

**Double colonization of Rhodesian women in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions***Angga Brian Fernandi¹ ✉, Rahayu Puji Haryanti²,^{1,2}English Department, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia**Article Info****Abstract****Article History:**Received
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Nervous Conditions focuses on the story of the Shona family living in a patriarchal culture in Rhodesia during the postcolonial era in the 1960s. Rhodesia was a former British colony, so the legacy of colonialism and its influence is not that easy to go away. Hence, those who were colonized, or the locals experience many problems to cope with, especially women. Therefore, the study aims to examine the postcolonial issues in the novel dealing with double colonization. The objectives of the study were to describe and explain how the novel builds the themes related to postcolonialism and how the women living in patriarchy experienced oppression from male relatives as well as a colonial power. The study was done qualitatively using a content analysis method. The data were analyzed using Edward Said's theory of Orientalism. The findings showed the story highlighted the themes of patriarchy and cultural contestation which affect the lives of the female characters. Then, the findings explained how the female characters were oppressed traditionally and colonially. Therefore, it showed how women were doubly colonized by males and Western domination. Thus, they had not been able to get full authority since they were trapped between both.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature has contribution to the development of society because "it is combined with culture and other facets –both abstract and concrete- of society, not only presents palpable subjects like alienation, assimilation, and transformation in society but also reflects the palpable issues such as historical, political, and social facts," (Dubey, 2013, p. 85). Therefore, sometimes literature or literary work is used to convey the issue experienced by society, especially social issues that may also include political dimension. It is no wonder if society becomes the

source of inspiration in literary works as what the author has experienced it as a means to express the idea of human life that is "...not only the bright side, but also the seamy and dark side of life," (Duhan, 2015, p. 198).

The author usually criticizes the practice within the society or represents social problems such as gender, race, or class prejudice. These problems commonly occur in ex-colonized countries or in a country having colonial history. They even have some particular issues for example agency as the ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate action in either engaging or resisting imperial power (Ashcroft, Griffith, & Tiffin, 2007,

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p. 6), subaltern that is known as any general attribute of subordination in South Asian society in terms of class, caste, age, gender and many others (Ashcroft et al. 2007, p. 199), and racism as a cultural phenomenon constructed by capitalism, colonialism, and prejudiced individuals (Young, 1990, p. 124). Such issues are explored to show the colonial relations and their aftermath in the colonized nations.

Novel *Nervous Conditions* is a novel related to such issues and written by someone from Third World countries who experienced colonialism so that it belongs to a postcolonial novel. The story is quite complicated since the characterization is developed within complex social problems. It was written during the European colonization in what is now Zimbabwe. Their rule began to visibly unravel in the 1960s as British empire started to abandon its colonial possession in Africa. At that time, the role of Shona women deteriorated during colonial rule as they were only at home to do daily customs (Khader, 2016, p. 298). Moreover, the access to get education is so difficult as the priority is given to men.

The novel focuses on the story of the Shona family in Rhodesia during the postcolonial era in the 1960s. It tells the main character named Tambu pursuing her dream to get education though she lives in the rigid tradition of the Rhodesian patriarchal society. On her journey to get educated, she faces many events illustrating the issue of culture, race, ethnicity, and gender. It is caused by the influence of the European domination in Rhodesia after the colonial era.

The problem, the influence of colonialism in a country, is not that easy to answer since there are many ways of colonial infiltration in terms of values and culture which are usually done through movies, education, literature, and religion of the European people. Hence, those as the ex-colonizer feel superior, whereas those colonized or the locals experience many problems to cope with, especially the women. Women are considered as second-class citizens and the ones who more likely got unfair treatment. Moreover, they have been 'marginalized by patriarchal society and consequently the history' (Ashcroft et al, 2007, p.

66). Oppression and inferiority have become aspects which always come up in ex-colonized nations. It is not only visible in the deep physical form, but also at an abstract level, especially in the space of cultural representation.

