

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol.6.Issue.1.2019 (Jan-March)

ISSN

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

FEMINIST COMMITMENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AS SEEN THROUGH TSITSI
DANGAREMBGA'S TWO FIRST NOVELS: *NERVOUS CONDITIONS* AND *THE BOOK OF NOT, A SEQUEL TO NERVOUS CONDITIONS*

AGUESSY Yélian¹, Codjo Grégoire Gbêho²

¹Constant - Université de Parakou

E-mail : aguessico@yahoo.fr

²Université d'Abomey-Calavi

E-mail: freddelwish@gmail.com

doi: <https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.6119.158>



ABSTRACT

In this paper, we intend to revisit the inequalities that prevail in *Nervous Conditions* and in *The Book of Not, a Sequel of Nervous Conditions*, two books under study. These inequalities find their roots on the one hand in the existing superstructure in African societies in general and mainly in Zimbabwe, and on the other hand in the established colonial system. In fact, Tsitsi Dangarembga, in her two novels denounces the effects of colonialism on her peaceful community before tackling in a sure and mature way the manifold internal issues. Thus, the writer through Tambudzai Sigauke's senses- describes a society made fragile, divided and ruined by colonialism. she shows with sorrow how colonialism, religion and patriarchy have imprisoned African women and makes them voiceless. She critically glanced at the racial practices in the convent- at Sacred Heart College, and castigates the patriarchal yoke that undermines the African women undertakings in all social movements. To knock down the order of her society, Tambu uses all her efforts, all her energy to get education after the death of Nhamo, her egocentric brother. The opportunity that death facilitates was effective by dint of her intellectual and patriarchal uncle; Babamukuru. The study uses two literary theories and one approach: the historical theory that seeks to understand the work by investigating the social, cultural, and intellectual context that produced it; the biographical one that helps understand the author's life and helps readers to more comprehend the work. We have used the feminist approach aiming to understand in the books the nature of gender inequality.

Key-works: Feminist, patriarchy, colonialism, inequalities, commitment, formal education

Résumé :

L'objectif de cet article est de revisiter les inégalités qui prévalent dans *Nervous Conditions* et *The Book of Not, a Sequel of Nervous Conditions*, deux romans le centre d'intérêt de notre étude. Ces inégalités trouvent leur

force d'une part dans les éternelles superstructures des sociétés africaines en général, et spécifiquement du Zimbabwe, et d'autre part, du système colonial implanté. Dans cette optique, l'écrivaine Zimbabweenne Tsitsi Dangarembga, met à nu les effets du colonialisme sur sa paisible communauté avant d'attaquer, avec tact et minutie les multiples problèmes internes, propres à la communauté à laquelle elle appartient. Par le biais de Tambudzai Sigauke- Tambu, Dangarembga décrit dans ses œuvres une société fragilisée, divisée et ruinée par le colonialisme. Elle montre avec amertume, comment le colonialisme, la religion et le patriarcat ont embrigadé les femmes africaines. Par ailleurs, Tsitsi dénonce les pratiques raciales au couvent- au Collège 'Sacred Heart' (Sacré Cœur), et fustige la domination patriarcale qui chosifie les femmes africaines dans tous leurs mouvements. Pour renverser l'ordre des choses, Tambu déploiera tous ses efforts, toute son énergie pour s'instruire, après la mort de Nhamo son frère égocentrique. Cette opportunité provoquée par la mort a été possible grâce à son oncle à la fois phalocrate et intellectuel : Babamukuru. Nous avons utilisé, pour cet article la théorie historique afin de comprendre le travail tout en menant des investigations sur les contextes socio-culturel et intellectuel des œuvres. Tout de même, la théorie biographique ici appliquée servira à comprendre la vie de l'auteur et aussi pour les lecteurs à comprendre le travail. Le féminisme comme approche littéraire utilisé s'évertue à comprendre la nature de l'inégalité du genre telle pratiquée dans ces ouvrages.

Mots-clés:Féministe, patriarcat, colonialisme, inégalités, engagement, éducation formelle.

Introduction

Being feminist is not a question of just a will. Far from this since feminism requires aptitude, capacity and courage to fly over the humans' artificial horizon to convey a message that can resist time and space with one and only one objective: to free the female gender and value its identity. According to Tong, as cited by La Tayna M. Purnell in "I Think I am a Feminist: A study of Feminist Identity Development of Undergraduate College Women", thesis of Philosophy submitted to the University Graduate School.

Feminism is a social, political ideology with a broad purpose of advancing the status of women. Mainstream feminism as a social movement has its origins in the woman suffrage campaigns of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Feminism as a political stance has a goal of gender equality, but there are multiple approaches within feminism, expressing philosophical or theoretical explanations for the source of inequality and different paths toward abolishing it (Tong, 1989)¹

In fact, women's marginalization seems to be a heritage in African societies since the beginning of human beings' existence till today. So, one thinks that African women are inferior, useless and weak in the mind of African men and in their behaviours as well. They do not have the right to claim, to make decision and any role of consulting regarding the management of the home questions. There is here, between men and women a relation of master and slave.

