I. Condition of the Colonized Native as Nervous Condition

On its appearance in 1988, Tsitsi Dangarembaga's *Nervous Conditions* became the first novel by a black Zimbabwean woman to be published in English, meeting with immediate critical acclaim by winning the African section of the Commonwealth Writers Prize in the following year. Set in colonial Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe which became independent in April 18, 1980) in the thick of guerrilla activity in the late 1960's and 1970's, the novel dramatizes the conflicting Shona women's voices and subject positions while also exposing the rural-urban divide and the gendered discrimination in the then existing social configuration which the feminine characters seek to revise even while upholding it.

Borrowing its title, *Nervous Conditions* and epigraph, 'The condition of native is a nervous condition,' from Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968), the novel describes colonialism as a debilitating nervous condition for the colonized native. In depicting the colonization's effect on the natives, the novel focuses on the plight of the doubly colonized women, highlighting the connection between feminism and nationalism. Through the eyes of her narrator, Tambudzai, Dangarembga balances poverty, indigenous culture, and practicality against wealth, cultural illiteracy, and mental instability, for the most part by concentrating on the relationship between the two cousins, Tambudzai and Nyasha.

Tambu's family, though poor, maintains a direct link with traditional subsistence farming and customs, which provides the solid ground on which Tambu makes clear, practical decisions about her feminine rebellion. Essentially, the rebellion entails her desire for the same education that is made available to her brother. Early in her life, her grandmother impressed on her malleable mind a romantic tale of signs of wonder and the limitless horizons that a colonial education could offer through hard work and obedience to

the ideals of the ‘good African’ and the ‘good girl’. Nonetheless, her family could not afford the tuition fees for more than one child and, most importantly, the family deemed education a male prerogative. Her gender, not her merit, was the criteria that disqualified her from attaining an equal opportunity at education, because eventually a girl’s education in Shona culture is an investment that will benefit her husband and his family. Only when her brother Nhamo dies and her destitute family realizes their need for a substitute savior and provider could Tambu get her opportunity by default at education. She attends the Umtali Missionary School and moves to the house of her uncle, Babamukuru Siguake, who assumed the position of a headmaster of the primary level of that school as well as the Academic Director of the Church’s Manicaland Region.

In the Siguake dwelling place, Tambu develops a close friendship with her cousin, Nyasha, who spent the formative years of her life in English boarding schools abroad. Observing her cousin’s alienation from the sanctioned representation of a ‘good African’ and a ‘good girls,’ Tambu begins to re-evaluate and question her domestication and complicity with the dominant discourses of power. Hence, she begins to develop a disease with the failure of the dominant colonial and patriarchal cultures to open up a space to accommodate the complex subjectivity of this black female. Consequently, she rehabilitates her voracious consumption of any signifier of whiteness and Englishness as a referent for liberation. And with the deterioration of Nyasha’s relationship with her father and the severe anorexic behavior she develops, Tambu begins to identify and sympathize with Nyasha’s victimization. Moreover, she begins to contest the avuncular authority that strives to impose a strict Christian moral ethics on her parents. At this moment in the narrative, she reaches the conclusion that an assertion of her black female subjectivity can be accomplished neither through access to colonial education and western literacy as signifiers of modernization and progress nor through collaboration with patriarchy. Rather,

she could start to intervene in her liberation, only when she has gained consciousness of her and other women's objectification and dehumanization at the intersection of various, conflicting discourses and develop a politics of solidarity with local men and women.

In *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga articulates a tertiary space of the homestead, the mission and the convent. The relationship among the three spaces is fluid. The spaces, traversed by lines of force carrying their own intensities, are subject to constant and repeated deterritorializations and reterritorializations. Tambu moves through all three spaces as a figure of the transnational intellectual in the making; Nyasha, caught in the intermediate space, has traveled in the western space and occasionally visits the "native" space of the homestead. Nhamo's movement from the homestead to the mission, though a relatively minor movement, anticipates these larger movements and their finely calibrated differences. While Nyasha's movement is from the West (the outside) to the native (the inside) in the form of an "immersion," Tambu moves conversely from a native interior to a western exterior, in the form of an "emergence".

The effects of colonization permeate the text, while examining the plurality of nervous conditions. Tambudzai's coming of age story takes place within the colonial context in a male dominated African society and charts the resistance of various female characters within her extended family to the multiple oppressions of sexism, racism, colonialism, and capitalism. Although the story takes place in pre-independent Rhodesia, the postcolonial narrative perspective critiques the patriarchal class system directly as an outgrowth of colonialism. In this sense, the novel portrays that gender and class operation in (post)colonial countries has been fed by colonialist/imperialist ideology. References to prostitution arise and are contested to signify how women, as sites of cultural impurity, attempt to gain control of their bodies and their sexuality. Nyasha, however, suffers from another women's disease, anorexia nervosa, which serves as an internalization of and

resistance to sexual oppression and colonial domination, and is symptomatic of the western and class privileges she experiences as a cultural hybrid.

The novel begins with an epigraph (also the source of its title) derived from Jean-Paul Sartre's Preface to Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968) – "The condition of native is a nervous condition" (20). One consequence of such a beginning, clearly enough, is to suggest a certain relation between Fanon's text and Dangarembga's and it is precisely within such intertextual boundaries that *Nervous Conditions* has been set by a number of recent critics. All the same time, however, these critics are rightly at pains to stress the way to which Dangarembga's text not only deploys Fanon's insights into the workings and effects of colonial domination but also extends and revise them from a black feminist perspective. For Sue Thomas, *Nervous Conditions* is a narrativization of several of the "key concepts" elaborated in Fanon's text while simultaneously bringing into focus "the Question of gender difference" which Fanon's work fails "adequately to theorize" (35). Fanon's views are both enabling and limiting for the project of *Nervous Conditions.* Fanon documents some of the "mental disorders" to which colonialism give rise while remaining "almost entirely silent," as Vizzard puts it, "on the question of women, and their position as a colonial subjects" (205). It is a function of mutually reinforcing attitudes between colonizer and colonized that condemn the colonized to what amounts to a psychological disorder. Fanon writes, in the 'Manichean world' created by Europe, decolonization stems from a decisive and murderous confrontation of the two protagonists in the process of which the colonized people are transformed from being "spectators crushed with their inessentials into privilege actors with grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them" (30).

There is no doubt that approaches to *Nervous Conditions* which situate it within the frame of reference established by its epigraph are both productive and illuminating for the

invocation of Fanon also attracts the attentions of the postcolonial critic. The novel basically deals with the process by which colonization pathologizes the subjectivities of those whom it emerges, including the colonizers. In this regard, as Charles Sugnet claims, Dangarembga's text is categorized as a "feminist reinvention of Fanon" whose aim is to "rearticulate the relationship between Feminism and anti-colonial nationalism" (qtd. in Plasa 36).

Nervous Conditions, as embedded in the epigraph interrogate the category "native". The first line begins with a sensational announcement, "I was not sorry when my brother died". It goes on, "Nor am I apologizing for my callousness, as you may define it, my lack of feeling. For it is not that at all. I feel many things these days […]" (1). The categorical tone of the first person narrator signals a critical self-examination, quite conscious about rejecting the guilt associated with "unnatural" sisterhood, inhuman lack of feeling. In declining indifference as a cause, she indicates that there is agency and deliberation in her 'refusal to mourn' her brother's untimely death. Although the family is the primary space of identity, the narrator, Tambu, who is thirteen when her brother dies in 1968, "challenges the rhetoric of harmonious domesticity by identifying her brother as an antagonist and a rival." In diagnosing the "impending violence" of the male subject, Fanon seems to have forgotten "the implicit violence of the female, who, while she does not actually kill her brother, certainly seems to have sent a death wish or two his way" (Nair 133). Tambu's violence specifically and deliberately targets her brother who is a threat to her not just by virtue of his status as elder son/brother, but also an impediment to the education that Tambu desires, and that she is told she will not get because her brother comes first.

Tambu struggles to gain education despite her father's wish to learn the domestic affairs like cooking, washing, cleaning and growing vegetables. Tambu sees education as "one way, however impure and treacherous, of altering her vulnerable status" (Nair 135),

however, education is an inherited tradition, a patriarchal investment that allows the man to play primary breadwinner among the colonized. The power and privileged associated with the colonially educated male is evident in the family's success story. The legitimate access to family funds which comes from the woman's work on the farm as well is granted primarily to the son. Tambu grows her own crops and sells them in order to pay for the school fees her family coffers cannot or will not provide. While the colonial school offered material benefits, it was also a dangerous site for a growing girl who would loose her sense of place in the traditional family structure, a lack or mooring that would apparently lead to the woman's looseness or immorality.

Tambu's cousin, the rebellious Nyasha, suggests that Tambu refrain from convent education on intellectual and political terms but she is contaminated culturally. Nyasha argues that entry into the locus of colonial civic control will make a puppet out of her cousin. Although Tambu is aware that her desire to acquire colonial education is also a death of her native 'womanhood', "it is a death she welcomes because, she believes, her incarnation will emerge with more power than she has as a poor, uneducated, black peasant girl" (Nair 134). Nyasha, on the other hand, is born into the Europeanized, wealthy and educated side of the family and suffers, due to childhood years spent in England, from the loss of indigenous language, history, and consequently, personal identity. Alongside Tambu's successful negotiations to achieve academic merit, "Nyasha's lively intellect slides into a mental abyss where she regurgitates the wrong "self" with the wrong food, which is characteristic of the paradoxical behavior of those afflicted with anorexia nervosa" that she develops (Phillips 100-1).

Separately these two girls epitomize the "nervous conditions" of the novel's title, they are the split subject moving within the two diametrical spaces: if Tambu moves steadily from the homestead to the mission and to the convent; Nyasha moves backward

from the center of the metropolis to mission and to the homestead. Despite the “nervous conditions” brought about by colonization Nyasha struggles to negotiate her need for autonomy with her desire to embrace her African community. Nyasha and Tambu, “dance a delicate movement between individual and cultural identifications that places them simultaneously inside and outside the ideologies of colonized and gendered subjectivities” (Aegerter 235). Nyasha’s disease belongs in large part to her Anglicization. Wrenched from her rural African home at a young age to accompany her parents during their graduate education in England, she returns to Rhodesia at the onset of puberty. When she is reunited with her cousins, she looks and feels awkward in her western affairs, having forgotten her native Shona language and customs. Unable to communicate with her cousin, she is alienated from her familial and cultural identity and hyphenated by her Anglo-African experience, she thinks of herself as a ‘hybrid’.

Despite her scathing criticism of the arbitrary hierarchy of gender practiced with certain relish by the men in her nuclear and extended families, Nyasha yearns to embrace her African heritage once again. Frail and fragmented, Nyasha continues to rail against her father. When her resistant diatribes fail, she uses her body to rebel. As her father asserts his authority by forcing her to finish her food every night, she asserts her autonomy by vomiting it up. She becomes anorectic and suffers from “the illness, the disease” which “is precisely the disease of Englishness, a disease (or unease) carried in the language, or, perhaps, the disease of being between, of being in a condition of ‘thwarted becoming’”(Punter 153). Her bulimia signifies her refusal to swallow a sexist ideology which she cannot and will not stomach. She rejects the western ideals that revile the very man she is forced to revere, that make a slave of her father, her master. In turning from the unpalatable patriarchy of her father, she destroys her body through the eating disorder, bulimia, a western disease.

Nyasha furiously tears the pages of her colonial history books apart. Metaphorically she is tearing away at the layers that have built up as masks of identity, hiding her from herself and her home. But all there is behind "the black skin that tries to erase the white mask it wears, all there is beneath the attenuated layers, is her flesh, wounded and exposed"(Aegerter 238). She refuses to succumb to sexism and racism preferring the possibility of suicide to losing her complex self in the process of assimilation, but in attempting to strip away all layers of socialization, she risks losing that part of her so integrally associated with her community. As Nyasha comes to discover through her friendship with Tambudzai, and as Tambu also realizes, her African self cannot fully exist outside of her African community.

Dangarembga creates in her narrative a world of women with a submerged female genealogy, ruled ineffectively by men. For Nyasha and Tambu the condition of native as a nervous condition comprises not only colonization but also the condition of gender and that of female education. Their attempts to function in a society that does not allow them socially acceptable verbal or written outlets as educated, female Africans result in their being punished for inappropriate expressions of dissatisfaction and anger. Every stance of bulimic purging comes to Nyasha after a verbal argument with her father, who forces her to eat in order to assert his control. Her violent purging in the privacy of the bathroom is also indicative of the indigestibility of patriarchal order and discipline, which she nevertheless internalizes in her anorexic condition, the existence of her will reduced to disciplining and punishing her body. Her tearing apart of the colonial textbooks with her teeth, calling them "bloody lies" suggest her sickness with the ideological diet of colonial history. Her internal and physical disruptions signal severe psychological trauma that goes entirely unrecognizable until several hysteric ravings and disputes with her father. The available psychiatric help is unable to cure her: she is sick and infected from alienating

structures – postcolonial-patriarchal configurations – that are themselves too sick to provide a cure for her nervous condition. Within such context Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, which is also the coming-of-the age story of the narrator Tambu, charts the resistance of various female characters within the family to the multiple oppressions of sexism, racism to colonialism.