Concerning the concept of postcolonialism in *Nervous Conditions*, there are many researchers who discussed it with various topics. First, the research was done by Odoi, Rafappa, and Klu (2014) with the title *Negotiating Social Change in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions*. This study is conducted by looking at the female characters within male dominated literary discourse. The study revealed Nyasha and Lucia were strong characters as opposed to relatively docile women like Maiguru and Ma Shingayi. They used different method and strategy to stand up for themselves and to fight the negative aspects of patriarchy and tradition in African communities.

Second, a research was carried out by Sarah Miller entitled *Self-Destructive Education in Tsitsi Dangarembga Nervous Conditions* (2018). In this research, she discussed the role of education with colonial influences on the characters of Tambu and Nyasha. Therefore, this study aimed to reveal the influence of education which was dominated by Western values to the life of Rhodesian women. Third, Da Silva (2019) also conducted a research entitled *Modernity, Representation of Violence, and Women Rebellion in Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions*. The research revealed women's responses to various forms of violence that target their bodies and minds. Da Silva did investigation to female characters who avoid complying with the cultural norms in Rhodesia.

So far, the previous studies above had mostly talked about gender equality, especially how women successfully fight against male domination and how they were influenced by western education. The novel presented which brings the issue of colonialism, culture, race, and gender. It describes an inferior position of Rhodesian women during the postcolonial era, especially when the country was in the process to gain its independence. It also talks clearly about the influence of the European domination in Rhodesia

after the war towards the life of the local people. This has made me think to study the novel further to identify the problems behind women struggle in the story. Therefore, this study will describe and complete the gap from previous studies, because the issue of Double Colonization in this novel has not been explored yet. Hence, in order to see the forms of double colonization in the novel, this paper would like to see through a perspective of postcolonialism.

METHODS

Postcolonialism investigates the clash between two cultures and when one of them has more power and is superior to the other. It is in line with the postmodern thinkers that each society or culture contains the dominant culture that can be "... culture ideology or its hegemony" (Bressler, 1994, p. 264). Therefore, this paper used a postcolonial approach to investigate the issue of double colonization in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, which is also related to those who are the marginalized or the Other. The other or othering is related to the concept of social representation that develops in the postmodern world. It is also supported by Ashcroft et al who argue that 'subaltern' has almost the same meaning with the notion of 'the other' who may control their own representation, and less access to cultural and social institutions (Ashcroft et al, 2007, p.199). Additionally, Spivak explained that the construction of subalterns involves many terms including gender, race, and caste because when you are "...poor, black, and female, you get it in three ways." (Spivak, 1985, p. 294).

Besides, it is also close to the theory of orientalism as told by Edward Said that Orientalism is creating stereotypes or prejudice towards the eastern societies because it functions '...at one and the same time to characterize the Orient as alien...' (Said, 1978, p.72). Therefore, specific trait or aspect of the orient is being depicted as something far behind the west because they have '...helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.' (Said, 1978, p. 2). This thought has been shaped by

the European imperialist since the 18th and 19th century.

According to postcolonial figures such as Gayatr Spivak, Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, and Edward Said who learn and emphasize different aspects of postcolonial subjects and terminologies, this paper focuses on the scope of double colonization and its relevant subjects. By analysing the data and paying attention to the discussions, this paper aims to examine topics such as postcolonialism through the analysis of the novel. Furthermore, this paper will discuss further about the double colonization and its consequences affecting the lives of female characters in the novel.

In terms of gender issues, postcolonial theory assumes that the women, especially in the Third World countries, have bear the brunt of double oppression: of the colonial nation and of the native men. This is in line with what Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin said that double colonization was the condition when women were doubly colonized, since both "empire and patriarchy act as analogous to each other and both exert control over female colonial subjects." (Ashcroft et al, 2007, p. 66).