As Ann Smith quoted in 'Girl Power in *Nervous Conditions*: Fictional Practice Research Site', "Dangarembga's use of the term 'nervous conditions' in the title of her novel, drawing as it does on Jean-Paul Sartre's observation in his Preface to Franz Fanon's (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth* that "[t]he status of 'native' is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among colonized people with their consent"², carries with it an obvious post-colonial preferentiality" (Smith 253). This, Tsitsi Dangarembga portrays in her novels, *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not, a sequel of Nervous Conditions* (as the title of the book says it) the conditions in which Zimbabwe postcolonial society lives and continues to live.

These conditions ensure these three aspects: patriarchy, colonization and education. Tambu the female protagonist (we can also quote Nyasha- Tambu's cousin) has been the instrument that the author uses

¹La Tayna, M. Purnell. I Think I am a Feminist, A study of Feminist Identity Development of Undergraduate College Women, Thesis of Doctorate of Philosophy in the Education school of Indiana University. 2006. Ch.1

²Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. United Kingdom: Ayebia Clarke Publishing Ltd, 2004. P.20. Further references about this book will be NC followed by the page references when quoted.

to denounce the inequalities in her society, to rectify and to value the image of the undermined African women. *The Book of Not, a sequel of Nervous Conditions* is the second novel written by Dangarembga that narrates the postcolonial life of Rhodesia (house of stones) today called Zimbabwe on her way to independence (1980s). The conditions in the two books are really nervous. One does not allow girls to get education because as defined by African traditional principles, girls are created for the needs of home and Kitchen.

First, when those girls will become women, one will exclusively sum up their role into two: 'hold' the stomach and the 'under stomach' of men. Secondly, the society dictates to women the behaviours to adopt at home in front of the strong and austere master's hand to rule. Thirdly, once they succeed in getting education or reaching a certain non-neglecting level, they will suffer racial practices from whites or suffer psychological abuses of the native male. In this regard, will be the norm to let things go as it happens in Zimbabwe at that time without engaging energetic actions? The question seems to be negative. That is what determines our choice of the topic: "Feminist Commitment For Social Change As Seen Through Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book Of Not, A Sequel To Nervous Conditions*", to unveil this maybe masked shame and cry of those desolate women represented in the novels under study by Lucia, Mai(Tambu's mother), Maiguru(Tambu's aunt, wife of Babamukuru, Tambu's uncle) and the nervous and psychopath Nyasha.

Dangarembga chooses education as a sine qua non weapon through Tambuher committed round character to change her own life, the life of her parents and the one of her sister and her brother, all kneaded by misery. We discover Dangarembga in these books in a complicated mission for, she faces colonialism in its abuses and in the same time she faces an ancient traditional system of dominance: patriarchy(male super power to rule without any space of claiming).

In this research work, we have used articles, theses and dissertation. We have also used Feminism literary approach. Our research is articulated into three chief ideas. The first one is rephrased as 'Patriarchal Superstructure as an Obstacle to Woman's Emancipation.' the second one is about 'The Formal Education as an Efficient Weapon for Social Metamorphosis and finally we have studied 'Tambu as a Role Model.'

1. Patriarchal Superstructure As An Obstacle to Woman's Emancipation

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 6th edition, the adjective patriarchal means 'ruled or controlled by men; giving power and importance only to men'. We will choose the phrase "giving power and importance only to men". Who gives power to whom? The answer seems to be clear: men embodying the whole African society. By giving power and importance only to men we notice an absolute exclusion of women. The adverb 'only' used is not at random here because it comes to put a strong focus on the issue of discrimination. Also, when between two persons or between two groups of people w freely gives a thing to one in the detriment of the other, it raises a problem: Either a person or a group of people merits or has a particular privilege unlike the other. In such a context can we declare or conclude that there is a question of merit or privilege between men and women? The answer could situate readers for more understanding of this research work. In this regard, we can say that many are the books written by African women writers to show the tap root and the emptiness of the patriarchy practice in African society.

Earlier in *Nervous Conditions*, Tambu tackles this selective, humiliating and degrading ideology that places men into the core of development. She explains:

It had been my uncle's idea that Nhamo should go to school at the mission. Nhamo, if given the chance, my uncle said, would distinguish himself academically, at least sufficiently to enter a descent profession. With the money earned in this way, my uncle said, Nhamo would lift our branch of the family out of the squalor in which we were living. Thus, my uncle's gesture was oceanic, and my father, who liked hyperbole, did not need much persuading to see the sense of this plan. (NC4)

The above passage seems to be sufficient to develop the characteristics of the patriarchy. The "idea that Nhamo should go to school" is the idea of Babamukuru, the uncle of Tambu. This phrase shows an exclusion of other's wills to impose his own voice, his own decision that passes like a letter at the post office.

