identity crisis of black women but does not fully grasp with the issues of black. Her study lacks in addressing the racial exclusion, racial dogmas and domination and exploitation of the black women and girls as well.

Although all these critics and reviewers have examined this novel from different point of view and then arrived at several findings and conclusions, none of them have examined the issue of female subjectivity in *Nervous Conditions*. So, this reasearch attempts to explore a female's journey of creating her own subjectivity to fight against discriminatory patriarchal values. Similarly, the desire of Tambu to protest against the muscline domination that she herself has faced will be enhanced through her own efforts to create her own subjectivity. The patriarchal world cannot control her; she challenges with her struggles no matter where they are in form. She even breaks through the boundaries created by patriarchy. Since, the topic is untouched and unexplored; the researcher claims that it is the fresh, new and original topic. This analysis concentrates with the few concept of female subjectivity especially from the view of Chandra MohantyTalpode who is concerned with structural discrimination, GayatriChakravortySpivak as she is identifies "subaltern subject" against phallogocentrism as well as Judith Butler who speaks for gender contruction of gender in patriarchal society.

This research intends to examine the issue of how tortured and tormented female beings are exploring their subjective identities in writings.

Dangaremba's portrayal of Tambu as a revolutionary character is an iconic figure to combat against the oppression upon women. In narrating her story, Tambu places herself in the triple jeopardy of the common black women. Lastly she may have to be separated from women that shares a similar plight of suppression, as the latter could be satisfied with the status quo. Still she achieves what she wants "be educated."

The extent to which the protagonist, Tambu, is trapped is portrayed by her mother's remarks that: 'and these days it's worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other' (16). Passing through various trials and tribulations, Tambu constructed her subjectivity. Tambu's story traces her hardships from infancy. She had to look over the fields, draw water from Nyamarira River. She is supposed to look after her younger siblings. She cooks for the family, and sleeps on the kitchen floor on cold days with a single, threadbare blanket as cover. Tambu also endured humiliation from her brother, Nhamo, who made her an object of mockery. Her brother, Nhamo was sent to school. On the other hand, her father viewed her feeble efforts in trying to educate herself as ridiculous. Tambu was culturally restricted to the roles that denied her opportunity to rise above domesticity, her brother on the other hand was able to study. The following extract reveals Nhamo's academic uptake:

He was privileged to attend school with the whites who were part of the ruling colonial class. Furthermore, Nhamo was able to attend school despite the family having to eke out a living. This was consonant with the patriarchal beliefs of empowering male members of the family for perpetual domination. (37)

Nhamo was more privileged than his sister Tambu because of his gender. The only thing Tambu wishes is to attend school but her parents gave importance of education

for the male because he is recognized as only powerful member of the family who holds authority of their property in the future. Tambu, main character of this novel, when she demands for education her father refused to allow her to attend school. The following lines show her father's objection for her education when she asked permission to go to school:

My father thought I should not mind. "Is anything to worry about? Ha-a-a, it's nothing"

'He reassured me. With his usual ability to jump whichever way was easiest.'

Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetable'. (15)

The above lines expose the patriarchal thinking of Tambu's father assumption is that education for a male is privileged where as female is supposed to place at home, caring for her family and later for her husband and children. His denial to Tambu to get education reflects the father's role in the family and his thinking about female as subsidiary of male. In the domain of the family fathers hold authority over women and children. The father or male older member of family is recognised as the only decision maker in the patriarchal society.

In the African tradition, it is believed that women can only gain respect after getting married. This is why a woman who is not married has practically no role in society in the view of African tradition. It is expected that all women get married and submit to their husbands. This thought is bound with the idea of child bearing. In his well-researched article, *Portrayal of African Women in Folklore*, Sylvester Mutunda observes:

Marriage is an absolute social must, a sign of maturity and responsibility among the Lunda [for instance]; it is a fulfillment of the wishes and

aspirations of one's parents, extended kin members and society at large. More importantly for women, once in marriage, they are expected by parents and in-laws to bear a child as soon as possible after marriage. (516)

In addition, as Mutunda observes, once a man gets married, his wife should give him as many children as she can, for the more children a man has, the more masculine and virile he is considered by the community. A woman in this situation is not consulted and her opinion does not matter, she is just a mere sexual object that man uses at will because, as the 'head' of the family, he is justified to control not only his wife but her womb too. Socially equally wants a woman to become a mother as soon as she gets married. This is because a woman is viewed as a nurturer and everyone expects her to take pride in bearing multiple children along with breast feeding, washing and twenty four hour baby sitting. Even so, when a woman fails to bear children, she becomes worthless as a child bearing among the Africans is the underlying and basis for every marriage.