Literary depictions of Feminist awareness have undergone major transformations in the recent years as the examination of colonial and patriarchal agendas in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* will show. In Dangarembga's text Feminism informs this Zimbabwean writer's critical consciousness and impacts her postcolonial perceptions of the nation and the national where her double consciousness is both rooted in national concerns and uprooted from them. Insofar as women are located in the nation and its culture, the text can be viewed as having national concerns. But because it focuses on how a culture supported and promoted by the nation, the national, and nationalism, has oppressed women the text can be deemed to question the national. The text allows one to see why, if the patriarchal culture underlying the social system licenses woman's oppression, then the patriarchal culture acts as an instrument of the nation. Situating both the writer and the text in their historical, political, and social contexts, the researcher argue that the writer's approach to the national is informed by a feminist consciousness rooted in the nation albeit in a manner that allows us to read into it a moving beyond the national towards a trans/postnational conceptual paradigm.

Broadly speaking, the researcher will attempt to connect and contextualize the postcolonial, national, and feminist to see how their trajectories intersect and overlap in this text. Further, an analysis of Dangarembga's feminist and postcolonial perspectives will, as the researcher hope to demonstrate, show how this trans/postnationalism, this trans/post national identity for women derives from the national itself; and moreover,

reveal the dialectic of autonomy and community – through the characters Tambu and Nyasha – that characterize African women's subjectivity in a postcolonial paradigm, in which each young woman is agent and arbiter of her individual, African, female destiny within the framework of community.

II. Feminism and Postcolonialism: African Women's Resistance against the Imperial and Patriarchal

The issue of feminism and postcolonialism is integrally tied to the project of literary postcoloniality and its concerns with the critical reading and interpretation of colonial and postcolonial texts. A postcolonial feminist perspective requires that one learn to read literary representations of women with attention both to the subject and to the medium of representation. Feminist criticism emphasizes the significance of gender in history, politics and culture. Inherently interdisciplinary, feminism examines the relationship between men and women and the consequences of power differentials for the economic, social and cultural status of women in different locations and periods of history.

Gender occupied and still occupies a prominent and constitutive quality in the colonial project whereby all the native, colonized people in the mainstream colonial discourses are characterized as 'Feminine'. No less significant is the way in which the status of native women was used to justify the colonial project as a civilizing mission. As Deepika Bhari says, "Feminist theory and postcolonial theory are occupied with similar questions of representation, voice, marginalization, and the relation between politics and Literature" (201). Given that both critical projections employ multidisciplinary perspectives, they are each attentive, at least in principle, to historical context and the geopolitical co-ordinates of the subject in question. While there is obvious harmony and overlap between the two tensions and divergence are no less in evidence:

> Feminist studies and postcolonial studies sometimes find themselves in a mutually investigative and interactive relation with each other, especially when either becomes too narrowly focused, i.e., when feminist perspective are blind to issues pertaining to colonialism and the international division of

> labor and when postcolonial studies fails to include gender in its analysis. (Bhari 201)

Feminists sometimes complain that analysis of colonial or postcolonial texts fails to consider gender issues adequately, bracketing them in favour of attention to supposedly more significant issues such as empire building, decolonization, and liberation struggle in the colonial context, and nation building in the postcolonial context. The implications of these tensions are many. As Bhari says, “A feminist position *within* postcolonialism must confront the dilemma of seeming divisive while the projects of decolonization and nation-building are still under way” (202). Postcolonial feminism is thus a dynamic discursive field which interrogates the premises of postcolonialism as much as those of feminism. Within the broader work of mainstream feminism postcolonial perspective that focus on race and ethnicity are often perceived as forces that liquidate the global feminist alliance for these critics focuses on the failure of mainstream feminism to incorporate issues of race, or its tendency to stereotype or over-generalize the case of the ‘Third -World Woman’. As bell hooks claims, “White women who dominate feminist discourse today rarely question whether or not their perspective on women’s reality is true to the lived experiences of women as a collective group” (3). The field of knowledge called “postcolonial feminist studies”, thus, clearly indicates the relational identity of the field, suggesting that it exist as a discursive configuration in dialogue with dominant First-world academic constructions even when it is in tension with them.

A number of feminist writers, however, have misgivings about terms like “Third World” for they note the inclination of this indiscriminate label to lump together diverse women, cultures and places into a single monolithic grouping. Such a grouping is constituted in ways that may ironically replicate the vantage point of imperial definitions in presuming to name the vastly differentiated character of the supposedly ‘non-western’ as

singular and simply marginal/outsider. Since the most significant collision and collusion of postcolonial and feminist theory occurs around the contentious figure of the 'third-world woman' some feminist postcolonial theorists have cogently argued that "a blinkered focus on racial politics inevitably elides the 'double colonization' of women under imperial conditions" (Gandhi 83), and postulates the 'third-world women' as victim *par excellence* – the forgotten casualty of both imperial ideology, and native and foreign patriarchies.

While it is impossible to ignore the feminist challenge to the gender blindness of anti-colonial nationalism, critics such as Sara Suleri and Mohanty are instructive in their disavowal of the much too eager "coalition between postcolonial and feminist theories, in which each term serves to reify the potential pietism of the other" (Suleri 274). The imbrications of race and gender, as Suleri goes on to argue, "invests the 'third-world woman' with an iconicity which is almost 'too good to be true'" (273). Suleri's objection to the postcolonial-feminist merger is a refusal to surrender the 'third-world woman' to the sentimental and often opportunistic enamourment with marginality which has come to characterize the metropolitan cult of 'oppositional criticism'. As Spivak writes, "If there is a buzzword in cultural critique now, it is marginality" (55). Such consistent invocation of the marginal has helped reform the aggressive canonicity of high western culture. The margin, as Gayatri Spivak suggests, remains at the service of the center: "when a cultural identity is thrust upon because the centre wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the center" (55). The 'third-world woman' is arguably housed in an 'identifiable margin' and as the critics like Suleri and Spivak insists, this accommodation is ultimately unsatisfactory. These critics attempt to shake up the heavy imperialist weight of the center-periphery binary associated with apparently opposed terms like First world/ Third world by reconfiguring the marginal as not simply offering an outsider positioning but simultaneously an integral vantage point.

These ideas clearly indicate some important terminological difficulties. However, as Mohanty claims, it is helpful to continue to make use of the label, 'third-world women' because, "rather than referring to a commonality of colour or radical identification, the term is better employed to indicate a common context of struggle and resistance to sexist, racist and imperialist structures" (7). Many of the feminist critics within postcolonial feminist studies are struggling to establish identity as relational and historical rather than essential or fixed, even as it attempts to retain gender as a meaningful category of analysis. To be precise, in postcolonial feminism – that is, feminism congruent with broad postcolonial perspectives, simultaneously "postcolonial" and "feminist" in temper and commitment – emphasis tends to be placed on the collusion of patriarchy and colonialism.

Insisting on the heterogeneity of the lives of third world women, Chandra Mohanty pleads for an inter-relational analysis that does not limit the definitions of the female subject to gender and does not bypass the social, class, and ethnic co-ordinates of those analyzed. The Egyptian writer Nawal El Saadawi, like Chandra Mohanty, argue that "the oppression of women, the exploitation and social pressures to which they are exposed, are not characteristic of Arab or Middle Eastern societies, or countries of the 'Third World' alone" (i). Instead, a universalist theory of women's oppression should note that such oppressions "constitute an integral part of the political, economic and cultural system, preponderant in most of the world" whether that system is "backward or feudal" in nature, or a "modern industrial society" that has been submitted to the far reaching influence of a scientific and technological revolution (i).

Saadawi links women's oppression in general and third-world women's oppression in particular to the global capitalist system and warns that under expanding capitalism and ensuing globalization, these women face a whole range of new problems resulting from the social changes to which they are exposed. In recent year, as suggested by Saadwai, there

has been a shift of focus away from cultural issues to the status of women in an international arena defined by globalization. Dissatisfied with the First-world preoccupation with question of tokenism, identity politics, and the politics of location, feminist scholars, in both the First world and the Third, are producing a more dialectical and praxis-oriented understanding of postcolonial feminism that links labor sites in the First and Third worlds and emphasizes the international division of labor as a major concern. As Sunder Rajan and Park claims, "many transnational feminists identify the international division of labor – rather than cultural conflicts or transactions – as the most important defining feature of postcoloniality" (58). The growing importance of the global as the context for feminist scholarship has given new vitality and often new shape to debates about representation, location, and the category of 'Third-world woman', as Chandra Mohanty claims this category, "even if it is reliant on a dualistic politics, retains an heuristic value, particularly under globalization" (Women 5). Mohanty here draws attention to the ways in which issues of spatial economy gain fundamental importance for feminist analysis.

Along line Sundar Rajan and Park, the concept of "Transnational Feminist Practice" is developed by Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan. For them the relationship between postcolonial and transnational studies is one of a specific feminist trajectory that has always focused on the "inequalities generated by capitalist patriarchies in various eras of globalization" (139). The structure of a transnational feminist responsibility is:

> Examining the politics of location in the production and reception of theory can turn the terms of inquiry from desiring, inviting, and granting space to others to becoming accountable for one's own investments in cultural metaphors and values. Such accountability can begin to shift the ground of feminist practice from magisterial relativism (as if diversified cultural

> production simply occurs in a social vacuum) to the complex interpretive practices that acknowledge the historical roles of meditation, betrayal, and alliance in the relationships between women in diverse location. (Kaplan 139)

Kaplan's flexible grid for a transnational feminist politics begins to sketch out the terms of transnational engagement without the grandiose project of erasing inequalities or the prospect of being paralyzed by them. In the arena of global theory, transnationalist feminist practices reject the untenable dichotomy between masculinist grand theories of globalization that ignore gender as an analytical lens and local empirical studies of globalization in which gender takes center stage, such a practice assumes local processes and small-scale actors as the very fabric of globalization.

A meaningful transnational feminist literacy requires the recognition of the location of readers and of reading as a socialized activity within a particular context. As Mohanty remarks, "experience must be historically interpreted and theorized if it is to become the basis of feminist Solidarity and struggle, and it is at this moment that an understanding of politics of location proves crucial" (Feminist 87). It oblige us to recognize the complexities of subject construction everywhere – whether Caribbean, Indian or African – and to learn to read the world through, what Deepika Bhari refer to as, the "logic of adjacence" (220), a logic that could be applied to the general orientation of postcolonialism. Such transnational feminist politics initiates a dialogic process of modification and rehabilitation of a third world woman in a colonial-patriarchal historical context and the critique of colonialism and patriarchy allows the transnational feminist to open up a third space of possibility and embody an unsettling location which insist on continuous mobility and fluidity to avoid entrapment in the webs of power whether colonial or patriarchal.

It is at this juncture that the researcher tries to locate *Nervous Conditions* by the Zimbabwean woman writer Tsitsi Dangarembga within the specific cultural-historical

context of the text – colonial Rhodesia – and 'theorize' transnational feminist position of its writer as a shaping force of the narrative. This Zimbabwean writer engage herself in the production of transnational feminist location by first, disidentifying with the mythic fantasy of a harmonious homestead underpinning the local Shona patriarchal structure, and second, by condemning the colonial ideology and its practices in Southern Rhodesia, including the dispossession of the Shona, the deployment of colonial tropes, and the institution of colonial education. These two strategies demonstrate that the construction of femininity under colonial and patriarchal ideology increases the vulnerability of women to silence and violence.

Such African feminist praxis on the one hand acknowledges the heterogeneity of black female experience, while on the other, recognizes that each woman's politics of location is constructed at the intersection of different, conflicting narratives of identity – race, gender, class, education, family, colonialism, religion, and language. In addition, this African feminist praxis depends on unraveling a tradition of female solidarity, by reconfiguring the notion of community in which these women live as open and inclusive which can also embrace men given that they dissocialize themselves from the masculinist colonial values they have been subscribing to.

Colonial Shona Patriarchy and Dangarembga's Transnational Feminist Position

In an interview with Rosemary Marangoly George and Helen Scott, Tsitsi Dangarembga was asked whether the female cast of *Nervous Conditions* can be viewed as "strangers in their own country" and not quite as insiders, who can be considered "quite at home"(314). Dangarembga responds:

> Yes, I've also been thinking about this question of home as well, and while it is a very interesting concept, I don't know how to answer your question at the moment. What constitutes a person's home? What home for any of

> those characters, *including* the male characters? Clearly, none of the women are at home. (314)

Despite that moment of hesitation and uncertainty about the viability and possibility of a homely location for African women and men, Dangarembga conclusively implies that gender politics foreclose the seamless suture of the black female subject to her patrilineal home. Women can never be at home, as long as mechanisms of male domination and superiority continue to subordinate native women. These mechanisms completely disrupt and crack within the interiority and integrity of Shona ancestral home sites, to the extent that a rupture of the collective mythologies of oneness, continuity, and plenitude between the female subject and communal subjectivity is inevitable.

The title of the novel and its epigraph draw on and revise Frantz Fanon's work on the psychological condition of the native – which Jean-Paul Sartre identified in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968) – from the viewpoint of the colonized women. Fanon theorizes the psychology of the (male) colonized in terms of cultural indeterminacy and split subjectivities. Fanon accredits these pathologies to the condition of "permanent tension," or the state of "nervous condition," engendered by the violent manicheism of colonial culture. Although, degraded and violated by colonial aggression, the colonized envies colonial privilege and "never ceases to dream of…substituting himself for the settler" (52). Fanon's discussion of the pathological effects and psycho-social impact of colonization on the colonized foregrounds the sense of anxiety that the Manichean logic of colonialism generates in the colonized. Fanon argues that when the colonized is "confronted with the colonial order of things, he is in a state of permanent tension" (52). Moreover, Fanon mentions two major factors that generate this nervousness. First, although the colonizer represents the colonial environment as a function of hostility, antagonism, and the negation of the native, the colonized nonetheless perceives this

cosmology in an ambivalent economy: "the settler's world is a hostile world, which spurns the native, but at the same time it is a world of which he is envious" (52). The colonized, then, never ceases to fantasize about inhabiting whiteness and imperial privilege, substituting himself for the settler. The imperial psychic economy is "a space of splitting" not "a neat division" but a "doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once" (44): Fanon calls these spaces "hell" and "paradise," the site of damnation and seduction (52-53).