When the uncle gave Nhamo the “chance(to go to school), the latter would distinguish himself academically, at least sufficiently to enter a ‘descent’ profession”. This implies that education is the key to enter a profession, better a descent profession. The end of the passage shows the eagerness, the enthusiasm in the voice of Babamukuru. Nhamo-senior brother of Tambu is the one and the only one on whom relies the destiny, the success or the continuation of their family because he is a boy. He is the one who would lift the branch of the family out of the squalor in which they are living. This is the fundamental reason to send him to school to save the whole family from squalor.

What is frustrating in all those situations or with all those declarations is that they have said everything in presence of Tambu. The use of the sentence:” my uncle said” twice implies first that the speech is direct; not opposite reverse. Secondly, her insistence on the sentence shows how unfair the decision of the rock uncle affects Tambu. Just because she is a girl by nature. It is an open provocation and a menace of womanhood.

Furthermore, the qualifying adjective ‘oceanic’ shows the nature of the person the uncle is. Ocean is noisy. Ocean does not allow neither negotiation nor claiming. Ocean is force and violence to carry away what it wants, when it wants it and where it needs. This demonstrates the characteristics of the domination of patriarchy. Readers just realize that Babamukuru has come to his brother and to his children to give instruction or to inform about his ‘plan’. Jeremiah his brother ‘did not need much persuading to see the sense of this plan’. Even the father of Tambu and Nhamo knows that they are the same, when they decide to do something; there is no place to amend. He knows the sense of the plan which consists in preparing the relief team which uses as instrument only men. Babamukuru, in spite of being Christian does not succeed in departing from this ancient conservative ideology that gives all the powers to men to rule women. The reason that back up these men’s behaviour maybe, finds its place in the words of Jeremiah, the narrator’s father, caged by this forlorn patriarchal ideology by rendering him slave as well. Here are his sayings while discussing with Tambu:”Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables”(NC 15).

We do not want to talk of education here but unveil the practices of patriarchy once more. The patriarchal ideology is retrograde when we all accept that the development of our society is not the apanage of men only. It is and must be the contribution of both men and women since undermining women’s skill is a dangerous and fatal option that leads all the human society, especially African society into its destruction.

Interpreting this aforementioned quotation, we realize that Jeremiah is reducing female gender into a role of servant. He is reducing women to household chores, to domestic. This conception of life and about womanhood is an untrue conception for by binding women, we are binding the whole African society. And when one binds a society, its development suffers for decades. Therefore, we also think that this behaviour is a pure ignorance of our African societies.

Constant Y. Aguessy in reflection on the concept of patriarchy in his article entitled: “A Woman’s Combat for Formal Education in Binwell Sinyangwe’s *A Cowrie of Hope*”, says:

...It appears, clearly, that women are mentioned nowhere, in a word they do not play important roles in the patriarchal social system. As for me, patriarchy is a pervasive social system through which men deny women all rights to social properties and politics. Therefore, men use their authoritative position to keep women under domination and the inferiority state. (Aguessy 75)

The words of Aguessy sound strong when he qualifies patriarchy as pervasive because of its drawbacks on the whole African society. Keeping women under domination and under inferiority state as mentioned above is dangerous. It is two-edged sword that does not spare anybody. Keeping women under domination is synonym of throwing hot water in the air. It will surely come down and burn everybody.

Emancipation is the enemy of patriarchy; we can say in the case of study. So, to free womanhood and show the mistake of men to free women, as cited by Tasmia Moslehuddin in the following article: “Tsitits Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions*: The Emancipation of Women in Africa” Vice- President J.T.R.Mujuru has

said while addressing delegates at a conference on women's emancipation in Abuja, Nigeria on 01 July 2010. "Emancipating the African woman politically, socially and economically is a revolution that has to be fought and won. It is an intimate part of the larger context of the gender, democracy and human rights issues which are all core to the development of any nation or region". She will add in her speech: "African Women Emancipation: key to the future" (Tasmia79). There are things to consider instead of entrapping African women future.

To close this part, we will examine the way patriarchy has made fragile and muzzled for long time Maiguru, the wife of Babamukuru the embodiment of patriarchy. Being dejected, she decides to put an end to this traditional injustice by facing for the first time her husband to cry enough.