The concept of double colonization is related to Said's Orientalism as he stated that "such.... as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made. Therefore, as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West." (Said, 1978, p. 5). It notes that Orientalism is a Western style to dominate the orient. Therefore, in relation to double colonization, 'the orient' stands for the East and the women, whereas the 'occident' stands for the West and the men. Men are superior to women and thus women as colonial subjects represent 'the other' both for imperial power and their male relatives as well as society.

This paper was drawn into a qualitative content analysis method. According to Julien (in Given, 2008, p. 120-121), qualitative researchers use content analytic approach to recognize that a text is open to subjective interpretation as it reflects multiple meanings. The process of this analytic method is by categorizing qualitative textual data

into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories to derive the meaning both explicitly and implicitly stated in the content of the story. Moreover, Creswell (2012, p. 17) argues that the data of qualitative research is gathered from a text database or called text segments. It is done by dividing the text into groups of sentences and determining the meaning of those describing the phenomenon brought in the study; segmenting the text into sentences and explaining the result in accordance with the topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Themes Portrayed in *Nervous Conditions* *The Struggles of Rhodesian Women Living in Patriarchal Society*

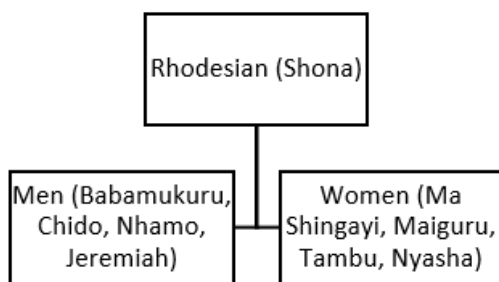


Figure 1. Men versus Women

In *Nervous Conditions*, men are more powerful and superior than women. Ma Shingayi is an illustration of a traditional Rhodesian woman who did not pursue education. Thereof, in a society which is very much controlled by modern culture she certainly does not have the power. She only accepts and carries out her duties as a woman. See the quotation below:

‘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.’ (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 16)

In the above quotation, Ma Shingayi gives an understanding to Tambudzai regarding the burdens carried by the Rhodesian women. She thought that as a black woman it is a heavy burden that has to be accepted and accustomed to from an early age in order to easily live our life in the future.

This indicates that Tambu's mother is trying to get her child to take the fate of being a black woman in Rhodesia. As women, they are the ones who will take care of the children and the household chores.

The same incident also happened when she wanted to go to school, but she was not supported by her father and instead asked her to learn to cook and do other chores.

Can you Cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 15)

On the other hand, her mother and father do whatever it takes to keep Nhamo, her elder brother, in school. Even, Nhamo had the opportunity to attend education in Babamukuru's place which is not an ordinary school but a mission school, a modern English-language school. Pay attention to the following quotations:

‘why do you bother?’ he asked, his eyes twinkling maliciously. ‘Don’t you know I am the one who has to go to school?’ (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 20)

‘Babamukuru says I am so bright I must be taken away to a good school and be given a good chance in life. I shall wear shoes and socks, and shorts with no holes in them, all brand new,...., I shall stop using my hands to eat. I will use a knife and fork. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 48)

Those quotations emphasize that men have more access to school. Boys are prioritized for their interests and needs because they will be relied on to help their families in the future.

The descriptions above point out theme of patriarchy as the customs in the traditional life of the Rhodesia people in the novel, especially the Shona people. The descriptions of the character's behaviour and storylines in the novel emphasize how the tradition defines Shona women who do not get the same opportunities as men do. The female characters in this novel represent Rhodesian women who are under the grip of a patriarchal cultural tradition