The pervasiveness of male domination is reflected in the labor force and career market. Men uphold their rule over women by excluding them from some labor and profession markets. They do this by holding positions of power in the labor force, which enable them to dominate in decision-making processes. Hence controlling the labor force gives them power over woman. Kate Millet portrays this type of control:

Our society is patriarchal. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that military, industry, technology, universities, science, political offices, finances - in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of police, is entirely in male hands. The forces that hinder the feminist quest are not easy to textualize. It is the lack of access to textuality that troubles us in our attempt to understand sexual politics. (25)

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The patriarchal system in which male holds primary power and predominate in roles political leadership, moral authority, social privileged and control of property. Although men different , particularly along racial and class lines, the patriarchal system nonetheless unites them in their supremacy over women, by reducing the latter to economic dependency. The patriarchal system in which male holds primary power and pre dominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority social privilege and control over property. In this novel, *Nervous Conditions* the dominant member of the family is Tambu's father, Jeremiah, holds the authority over women and children so he gave more priority to his son because of his gender. In this connection, Chris Hartmann supports this dependency by noting that the social relations amongst men have a social base, which upholds interdependence and unity amongst men and enables them to control over women. Not only Tambu but also Tambu's mother Ma' Shingayi and Tambu's pay highest price for being female in their household. Maiguru argues that with Babamukuru "over the lack of respect that she gets and the fact that her economic contribution to the family is not recognized" (121). Regardless of high levels of education she is subjected to the same treatment as that of the uneducated women by her husband Babamukuru. She leaves his house the next day and stays with her son, Chido.

Tambu complained about her father's imposition to her mother, "Baba says I do not need to be educated" (16). Tambu's mother, Ma' Shingayi, explains to her daughter, "When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them" (16). This point of view clearly demonstrates that Ma' Shingayi has accepted her fate as servant to the men in her life, Tambu wants more. Tambu thinks she is worth more than just being a bearer of a burden, and this drives difference between

her and her mother. Tsitisi narrates the burden of being woman depends on sacrifices she makes, she writes:

‘This business of womanhood is a heavy burden,’ she said. How could it not be?

Aren’t we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can’t just decide today I want to do this’ tomorrow I want to do that the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And this is not easy: you have to start learning them early from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is easy later on. Easy! As if it is ever easy. And these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength. (16)

Tambu’s mother responds more sympathetically but has same message when there are sacrifices to be made, women have to make them. Tambu’s mother, Ma’Singayi had accepted this reality and this is why she views her daughter’s feeble efforts in trying to educate herself as ridiculous. Since she was a girl, her mother Ma’Singayi tried to teach her how to tolerate hardships as a woman. It is this role of resignation that she expected her girls to emulate. She advises her daughter: “This business of womanhood is a heavy burden . . . I will help you my child is to learn to carry your burden with strength” (16). She does not encourage her daughter to study as she feels that every woman was doomed to live life under the domination of the fathers.

Through the eyes of Ma’Singayi, one can see that women are seen as perfect administrators of the household who pass on social values to their children. She does not encourage her daughter to study as she feels that every woman is cursed to live life under the domination of the male. She is teaching the same patriarchal idea,

knowingly, like fathers. Economic powerlessness and 19 years of domestic labour had taught Ma'Shingyi how to survive what she could not change. She has been socialized into assuming an unreceptive role in an environment dominated by patriarchy.

In her book, *Feminism without Borders*, Talpode the third world, transnational feminist theorist, argued for the inclusion of a transnational approach in exploring women's experience across the world. She presents provocative analyses and simultaneous oppression of race, gender, and sexuality. She speaks for socio-economic and social justice. Talpode writes:

It would require a clear understanding that being women has political consequence in the world that we live; there can be unjust and unfair effects on women depending on our economic and social marginality and / or privilege. It would require recognizing that sexism, racism, misogyny, and heterosexism underline and fuel social and political institutions of rule and often lead to hatred of women violence against women. (3)

In addition, Talpode observes, women being women are marginalized in the patriarchal world as a 'category' or as a 'group' in comparison to 'men' have been relegated to margin due to systemic and structural discrimination within the society.

