

**Tribhuvan University**

**Subverting the Imperial and Patriarchal in *Nervous Conditions***

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract

Borrowing its title and epigraph from Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968) – the condition of native is a nervous condition – Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* extends the Fanonian thematics of psychological anxieties as a colonial condition to articulate these anxieties as symptomatic of the collaboration of both the patriarchal and colonial conditions. Dangarembga dramatizes the conflicting Shona women's voices and subject position in the then existing social configuration which the female characters seek to revise even while upholding it. Trapped in the storm of violence both vertical – violence of the war of independence from colonizing power; and horizontal – violence directed at the wives or sisters in house and family by the fellow colonized men, the female characters like Tambudzai and Nyasha are engaged in a dialogic relationship to the imperial legacies and the local patriarchy supported and promoted by it, missionary education and other nervous conditions. While textualizing their repressed rage at the patriarchal and colonial domination, Dangarembga proposes the trans/postnational politics of location for these characters who are seeking to disidentify themselves both with local patriarchy and imperial power. At this moment, Dangarembga comes to the conclusion that the assertion of trans/postnational female subjectivity can be accomplished neither through an access to colonial education and western literacy as signifiers of modernization and progress nor through the collaboration with patriarchy; rather it is possible to attain female subjectivity, by becoming conscious of women's objectification and dehumanization at the intersection of various conflicting discourses; and by developing a politics of solidarity with local men and women within their community.

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