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 weddings, that are when they are my relatives too. Let me tell you, Babawa Chido, I am tired of my 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... I am sick of it Babawa Chido. Let me tell you, I have had enough!" (NC 174)

This quotation is an expression of a tired woman who needs air to breathe, a woman who needs inclusive decisions in the home management. This is the cry of a marginalized woman who stagnates under the weight of a society that works for her degradation. Maiguru needs to live and live more. Maybe far from this spoilt environment of patriarchy. The continuation of the novel tells us more about her final decision when she has left the house after she did put for a while even though she has come back 'to reason'. African society remains a society where women live for their men. The case of Maiguru is a typical illustration. The projects of her husband have swallowed all her economy. Her wage belongs to her husband. Though she has got education, she has to be docile like a donkey to obey her master-Babamukuru. And regarding all this, she must keep quiet simply because the nature has made her a girl and she has become woman, subject of manipulation.

As cited by Tasmia in the above quoted article: "Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*: The Emancipation of Women in Africa" Boyce-Davies, portraying these nervous conditions that suffer the Nigerian women, clarifies: "the woman as a daughter or sister has greater status and more rights in her lineage. Married, she becomes a possession, voiceless and often right less in her husband's family, except for what accrues to her through her children" (Tasmia 82).

This quotation comes to back up the degrading situation of women in *Nervous Conditions* where the case of Maiguru (among the many women) is an illustration of 'wretched woman' in African societies. Boyce-Davies confirms here that in African societies, people do not pay women respect and do not treat them as home partners. It seems that once married, African women lose their dignity and their freedom to enter into 'mendum'³.

While the whole world is celebrating women, African society, even political leaders continue to hesitate to give a place of choice to them. Régine Torrent in *first ladies: D'Eleanor Roosevelt à Hillary Clinton* is giving an example to African society when Bess Truman, the wife of Harry Truman, late president of America says: "La place d'une femme est d'être assise derrière son marien public, silencieuse, et de s'assurer que son chapeau est d'aplomb" (Torrent 71). Just a bit after some pages she states to be more interesting: "... Un président est sur la mauvaise voie s'il ne peut pas compter sur une First lady qui connaît son job et soutient complètement son mari. Elle est la meilleure aide qu'un président puisse avoir" (89). That is what a woman needs. To win the attention of her husband and to have this husband's regard in the decision making. Woman does not want to undergo the decisions that engage her home, her life and the life her children. She wants to be part of it, to contribute, to realize that she exists in the heart of the man who is her husband. That is the way the greatest nation we daily envy behaves.

³We have chosen here this word, in the context to design the domination of men, a world ruled by men

In this context, marriage seems to be in Africa a way to sell woman to the ruthless master who is her husband; this husband who has to protect her and defend her. That is the way patriarchy has forlornly succeeded in transforming African society into a supporter of slavery society.

Lola Shoneyin in her novel has dealt with the issue as it happens in her Yoruba culture.

Four women- IyaSegi, Iya Tope, Iya Femi and Bolanle 'belong' to a man, Ishola known as Baba Segi.

So, in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*- the novel at stake, as shown in her article *Feminist Empathy: Unsettling African Cultural Norms in The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, ChielozoneEze, to carry out the resounding voice of Lola Shoneyin puts with acuteness a focus on the issue of patriarchy.

As cited by Chielozone, a 'girl cannot inherit her father's house'. A woman is denied her father's property because, as her uncle says, 'she will marry and make her husband's home her own' (135)

The situation above may not make sense to certain persons veiled with the traditional wrapper of patriarchy that makes the fact normal, but it is sufficiently cruel when we come to consult the content of the book object of that article. The drawback is heavy for Iya Femi who lost her parents as a child and sold by her uncle as slave. Chielozone in the aforementioned article will more explain the sad way African society sacrifices the destiny of its daughters, its women:

Iya Femi's story reveals a lot about the condition of trapped women, when sometimes their only escape from the misery of their lives in their natal homes is through marriage. In examining her life, we are allowed to interrogate the cultural patterns that denied her access to her own father's estate. The source of her economic dependence lies in her inability to inherit her father's property. Would she have needed to beg a man to marry her if she had had the means to sustain herself economically? We understand her seeking to be wedded to a married man as an effort to stay alive in a culture that has a limited space for her (Chielozone320)

This passage casts a reflection upon African culture in its practice. Chielozone questions our culture and shows how unfair we behave towards our sisters in Africa. Does it imply that women have no place in our society? The answer does not surprise anymore. Women seem to miss their way in the African culture. They do not get any consideration and one does not treat them as human beings in violation of human rights. We can realize that it's the mistreatment Iya Femi has suffered that makes her become an unfortunate woman leading her to beg a man to marry to survive; just to survive. Attainted. Her father's property because she is woman, born in Africa. This act of injustice makes her an unfortunate woman forever. In the same book of Lola Shoneyin as cited by Chielozone, she introduces to readers Iya Tope, another woman with the same destiny and bargaining by the same man, the womanizer Ishola: "if your father has sold me a rotten fruit, it will be returned to him"(93). It is what Baron-Cohen calls 'single-minded focus of attention' which considers other people as objects to be used, to quote Chielozone in her article.