However, Tambu, the rebellion character of the novel, is against the "structural discrimination" of male society. Dangaremba in this work demonstrates the African women who have always been seen as belonging to a weaker sex, illustrates the universality of patriarchy and the role of the women in this culture. Tambu is culturally restricted to the roles of "bread winner" and goes against the set standards for her to deny her opportunity to rise above domesticity. Finally, she accomplishes empowerment through her own efforts.

Despite her parent's wishes, Tambu desperately craves for education, recognizing its strength even at her young age, which offers her only chance of escape from village life. She decides to grow and sell vegetables to raise money herself. 'I will earn the fees,' I reassured him, laying out my plan for him as I had laid out in my own mind.' If you will give me seed, I will clear my own field and grow my own maize. Not much just enough for the fees' (17). There was not enough money to send Tambu as well, so she decided to manage fees for her education herself. Despite the family's poverty, Tambu's parents were able to raise the fees to send Nhamo to school" (87) but they couldn't expect her to go for education. When she found out that her brother was stealing food from her garden patch, she tried to beat him up while the two were attending Sunday school. The following extract throws light on how Tambu faces harsh atmosphere which seldom inspires her to tread on the path to freedom. The following extract clarifies problematic and puzzling predicament of Tambu:

Tambu's teacher, Mr. Matimba, took her to Umtali, a local urban center, to sell green ears of corn. A white woman, Doris, and her husband pitied Tambu and gave Mr. Matimba ten pounds sterling to pay for her education. The extended family gathered to celebrate the return of Babamukuru, his wife, Maiguru, and their two children, Chido and Nyasha, back from studying abroad in England. Chido and Nyasha, Tambu's cousins, had lost the ability to speak their native tongue, Shona. Maiguru did not want them participating in the dancing and other festive activities. (97)

The extended family gathered to celebrate the return of Babamukuru, Tambu's uncle and his family. Babamukuru's three siblings admired his success. Tambu is asked to bring a bowl of water to each member of the family so they could clean their hand.

He proposed educating a person of each family, focusing especially on the neediest branch, Tambu's clan. They selected Nhamo to go to the mission school, but after his sudden death, Tambu is chosen to replace him.

Tambu is unmoved by the death of her brother, Nhamo. The afternoon he is expected home at the end of his term at the mission school, he does not arrive. He dislikes taking the bus and then walking the rest of the way through the countryside to the family's homestead. Tambu is "relieved at his absence, as she does not have to kill and prepare a chicken to celebrate his return" (57). Tambu then reflects on the events leading up to her brother's death. Tambu, returning her focus to the present, is excited and awed by her new life in her aunt and uncle's house on the mission school grounds. Maiguru Tambu's aunt warmly welcomes Tambu into her new home. She serves Tambu tea and pastries and gives her an entirely new wardrobe, all in preparation for her first day of school. Tambu gets new insights of her life there which also functions as foundation to construct her subjectivity.

G.L. Roman describes humanist subjectivity as the stance taken by researchers in attempts to valorize the prejudices, experiences and knowledge of research participants. Subjective experiences are not mediated by the historically specific analysis of the underlying structures, material conditions, and conflicting sets of unequal power relations. In this connection Roman makes the following remarks:

Because both stances are premised on the subject / object dualism, neither subjectivity nor objectivism can provide adequate causal analyses of the connections between the structures and processes that give rise to both these unequal power relations and to people's experience and knowledge of them. Even though our subjectivities are, by definition, personal and individual, our desires and expectations are acquired in a social context. Unlike the term

‘individual’, the term ‘subject’ encourages us to think of ourselves and our realities as constructions. (54)

The subject is therefore, always both conscious and unconscious. The term ‘subject’ calls into question the notion of a totally conscious self. Subjectivity is the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her way of understanding her relation to the world.

Subjectivity is shaped historically and is the creation of society and culture.