Cultural Contestation in Rhodesia: Tradition versus Modernity

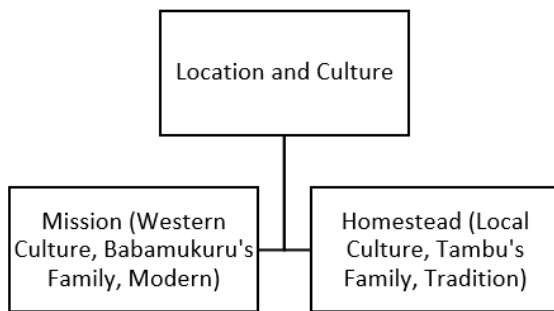


Figure 2. Modernity versus Tradition

The story in this novel also shows the existence of cultural contestation among the society, especially between traditional culture vs modern culture, a representation of Western culture, as former colonialists. This is depicted through Babamukuru’s family as a cultural representation of England and Tambu’s family in the village which is a representation of Rhodesia. This contestation is shown through the conflict that Tambu experienced when she with her native background had to join the family of his uncle, Babamukuru, who had a Western educational background. This makes Tambu adjust her behaviour and lifestyle while living with Babamukuru on a mission as shown in the following incidents:

Then I greeted her. It was necessary to sit on the floor to do this. I sat, folding my legs up under my bottom. I clapped my hands. ‘Nyamashewe, Maiguru, how are you?’ (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 131)

All the same, I did not feel up to confessing that I had not known what bedclothes were, but it did not matter. Observing what Nyasha was wearing I found something similar in my suitcase. These, then, were the bedclothes. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 91).

These quotations explain that Tambu initially held and practiced the local traditional culture when she stayed at Babamukuru's house for the first time. As she never intersects with modern culture before, Tambu is described as being foreign to the modern items in the house. Even, she noticed that some things were new to her. It was the time when Tambu was trying to adjust to the new environment as if she began to realize that

there was a need in her to start learning the modern values at the mission.

Rhodesia, in the above quotations, shows a change in society that has emerged around them a field of contestation of foreign and local cultures. As a result, various problems arise in the struggle for positions between the two cultures. Apart from Tambu, characters such as Babamukuru, Maiguru, Nyasha, and Chido also experience the consequences of this cultural contestation. They should adapt to local traditions when they visit the homestead as what Tambu and Nhamo argued below:

‘Didn’t you see Babakumuru eat with his hands? All of them, Maiguru and those proud children. They all ate with their hands.. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 48)

But in their own home they use them. Each one has his own plate with his own portion of food and his knife and fork. I asked Chido if they eat like that at home and he said yes. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 48)

The quotations above prove that the backgrounds and situations with cultural differences have shown how the characters adapt their life from traditional to modern and vice versa.

According to the explanation above, *Nervous Conditions* portrays a cultural contact between the West and Rhodesia. It is no wonder that the characters experience overlapping identities because of the contestation of the two cultures.

Double Colonization of Rhodesian Women in *Nervous Conditions*

Rhodesian Women and Traditional Oppression

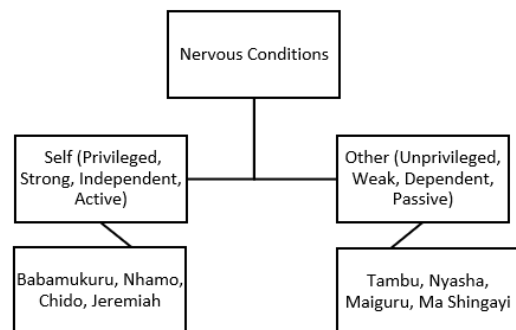


Figure 3. Binary Opposition: Traditional Oppression

In *Nervous Conditions*, women are an important community. The main character in this story, Tambudzai, is the one who gets the most detailed character development. In this research, Tambu is considered as a representation of Rhodesian women and their position in the society is a concern to be illustrated here.

According to the story, the background for Tambu's life is Shona culture. All of Tambu's behaviours, problems, and responses to life cannot be separated from the culture around her life. The culture of the Shona people in this novel is depicted through people's behaviour. For example, showing actions of maintaining harmony with nature, adhering to traditional beliefs that are different from the beliefs of the average European nations, and what is equally important is the depiction of the relationship between men and women in the Shona tradition.