Second, Fanon argues that there can be no reconciliation in this manichean structure: cultural civility is replaced with colonial violence, brutality, and terror. This constitutes vertical violence, which trickles down to police and enforces the integrity of the borderlines of the imperial symbolic economy. Therefore, the colonized does not want to trespass, or transgress the limits of colonial borders and incur colonial vengeance for his unforgivable guilt. As such, the colonized never stops from decoding the colonial signifiers that demarcate this borderline. Fanon states: "The native is always on the alert, for since he can only make out with difficulty the many symbols of the colonial world, he is never sure whether or not he has crossed the frontier" (53). Thus, both the material conditions of vertical violence as well as the symbolic practices, necessary for decoding colonial signifiers, generate the nervous condition, "a tonicity of muscles" (53), among the colonized. To release his tension and nervousness, the colonized engages in acts of horizontal aggression, which he directs inwards towards other (male) natives. Fanon observes that at this stage, "you will see the native reaching for his knife at the slightest hostile or aggressive glance cast on him by another native; for the last resort of the native is to defend his personality vis-à-vis his *brother*" (54).

In her re-visioning of Fanon, Dangarembga first multiplies the paradigmatic nervous condition into conditions within the context of gender, race, and class politics,

which ruptures the homogenization of African pathological bodies as male. Dangarembga redefines the category "native" to include the colonized women, for there is an urgent need, she implies, to institutionalize the investigation of the psychosocial effects of colonialism on women. Therefore, Fanon's reduction of female pathologies to a function of biology, as child birth and menstruation, needs to be reconsidered here in favor of an examination of female trauma and nervousness as necessarily symptomatic of the collaboration of both the patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist conditions. Dangarembga manages this way to emphasize that the vertical violence between colonizers and colonized, is transvalued as horizontal violence that the colonized directs inwards towards his house and family. Unable to manifest a violent stance towards their masters, as a result of their desire to prove their humanity to the colonizer by subscribing to their ideologies, colonized men turn their mechanisms of oppression and domination towards their wives or sisters.

As evident in Dangarembga's revision of Fanon the relationship between the black female individual and her African community has been the subject of a long heated controversy in African literary circles. The emergence of a strong feminist voice in African women's writings posed an ethical and a political dilemma for these writers. Beatrice Stegman explicates the black female's dilemma in negotiating the pressures of community and subjectivity:

> African communalism implies a standard or value of submergence rather than self-realization. In traditional African societies, the role of each citizen is to perpetuate the status quo, to assure continuity of the clan, to work within tradition […]. The "new woman," or feminist, rebels against such traditionalism because she evinces a theory of personhood where the individual exist as an independent entity rather than a group member, where

> she is defined by her experience rather than her kinship relations, where she has responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than accept her role, where she has indefinable value rather than quantitative financial worth, and where she must reason about her own values rather than fit into stereotyped tradition. (90)

Feminist concerns were trivialized or dismiss by the national male intelligentsia who demanded the valorization of race and national struggle over the divisive issue of gender politics. Besides the squabble and disagreement over the appropriate locution to describe African feminisms as a women's movement, the whole community and subjectivity debate was complicated by two problems. First, the general suspicious sentiments in Africa towards Western feminism. For many male intellectuals the practice of feminism in Africa has been usually denounced as a reproduction of Western imperial ideologies. These intellectuals argue that western feminists are on a crusade to prosecute and execute African communal values. Moreover, western feminists were condemned for co-opting African women's texts, in order to privilege the western thematics of individuality, antagonism to men, militant separatism, the politics of the female body, and the value of motherhood. As such, for many African women the label feminist becomes a referent to de-Africanization (betrayal and rejection of African identity). In fact, in an interview with Kristen Holst Peterson, Dangarembga states that "women in Zimbabwe are very wary of being called feminists. It is really a very dirty word" (347). Moreover, Flora Veit-Wild mentions that the novel was rejected for publication in Zimbabwe for its "pointedly feminist perspective" (331).

Second, this debate has been exacerbated by the representation of black female subjectivity in African male texts. The female voice in male literary production is generally absent and deemed not worthy of the grand narrative of literary production, and talking

about women is branded as divisive and superfluous to the national/colonial debate. Abdualrazak Gurnah, for example, explains the erasure of gender and the apathy towards patriarchy in African male textuality to the exigence for negating and correcting the colonial denigration of the African mind, thought, and culture. He writes, "In respect of patriarchy, the African text was engaged in establishing the potency of African thought and culture to itself and to the world and, at best, it spoke for women without giving them voice" (xi). Only when they are displaced in the trope of Great Mother/Mother Africa that women resurface in this literature, but only as metonymic markers of the purity and innocence of the precolonial continent/nation or as signifiers of resistance to colonialism.

Afrocentric discourses, the Negritude movement in particular, insisted not only on feminizing Africa and displacing the embodied female subject, but also on reproducing the African motherland in the female body. These writers glorified the materiality of the female body as a metaphor for a mythological continent and as a container of the core values of the motherland that the colonialist could not have access to. As such, African women were hence denied any claim to freedom, as it was taken for granted that the African woman does not need to be liberated; she has been free for many thousands of years. Thus, the communal pressure on African female authors seems to demand that they overlook the dynamics of their displacement and metaphorization and, instead, valorize deference to race, nation, community, and tradition over their loyalties to women's freedom.

However, some feminist interventions proposed to bridge this seemingly irreconcilable dichotomy by synthesizing the African demands with the feminist claims. These synthetic interventions remained, nonetheless, limited to the agendas of demonstrating that in Lindsay Aegerter's words, "African's woman's autonomy is predicated upon and inseparable from her place within her community" (233). Such a

synthetic approach locates a communal ethics at the center of African feminism and finds it impossible for black female subjectivity to inhabit any space outside her African community. In *Ngambika: Studies of Women in African Literature*, Carole Boyce Davies and Anne Adams Graves reconfigure African feminism as “a hybrid of sorts, which seeks to combine African concerns with feminist concerns” (12). Accordingly, African feminism is expected to recognize African men not as antagonistic but as comrades, and to challenge them to become conscious of female oppression in Africa. Whether this challenge also means exposing these same men’s complicity in the subjugation of women not only to local patriarchy but also to colonialism and capitalist rationality remains unanswered. Moreover, while maintaining that African feminism recognizes misogynist traditions but accepts institutions of value for women, Davies and Graves do not consider the male role in reinforcing these same unjust traditions and institutions they want African feminism to be rid of. The authors suggest that only colonialism “reinforced traditional inequalities and introduced others” (9).

The inevitable conclusion that these synthetic critics can reach is that African feminist writings are inherently narratives of national allegory. For example, Janice Hill interprets Dangarembga’s novel as an allegory of the national struggle for the independence of Zimbabwe. She contends that Nyasha’s defiance of her father’s authoritarianism is meant to parallel the guerrilla struggle for liberation, the setting of the narrative which is almost completely absent from Tambu’s narration. Hill state:

> Much of the discontent that the women in the Siguake family express with the patriarchal power structure […] mirrors the discontent that Africans expressed with colonial power structures during the 1960s and 1970s […]. In particular, I read Nyasha’s struggle against Babamukuru’s authoritative attempt to silence her as figuring the struggle of African freedom fighters in

> the long and bloody guerrilla war against Southern Rhodesia's government. (89)

Hill's reading of this narrative as a national allegory raises several problems. First, Hill's allegory reproduces the inherently colonial trope of feminizing the land and its populace that underlies her analogy between colonialism and the nation, patriarchy and women. Moreover, this claim diverts attention from the scenario of collaboration between both patriarchy and colonialism over the disciplining and control of women, their bodies, and labor. Second, Hill argues that the "openness of the narrative marks an anticipation of the process of national composition, but never states whether it is also a period of patriarchal reconstruction of public hegemony" (87). The consequences of this consolidation of the national ideal, under the auspices of the same patriarchal structure, on Zimbabwean women are left without further consideration. Most importantly, Hill fails to provide any convincing explanation for the absence of the guerrilla warfare (Chimurenga), the process that initiates the nation of Zimbabwe into this path of liberation, from the narrative.

The implication of the African/woman, community/individual debate on *Nervous Conditions* can be discerned in the absence of the war of liberation from the text. Michael Chapmen has even gone so far as stating that the Chimurenga "as the intractable event, remains a key to understanding developments of the last twenty five years in any field we may wish to call Zimbabwean literature" (301). However, except for a couple of casual references Dangarembga completely erases the national struggle for liberation from her novel. Dangarembga refuses to engage this debate on their prescribed reductive terms, even though colonialism is the pre-existing thematic framework for her texts.

Dangarembga, evidently, deems addressing the tenuous position that native women occupy in their societies more important than an attention to the historical record of the Chimurenga. Dangarembga refuses to succumb to the nationalist demand to suspend

the fight against gender politics and oppression in her culture. Instead, she turns the "invisible war" at the home front, into the urgent site of war. This demystification of home unravels the obliteration of gender politics and inequalities that underlie much of the rhetorics and politics of official narratives of the nation. In fact, a major national trope displaces women and transvalues them into abstract signifiers for the nation, land and culture which are in need of male protection. Moreover, her insistence on foregrounding gender politics anticipates the domestication of women in post-colonial Zimbabwe. In *Mothers of the Revolution*, Meggi Zingani points out that the language of egalitarianism, which was urgent to mobilize every Zimbabwean as "comrades" during the guerrilla wars, got eventually displaced in post-colonial times: "But now people are still behaving in the same way. So the village and district committees were formed to teach people, especially mothers, to behave like mothers. The young women were the most affected" (134). For Dangarembga, the pedagogical narratives of the nation and its past need to be interrogated, rather than mythologize it in a set of fetishized iconographies that confine women into second-class citizenship.

Dangarembga anticipates the black holes in the post-colonial narrative of national memory in regards to women's contributions to the Chimurenga as well the manipulation of memory in the reproduction of gender politics. The backlash against women and feminism continues in the administration of public memory in Zimbabwe, as evident in the monuments, statues, and memorials constructed to commemorate the Chimurenga. To honor the memory of the war heroes, Zimbabwe's public space is implanted with memorial texts that operate as a referent for an ideal patriotic polysemy: remembering the honors and suffering of national heroes, inculcate a message of courage and freedom, and as expected reproduce the domestication of women. Female guerrilla combatants became "lady fighters," and a maternity hospital, rather than a military regiment, was named after a

female rebel. Dangarembga seems to claim that the post-colonial state's motives for remembering need not be anchored in a recollection of and homage to those who were annihilated to allow for the emergence of the nation. Rather, the administration of memory becomes a practice of state legitimacy as an idealization of male power and as mnemonic device to remind women of their maternal positions in homely places. Hence, for women in Zimbabwe, public spaces of commemoration became sites of erasure, exclusion, and domestication.

Dangarembga, in short, refuses a smooth retrieval of the identity narratives of women and African, but rather continues to unravel the indeterminacy underlying the concepts of gender and race. As such, Dangarembga's narrative abrogates the structure of national allegory, because women should not, will not, function as signifiers for national culture. Instead of glossing over the complexities of this debate, Dangarembga's narrative opens up a space to explore and problematize the instabilities of these contested terms – namely, feminism and Africa, individuality and community, race and gender, public space and homely location, as they undergo a continuous process of reinscription.

In "Patriarchy, Capitalism, and the Colonial State in Zimbabwe" Elizabeth Schmidt explicates, "the economic – namely, obtaining cheap labor – and the political motivations that is, maintaining law, order, and respect for all forms of authority, behind the collaboration between colonialism and local male leadership in their mutual subordination of Zimbabwean women"(742). Colonialism endeavored to strengthen the base of patriarchal dominance through the enactment of laws and regulations that would restrict the movement and production capacity of Shona women. Indigenous patriarchy, on the other hand, sought to reclaim authority over women's labor and production to consolidate the market economy and capitalist rationality of colonial rule. Hence, colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism conspired to keep women totally dependent on their husbands

and to deprive them of equal access to land, children, and capital economy. Schmidt quotes a native commissioner who admonished: “Unless the government supported African men in exercising their rights over the wives, not only the family but the whole existence of a nation could be placed in jeopardy as well” (741).

Underlying this cooperation of the local and western structures of patriarchy is the anxieties of colonial discourses over the representation of Shona women as lustful animals, unable to control their sexualities and the patriarchal fear of women’s threat to the security of their authority. These representations of the radical Otherness of Shona women, Schmidt argues, “functioned as a discourse to legitimate imperial and capitalist exploration of cheap wage male labor” (744). Dangarembga implies that any critique of local patriarchal structures is incomplete without examining its intersection with the colonial imaginary. Therefore, she casts the narration and its decentering of the notion of home under the hideous specter of colonialism. Besides, Dangarembga registers her abrogation of colonial authority and dismantling of colonial tropes through the grandmother’s fairy tale and her extended critique of the policies and the curriculum of colonial education.