Before this sad situation that holds womanhood captive to men, the only way to get out from this entrapment is formal education.

2. Formal Education, an Efficient Weapon for SocialMetamorphosis

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English defines education as 'a process of training and instruction, especially of children and young people in schools, colleges, etc. which is designed to give knowledge and develop skills. If one could perceive education as a channel of knowledge acquisition and developer of skills, it is of paramount importance to get it and to allow all the children without distinction to get it. In addition, if development requires aptitudes, skills, education is a right and recommended way. As a matter of fact, we notice that the machine of the Tambu's revolution in the two books under study is the thirst of education. What can we say about social change? For Kimberly Moffitt, 'social change is the transformation of culture and social institutions over time. It happens all the time'(Google play Study.com).

We could retain from Moffitt's definition that social change is the metamorphosis of culture and existing superstructure to a better life standard, for a better life in a given time. It is a revolution that suffers a

society in order to receive or welcome (freely or not) a new ideology, a new tendency, a new lifestyle more promising in term of development. It has been what occurs in the books of Dangarembga with certain characters. Tambu is here the main protagonist the most courageous to face an ancient established rule: women do not have voice to utter in a society where men reign. Through what we can call 'A fine madness' to quote the book of the Zimbabwean MashingaidzeGomo, Tambu has chosen to overturn the rules that hold female gender for its freedom and put an end to gender discrimination through formal education. Parents have refused to give her education because they think that they do not have money to send her to school like her brother Nhamo. Here is what she tries to have access to school:

I decided it was better to be like Maiguru, who was not poor and had not been crushed by the weight of womanhood. 'I shall go to school again,' I announced to my parents.

My father was sharp with me, thinking that I expected him to obtain the money somehow, perhaps by working.' Your nonsense, you are about to begin it! I can tell you. You know your Babamukuru will not be home for a while yet'!

'I will earn the fees,' I reassured him, laying out my plan for him as I had laid it out in my own mind. 'If you will give me some seed, I will clear my own field and grow my own maize. Not much. Just enough for the fees'(NC 16- 7).

In the above quotation we discover through this passage an engaged girl at this age (about thirteen) be aware of her future by taking seriously her own destiny when her parents are amusing and mocking at her. Tambu at this age realizes that education is the only way at that time of her life, when poverty has tied her neck up to feet. Although her parents are neglecting the power of education, especially education of girls, Tambu has this revelation and confidence that only education can set her free to set free in her turn her family. She believes that girls also can contribute to the development of African society. She is showing readers that girls possess the ability to change things where men are refusing their emancipation. She is conscious that there is no place for women in her society but decides to face this wind of ignorance, inequality and gender discrimination to make herself a place.

In front of her father's drastic reaction to impose the traditional opinion (a failure father), we discover a docile girl, even though her father's menacing tone 'your nonsense, you are about to begin it!'(NC 17), she remains respectful since he is her father. Tambu is well educated. She promises to earn the fees without parents' implications. The only thing she asks them is a plot of land to clear and grow her own maize. And she states: 'Not much. Just enough for the fees(ibid 17). Somehow Tambu knows that her father will not help her (the mother can nothing without her husband) but she will earn this schoolfees and go to school 'again'. This attempt will no more fail. The following of her narration explains her determination to travel afar to look for clients to sell her green mealies.

Many writers, males or females have portrayed this behaviour proper to African society is because they realize that it is a 'crime' to refuse or to restrain women emancipation whose vehicle is formal education. To the extent of this, in *A COWRIE of HOPE*, his second novel, the Zambian BinwellSinyangwe portrays a mortified and illiterate African woman:

Nasula was poverty, she was loneliness and aloneness. Suffering was her life. She wore it like her own skin. A young peasant woman in her early thirties, beautiful and gracefully built, Nasula had no means and no dependable support. She was the god's plant growing on poor soils without tendrils. Both her parents had died not long after she had come of age and had left her with nothing but herself (Sinyangwe 4).

The author compares Nasula here to poverty. She is poverty. She feels and breathes poverty as portrayed in the aforementioned sentence. But she needs a 'saviour' to remove this 'garment' of poverty from her life. This saviour seems to be education when she realizes it by deciding to send her daughter Sula to school to bring life, in spite of being poor. We notice this determination in her voice while discussing with her daughter. She argues:

You must go to school. You can't stop your schooling just like that. Do you not feel sorry for yourself? Do you not see how we are suffering because I did not go to school? You want your future to be like me?...