The individual is always the site of contradictory forms of subjectivity. The meanings and values that women bring with them make them resistant to alternatives.

However, as they move out of their familiar circles through education and politics they may become exposed to other ways of interpreting their experiences. In *Nervous Conditions* Maiguru, Tambu’s aunt, interprets her experiences in a different way from that of Ma‘Shingayi, largely because of her education. It will be shown that Maiguru has to assert her identity in most challenging situations having to walk out on her husband and family. Tambu’s concept of becoming women would be to copy her aunt, Maiguru. The fixed symbol of empowerment has enabled Maiguru to hold a good job and a happy home. It is expected that Tambu would style her future around her successful aunt at the expense of her mother whom she referred to as “no more than another piece of scenery to be maintained [. . .] but all the same superfluous, an obstacle in part of my departure” (167).

Tambu has to distance herself from her near one to boost her undivided search for identity. The coldness and emotional distance that once existed between Nyasha and Tambu quickly disappear. Tambu becomes “absorbed in her studies. She soon learns the rhythms of the household, witnessing Nyasha and Babamukuru’s frequent fights. Maiguru is highly educated” (101). In this sense, Roman shows

thesympathy by a male relative weigh upon Tambu's search for subjectivity. During the visit, Babamukuru advises that Tambu should take Nhamo's place and attend the missionary school from his own house. During term break, everyone returns to visit the family back in the homestead school in Salisbury, the capital city, and Nyasha, Tambu's friend, excels at her exams. On the last night of the semester before she returns with her family for the Christmas vacation, Tambu, Chido, and Nyasha join a dance at the mission. Tambu discovers that she likes "the white missionaries at the school, especially the young ones. She makes friends with Nyaradzo, a white girl who is the daughter of a missionary"(76). Meanwhile, Chido, her other cousin, wins a scholarship to a interracial private school. Through all these examples the novelist may be trying to depict that Tambu's academic helps her to boost her subjectivity.

When the females are out of home without permission from their male members they are interrogated. Same situation happened with female characters in general and Tambu in particular. Tambu usually prefers "going to debates and films, but to her surprise she enjoys the boisterous atmosphere of the dance. When they return home, Babamukuru is angry with Nyasha who has stayed out later than the others and for a while was alone outside with a boy"(66). When the males whip the females to confine themselves in the private sphere of the family.it is evident in the tussle between Babamukuro and Nyasha. The two of them engage in an unpleasant argument, and Babamukuru, after blaming Nyasha of behaving like a whore, hits her twice across the face, knocking her to the floor. He hits her again and she fights back. He spits at her and rejects her as his daughter for exercising his power.Alienation, estrangement and solipsism are some of the outcome of Nyasha's singlehanded fight for her subjectivity. Nyasha walks out of the room. Within the next few days, Babamukuru gives his daughter a formal punishment of fourteen lashes, while her

mother looks on. Tambu is concerned to the conflict Nyasha is experiencing, while Nyasha insists that her father has no right to treat her the way he does. This all scene was witnessed by Tambu. Tambu admires the resilience of Nyasha. Tambu's subjectivity is reflected in her hesitation to submit to the status quo which is patriarchal. The following lines present the case:

The victimization, I saw, was universal. It didn't depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition. It didn't depend on any other things I had thought it depended on. Men took it everywhere with them. Even Heros Babamukuru did it. And that was the problem [...] all the conflict came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness. (118)

In the *Nervous Conditions*, Babamukuru is a representative character of this novel also follows patriarchy though he is the most educated person in Tambu's clan and he is respected by all the members of his family like a god. But his authority over his daughter portrays how patriarchy creates the condition for women to be dominated and exploited. This is evident when one makes a comparison between the way Babamukuru treats his son Chido and in the way that he treats Nyasha. He allows his son Chido to spend nights at his white friend's homes but he can not tolerate Nyasha coming home late.

Similarly, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her well known essay, "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" theorizes how to voice the subaltern women are suffering. She points out that, by such a practice, the oppressed are being more silenced is that, she cannot speak but is spoken for. The subaltern consciousness is a construction of the elite discourse and it is due to this discourse that their marginality is sustained.