Dangarembga’s representation of her characters’ estrangement from their family and home coincides with Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s theories on the effect of colonial education that he expounds in *Decolonizing the Mind* (1981). With the institutionalization of English as the language of communication, wa Thiong’o conceives of this colonial relation as a steady progression of the substitution of native self for a colonial subjectivity: “Thus language and literature were taking us further and further from our selves to other selves, from our worlds to other worlds” (27). The curricula and objective of this education are designed to produce an extreme form of alienation, estrangement, and self-hatred, for within the alienation trap everything native will be viewed as inferior, worthless, and superfluous. This is, of course, the ultimate sign of the dehumanization of the natives, their

traditions, cultures, and languages. Moreover, wa Thiong'o claims that this alienation emerges in the context of colonial education in two interlinked modalities: first an ambivalence towards one's own system of reference. Second, an enthusiastic assimilation to the "most external to one's environment" (27), that is, the colonial economy that suppresses and negates the existence of the colonized. This process of alienation, he explains:

> Starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. On a large social scale it is like producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies. (28)

Although pertinent to her representation of Nhamo, Dangarembga refrains from deploying the same nostalgic rhetoric of pre-colonial communal harmony that wa Thiong'o employs. His narrative of colonial trauma and alienation as well as the loss of native oral culture bemoans the ruptures in the harmony of an idyllic, pastoral wholeness between land, family, culture, history. Transcending colonial alienation would ensure the "restoration of the harmony between all the aspects and divisions of language so as to restore the Kenyan child to his environment" (29). In contrast, Dangarembga suspects that for local women this harmony between self, language, and environment is merely a mythic construct and a fantasy, a condition that precludes the fullness of any sense of plenitude and wholeness with the environment.

In her *Peasants, Traders, and Wives*, Elizabeth Schmidt argues that "colonial education for indigenous women resulted in their domestication and deprived them of cultivating any skills" (10). The primary object of domestic education was to make local

women better wives and mothers in ways that suit their native needs and traditional lifestyle at rural homesteads only. Underlying this ideology, of course, was the desire to posit African traditions as normal and natural. Moreover, in their attempt to reinvent African womanhood along the lines of middle-class Victorian housewives, colonizers and missionaries reconfigured the referent of the “civilizing mission” to signify the ideology of domesticity. Shona women, as good Christian mothers and wives, were needed “to reproduce the labor force and bear the social costs of production” (12). Integrating these women into the civilizing mission ensured that native women would raise the good and healthy Christian children necessary for the preservation of the colonial and capitalists systems.

Thus, women were encouraged to get rid of their savage and ignorant habit and comply instead with the codes of European hygiene, morality, and a labor ethics. As such, “women were trained not even in basic literary programs, but in the daily routine of house chores and domestic work and in their loyalty to the Victorian ideology of the private sphere--namely, taking care of the home, feeding and obeying the husband, and fending for the children” (15). The domestication of women, therefore, entailed not only the direct inculcation of traditional feminine constructs like nurturance and service but also the regulation of female sexuality. Moreover, this domestication meant that these native women were precluded from inhabiting any European space, for to become Europeanized would entice these women into moving to urban areas which would destabilize both patriarchal and colonial structures.

Dangarembga’s text is not a national manifesto of self-assertion in times of national liberation but a narrative of disillusionment that departs from the master narratives of postcolonial literary development. The transnational feminist characters like Tambu and Nyasha, not only straddle conflicting worlds but also refuse comfortably to inhabit any

static position within these structures, for they attempts to disidentify themselves from all hegemonic and oppressive structure, local and global, patriarchal and colonial.

When Kristen Peterson asked her, "you obviously live between cultures. Who celebrates your victories or on whose shoulder do you cry when you get depressed. Who is your support group?" Dangarembga, matter-of-factly responded, "I don't have one" (348). Such transnational location is not coterminous with a narration of loss of cultural and maternal affiliations, but rather a narration of reinvention and reconstruction of the wounded psychology of third world women who have no one to lean back on. Dangarembga herself occupies a transnational feminist position par excellence. In other words, Dangarembga's transnational poetics propose to celebrate the postcolonial era of independence, which is structured around the same symbolic economy of coloniality, but to project the exigency of reconciliation. As such, colonial pathologies and other nervous conditions could be only addressed and cured in a process of reconciliation that complicates and unsettles the race economy between blacks and whites – colonizer and colonized – in the national front.

III. Subverting the Colonial and the Patriarchal in *Nervous Conditions*

Imperial Legacies, Missionary Education and other Nervous Conditions

In *Nervous Conditions*, one system is pitched against another in the collision of what constitutes an African and a woman as five different women move over different places. Nyasha, for example, feels that she has to fight both the African and colonial systems while Tambudzai slips into a system that negates her world completely, while she continues to benefit from its values. Tambudzai's mother is defined by the village while Maiguru is not willing to let go of the privilege of being with her husband because her sense of identity is tied up with her husband's. Lucia, the only one of the second generation of women who actually has her own name, does not believe in but uses patriarchally acceptable strategies to have a voice, and proves that she can be successful without being westernized. Lucia plays an important structural role in the book, suggesting both the oppression and the potential power of women in traditional African society, while at the same time serving as a sort of traditional counterpart to the westernized Nyasha. The text thus demonstrates the female imperative to challenge traditionally prescribed roles by reinventing her self and re-shaping her identity.

Juxtaposed against the "entrapment" of Tambudzai's mother, aunt and cousin, is the deleterious, detrimental, and debilitating combined effect of colonial culture, education, and religion, compounded by traditional patriarchy. Since the colonial is in collusion with the patriarchal, the line between the colonial system of meaning and the national gets blurred as we find in Babamukuru both the patriarchally constituted ways of thinking found in colonial and traditional cultures come together. Implicit in the depiction of Babamukuru, who is deeply conditioned by colonialism, is the novel's concerns with the psyche of a colonized people which has further implications for the task of nation-building. This concern with the character of the male native is further highlighted in the depiction of

the characters, Jeremiah and Takesure, both of whom are portrayed as irresponsible husbands and fathers. Thus, the text psychologizes concern about the difficult task of nation-building when the psyche, attitude, and behavior of men like Babamukuru, Jeremiah, and Takesure are less than desirable and laudatory.

Babamukuru's internalization of colonial cultural ideology is testified to by his insistence that his brother legitimize his twenty-year marriage by undergoing a Christian church wedding to atone for living "in sin." Juxtaposed against his colonial Christian ethics which impels him to compel his brother and sister-in-law to undergo a Christian church wedding in order to exorcize any devil is his internalization of traditional patriarchal values evident in his patriarch's role of helping his brother's family lift itself out of poverty. However, his attitude towards his wife, daughter, and other female members of his extended family demonstrates both the "colonial" and 'traditional" sides of his character, dictating what constitutes being good, what constitutes sin, and how a woman should conduct herself. He reveals the contradictions in his ideology when he advises Tambudzai that he has "observed from" his own daughter's behaviour that "it is not good thing for a young girl to associate too much with these white people, to have too much freedom. I have seen that girls who do that do not develop into decent women" (180).

That the systematic and endemic exploitation of the colonized was built into and constituted the very substance of the colonial system's gain and success explains and emphasizes, as the text illustrates, how colonialism destroyed the economic fiber and social fabric of the people in general and damaged their psyche – but even those, like Babamukuru and Tambudzai, who were able to achieve success within the economic framework that the colonial government allowed were co-opted into colonial culture. Babamukuru, for example is not even aware of the extent to which he has become a pawn

in the colonial game. Tambudzai succeeds in resisting the wedding, which she realizes makes a mockery of her parent's marriage, by not attending. This is an example, among others, of the ways in which the novel questions the assumptions underlying colonial culture imbibed by the colonized.

In Tambudzai, the rational and the intuitive intersect and conflict as she recognizes that to get an education she must obey the rules implemented by those invested with authority and power even if it means going against her sense of rational logic. She learns this lesion gradually the first seeds of which are sown in her childhood when she learns from her grandmother the story of her forebears, of the ways in which her grandfather was tricked into slavery by the colonizers and how her uncle's hard work paid off. Tambudzai learns to work in the family fields beside her grandmother who "praising" Tambudzai's "predisposition towards working", consolidated it in her "as a desirable habit" (17). She also gave Tambudzai "history lessons" in their colonial history. Tambudzai's great-grandfather was a "rich man in the currency of those days, having many fat herd of cattle, large fields and four wives who worked hard to produce bountiful harvests" (17). This description of the wives working hard and of Tambudzai's grandmother working hard, whom Tambudzai describes as an "inexorable cultivator of land, sower of seeds and reaper of rich harvests until, literally until, her very last moment" (18) underscores the social history of Zimbabwean women who were historically conditioned to work hard in the fields as sole supporters of their families with absent husbands lost to the colonial gold and diamond mines. Notwithstanding this implicit concern with the damage done to the nation's psyche and what it might augur for nation-building, the text highlights woman's subjugation and explores possibilities for challenging the role imposed on her by a patriarchal society.

The subtext of the grandmother's "fairy tale" provides a precise historical context to illuminate the dispossession of the Shona in colonial Rhodesia as well as a critical unraveling of the tropes and rhetoric of the colonial discourses. This "fairy tale" is, in fact, a tragic record of colonial dispossession of the Shona and their economy, social structures, and culture as well as of their incorporation as cheap, migrant labor in the market economy and capitalist rationality. It also functions as a subaltern interrogation of the colonial presence in Zimbabwe, the typology of colonialist, colonial tropes, and of the representations of the native in colonial discourse. The subtle condemnation both of imperial politics and native complicity is too sophisticated for Tambu to detect, who prefers instead to interpret it as a romantic text. The grandmother first informs Tambu of the influx of the wizards – that is, the European colonizers, who evicted the natives from their lands, "Wizards well versed in treachery and black magic came from the south and forced the people from the land. On donkey, on foot, on horse, on ox-cart, the people looked for a place to live. But the wizards were avaricious and grasping; there was less and less land for the people" (18).

Besides recording the subtle critique of imperial power structures, the grandmother's narration contains a subversive reading of colonial authority, discourse, and tropes. She first considers a typology of the colonialists: "there are treacherous wizards but there also holy wizards" (19), a typology which reflects the subaltern native's deep mistrusts of any colonial presence in Rhodesia. For her, Whites are all wizards, no matter their colonial positionality. Although many missionaries earned the widespread gratitude of Africans, these missionaries were not exempt from subtle racial presuppositions. They endeavored to convert the native populace into Christianity and assimilate them into European civilization as a means of salvation and moral redemption. While they profoundly cared for Africans as individuals, they nonetheless held very condescending

and demeaning attitudes to the infantile Africans. Realizing intuitively the magnitude of their power and their ability to transform the land and its people, the grandmother appeals to the missionaries to accept Babamukuru and "prepare him for life in their world" (19). At this point, the representation of Babamukuru's abilities is predicated upon a familiar colonial trope – namely, the feminization of colonized territory and its native populace. The metaphors of rape and the husbandry of land are typical of the narratives of the colonial penetration: "They thought he was a good boy, cultivable, in the way that land is, to yield harvests that sustain the cultivator" (19). Colonial paternalism and philanthropy are exposed here for what they are: practices and ideologies of exploitation of native labor and resource that do not benefit the indigenous population at all, but rather "their cultivator" (19).

Although too young to apprehend the political subtexts of her grandmother's fairy tale, Tambu occasionally records the impact that the colonial administration and the institutionalization of market economy had on the topography of the communal land surrounding Umtali town. To force the natives into capitalist rationality and mass consumption, the colonial government built "a beer-hall…where 'native beer' and 'clear beer' was sold cheaply every day of the week" (4). Moreover, Tambu registers how popular music reflected the magnitude of the social anomie that was shaking the foundations of local culture in Umtali province. From Mr. Matimba, furthermore, Tambu learns about the slave work that the local population was forced to do, in order to pave the roads for colonialists' cars. In response to her admiration for whites for their strength in building wide roads, Mr. Matimba correct her knowledge, unequivocally stating; "We did the building… It was terrible job. We did many terrible jobs" (26). Even Babamukuru himself, in an understatement of the slave labor he had to perform, confessed to the

"cruelty of the white farmer, Montgomery, who made him suffer the hardships of agricultural work" (122).

Through Tambu, Dangarembga also manages to deconstruct the colonial rhetoric of pity and philanthropy, as seen in Tambu's visit to the city where she traveled with Mr. Matimba to sell her maize. Doris, a white woman in the market, assumes that Tambu, "all rags and tears" (28), does not attend school, even though she remarks, "the Governor is doing a lot for the natives in the way of education" (28). Moreover, for Doris, school is the site of domestication for native women, where she can be "learning her tables," as well as a place that keeps her "out of mischief" (28). The white female settler automatically presumes that Tambu is too lazy to be in school and that Mr. Matimba is using her for slave labor. For Doris, Tambu's work and agricultural production are signs of her enslavement and oppression. As such, Doris decides to perform her charitable act of donating the tuition fees for Tambu's schooling, an act that the black spectators debated as a referent of colonial humanity or imperial hypocrisy. This charitable donation in the colonial context re-enacts traditional colonial policies towards native women – that is, the colonial burden of defending the colonized woman and protecting her from the oppressive power of local patriarchy.