You must go to school. You don't know what suffering I have gone through because apart from being poor and woman, my parents did not send me to school. I don't want you to suffer the way I have suffered. I want you to grow up to stand on your own feet and not look to marriage or men for salvation. Marriage and men are not salvation but the ruin of any woman who can't stand on her own feet. I want you to go far with your education so that you can support yourself, earn a good living and be free and independent in your life. You must go to school! (37)

The modal verb 'must' expresses an obligation, a strong obligation. Nasula according to these quoted declarations serving as scapegoat for her daughter thinks that her role is to show Sula – her daughter, the right way to be at ease tomorrow. And the only way is education. The evidence is that she is poor but the truth to her is that Sula must go to school to be on her own feet tomorrow. Unlike to her, Sula will not submit herself to men and marriage that stand as a virtual prison in African societies. Her stress on the sentence 'you must go to school' shows her strong determination to save her daughter from women misery which the first instigator is African society. She does think that 'marriage and men are not salvation but the ruin of any woman who can't stand on her feet'. Nasula does not want her daughter to suffer what Iya Femi has suffered in Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret of Baba Segi's Wives* when, dejected to suffer, to shorten her misery asks Taju, Baba Segi's driver to help her find a husband, his wealthy boss. She shows through the following declaration her thirst: "...Then make him marry me. Convince him and put me in your debt forever. I have no relatives so there is no one for him to pay homage to" (Shoneyin 129). Iya Femi here gives impression of a miserable woman and this philosophy is for those who have lost hope and life. For her, education would be a weapon to get out from this compromising situation and change her way to perceive life. Lola in this chapter (13th) entitled *Iya Femi* uses "I narrator" what implies that Iya Femi is narrating her own adventure.

Dangarembga and Sinyangwe seem to fight for the same cause even if the two mothers do not have the same opinion, the same experience, the same commitment for the social change, for female emancipation. Mai- Tambu's mother is passive and receives African societies' rules as normal and natural whereas Nasula is active and rejects with vehemence African societies' rules perceived as unfair, degrading and abnormal. Nasula attacks instead of accepting. Mai receives instead of attacking. Sula hesitates for her schooling whereas Tambu provokes the opportunity to go to school. Sula thinks that education is a privilege. But Tambu thinks that education is a must.

In *The Book of Not*, Dangarembga introduces a new Tambu with a new and ameliorated perception of life in spite of these manifold discrimination practices she endures in Sacred Heart-her college, a Tambu mad because of education in search of her unhu⁴. Here, she shows her eagerness to achieve her goal through education:

That was in the second year; a deterioration of hope. The first year was better because I knew what I wanted. My desires in this initial year were positive: to achieve, achieve, achieve some more, and I knew how to realize them. I was going to learn until I had more learning than anyone about me, first in the classroom, then in the school and finally in the community (The Book of Not 21⁵)

Reading such a declaration, we notice that Tambu knows her combat and has yet resolved in her mind her own plan to reach her goal. Far from exaggerating we can say that education is for Tambu what God is for his believers. Her breath is education; the blood that flows in her veins is education. All her being claims to 'live' by education and for education. We can read and even hear her voice while reading through her sayings:

⁴Personhood in Shona- aZimbabwean's language

⁵For the second book of the same author- Dangarembga, *The Book of Not*, we will write TBN followed by page references quoted.

'to achieve, achieve, and achieve some more'. This is a sign or a symbol of a strong commitment. She knows where she goes and what to do to reach her destination. Achievement implies application. Being the top in her classroom, in her school (all the promotions put together), and finally the top in her community. It sounds strong. Though the events that happen for the deterioration of her hope. She knows what she wants. When you want something with your entire mind, with your entire body, you have eighty per cent of possibility to get it.

In some chapters of this book, for having done good job at school, for her O- level degree, we can hear the pleasure and satisfaction of Babamukuru her uncle: "You have done well. You have made us proud, my daughter! Yes, parents become very proud when they have such a daughter as you are" (175). Tambu has done well. The hope to succeed with education her passion. Parents' expectation while investing in their children life is their success.

Formal education is a sure and an efficient weapon for social change. Education is a key that never fail. It opens all the doors and casts light into the penumbra of ignorance. It illuminates and directs life like the moon illuminates and directs the paths of humans at night. We must keep in mind that our role as father or parent is to show the way of education to our children, otherwise, we got lost. Jacqueline Kennedy has to say this : "Si vous ratez l'éducation de vos enfants, je ne pense pas que vous puissiez faire correctement quelque chose d'autre" (Torrent 124).

Even Chielozone Eze in her aforementioned article describes Bolanle, an outstanding character who affronts African cultural norms to free herself from the ancestral objectification system. Thanks to her education, Bolanle has a sort of mind illumination that makes her a distinguished woman among her co-wives, before her husband and in her community. Her audacity to turn down the superstructure of the African society; her act of boldness captivate readers' awareness and call the attention of the so-called society:

...In the novel, Iya Segi, Iya Tope, Iya Femi, and Bolanle are married to one man, Ishola known as Baba Segi. Ishola is confident in his virility and standing as a patriarch. The apparent barrenness of Bolanle, his beloved and educated fourth wife, causes him much concern. His three other wives had, unbeknownst to him, solved the problems of childbearing in their own unique, crafty ways. But Bolanle insists that she and her husband do a test. He learns that he is, indeed, not as virile as he had claimed (Chielozone 311).