Chakravorty writes:

The question of 'women' seems most problematic in the context. Clearly, if you are poor, black and female you get it in three ways. If, however, this formulation is moved from the first world context into the post colonial (which is not identical with the third world) context, the description 'black' or 'of colour' loses persuasive significance. (90)

Although all women are affected by gender discrimination, they are affected greatly depending on their diverse situations including their identity, class and many other particularities however black women experience multiple oppression i.e racial, gender and class oppression. In Dangermbga's *Nervous Conditions* Tambu's mother Ma' Singayi is trapped within the double bind of 'poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other' (16), whose submissive self-effacing life represents the very essence of oppressed female passivity. With no sense of her own self-determination, she is unable to conceive of an identity for her daughter outside of marriage so that Tambu met difficulties including (race, class and gender) to achieve her desire as well as another important character Nyasha also faces gender discrimination by her own father.

Tambu witnessing Babamukuru and Nyasha frequent fight relates that incident with her. She feels that women will always be victimised she related this victimization she went through at home when Nhamo went to school and she had to stay at home and grow her maize. She realises that, "the victimization was universal and men took it with them everywhere" (118). When Tambu desire to attend school; however her family is very poor and does not have money to pay her school fees. Because she is a girl her father does not pay attention to her education so, she decides to plant mealies (maize) when she asked help with her brother but he denies saying: "Don't you know that I am the one who has to go too school? Did you hear a girl a

girl being taken away to school? I was meant to be educated”(49). These lines visibly express the fact that a women’s place has traditionally been inferior to that of her male counterpart. Later on when Tambumasemealies ready to sell, Nhamo steals them and gives them out to his friends, and he is not even ashamed to fight his sister. This element of male super patriotism can already see even in this young boy because of the patriorcal system.

Nyasha grows more detached in the following weeks, and Tambu tries to help assuage her guilt. Nyasha’s intelligent nature and volatile, ungrounded identity eventually take their toll. Loneliness and isolation are her reward for being unconventional and severely independent. She is unpopular at the mission school. But this unpopularity is due more to her willfulness than the fact that she is the headmaster’s daughter. Her inner resources and resolve are highly developed. But they can sustain her only so far. The elements that define her and the aspects of her personality she most treasures become the source of her unrest and final breakdown. Increasing sense of lamentation on the part of Tambu is manifested in the following extract:

During the school vacation, Tambu and her relatives head back to the homestead. Maiguru laments the fact that, as senior wife, she is expected to cook and clean for the extended family the entire time. Babamukuru is upset to find Lucia, Tambu’s mother’s sister, and Takesure, a relative of Tambu’s father, still living at the homestead. To make matters worse, Lucia is pregnant with Takesure’s child. A family meeting is held to decide what course of action should be taken. (105)

Babamukuru moves his focus to another moral issue that shocks him. His own brother’s unsanctified domestic status. Babamukuru declares that Jeremiah and

Ma' Shingayi must be wedded in a formal Christian ceremony as soon as possible.

Tambu's mother comes to the mission hospital and gives birth to a son. Lucia

Tambu's aunt soon follows and asks Babamukuru to find her a job, which he does.

When Babamukuru said, "not much. A little job. At the girls' hostel. You will help to

cook food there at the hostel"(158).She cooks at the school and begins taking classes.

Preparations are being made for the impending nuptials. When it comes time to leave,

Tambu, who is strongly against to her parents' wedding, feigns illness. When

Babamukuru tells her to be ready in thirty minutes, she refuses to join. When he

returns from the wedding, he punishes her by lashing her and forcing her to perform

the maid's duties for two weeks.Tambu's view of Babamukuru as a God demonstrates

the amount of respect that she has for him and the reverent power that he has over her.

In fact Babamukuru was respected by all the members of his family. Babamukuru's

authority over all women within the clan portrays how patriarchy creates the

conditions for women to be dominated, exploited and oppressed. Maiguru argues with

Babamukuru over the lack of respect that she gets and the fact that her economic

contribution to the family is not recognized"(121). Maiguru is educated, she had done

masters from England she could have done lots of things in life but taking care of her

children and family she could not continue her career she laments feeling that her

sacrifices were not realize. Thatsway she leaves home the next day and stays with her

son Chido.