Tambudzai also learns early in her life the illogic of her parents, though at that time too young to see their deep entrenchment into the patriarchally defined cultural codes. When her mother collected enough money to keep her brother in school, she understood why she "could not go back to school" but was upset because she "loved going to school and was good at it." Her father's advice, "can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables" (15) didn't help. Though at that time her father's intention was to calm her "with comforting sensible words" she could not see the sense. She knew Maiguru was educated and she did

not "serve Babamukuru books for dinner." Due to these nonsense theories of her father she unhappily discovered that her "father was not sensible" (16). Not only father but Tambudzai's mother also dissuades her from going to school but explains her in a different manner. Reminding her daughter not only of the "weight of womanhood" but also of the "poverty of blackness," thus focusing on woman's oppression by both colonialism and patriarchy, she explains that her father was right because even Maiguru knew "how to cook and clean and grow vegetables" (16). In addition to her father's view that an education was not going to help her cook and feed her husband, her mother factors in race to explain the double colonization of women:

> '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 these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that 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)

Bewildered, Tambudzai cannot make sense of her parent's logic:

> Being a black was a burden it made you poor, but Babamukuru was not poor. My mother said being a woman was a burden because you had to bear children and look after them and the husband. But I did not think this was true. Maiguru was well looked after by Babamukuru, in a big house on the mission […] was driven about in car, looked well-kempt and fresh, clean all

> the time. She was altogether a different kind of woman from my mother. I decided it was better to be like Maiguru, who was not poor and had not been crushed by weight of womanhood. (16)

Right from the time that her uncle and his family return from England, Tambudzai recognizes his power and authority as her family's benefactor. She recognizes that all his power and the respect accorded him derive from his education and his male status. However, we notice that Maiguru, despite earning the same degrees as her husband, does not get the same power from her education. Tambudzai wanted her "father and Nhamo to stand up straight like Babamukuru, but they always looked as though they were cringing" (49-50). She saw that Babamukuru hadn't "cringed under the weight of his poverty. Boldly, Babamukuru had defied it. Through hard work and determination he had broken the evil wizard's spell…he was completely dignified. He…had made himself plenty of power. Plenty of power. Plenty of money. A lot of education. Plenty of everything" (50).

Her uncle's power and wealth do not prevent Tambudzai from noticing the alienation of her newly-England-returned cousins from the native culture. Neither Chido nor Nyasha remember enough of their mother tongue, Shona, to be able to converse in it and seem ill at ease in the extended family gathering. Not joining the dancing and merrymaking to celebrate their arrival, their unease in the family gathering prompts Tambudzai, as yet uninitiated into missionary education, to think that England was not worth losing one's culture for.

Initially fluctuating between criticism and acceptance of the culture that she is exposed to at the mission school and in her uncle's home, Tambudzai later sees the necessity of adopting colonial culture as her education progresses, to do what she deems essential to getting ahead in her schooling. Her uncle, who worked hard to educate himself within the colonial system and consequently succeeded, is enough of an example to make

her see the necessity of obeying the powers that be as the only means of achieving her goals. All this is conveyed to her rather quickly as Tambudzai grows and develops intellectually.

In her first phase, or stage of development, we see Tambudzai pitting her full force against her family's attempt to socialize her into her gendered role by refusing to buy into her parent's patriarchal ideology. Recognizing the injustice when her mother does scrape together enough for her brother's fees because his cultural role as breadwinner prioritizes his education while her cultural role as wife/mother does not, she puts her spirited nature to full use by growing maize to pay her school fees which her parents cannot afford.

At crucial moments in Tambudzai's education we find it is her mother and aunt who support her. When her father dismisses her request for seed to grow maize, it is Tambudzai's mother who persuades him to grant Tambudzai's request: "listen to your child. She is asking for seed. That we can give. Let her try" (17). For a second time Tambudzai's mother is successful in persuading her husband to give his permission to Tambudzai when she wants to go into town with Mr. Matimba to sell her maize: "the girl must have a chance to do something for herself, to fail for herself. …if you forbid her to go, she will always think you prevented her from helping herself. …she will never forget it, never forgive you" (24-25). At both these moments it is her mother's intervention that gains Tambudzai the requisite permission from her father.

Similarly, it is because her aunt intercedes that her uncle finally agrees to allow Tambudzai to attend the elite Sacred Heart Convent. Achieving excellence at the primary school, Tambudzai is ready for the second phase in her intellectual development. Her brother's untimely death makes way for her further education at the mission school where her uncle is headmaster. Though her father and uncle consider educating her a waste because her education would benefit the family of the man she married, circumstances,

such as her brother's death and her own will-power pave the way for her progress. We find her aunt coming to her support when Babamukuru opposes her schooling at the multiracial convent, a prestigious private school, because it was expensive and because associating with the white people would prevent her from developing into a "decent woman." Maiguru expresses her views by telling her husband:

> I don't think Tambudzai will be corrupted by going to that school. …if our daughter Tambudzai is not a decent person now, she never will be, no matter where she goes to school. And if she is decent, then this convent should not change her. As for money, you have said yourself that she has a full scholarship. It is possible that you have other reasons why she should not go there…but these – the question of decency and the question of money are the ones I have heard and so these are the ones I have talked of. (180-81)

Thus her mother and aunt support her successfully by persuading her father and uncle that Tambudzai be given a chance to educate herself so that she could then do what her brother was meant to: support and lift the family out of poverty. They argue that she would benefit her family at least till she got married.

Going to the mission-school where her uncle is a headmaster privileges her, like her brother before her, to live with her uncle's family. Tambudzai, the village-girl who has always lived in a thatched hut, is overawed by the majesty of her uncle's middle class home: "the opulence of his living-room was very strong stuff, overwhelming to someone who had first crawled and then toddled and finally walked over dung floors" (69). Her awe at the grandeur and opulence that she sees does not, however, blind her critical senses. Used to a meager existence in her village, she notes what to her seems wasteful living and

eating at her uncle's place. But, not before long, she is acclimated into the middle-class material comforts of Babamukuru's home.

Negating the world she has hitherto known, the culture she assimilates at her uncle's and the missionary school makes her both self-aware and unsure of herself. The educational pathway to the ladder of academic and social success is not the magic wand she had imagined would make her world miraculously beautiful. On the contrary, after her initial awe at what she sees as material success at her uncle's, Tambudzai becomes subdued, her spirited nature somewhat crushed.

Her progression from the missionary school to the Sacred Heart Convent in some ways unsettles her even more when the white nun's apartheid makes visible to Tambudzai for the first time the colonizer's racializing of a whole nation. In retrospect, Tambudzai, the narrator, shares with the reader the implications of being colonized as her experience at the Convent underlines for her the precarious balance she needs to maintain between self and success. Her initial awe at the world of Sacred Heart represents is later punctuated by nagging doubts that the opportunity her education there will afford her might not be worth the self-alienation it brings with it. But she consciously relegates her doubts to the back of her mind as she realizes that she has no choice because her education is a necessary means to succeed.

The selective process under the educational system set up to generate only a handful of coveted admissions into grade school and then into high-school and beyond prevents most from any hope of decent jobs which require a high-school or college education. But as Tambudzai discovers, getting the desired admission into grade school or high-school comes with a price – the price of self-alienation and alienation from her family and community compounded by her awareness of the ways in which colonial education while providing social success has, in other ways, been self-debasing/eroding. Embedded

in Tambudzai's mother's statement is the dilemma, the two-edged sword that colonial education represents, necessary for Tambudzai's success and at the same time that which will alienate her from her family and culture. As her mother fears, "Tell me, my daughter, what will I, your mother say to you when you come home a stranger full of white ways and ideas? It will be English, English all the time" (184).

By implementing a discriminatory educational system through a selective process the colonial government made it possible for only a few to obtain a higher education that was required for coveted jobs of teachers or headmasters of mission schools. The discriminatory strategies underlying the rules and laws governing the hierarchical educational system perpetuated the subjugation of the Zimbabwean people by only educating a few. Thus the political system ensured the economic poverty of most of the colonized while it fostered an unhealthy competitive spirit:

> Glamour…surrounded the prospect of going to school at a convent. And not just any convent, but a multiracial convent. A prestigious private school that manufactured guaranteed young ladies. At that convent, which was just outside town but on the other side, to the south, you wore pleated terylene skirts to school every day and on Sundays a tailor-made two-piece linen suit with gloves, yes, even with gloves! We all wanted to go. That was only natural. But only two places were on offer, two places for all the African Grade Seven girls in the country. The effect was drastic and dangerous. We stopped liking each other as much as we used to in case the other was offered the place and we had to suffer the pangs of jealousy while she rose in status and esteem. (178)

Consequentially only a handful of the colonized got the advantage of an education, the only path to social success. Therefore, Babamukuru's job as the headmaster of the mission

school, Nyasha's passing the school exams with flying colors, and Tambudzai's admission to the Sacred Heart Convent are the envy of all.

But the novel subverts Tambudzai's success in gaining admission to the Sacred Heart as it also subverts Babamukuru's social success as a headmaster and Nyasha's success in her exams, by showing the price they have to pay for their success. The all-powerful Babamukuru is silenced into accepting the crowding of Tambudzai with five other African students into a dorm room meant for four by the white nun at Sacred Heart. Her peremptory response, "it is inconvenient, isn't it?" to Babamukuru's polite query, "I have been wondering, Sister. …I was under the impression that the girls sleep four to a room, but I see there are six beds here" (194) sets Babamukuru's "double consciousness" operating in this confrontation with the colonizer. The implication of what is unsaid by the nun is that since the school has six African students they have to share a room meant for four because, the alternative, giving them two rooms would mean white students having to share a room with African students. Babamukuru's politically disempowered position in terms of race, gender, and class in the colonial structure is brought home to the reader when he, in front of whom his whole family knelt in reverence, is shown in this confrontation to be powerless.

When Tambudzai goes off to the Convent, Nyasha is left without her only ally as she rebels against her father whom she sees bound by traditional patriarchal norms and an internalized sense of Christian ethics. She tells Tambudzai about her rebellious relationship with her father who orders her to finish food, little realizing that she is bulimic: "imagine all that fuss over a plateful of food. But it's more than that…it's all the things about boys and men and being decent and indecent and good and bad" (190). She tries to see things from his point of view of "tradition and expectations and authority" (190) but thinks he should see her viewpoint too. Rebelling against both colonial and traditional oppressions,

she is unable to withstand and combined pressures. She finds it difficult to cope with the demands of patriarchal world complicated by alienation caused by western education acquired abroad and lack of parental guidance. The outlet for her is, sadly, a nervous breakdown.

Propelled by her bulimia, Nyasha suffers a nervous breakdown; the psychiatrist's incredulous response to which is that to be African was to be incapable of such eating disorders because it was a disease that only white suffers. The psychiatrist said that "Nyasha could not be ill, that Africans did not suffer in the way we had described. She was making a scene" (201). Nyasha's sense of self, identity, roots, weakened by her five years in England make it difficult for her to straddle both the English and Zimbabwean cultures. Failing to gain security in the knowledge that she is equally at home in nether cultural terrains, she cannot and does not see herself operating from any position of strength. Mistaking her insecurity for snobbery, her classmates don't accept her. As she writes to Tambudzai at the Convent, the girls at her school do not like her language, "They do not like my language, my English, because it is authentic and my Shona, because it is not! They think that I am a snob, that I think I am superior to them because I do not feel I am inferior to men. …I very much would like to belong, Tambu, but find I do not" (196).

Nyasha's identity crisis and alienation from her own culture lead her into the abyss of bulimia. Seeing her father, Tambudzai, and herself taken over by colonial culture leads her further into depths of depression. When she learns of her father's decision to have Tambudzai's parent's have a church wedding because they were "still living in sin" because they were not "married in church before god" she "lectures" Tambudzai on the "dangers of assuming that Christian ways were progressive ways. 'It's bad enough,' she said severely, 'when a country gets colonized, but when the people do as well! That's the end, really, that's the end'" (147). Just as Tambudzai cannot fully comprehend Nyasha's

breakdown, she cannot completely appreciate Maiguru's predicament as one highly educated woman, with a job, who is subservient to her husband, stays in his shadow, subscribing to the patriarchal agenda. Tambudzai is unable to see that Maiguru, operating under pressures of her own, in some ways, has failed to emotionally support Nyasha and has not coped with her daughter's illness.

Maiguru's role-playing sublimates, to some extent, her frustration and resentment at her self-effacement so that her husband can enjoy the full limelight. Because she defines her identity through her husband's social success the text seems to suggest that Maiguru's education does not automatically empower her to resist internalized cultural codes that prevent her from asserting her self. Notwithstanding Maiguru's submissive attitude and her inability to stand up to her husband the text establishes that education is imperative for woman's economic strength. Embedded in Maiguru's submissive attitude is a warning against the internalization of a colonial value system. Education is certainly one means whereby a woman can empower herself and effect social change, although acquiring an education does not necessarily guarantee these gains.

From another perspective, it is possible to see Maiguru as an educated woman who exercises a choice in submerging her identity by staying with her husband and basking in his glory. But more realistically, what options does Maiguru have available to her? We can read into the fact that when she does leave her husband for a few days and goes to her brother's, that the option of leaving alone is not presented to her. In admitting to Tambudzai that she chose the security of marrying Babamukuru over the opportunity to develop her professional self, she reveals that an education and an earning job have not empowered her enough to resist societal norms. As she says to Tambudzai, "'What it is'…'to have to choose between self and security.' When I was in England I glimpsed for a little while the things I could have been, the things I could have done if-if-if things were-

different. …but that's how it goes, Sisi Tambu! And when you have good man and lively children it makes it all worth while" (101-2).