This citation carries two messages. Firstly the author is removing this mask of intimidation and self-centeredness adopted by African males to nail women on pile which embodies the patriarchal system. Secondly, this passage seems to be a starting point of realization for African women to get out of the secular objectification.

Bolanle's reaction, because of being educated has cast light in the hollow and dark hole that symbolizes patriarchy practice. Shoneyin with her literary mission through Bolanle frees men from their wives' ruse and detrimental attitude. Thanks to education she has got, she has liberated both her husband and herself. From her 'stubbornness' she has revealed the hidden danger her husband runs and gets her 'independence'- freedom. Her husband is not virile as he is supposed to be. The children of the other wives are not his. To Bolanle herself, she is from now on fixed as far as her lot is concerned. And the way is clear for her to divorce. And she has divorced. All this has been possible because she has got the illumination to do a test. Here we can read the following of their story: "Listen, Doctor, I have many children. I have sons; I have daughters. The only thing God has not blessed me with is twins. Mind you, there is still time. So, tell me... Are the tests you want to do on me not a waste of time?" (Shoneyin 189). Only an educated person can have this amazing idea. So she has been saved, thanks to education.

Lola Shoneyin and Chielozone are performing the same job that consists in letting African women get out of the traditional shell that holds them and timidly strangulates them. All the same, Shoneyin's ambition while writing this novel is to demystify the myth of patriarchy and give back to women their image and reconstruct and revalue womanhood. It has also been the objective of Tsitsi Dangarembga in *Nervous*

Conditions and in *The Book of Not*, our books under study. Only the feminist approach can succeed this heavy task.

3. Tambu, a Role Model

Labeling Tambu as role model, we realize that she must be a mirror to many other girls and even to any adult to consult with her rich characteristic traits. She is role model in behaviour, role model in determination. She could expose her mother with these words of demotivation:

I think my mother admired my tenacity, and also felt sorry for me because of it. She began to prepare me for disappointment long before I would have been forced to face up to it. To prepare me she began to discourage me. 'And do you think you are so different, so much better than the rest of us? Accept your lot and enjoy what you can of it. There is nothing else to be done'. I wanted support, I wanted encouragement, warnings if necessary, but constructive ones. On the day that she discouraged me once too often I decided she had been listening too devoutly to my father. Ceasing to pay attention to her, I sought solidarity with Nhamo instead, but he could not help because he was going to school (NC 20)

What we find out here is about attitudes to adopt to reach success: to focus on one's set plan and to separate oneself from people who constitute an obstacle for the achievement of the destiny. Her mother is a failure and she wants her daughter to be like her, to be poverty, to feel and breathe poverty; and to remain in the net of poverty. She could confirm this portion of sentence: 'And do you think you are so different, so much better than the rest of us? Accept your lot and enjoy what you can of it' (op.cit,20). These sayings are not the words of a person who needs change. These sayings are not expressions of someone who is conscious and free in the mind. When we study the psychology of Mai, Tambu's mother, we realize that she is slave of both patriarchy and misery. Her mind seems to be locked and refusing the social change for which her daughter fights.

This kind of mother does not deserve wifehood nor motherhood. While many women are wrestling and toiling to invest in their children's future, Mai here is working to demotivate her committed daughter. She enjoys herself in her miserable situation. She is a submissive woman. Submissive to her culture, submissive to her lot. She thinks that anything else cannot be possible for her to get out of the net of poverty. She takes her situation as natural and unchangeable. Tambu is not ready to accept that. Unlike to her mother and the women of her lineage, she empties her mind, open for social change and she gives herself the means to succeed.

The second aspect we want to find out from this passage above is to separate oneself from those who refuse change and being passive. Tambu has understood this when, realizing that her mother is her stumbling block decides to separate herself from her. Here she says: '...Ceasing to pay attention to her, I sought solidarity with Nhamo instead...' (op.cit, 20). Tambu wants to reach her goal and to reach it, she decides to befriend with those who have ambition. She understands the secret according to which, to succeed, she must associate herself with those who have vision; those who have ambition. If you do not have financial means to reach your objective, you must be determined and engaged. Tambu's leitmotiv is action in determination.

Making a parallel, we could affirm and demonstrate that Tambu is quite different from her cousin Nyasha the anglicized girl who does not measure what to say to her parents and how to say it. No respect, no consideration. Here, Tambu shows her disagreement with Nyasha's behaviour toward her Maiguru: "It really was very sad that Maiguru, who was the embodiment of courtesy and good breeding, should have such a rumbustious daughter. It was so embarrassing, the way Nyasha thought she could say anything to her mother. I did not know where to look"(NC 74). Tambu basing on her own education before meeting formal education is the obverse side of Nyasha. She does not accept this comportment, this lack of respect of her cousin to her parents. To Tambu, there could not be the expected comportment of a child towards his parents, worse a daughter who will be one day wife and mother. Anyway, in African society behavioral code, this comportment cannot be tolerated.