Culture related to male-to-female relations in Shona culture as depicted in the novel is how men are supported to occupy a higher position than women. This culture was shown in various events, for example when Nhamo had the opportunity to attend missionary school and Babamukuru who was trusted by white people to become the headmaster of the school. Those are seen in the following quotations,

'But how can he study when there is no electricity? How can he read when there are no books? Even going to school, how can he do that everyday when there is so much work to be done on the homestead?...What we must do is to let Nhamo stay with us at the mission, let him go to school there.' (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 46)

'But Mukoma was lucky. He got the chance. He went to the mission at an early age. The missionaries looked after him so well, you know...' (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 5).

The quotations above note that Rhodesian men are trusted than women in education and occupation. Babamukuru and Nhamo are the colonized men, but they take the advantage of European education to strengthen the position in the society. Hence, the local women would consider that men should be obeyed and respected since they are the head of the patriarch and the ones who are relied on. As a result, women can

easily be controlled and ruled by men since men are superior to women, and women is considered as the other in relation to male relatives. Therefore, Tambu is inferior to her brother, Nhamo, while Maiguru and Nyasha are inferior to Babamukuru.

The main character, Tambu, is a representation of a girl who grew up in this traditional culture. Through the words of this character, data can be obtained that women are considered as second-class citizens, and inferior to men. See the quotation below:

The needs and sensibilities of women in my family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate. That was why I was in Standard Three in the year that Nhamo died, instead of Standard Five, as I should have been by that age. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 12).

The quotation above shows that through the words of Tambu, women are considered as second-class citizens, unprivileged, and inferior to men, and thus they are 'the other'.

Based on the novel, the differences of the women's role from men are introduced from an early age with men in a superior position. Hence, the women are encouraged to learn how to do their duties since they were children. They are assigned to do chores such as washing clothes, providing water for bathing, and cooking food to be served each day. That is proven from the following quotation:

'...which was twenty four stomachs to fill three times a day....twenty four people's laundry to wash...Now this kind of work was women's work.. So Maiguru, Nyasha, the three helping girls and myself were on our feet all day' (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 133).

The quotation illustrates how modern Shona women continue to carry out chores when they are at homestead. It was said by Tambu when the extended family gathering was held at the homestead. She, Nyasha, Maiguru, still adapt to local traditions even though they have received Western education.

Another position of Rhodesian women in this novel is portrayed through the character of Nyasha, a woman with a modern culture who is often in conflict with her father, Babamukuru, because of her behaviour which is deemed

inappropriate for the Shona women. In the view of the Babamukuru, Shona women should behave like domestic women who are always obedient and polite in accordance with the Rhodesian patriarchal culture. See the following quotation

‘No decent girl would stay out alone, with a boy, at that time of the night,’ What’s the matter with you girl? Why can’t you behave like a young woman from a decent home? (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 103).

Nyasha continues to practice western values in Rhodesia which is considered bad and wrong. She did not want to be a woman who was always controlled, she wanted to be free, to express what is in her mind, and to do what she intended. She still minded getting accustomed to local customs that she had forgotten for years. This is shown in the following quotation:

‘It’s not England anymore and I ought to adjust. But when you’ve seen different things you want to be sure you are adjusting to the right thing. You cannot go on all the time being whatever’s necessary. You’ve got to have some conviction, and I’m convinced I don’t want to be anyone’s underdog. But once you get used to it, well, it just seems natural and you just carry on. And that’s the end of you, you’re trapped...’ (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 117).

According to the explanation aforesaid, women in the traditions of Rhodesian society during postcolonial era, especially Shona women, had a role or position as the lady of the house who takes care of the children and family. This showed that women in Rhodesian society as depicted in the novel experienced traditional oppression. The traditions of society did not give women the freedom to determine their destiny or pursue their ambitions, especially in the world of education, work, and self-actualization. The local traditions in this story led men to be privileged citizens with a role as leaders of their families since they were born. Thus, women are inferior, powerless, and voiceless in front of men.