While her position as Babamukuru's wife certainly bestows security and social status on Maiguru she exist to be a wife for her husband and we do not see her except on a few occasions speaking up her mind, as, for example, when she stands up to Babamukuru to support Tambu's admission to the Sacred Heart or, when she protests the injustice of not being allowed to say in matters pertaining to his side of the family while her husband feels free to draw on her salary and services to feed them on festive occasions like Christmas. Babamukuru mentions his right to punish Tambudzai when Maiguru protests. She says:

> 'Yes, she is your brother's child.' …But when it comes to taking my money so that you can feed her and her father and your whole family and waste it on ridiculous wedding, that's when they are my relatives too. Let me tell you, Baba Chido, I am tired of my own house being a hotel for your family. I am tired of being a housekeeper for them. I am tired of being nothing in a home I am working myself sick to support. (172)

The text further suggest how colonial education, in a sense, entraps a woman further by imposing bourgeois standards of social success, as in Maiguru's case, which become difficult to shrug off. Tambudzai's mother, on the other hand, recognizes the injustice of her marriage and accepts the hardship it brings because, as she says, she had no choice, but to marry her husband because of poverty. It is significant that the unmarried Lucia, juxtaposed against her unhappily married sister and against Maiguru is portrayed as the happiest of all female characters. Tambudzai attributes her aunt Lucia's spirited nature and happened to the fact that she is not married, "Although she had been brought up in abject poverty, she had not, like my mother, been married to it at fifteen. Her spirit, unfettered in

this respect, had experienced with living and drawn its own conclusions. Consequently, she was a much bolder woman than my mother" (127).

That Dangarembga allows Tambudzai, Nyasha, Lucia, Maiguru, and Tambudzai's mother only limited options within their social and economic framework needs to be examined in its historical and political context. In pre-independent Zimbabwe women were economically and socially oppressed and had few rights. The women characters, though they voice their dissatisfaction with their socially prescribed gender roles, have limited options available that would enable them to break out of domestic oppression.

Maiguru, however, does leave her husband and though her daughter is disappointed that her mother goes to her brother's because she goes to "a man" the point is that she takes a stand, asserts her position as wife, and gains respect with her husband subsequently. Maiguru leaves to protest not having a say in decision-making in her own home especially when her husband relies on her salary to feast and support his side of the family. That she returns, another disappointment for her feminist-conscious daughter, suggests that Maiguru exercises a choice in returning to her husband, but given Maiguru's class consciousness and the extent to which she has internalized her gendered role of wife and mother she does not seem to have a viable alternative other than to return to her husband.

That Maiguru is role-playing her gendered role as both the traditional wife who should regard the husband as 'god' and as the educated, anglicized wife always sweet talking her husband is apparent in Tambudzai's observation of her aunt:

> Maiguru, always smiling, always happy, was another puzzle. True, she had good reason to be content. She was Babamukuru's wife. She lived in a comfortable home and was a teacher. Unlike her daughter, she was grateful for all these blessings, but I thought even the saints in heaven must grow disgruntled sometimes and let the lesser angles know. (97)

Tambudzai, later in the narrative, is shocked to discover that her aunt has a Master's Degree, like her uncle, because she had assumed that her aunt had gone to England to "look after Babamukuru." In her statements to Tambudzai that her "uncle wouldn't be able to do half the things he does" if she didn't work as well and that she "never received her salary" she hints at her husband's appropriation of her salary (101).

Tambudzai shares her thoughts about her aunt with the reader which explain Maiguru's position:

> I felt sorry for Maiguru because she could not use the money she earned for her own purposes and had been prevented by marriage from doing the things she wanted to do. But it was not so simple, because she had been married by my Babamukuru, which defined her situation as good. If it was necessary to efface yourself, as Maiguru did so well that you couldn't be sure that she didn't enjoy it, if it was necessary to efface yourself in order to preserve his sense of identity and value, then, I was sure, Maiguru had taken the correct decisions. (102)

Tambudzai's mother also voices her dissatisfaction at being married to Jeremiah who is lazy and irresponsible as father and husband. Tambudzai observes that since most of her life her mother's mind "belonging first to her father and then to her husband, had not been hers to make up, she was finding it difficult" (153) to decide whether to leave her husband or not. But her indecision does not prevent her from expressing her anger and resentment at the miserable condition of her married life:

> 'Lucia,' she sighed, 'why do you keep bothering me with this question? Does it matter what I want? Since when has it mattered what I want? So why should it start mattering now? Do you think I wanted to be impregnated by that old dog? Do you think I wanted to travel all this way

> across this country of our forefathers only to live in dirt and poverty? Do you really think I wanted the child for whom I made the journey to die only five years after it left the womb? Or my son to be taken from me? So what difference does it make whether I have a wedding or whether I go? It is all the same. What I have endured for nineteen years I can endure for another nineteen, and nineteen more if need be. Now leave me! Leave me to rest.' (153)

Lucia too describes her sister's husband thus: "this Jeremiah…who married my sister…has a roving eye and a lazy hand. Whatever he sees, he must have; but he doesn't want to work for it. …this man…has given her nothing but misery since the age of fifteen" (145). Tambudzai's mother sees no option out of marriage because of children, lack of education, and poverty. However, seeing her sister's health deteriorate, Lucia threatens to take her away with her. As she tells Babamukuru: "Well Babamukuru…maybe when you marry a woman, she is obliged to obey you. But some of us aren't married, so we don't know how to do it. That is why I have been able to tell you frankly what is in my heart," which elicits praise from Babamukuru that he "applauded Lucia in her absence. 'That one,' he chuckled to Maiguru, 'she is like a man herself'" (171). Babamukuru's comment mirrors the text's feminist consciousness in its underlying irony: that to be assertive is a masculine/ male attribute.

As the patriarch of the family, Babamukuru decides that the solution to all their family problems is to have a church wedding for his brother and sister-in-law since they had been "living in sin" (147). His behavior toward the women of his family reflects the influence of colonialism because native tradition alone does not explain his physical abuse of his daughter or his insistence on his brother's church wedding after twenty years of

marriage. Babamukuru's Christian ethics stem from his indoctrination by colonial ideology which in its own way supports his patriarchal attitude.

Thus, embedded in Dangarembga's critiques of colonialism and indigenous tradition we find the text's concern with the nation and national. Demonstrating how not only Babamukuru but all the characters, Tambudzai, Nyasha, Maiguru, Lucia, Tambudzai's mother, Jeremiah, Takesure, in different ways, are victims of the colonizer, beset by nervous conditions, the text underscores the debilitating effects of colonial domination, as for example, the poverty and lack of economic options that reflect in some measure Jeremiah's and Takesure's attitudes.

Dangarembga, furthermore, addresses the psychological and cultural implications of colonial education as a site of alienation and estrangement for the natives. Colonial education generates a narrative of loss and annihilation through the fantasy of inhabiting whiteness, as evident in both Nhamo's, and the young Tambu's stories. First, however, Dangarembga indicts the racist economy inherent in the colonial education system, in which African children were represented as lacking rationality or any capacity for performing complex cognitive activities. Only when they turn seven, colonial racism stipulates, that African children are able to "understand the abstraction of numbers and letters: 1 + 1 = 2; k-it-s-I = kitsi" (13). Moreover, as Tambu realizes later, Whites promoted bright Africans into the system of colonial education only under the condition that they demonstrate "a grateful promise to accept whatever was handed out to them and not to except more" (160). The colonial promise of progress entails that the African be a good African – that is, knows his location in the chain of colonial being and never aspires for more or for change.

Nhamo's narrative demonstrates the impact that such a colonial system of education has on the alienation and estrangement of the natives. In his desire to replace a

black skin with a white mask, Nhamo loses his self, language, history, and culture. Nhamo's estrangement from his home and culture is manifested through his revulsion at the class position they embody: poverty and its signifiers become objectionable and offensive. Thus, he refrains from taking the bus home from the Umtali mission, because "the women smelt of unhealthy, reproductive odours, the children were inclines to relieve their upset bowels on the floor, and the men gave off strong aromas of productive labor" (1). His obstinate reluctance to take the bus developed into a disinclination even to visit the homestead, under the pretext of industrious study: "All this poverty began to offend him, or at the very least to embarrass him after he went to the mission, in a way that it had not done before" (7). As such, his alienation at home became complete and he started behaving as if he were not present.

The impact of missionary education on Nhamo was very radical, to the extent that he "had forgotten how to speak Shona" (52). His linguistic dispossession was manifested in his aphasiac behavior: "A few escaped haltingly, ungrammatically and strangely accented when he spoke to my mother, but he did not speak to her very often any more" (52). Nhamo insisted on communicating only in the colonial language, which he did with a lot of pretension to mark his difference from his family. Jeremiah, on the other hand, valorized his alienation from mother tongue not only as an authentic sign of his education but also as the first step in his family's acculturation into English culture and their linguistic emancipation as the medium for upward mobility. Nhamo could provide an "opportunity for every family member to practice their English" (53). Mainini, on her part, was "alarmed at her son's aphasia, for despite his pride in his education, she wanted much more to be able to talk to him" (53).

Alienation through colonial education also leaves its imprint on the character of the young Tambu. Despite all her disgust with and condemnation of her brother's radical

acculturation process, Tambu ends up replicating the same process of estrangement and loss. Her description of the "reincarnation" experience she goes through as she moves to the mission evokes and extends the same thematics of colonial interpellation she noticed earlier in her brother's conduct. She first considered this new stage of her life as an entry into a world of "limitless horizons" (58) and as an embodiment of the moral of her grandmother's romantic fairy tale about reward and punishment, hard work and determination. This whole scene is structured around the trope of assimilation as reincarnation: shedding an old, peasant Self and inhabiting an Anglicized Self, "a clean, well-groomed, genteel self who could not have been bred, could not have survived, on the homestead" (58-59). Furthermore, Tambu represents this new Self as a zombie, a corpse that her uncle "disinter[ed]…from the village" (85). Interestingly, she immediately resorts to conventional colonial tropes to represent her acculturated subjectivity – namely, the spirit and body dichotomy. She states: "At Babamukuru's I would have the leisure, be encouraged to consider questions that had to do with survival of the spirit, the creation of consciousness, rather than mere sustenance of the body" (59). At stake here is valorization in colonial discourse of the spirit, associated with European transcendental categories, and the body, linked with the zoological qualities of the natives. Moreover, her new Self is now defined in terms of linear progression from the oppressive conditions of homestead life, a site where regression from and modernity might be intimated. This deprecation of a native Self is also accompanied by a glorification of whiteness and missionaries.

Tambu's description of the missionaries reflect the magnitude of her colonial interpellation, a process that entails the internalization of the same colonial rhetoric that represented Africa and Africans as the signifiers of evil and moral perversion in the figuration of blackness. She first asserts the missionaries' superiority as holy people who "has come not to take but to give" (103). Africa then is depicted as "darkest," evoking all

those colonial fantasies and fears associated with such a mythos, adding that "they had given up the comforts and security of their own homes to come and lighten our darkness" (103). Tambu evidently glosses over the missionaries' complicity with and loyalty for the colonial administration, only to embrace them as "minor deities, who practice the elevated moral code of sacrifice, self-denial, and brotherly love" (103). Underlying this rhetoric of apotheosis is the fact that missionaries or expatriates are white, which is for her the affirmation of the "lightening of diverse darkness" (103). Nonetheless, this whole glorification of whiteness and negation of blackness emerges in the context of deference to all superior authority on the mission, beginning with Babamukuru. While earlier, as seen in her trip to the city, she expressed repulsion towards Whites and their skin color, her feelings of guilt on the mission transformed her hate into love. Moreover, whereas she used to deny that whites were as beautiful as blacks before (104), she started to valorize the standards of Nordic beauty over black beauty. Hence, Tambu mentions elsewhere that on the mission she started to straighten her "hair by potting ribbons in it at weekdays (94).

However, Tambu realizes later that her colonial education was designed for the production of "guaranteed young ladies" (178) who would assimilate into white colonial society. Nyasha explains to the thrilled Tambu that enrolling at the convent entailed that the colonialists "made a little space into which you are assimilated, an honorary space into which you could join them and they could make sure that you behaved yourself" (179). At stake in Nyasha's admonition is the intent of colonial authorities to domesticate African female subjectivity through education.

Moreover, Tambu discovers that this colonial education is based on the ideology of segregation that inhibits her from achieving her full potential. Tambu had naively expected that once she is admitted into the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart, she would have accomplished everything she had aspired to. She thought that her "burdens lightened

with every step" she takes into convent. Amidst her enchantment and anticipation comes her disappointment. She notices the absence of any black face in this school: "I looked and looked and searched carefully through crowd, but I could not find a single black face which did not belong to our party, except of course for the porters" (194). Tambu is informed of the segregationist ideology that the school practices: "And the Africans live here," the nun said. Moreover, unlike all other rooms, which are shared only by four girls, the African girls' room was overcrowded. So girls were supposed to occupy the room, because the nun explains, "We have more Africans here than usual this year and so we had to put them all in here" (194). The nun demonstrates the condescending and dehumanizing attitude of the colonialists who completely disregard the individuality of each black female's subjectivity. She lumps all African girls into one indistinguishable group, as befitting of the dictates of the colonial trope, the total erasure of individual black subjectivity.

Moreover, the enforcement of segregation in the convent reflects the colonial anxiety over the consequences of the intercultural contact between European and the natives, especially the possibility of the dissolution of the manichean symbolic economy that demarcated the boundaries between savagery and civilization. Missionaries, like other colonialists, perceived the magnitude of the African threat to the stability of the colonial administration and the colonial European presence, and hence embraced the rhetoric and politics of segregation. As such, missionaries deployed the same colonial tropes and language that the colonial government used to justify segregationism: infantile Africans, white prestige, and slave psychology.