Towards the end of the term, she excels in the exam and is offered a scholarship to

attend a prestigious missionary school. She is introduced to many cultural changes but

she remains resistant to these changes as she is focused on her studies. Tristi writes:

While the girls are preparing for final exams, nuns arrive at the mission and

administer a test. Tambu is offered a scholarship to study at the esteemed

mission school. At first, Babamukuru is opposed to her accepting the offer, but he eventually relents. Home for the holiday, Tambu finds her mother ill. Lucia arrives and nurses her sister back to health. When Tambu returns to the mission and prepares to leave for the convent school, she cannot find Nyasha anywhere. When she finally finds Nyasha, Nyasha is cold toward her, upset that her best friend will soon be leaving and she will be left alone with her unsympathetic father. (126)

Protesting character, Tambu departs for the convent school, where she shares a crowded room with other African girls. Busy with her studies, she soon falls out of touch with Nyasha.

Tambu returns to the mission to find Nyasha transformed, terribly thin and suffering from an eating disorder. One night, Nyasha has what appears to be a psychotic episode. Continuous contact to some of the severe pressures of patriarchy drives Nyasha to terrific mental condition. Nyasha visits a psychoanalyst and gradually recovers her health. Tambu fears she is yielding to the negative, colonial influence that made Nyasha mentally sick. Her other cousin, Chido, has a girlfriend from white community, much to Maiguru's chagrin. Tambu states her intention to begin enquiring her world and the effects that it exerts on her. Heartless patriarchy is an obstruction on the way to the cultivation of female subjectivity.

Entire gamut of Butler's thought is marked, in part, by a linguistic turn. This belief of thought puts forward an opinion of gender as a discursive construction and performance rather than a biological fact. Butler's view in this regard is cited below:

These theorists criticize the conflation of sex and gender, essentialist generalizations about men and women, and the tendency to view gender as fixed, binary, and determined at birth, rather than a fluid, mobile construct that

allows for multiple gender expressions. The gender dichotomy of man/woman so pervasive in Western culture can be understood in terms of the cultural imperative. (59)

As claimed by Butler, postmodern feminism rejects a dualistic view of gender, and biological determinism. They point to the inseparability of the body from language and social norms. Postmodern feminists argue against the assumption that all women share a common oppression.

Such types of continuous contact of the severe pressures of patriarchy drive Nyasha to terrific mental condition. Nyasha visits a psychoanalyst and gradually recovers her health. Tambu fears she is yielding to the negative, colonial influence that made Nyasha mentally sick. Her other cousin, Chido, has a girlfriend from white community, much to Maiguru's chagrin. Tambu states her intention to begin enquiring her world and the effects that it exerts on her. Heartless patriarchy is a obstruction on the way to the cultivation of female subjectivity. The following extract is an index to this bitter realization:

Babamukuru is a cold and enigmatic figure who is difficult to penetrate. While the book's point of view is decidedly female, Babamukuru enacts the pressures and duties placed on men attempting to raise their families' status and to shake off the specter of poverty. Babamukuru's intelligence, ambition, and accomplishments are often taken for granted by others, as it is the others who reap the benefits of his hard work without attaining a full understanding of the sacrifices involved. His dual roles as parent and administrator are often at odds. (132)

Babamukuru uses his work as headmaster to escape any form of emotional attachment with the women who share his home with him. His connection with Nyasha is

particularly fraught, since her general behavior and educational performance at the school mirror his abilities not only as a father but also as a leader.

Babamukuru is the poker chip of those who have offered him support and opportunity. He senses he has no choice but to accept the assistance that the officers at the school extend to him. After completing his education in South Africa, he does not want to pursue a higher degree in England. He understands that the hope of a brighter future for his big family rests only on his shoulders. Babamukuru accepts his duty, even if he risks being viewed as an arrogant authoritarian or heartless bully by saying what direction his family will take. He may not “wish to be the leader, stern taskmaster, and voice of moral guidance in his family, but if he does not accept that role, his relatives will not be able to alter their circumstances on their own” (131). Partly because of Babamukuru’s story and life experiences, Tambu realizes there are multiple versions to the choices that individuals make and the motives behind those choices.