Rhodesian Women and Colonial Oppression

Regarding the history of colonialism, Khader (2000) stated that the status of Shona women

deteriorated under colonial rule. This is because women acted as mediators in every dispute even as the head of the community during the pre-colonial period. He also added that in the late 1930s, the role of women in various interests vanished and instead carried out tasks that were usually done by men such as in agriculture, including harvesting and planting. Meanwhile, men worked for Europeans in the railways, mining and agriculture. They left the women to grow their own crops. As a result, women have a lot of work to do (Khader, 2000, p. 298). Additionally, Ilma (2016, p. 5) says that in a colonial situation there was a hierarchy of four categories, namely men (Europe), women (Europe), *bumiputra* (men in colonies), and *liyan* or the others (women in colonies). The hierarchy even placed women in colonized countries lower than European women.

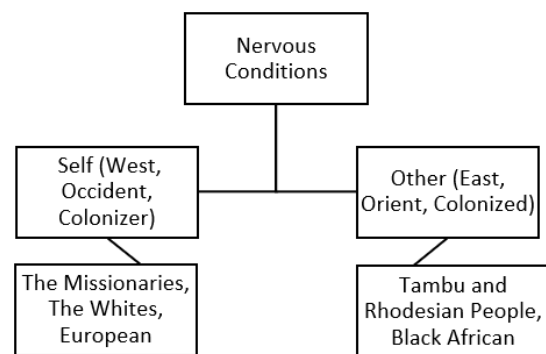


Figure 4. Binary Opposition 1

The story in the novel *Nervous Conditions* does not present a dominant Western character, but there are some white missionaries. The mention of words "white people" in some parts of the novel refers to European people who evoke memories of Western colonialism in Rhodesia. See the quotation below:

Another thing that was different about the mission was there were many white people there. The Whites on the mission were a special kind of white person...They had come not to take but to give. They were about God’s business here in darkest Africa. They had given up the comforts and security of their own homes to come and lighten our darkness. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 103)

The quotation above illustrates the local thought towards those of white people at the

missionary school in their area. The Shona saw and welcomed these white people with joy. In their view, the whites came to enlighten the Rhodesian, to help them to eradicate the suffering, and to educate them to be civilized. The term "not to take but to give" emphasizes the superiority of the West and inferiority of the black African.

Some of the dialogues also note people's memories of this colonial history, for example when Tambu received a scholarship to the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart dormitory. She got a different treatment at the school in which the majority of the students were the whites. She was placed in a room with other black students and given a second-hand uniform. Look at the dialogues below,

'I wished I had been wearing a uniform like the other girls I had seen. But I was getting my uniform second-hand.'

'Ah, yes, we have more Africans here than usual this year and so we had to put them all in here,' agreed the nun.

(Dangarembga, 1988, p. 194)

The conversation above shows that Tambu as the black girl is considered as the other among the white student in her new college. The college indeed grants Tambu a scholarship, yet they still have the Eurocentric mindset by dividing the African students into one room instead of giving them the same treatment.

Colonialism these days is not always physical, but also non-physical such as ideas and norms. This is also shown in the novel *Nervous Conditions* with the existence of missionary school and church as means to educate the society about Christianity. This is the way the colonizer uses Christianity as an influential factor to transform the values, cultures, beliefs, and the mind of colonized people. Tambu, and other female characters seemed to change their religion to Christian from the traditional belief. See the following quotations:

It was on Sunday. We went to church as we usually did. All of us went to church on Sunday, even Nyasha, and Anna too...In Sunday school we learnt about charity, love, and sin. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 97-98)

... and asked me about all sorts of fine details, details that I was not very sure of since we did not often perform this ritual anymore. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 147)

These quotes indicate that women are also the target of western hegemony because they should obey the male relatives. Once they are asked to go to church or at home, they do not have choice to take it down. The European introduces Christianity and it gives an impact on women's life because it brings masculine fundamentalism, and thus such patriarchal religion does not let women act like leaders. Therefore, women living in patriarchal culture do not have space to resist since they are trapped between the norms, customs, and colonial influence. The existence of missionary and church has reshaped the religion of the locals into modern religion which is spread through educational institution and religious activities.