Dangarembga's decentering of the image of the homestead, especially women's labor and the Victorian ideology of domesticity, is predicated upon an implicit indictment of local patriarchy and its collaboration with the colonial power structures. For

Dangarembga, understanding women's location at home is a function of not only the tradition and its debasement of Shona women but also of the complicity of the capitalist rationality and the colonial imaginary in maintaining female subordination. Similarly, Dangarembga implies that any critique of local patriarchal structures is incomplete without examining its intersection with the colonial imaginary. Therefore, Dangarembga casts the narration and its decentering of the notion of home under the hideous specter of colonialism. The title and the epigraph operate as an ideological frame which preestablishes the subtext of imperial power structures and discourses that affect all the subsequent events in the narration.

The title of the novel and its epigraph draw on and re-vise Frantz fanon's work on the psychological condition of the (male) native, which Jean-Paul Sartre identified in his preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968). Fanon theorizes the psychology of the (male) colonized in terms of cultural indeterminacy and split subjectivities. Fanon accredits these pathologies to the condition of "permanent tension," or the state of "nervous condition," engendered by the violent manicheism of colonial culture.

In her revision of Fanon, Dangarembga first multiplies the paradigmatic nervous condition into conditions within the context of gender, race, and class politics, which ruptures the homogenization of African pathological bodies as male. Thus she adds a repertoire of colonial female pathologies that are not mediated through the psychological traumas of colonized men, as Fanon does. For Fanon, women function in symbolic economy as a metaphor for national resistance, which explains the reasons that the material conditions inscribed on women's bodies go unnoticed, in order to preserve women's symbolic displacement. Second, Dangarembga redefines the category "native" to include the colonized women, for there is an urgent need, she implies, to institutionalize the investigation of the psychosocial effects of colonialism on women, too. Therefore, Fanon's

reduction of female pathologies to a function of biology, as child birth and menstruation, needs to be reconsidered here in favor of an examination of female trauma and nervousness in the context of political oppression.

Moreover, Dangarembga extends the Fanonian thematics of psychological anxieties as a colonial condition to articulate these anxieties as necessarily symptomatic of the collaboration of both the patriarchal, colonial, and capitalist conditions. Dangarembga, of course, manages this way to emphasize that the vertical violence between colonizers and colonized, a phenomenon that keeps on deferring until national struggles begins, is transvalued as horizontal violence that the colonized directs inwards towards his house and family. Unable to manifest a violent stance towards their masters, as a result of their desire to prove their humanity to the colonizer by subscribing to their ideologies, colonized men turn their mechanisms of oppression and domination towards their wives or sisters. Fanon overlooks the domestic terror that the colonized male projects on native females as a mechanism of defense and compensation. Reinventing Fanon allows for an equal attention to Babamukuru's control and discipline of his daughter and wife.

Without suppressing an ounce of its legitimate anger at the misogyny of the African men who mistreat the female characters, *Nervous Conditions* nevertheless shows clearly how those men are themselves products of the colonial system. Dangarembga explores the specific of Fanon's insight that the "native" does not pre-exist colonization, but is artificially produced by it. Tambudzai's father, Jeremiah, deprived by the British of his ancestral lands, becomes the stereotype of the shiftless "native," spending his children's school fees on beer, letting his homestead run down, enthusing about traditional ceremonies while lacking the money to carry them out, critical of the whites but secretly admiring them.

This reading of a national consciousness into the text's counter-hegemonic discourse thus, acknowledges the text's plurality and derives from the fact that even though Dangarembga ground her novel in the local culture and tradition and in issues of national import, the nation as a nation-state, finally, is not as primary a concern as women is. The text unfolds the subaltern and alterity in a gender envelop, stamped with a postcolonial third world postmark, thus telescoping the colonial and patriarchal/traditional trajectories under a postcolonial lens. The difficulties that a woman faces in defying socially and culturally prescribed codes of behavior are among the text's overwhelming issues as it highlights how patriarchy holds the social system in place whereby Maiguru, Tambudzai's mother, Tambudzai, Lucia, and Nyasha, all are in their own ways oppressed, the oppression compounded by colonial culture and a colonial educational and economic system that prevents the native people from progressing in any substantive way.

Decolonization of the Body and Transnational Female Subjectivity

Dangarembga charts two different trajectories of transnational feminism through the narratives of Nyasha and Tambu. While Nyasha's journey between the metropolis and the periphery allow her to discern and expose the instabilities in the symbolic economy of the colonial structure, Tambu's movements between the colonial spaces of the farm, mission, and convent facilitate her complete disillusionment with the language of promise embedded in the discourse of modernity that colonial power structures and their complicit patriarchy promote. As such, Nyasha's subversive act of anorexia and Tambu's ultimate escape map the routes of inhabiting transnational feminist positions that unsettle, misidentify with, and transcend all master narratives that have controlled their lives – that is, the signifiers of Englishness as well as the referents of local patriarchy. Rather than pledging allegiance to either dominant ideology with its concomitant identity narrative or even inhabit both sides of the polarization, these two adolescent females decenter the

symbolic economy of the manichean subtext of colonial Rhodesia and its reproduction in the interior of local patriarchy. Such a space can certainly transcend the fixation on the modernity/tradition dichotomy in western feminist criticism of African women's writing.

In this connection, therefore, Nyasha's anorexia is a symbolic enunciation of the limits that beset colonial discourse and power and an assertion of the urgency of opening up a third space that can accommodate Nyasha's transnational subjectivity. Nyasha's textualized female body dismantles the rigid manichean structure that informs the colonial symbolic economy. Hence, Nyasha's narrative is not that of victimization, but of new spaces and languages of possibilities and agency that transcends the manichean economy of patriarchy and colonization. Furthermore, Tambu's enunciation of an escape route at the end of the novel is not a referent for escapism, but the articulation of the desire for an alternative space to the colonial mission and convent as well as the patriarchal homestead. The fact that the novel lacks a sense of closure, the anticipation that there might be a sequel to the narrative, points to a moment of transcendence in a transnational space of openness, inclusiveness, and unsettling.

Nyasha constructs her transnational feminist subjectivity through a subversive decoding of the symbolic economy of colonial discourse that her father, Babamukuru, reproduces and enacts in dealings with his own (extended) family. Nyasha is intent on blurring the cultural boundaries that demarcate the colonial context, suggesting the artificiality of the manichean logic that governs the colonial symbolic economy. Her project is made possible not only because of the instabilities and slippages in the originary sites of power, both patriarchal and colonial, but also because of the historical context of war of liberation (Chimurenga). In such a turbulent terrain, ideological dualisms like English/ native and oppressor/ victim are forcibly reproduced by both white settler and Zimbabwean nationalists. Destabilizing borders and crossing them back and forth, to the

extent that European and native, oppressor and victim, are written into each other, undermine the rhetoric of authenticity and purity in demand for such a context.

Learning from her mother that she could break from parental authority, Nyasha begins to employ her own grand narrative of emancipation, a process that will shake the foundations of Babamukuru's ideological convictions. For Nyasha, her mother's abandonment of the house signals Maiguru's assertion of the self and identity: "Sometimes I feel I'm trapped by that man, just like she is. But now she's done it, now she's broken out, I know it's possible, so I can wait" (174). Nevertheless, Nyasha aspires for more than unsettling the gender politics that dominate the house. She is obviously on a quest for what Babamukuru stands for – all the systems of oppression and dominance that he embodies as a husband, father, headmaster, family head, Christian, and as an educated elite African. Nyasha informs Tambu: "But it's not that simple, you know, really it isn't. It's not really him, you know. I mean not really the person. It's everything, it's everywhere. So where do you out break to? You are just one person and it's everywhere. So where do you break out to?" (174). Nyasha strives to accomplish this objective and undermine the symbolic colonial economy in two ways: first, by forcing Babamukuru to shatter the abject image of the "good African," a subversive act that would dismantle the whole edifice of manichean constructs embedded in such an image. Second, by reinscribing her body as a signifier for the collapse of manichean signification, as evident in the psychiatrist's refusal to attribute anorexia, a traditional white female pathology, to a black female subject.

Babamukuru's representation as a "good African" is the fulcrum for a whole set of manichean constructs that inform the narrative: virtue and sin, domination and subordination, colonizer and colonized, man and woman, mission and homestead, light and dark, white and black, Christian and pagan, modernity and tradition, monogamy and polygamy, legitimacy and illegitimacy, rationality and superstition, English and native. He

lives in a "white house," the privileged dwelling places for White colonialists, reproduces the Victorian ideology of domesticity in his house, and imposes on his brother Jeremiah a Christian wedding. Nyasha protested the cultural implications of all these authoritarian statements, because these statements signify the Siguakes' embracement of the colonial symbolic economy.

To inhabit that house is simply a political statement that inscribes the Siguakes position in the language of power and superiority. Instead, Nyasha, Tambu notes, "had an egalitarian nature and had taken seriously the lessons about oppression and discrimination that she had learnt first-hand in England" (63). The political semantics of race and oppression is transferred from the metropolis only to be translated in the language of radical democracy that unsettles the whole foundations of the colonial edifice. Moreover, Nyasha objected to her father's arrangement of the Christian wedding, because such a preference entailed that he has not yet estranged himself from the colonial edifice and its symbolic economy. Thus, she complains, "It's bad enough…when a country gets colonized, but when the people do as well" (147), foregrounding her father's complicity. Furthermore, Nyasha had already expressed her refusal of the referent for sin that the missionaries had imposed, demonstrating the instabilities and gaps in the content of sin. The unsuspecting Tambu finds such a deconstructive exegesis of the established colonial order and its theological content incomprehensible: "because the distinction between right and wrong, what was and what was not sinful, was still very clear to me in those days and followed very closely the guidelines set out for us at Sunday School…" (118).

Evidently, for Nyasha, Babamukuru is not a complete mimic, but rather a flawed partial presence who cannot turn his gaze of Otherness back at its site of enunciation and who is unwilling to acknowledge his inauthenticity, his fixed representation, as a mask of colonial authority. Thus, Nyasha strives to make her father reject his colonial position as a

"good African" by forcing him to exploit his nepotic power and influence with the missionaries. As Tambu states, "The authorities thought Babamukuru was a good African. And it was generally believed that good Africans bred good African children who also thought about nothing expect serving their communities" (107). Thus, Nyasha's premeditated plan to fail the requirements of the public examinations would exert on him the pressure, Nyasha thought, of intervening on her behalf and find her a place in the school system. To force him to use his influence and nepotism to promote his daughter to a new standard entails his defiance of the laws that codify the good African, and therefore the whole colonial enterprise. This failure, then, manages to decenter the myth of the good African and his good progeny. However, Nyasha views such a demystification of the myth as a mental and psychological salvation for her father. Ironically, Nyasha's sneering mockery of her father in a white Rhodesian accent, "He's a good boy, a good munt. A bloody good Kaffir" (200), functions to awaken him and empower him to excavate beneath the colonial edifice and threaten to disrupt the imperial presence that needs but despises him.

Moreover, Nyasha destabilizes the boundaries that demarcate the manichean economy of the empire through inscribing her body in the language of disjunctive hybridity, which culminates in her anorexia. The textualized female body here operates as a sign for the collapse of all rigid dichotomies that the colonial regime violently polices and which local patriarchy enforces. Nyasha is a very conscious of her "hybrid position" (78), a location that allows for no smooth identification with either Shona culture with its misogyny or metropolitan culture with its racist codes. This hybridity offers no easy negotiation of the power structures, for she is always condemned for behaving in any Anglicized manner, from wearing a miniskirt, smoking, partying, to adhering to the "svelte, Sensuous" (97) image of the western ideal of female beauty. Instead Nyasha

transforms these British signifiers into specular referents that mark the limits and collapse of colonial discourse. This is evident in Nyasha's anorectic conduct and the reaction of the white psychiatrist to this peculiar pathology.

Returning home from her school an hour after her curfew time, Nyasha was again accused of being indecent. Feeling sad about Tambu's transference to the Sacred Heart, moreover, Nyasha lost her appetite, which her father interpreted as a sign of inter-generational conflict and a defiance of his authority and role as provider. Although she compiled with his command to eat her dinner, Nyasha went to the bathroom and purged from her body all the food that signified her father's wealth, authority, and power. Consequently, Nyasha's body became emaciated, even skeletal, that psychiatric help was desperately needed. However, when Nyasha is taken to see a white psychiatrist, he says: "Nyasha could not be ill, that Africans did not suffer in the way we had described. She was making a scene. We should take her home and be firm with her" (201). While Black women in colonial psychiatry were perceived as maternal, because fat and wide hips are acceptable in African communities, Nyasha's anorectic body abrogates the cultural mythologies of reproduction and motherhood. Moreover, her anorexia destabilizes the limits of colonial psychiatry, for an anorectic black female defies the normative, epidemiological portrait as anorexic white women.

The obstinacy of the colonial psychiatrist to acknowledge this specific pathology of black female subjectivity marks the general colonial inability and unwillingness to question the ontological status of white (female) subjectivity as the normative model of (anorectic) development. Such a contestation would undermine the whole edifice of rigid manichean constructs, by which the superiority and normalcy of whiteness are inscribed. As such, Nyasha's anorectic body refuses a position of radical Otherness, and instead blurs the boundaries of normalcy and superiority by showing the possibility of inhabiting the

attributes of white female subjectivity. Dangarembga insinuates that the psychiatrist completely understands that such an anomaly renders the whole symbolic economy of the empire bankrupt. Nyasha's anorexia is to be interpreted as a symbolic dismantling of the manicheism of the imperial edifice. As such, Nyasha can inhabit a transnational feminist location per excellence, as she rejects the dictates of colonial discourse, symbolized in "tearing the English books" (210), and the patriarchal enforcement of these dictates, as seen in her violent destruction of mirrors and clay pots (a symbol for native tradition). Her disentanglement from the webs of colonial fiction and patriarchal power culminates in the affirmation of a transnational subjectivity as neither British and nor African: "I'm not one of them but I'm not one of you" (201). The racism of the former and the misogyny of the latter produce in her the desire for misidentification from both.