Maiguru is a difficult, often contradictory, and complex character who grows “increasingly concerned about the development of her children and their responses to the various cultural traditions, both Western and African, with which they have been raised” (141). Her fears and anxieties are rooted in her own experience of trying to reconcile attitudes and behaviors that come from two very different worlds. Her conflicting attitudes suggest the deep divide that exists in her perception of herself as a female and as an African. When the family returns to Rhodesia, Maiguru wishes her children to retain the mark of distinction and difference that they have attained from living in a Western society. She protects the fact that they have lost their “ability to communicate fluently in Shona, their native tongue. After the family has settled back into life in Rhodesia, Maiguru’s reactions and attitudes change, and she grows

concerned at how Anglicized her children have become” (137). Only when her daughter is harshly ill in the final stages of the novel does she realize the terrible consequences of these conflicting cultural pressures that have been placed on her children. The following extract reflects on how the selfhood and subjectivity of Maiguru are foreclosed:

When the family returns to the homestead for the holidays, Maiguru, highly educated and accustomed to earning her own living as an educator, is reduced to a traditional role as domestic drudge. During subsequent holidays, Maiguru refuses to attend the celebrations. Even more boldly, Maiguru confronts her husband about her lack of respect and recognition in the family, an action that leads to the even bolder move of her leaving the house altogether. Although she returns to the family fold, Maiguru has evolved into a realistic model of modern womanhood for the young girls in her care. (140)

She signifies a subtle but emerging voice of feminist dissent, a woman ahead of her time who tries to ratify change in gradual and realizable ways. She is complex and multilayered, and her dual nature reflects her status as the creation of two worlds, Africa and England. On one hand she is emotional, passionate, and challenging, while on the other she is sensible and thoughtful in her thinking. Nyasha is well-regarded by Tambu for her ability to see fight and difference not as threats but as chances to increase her understanding of herself and the world. She uses the various experiences life presents her with as an opportunity to grow, learn, and improve. Initially, she thrives in her state of unsettled and often opposing emotions and feelings, and she sees any inconsistencies in her feelings or her world as opportunities for greater self-development. The following excerpt dramatizes Tambu’s yearning for coherent identity:

They were German birds and I got depressed. Secretly, I hate travelling. I am restless at home, but the minute I get away I feel the threat of doom hanging over my most trivial actions. Why had I come back to Europe anyway? My whole life was in pieces. For two years I had debated whether to get pregnant or strike out on my own and see some more of the world. (43)

The search for freshness, brightness, and difference is special to Tambu. She has dislike towards looking for fresh experiences within the border of marriage. Normal and monotonous practices choke and strangle her desires. Without thinking about the results, she decides to explore new and unknown scope of experiences. She begins to questions all the tendencies and rules set by the normal course of social life. When she evaluates her life from the vantage point of her principle, she feels successful. But viewed from the standpoint of other people, she seems to be utterly defeated and nullified. It is at this time that she does not have any context to deal with these trials. She can hardly survive without developing new experience.

To sum up, the core finding of this research is that an individual's undying and indomitable passion for freedom of any sort leads to the weakening of traditional gender roles. In Dangarembga's *Nervous Condition*, the female protagonist named Tambu is passionately guided by innovative notions of female subjectivity but her search is affected badly by plenty of patronizing and alienating factors. Patriarchal society is always intolerant of every woman who does not conform to the patriarchal status quo. Tambu wants to be different. She takes literature as her pursuit. Fed up with the restrictive measures of marriage, she chooses to live in a different way and with different purpose. From every corner of traditional patriarchal society she has to face hurdles and setbacks. People with a narrow perspective and rigid mentality produce hostile and harsh remarks. All these responses begin to inflict pain in her. But

she goes through all these setbacks like knife through butters. Tambu does not get engaged in a relation forever. For her it is imperative to change. She takes it as wastage of time and energy the task of reproducing children.

Tambu's search for her own subjectivity is not straight forward and forceful. On the contrary it is tacit and subtle. Her silence and patience are keys to understanding how troubled she is in the context of exploring identity. Plenty of evidences can be found to claim that Tambu is determined to defy and disobey those norms and values set by patriarchy which put control over women's passion for freedom. The patriarchal can not control her; she challenges with her efforts no matter what they are from. This research will help to aware a person to be educated and sensible like 'Tambu' whose life inspires everygirl to be independent, educated and revoutionary.

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