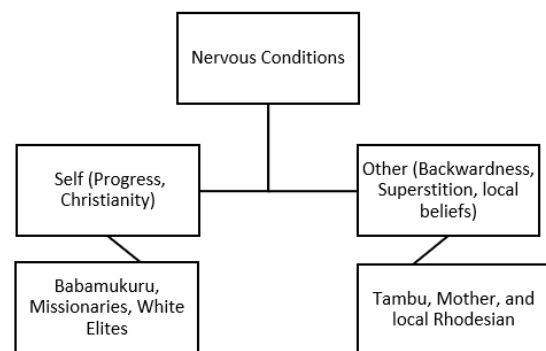


Figure 5. Binary Opposition 2

Babamukuru as the male character representing western ideas and values expressed his belief to remove sins from wrongdoing that was done by Tambu's parents in the past. Babamukuru believed that the distress experienced by Jeremiah's family was because he never married in a religious manner as described in the quotation below:

That is how we are judged and blessed accordingly... You have not been married in church before God. This is a serious matter.' (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 146-147)

Babamukuru's reason for choosing marriage was because he linked it to religious matters. He had gone to England and interacted with the missionaries and attended Sunday services at Church. However, Tambu did not feel like such an

idea. This makes herself have a dilemma and be oppressed because she could not express her opinions to Babamukuru. She just did not want to go to the wedding, and it made her uncle angry. See the quotations below:

‘I am telling you! If you do not go to the wedding, you are saying you no longer want to live here. I am the head of this house. Anyone who defies my authority is an evil thing in this house, bent on destroying what I have made.’

(Dangarembga, 1988, p. 167).

In this case, Babamukuru enforced patriarchy in terms of family discussions and decision-making. Moreover, he got rid of his tradition of cleaning ceremonies and replaced it with Christian marriages. Tambu was trapped between those and the way she tried to refuse was by being silent and not going to her parent’s wedding. Tambu had no chance to voice her opinion as both traditional and colonial power was imposed on her. Hence, Tambu is inferior to Babamukuru and such western values since she is successfully controlled and ruled without having any power to speak out.

Apart from Tambu, Nyasha also tends to imitate not only the behaviour of the Western, but also its values. Therefore, when she returned to her own land, she has a different view towards the local culture and environment which she had forgotten. Nyasha’s behaviour is likely to those of White people. She speaks English more than local language, she dresses differently from other girls, as well as she reads adults and historical books. This is shown in the quotation below:

‘They don’t understand Shona very well anymore,’ her mother explained. ‘They have been speaking nothing but English for so long that most of their Shona had gone.’ (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 42)

Do you see the kind of books your daughter is reading?’ Maiguru asked my uncle, taking Nyasha’s copy of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* from the dresser and showing it to my uncle. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 81).

The quotations above show that Nyasha with her westernized behaviour has made herself practice Western ideas especially the values of

freedom and individualism. As a result, she does things according to her will, not other’s. What Nyasha did was the impact of her experiences when she lived in England. However, she forgot that the patriarchy has made herself should abide by the men. She is a Rhodesian woman whose position is in the lower than Rhodesian men and even the Whites. Nyasha is expected to have good behavior and adjust to the traditions and customs of the Shona community.