Similarly, Tambu's ultimate renunciation of the desire to inhabit Whiteness as well as the possibility to suture her links with her mother, home, and culture, transpire in a long, excruciating process of disillusionment at the webs of power discourses, patriarchal and colonial. This disillusionment develops in a dialogic relationship with Nyasha, whose own transnational feminist ethics and politics Tambu internalizes to construct her transnational feminist subjectivity. Despite all her attempt to detract and disapprove of Nyasha's thoughts, Tambu finally starts to appreciate and comprehend the complexity of her cousin's subjectivity. Thus, she rejects the embarrassment of her "acquired insipidity" (116), as she sees Nyasha challenging authority and control with "intensity and determination," while she is content "to let events pass me by as long as they did not interfere deeply with my plans" (116). Moreover, she started feeling that Nyasha was necessary for her that she "did not like to spend too long without talking to her about the things that worried me…" (151). As such, Tambu learns from her cousin not only about the fraudulent nature of "all essential thinking" (173) but also about the endless process of

negotiating power structures. Moreover, Nyasha demonstrates for Tambu the need for women like them to "thrive on inconsistencies" (116), problematizing the paradoxes and incompatibilities that define the limits of their lives.

Even before inhabiting a transnational feminist location, Tambu could evoke it and realize its significance for both of them, as seen in her vague reference to that "state" that Nyasha has been inhabiting for a long time. She states that Nyasha was:

> Always reaching, reaching a little further than I had even thought of reaching, was beginning to indicate that there were other directions to be taken, other struggles to engage in besides the consuming desire to emancipate myself and my family. Nyasha gave me the impression of moving, always moving and striving towards some state that she had seen and accepted a long time ago. (151-52)

The referent for this continuous travel, movement, fluidity, and openness that Nyasha practices is what is referred to here as unsettling travel and dislocation. Unsettling travel is vital for Nyasha and Tambu, because they realize that stasis signifies entrapment – that is, performing a pre-existed subjected position in the colonial epistemology. Nyasha had earlier told Tambu; "You have to keep moving…getting involved in this and that, finding out one thing and another. Moving, all the time. Otherwise you get trapped" (96). And entrapment means that "they control everything you do" (117). These transnational feminists refuse to accept the comfortable position they inhabit; "Nyasha had everything," Tambu remembers, but she insists on "moving and problematizing the issues" that disturb the surface of placidity and content (118).

Tambu, then, can construct a transnational feminist subjectivity only when she had managed to cease to be disillusioned and reject all these master narratives that threaten to entrap her. Tambu's ultimate renunciation not only of Young Ladies College of the Sacred

Heart but also of her mother's admonition, symbolize her rupture with the phallus (the colonial and patriarchal Law that Babamukuru represents) and the maternal (plenitude, home, culture). It is important to reiterate that her disillusionment with the promises of colonial education and obedience to patriarchy does not lead Tambu to a sentimental glorification of the homestead. After all, her critique of the oppressive conditions of labor and production for women on the homestead remains valid, for this is the same homestead from which she "was burning to up with wanting to escape from" in the first place (65). Her demystification of the Phallus begins with her contestation of Babamukuru's avuncular authority and her disillusionment with his divine powers. This critique symbolizes her abrogation of the teleological narrative of progress projected in colonial education. First, Tambu retrospectively criticizes the uncle's house as the epitome of the language of promise and fulfillment that colonial education could guarantee. Her conscious refusal to use exorbitant metaphors to depict her uncle's house, for example, reduces the earlier romantic references to palace, castle, and mansion, to a simple and imperfect regular house. "The kitchen window," Tambu recollects, "was not curtained; a pane of glass was missing" (67). Moreover, "the colours were not co-ordinated" (67) as well as long list of blemishes and damaged commodities that demystify not only the uncle's "kingdom" but also his poor taste.

Most importantly, her renunciation of the Phallus becomes more stringent as she refuses to attend the Christian wedding that Babamukuru arranged for her parents. As mentioned above, the uncle attempts at enforcing the manichean moral code of the Christian religion on his family. While Jeremiah was pondering a second marriage with his wife's sister, Lucia, who accredited her unborn baby to him, Babamukuru refused to consider including a bigamist in his family. Tambu recounts her uncle's reaction: "He was surprised that my father did not know that such things were sinful and would bring the

wrath of God down on the entire family" (127). Thus, at the dare during the Christmas reunion, the family attributes all of their misfortunes, from Babamukuru's domestic problems, Jeremiah's poverty, extramarital pregnancies, and domestic terror, to Jeremiah's reluctance to undergo a Christian wedding. As such Babamukuru condemns Jeremiah for "living in sin" (147). Instead of a traditional Shona cleansing ceremony, suggested by Jeremiah, Babamukuru plans a Christian wedding.

Tambu objects to such an arrangement, because such a religious ceremony with its entrenched notion of sin would eventually reduce her life and her siblings, in Christian terms, to sin and illegitimacy, or to not-being in a metaphysical sense. She clarifies, "when I put it like that, I knew there was definitely something wrong with me because I had grown to understand, very categorically, that sin was something to be avoided" (150). The wedding clearly placed her existence and legitimate birth under a lot of doubt. Moreover, Tambu began to realize the absurdity of the whole idea, fearing that it would turn into a farce and a mockery of her significant others, in which her parents will be reduced to "the level of the stars of a comic show, the entertainers" (163). Thus, Tambu realizes that her vagueness and her reverence of her uncle "stunted the growth of my faculty of criticism, sapped the energy that in childhood I had used to define my own position" (164), the dilemma of succumbing to avuncular authority or affirming her individuality still leads Tambu into feelings of guilt, unnaturalness, and suffering, which she tried to suppress by running away. Her abrogation of avuncular power is by now completed.

Nevertheless, she returned in the evening, only to experience a nervous condition in the morning. Tambu describes her first out-of body experience, or splitting into two disconnected entities as Nyasha was trying to coax her out of bed, "I was slipping further and further away from her, until in the end I appeared to have slipped out of my body and was standing somewhere near the foot of the bed, watching her efforts to persuade me to

get up and myself ignoring her" (166). Watching Babamukuru entering the room "looking dangerously annoyed" (167), the immaterial Tambu feels elated for inhabiting a place out of her uncle's reach. Eventually, Tambu did not attend the wedding, risking expulsion from Babamukuru's heaven. Instead, Babamukuru punished her with fifteen lashes and forced her to perform house chores for two weeks.

Her anger with him over planning her parents' wedding initiated an attitude of questioning of the soundness of Babamukuru's judgment and a rejection of the patriarchal and colonial powers he represented. Thus, Tambu begins also to question her willingness to assimilate into Whiteness, "to embrace the 'Englishness' of the mission; and after that the more concentrated 'Englishness' of Sacred Heart" (203). Consequently, the moral and epic iconography that Tambu used to depict Babamukuru began to change into the semantics of monstrosity: "Babamukuru was taking on ogre-like proportions in my unconscious mind" (170). Similarly, even though she heeds her mother's admonition against Englishness, Tambu refuses to suture a nostalgic desire for the maternal. For Tambu, her mother has always represented passivity, stasis, and extreme dependency on men, from which Tambu needed to disidentify.

Unsettling her affiliation with both the Phallus and the maternal, Tambu begins to inhabit a transnational feminist position signaled by her recognition of "the process of expansion" (204) in her subjectivity, "It was a long and painful process for me, that process of expansion. It was a process whose events stretched over many years and would fill another volume…" (204). This transnational location is not coterminous with a narration of loss of cultural and maternal affiliations, but rather a narration of reinvention and reconstruction of the wounded psychology of third world women who have no one to lean back on.

Implicit in the foregoing discussion of the formation of a transnational feminist location are the material limitations and possibilities, oppression and privileges, of Shona women's positions across not only gender and race determinations but also across class, literacy, linguistic, filial, and religious spaces. Dangarembga transcends the traditional fixation on race and gender in the reconstruction of black female subjectivity, in order to examine other modalities of black female subjectivities that can be considered exceptional. Dangarembga, then, extends her reinvention of Fanon, multiplying the unified narrative of the (male) nervous condition into multiple and diverse conditions that shift across various and contradictory determinations. Again, Dangarembga offers a feminist agenda grounded in the politics of differe/ance, an agenda that functions as a necessary modification not only of the western feminist obsession with gender but also the nationalist valorization of race and nation. Especially in the context of African women, acknowledging the heterogeneity of black female subjectivity is a paramount task, because of the institutional homogenization of these women in discourses of western feminism.

Thus, Dangarembga shows that each woman's politics of location is constructed at the intersection of different, conflicting narratives of identity. Accounting for all these narratives can certainly transcend the fixation in the novel's critical reception over the politics of gender and colonialism in black women's lives. Besides inscribing black female subjectivity through multiple discrepant discourses, Dangarembga deploys the heterogeneity to construct a politics of solidarity that emerges from the dialogical relationship between these women in their redefinition of the concept of community.

IV. Conclusion

Dangarembga's third world feminism that refutes both colonial assumptions and traditional patriarchy, compares subalternity and bourgeois class consciousness, and examines alterity's double consciousness which is, in one sense, rooted in national concerns at the same time it opposes the national as the cultural symbolic. In challenging those aspects of the nation and national that are complicit with the patriarchal tradition, the text in a sense moves and takes its feminist concerns beyond the national into a trans/postnational identity for women. While patriarchal ideology insists that women uphold decency and honour, as Babamukuru expects of Nyasha and Tambudzai, they, along with Maiguru, Tambudzai's mother, and Lucia, resent the restrictions that are enforced in the name of tradition. Often tradition is evoked in the name of nationalism and hence attempts to resist tradition evoke a trans/postnationalism.

The novel's overwhelming concern with woman's oppression by both colonial and traditional cultures is underlined in the portrayal of the male characters, Jeremiah, Takesure and most prominently, Babamukuru whose lack of sense of duty and responsibility towards their families seems to be, in a way, endorsed by the patriarchal culture. Thus, in the character of Babamukuru is the collusion of patriarchal values defined by both colonial culture and native tradition. In his patriarchal attitude toward his wife, daughter, niece, sister-in-law, and Lucia, Babamukuru can be seen as having benefited from colonialism with all its attendant paradoxes inherent in cultural values defined by racial superiority. Hence, his character reflects the text's concern with the ways in which the national as represented by those in positions of authority is complicit with the patriarchal. The text allows us to see why, if the patriarchal culture underlying the social system licenses woman's oppression, then that patriarchal culture acts as an instrument of the nation. Thus the national becomes complicit with patriarchy and makes it imperative

for women to go beyond the national, evoking the trans/postnational because their need to be liberated transcends traditional patriarchy that sanctions such treatment of women either through complicity or by remaining silent.

But the novel also shows how tradition, lack of education, and economic dependence, all contribute to women's subjugation. It underscores how various factors, namely, the patriarchally constituted values and norms, the institution of marriage, colonial westernized education, bourgeois values, colonial culture, individually or collectively, deny women any viable choices. While the novel's one message, among others, clearly is to emphasize the importance of education for women as a first step toward gaining economic viability, it highlights the conflicts that education foregrounds between traditional expectations of women's subordination and between women's subjectivities.

Dangarembga's engagement with the nation and the national in *Nervous Conditions* is to be seen in the sense that it is concerned with Zimbabwean patriarchal culture, poverty, education, and its colonial encounter, and in the sense that all these in different ways define the nation and the national. That a culture cannot exist without the nation's support, implicit in which is the nation's sanctioning of a social system and endorsing of a culture that legitimates women's oppression. This feminist text's focus on women characters trapped in the social and culture problematic voicing their frustration underlines this feminist text's exploration of social change. Given that the nation and its culture and society perpetuate women's oppression, it is possible for us to view this text as taking woman's concerns beyond the national register onto a trans/postnational plane where different categories of women, as demonstrated in *Nervous Conditions*, are on a common platform. Women, along with subaltern groups, are part of the disenfranchised constituency who are not first class national citizens of their country. Hence, we can read into this text how woman's identity is trans/postnational in some respects, acknowledging

that necessary qualifications must be made on the basis of class and privilege and other cultural and social differences among women.

The critical consciousness of this text derives from its implicit conviction that a woman's identity, rooted in, yet fractured from the nation and the national, goes beyond the national. Embedded in the text's portrayal of women's entrapment and in its exploration of their options is, the researcher contends, a trans/postnational identity for women for whom escaping her entrapment takes precedence over the nation's patriarchal culture. Confronting how a national culture legitimizes woman's oppression, the text shows how the culture, endorsing patriarchal agendas, is complicit with and cannot exist without the nation's support. This analysis of the text has been to show how it suggests a connection between the patriarchal culture underlying the social system and its complicity with the national which endorses what the society sanctions. In other words, *Nervous Conditions* suggests that the whole cultural ethos must change, that the nation can progress only if women have freedom and equality of opportunity. This text thus underlines that national liberation cannot be a guarantor of a nation's progress without woman's independence and liberation from nervous conditions.

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