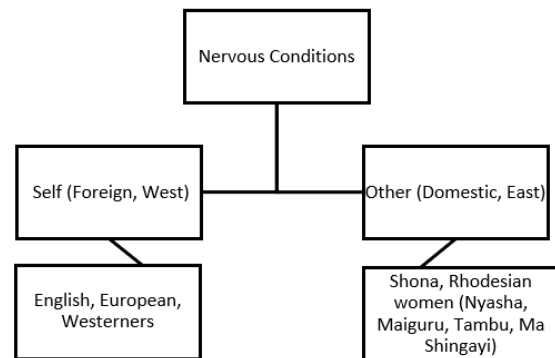


Figure 6. Binary Opposition 3

Thus, this novel shows the effort of colonization in ideas and values, which is nearly a success, but not completely work out. Most characters lived in mixed cultural identity since there are still both Rhodesian and western values in the story. However, preserving the local tradition and values is quite hard for those who have acquainted and enjoyed westernization. This was shown in the characters of Nyasha in the quotations below:

I find it more and more difficult to speak with the girls at school. They resent me the fact that I do not read their romance stories and if I do not read them, then of course I cannot talk about them. 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....I very much would like to belong Tambu, but I find I do not. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 196)

Another evidence is when Nyasha talked to Tambu about how she felt for the treatment she received in Rhodesia. She expressed her thoughts on returning to Rhodesia after several years living in England. She got stressed because of the

situation she was facing. Look at the following quotation:

‘Why do they do it, Tambu,’ she hissed bitterly, her face contorted with rage, ‘to me and to you and to him? Do you see what they’ve done? They’ve taken us away. All of us. We’re grovelling. Daddy grovels to them. We grovel to him.’ (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 200).

The pronoun *him* in the quote is Babamukuru, and the pronoun *they* or *them* stands for the white people, Westerners, or missionaries. Nyasha’s expression emphasized that the local people of Rhodesia were inferior in their own country, while the domination was held by another group, namely the former colonizers who were often mentioned as being present in Rhodesian culture. Since Rhodesian people were inferior, they are representation of the other in the presence of the white or the European.

Rhodesian women in *Nervous Condition* are considered ‘the other’ in relation to men. Correspondingly, the men belong to colonized ones and seen as ‘the other’ by the Whites. Nonetheless, they get more privileges than women which make themselves occupy a higher position. As a result, men are like the European or the colonizer towards the women themselves. Then, it comes to the condition and situation in which the women are controlled both by male and colonial power. Such situation is constructed by the existence of patriarchal culture as well as the influence of colonial legacy in form of culture, values, and ideas. From all the quotations which have been elaborated, the theory of orientalism therefore leads this finding and discussion in analysing a phenomenon which perhaps still happen to people especially women who live in ex-colonized countries.

CONCLUSION

By investigating the female characters throughout the story in the novel, by looking at the events, dialogues, as well as their relation to male characters, this research reveals the themes that are highlighted in *Nervous Condition*, namely women struggle who live in patriarchal society and cultural

contestation between tradition and modernity. Rhodesian identity is presented in the form of cultural norms or tradition as well as the existence of colonial legacy in the story. The novel reveals the patriarchy system in the family of the Shona tribe in Rhodesia.

The research also found that women characters in the novel experienced double colonization. They got oppression traditionally and colonially. First, Traditional oppression came from their local customs as patriarchal society which positioned Rhodesian women inferior to men. Second, they also experienced colonial repression which came from the colonial legacy that happened and could be found in Rhodesia as a former British colony. It made Rhodesian women, that were considered as black women, were in the lowest position in the hierarchy, even lower than European women or the Whites. As a result, they were always in the inferior position compared to the local men and the white people. No wonder they were not fully free or independent.

This research therefore draws a conclusion that even though Rhodesian women had experienced western education and culture, they would be trapped in the patriarchy and the hegemony of the West. Thereby, Rhodesian women in *Nervous Conditions* experienced double colonization which makes them incapable of getting freedom or full authority. They were positioned as such because they were not able to claim to be purely traditional nor to have adopted Western cultures thoroughly but fight in between them.

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