In the following dialogue, with her mother we can read this misdemeanour and strong language coming from Nyasha the 'educated or literate girl':

'What are you reading, Nyasha-washa, my lovey-dove?' Maiguru eventually asked, advancing into the room. Nyasha raised her book so that her mother could see for herself.

Maiguru's lips pursed into a tight, disapproving knot, 'Oh dear', she breathed, 'that's not very good. Nyasha, I don't want you to read books like that.'

'There's nothing wrong with it, Mum,' Nyasha reassured her.

'Don't tell me that, Nyasha,' Maiguru warned in a tone that I approved of although I could not follow the language very well. I thought Nyasha ought to be more respectful. 'I read those books at postgraduate level,' Maiguru continued, 'I know they are not suitable books for you to read.'

'But it's meant to be good, Mum. You know D.H. Lawrence is meant to be good,' objected Nyasha.

'You mustn't read books like that. They are no good for you,' Maiguru insisted

'But, Mum, I get so bored. I've read everything in the house that you say I can and there's not much of a library at school. What's all the fuss about anyway? It's only a book and I'm only reading it.' (75)

Never a daughter could talk to her mother in such way. Anyway, in African society where elder's and parents' respect is a norm, a recommended norm for our community life balance. Nyasha is the obverse side of Tambu when we study in depth this aforementioned dialogue between mother and daughter. Unfortunately, it does sound like a conversation between two antithetical characters. Nyasha is sufficiently disrespectful that she attacks and harms her milky mother. All her behaviours in this conversation are provocative and defensive. She does not show any aspect of respect. The first paragraph of this conversation shows the nature of daughter Nyasha is when in gestural manner she answers back and silently her mother's question: "What are you reading, Nyasha-washa, my lovey-dove?" "Nyasha raised her book so that her mother could see for herself." (Op.cit,75). It is not polite her reaction. But, Tambu denounces this behaviour and agrees with her mother to take her back to common sense.

Somewhere, we could understand Nyasha (far to defend her) when critically, we take her as embodying African society in her defensive and her mother embodying western to reject and fustigate. The overdose of her father's dominance can also be the core of her radicalism. She needs freedom whatever the price could be. We do not want to talk of her father Babamukuru who embodies Africa rigidity and traditional and conservative but westernized. Tambu contrary to Nyasha is a role model.

That was in the second year; a deterioration of hope. The first year was better because I knew what I wanted. My desires in this initial year were positive: to achieve, achieve, achieve some more, and I knew how to realize them. I was going to learn until I had more learning than anyone about me, first in the classroom, then in the school and finally in the community (Opcit, 21)

With this declaration, Tambu builds the way for readers, especially for girls and any woman for success. She is inspired with determination and strong courage to be the best in any field of the social life. She inflames the fire of feminism defined by Lather (1991) as cited by La Tayna Purnell in "*I Think I am a Feminist*" as 'a belief in women...' (ch.4) to readers and to women to fight and to be on their own feet tomorrow. Tambu is compared to Nasula in *A Cowrie of Hope* by Binwell, dealing with determination to find a way to get out of poverty by dint of the formal education.

As cited by AyéléFafavid'Almeida in her article: "*Squaring Marital Life With Self-Realisation: A daunting Challenge in AMA ATA AIDOO'S CHANGES*", appeared in *Geste et Voix* n°18, we discover a woman, OPOKUYA as role model in patience, wisdom, abnegation, endurance and negotiation although the caprices of Kubi her husband. Unlike to the two co-wives Esi and Fusena of "not-so- happily" marriage, OPOKUYA succeeding in finding a solution to the problem that opposes her to Kubi (a car to share for their needs): Ayélé

says: " Through this gentleman's agreement, OPOKUYA finally finds a solution to her problem by buying Esi's old car. Her abnegation and negotiation pay off(83).

Coming back to Tsitsi as to transcend our topic, she formally questions readers as follows: "How on earth were we to build a country if people and advertising agencies kept on promoting foreign products?" (236). she raises a thorny and sensitive preoccupation that, from farmer up to political leaders is ignored or knowingly ignored. Instead of consuming local we plump for westernized products in the detriment of ours. Do we really understand what are we doing? Awaiting for an answer, we will leave each of our readers in front of his or her own 'mental mirror'

Conclusion

Feminism as an ideology is the combat of women to revalue their own identity by believing in themselves. Dangarembga has portrayed Zimbabwean's society before and after independence and its trials where colonialism and patriarchy affect a traditional and conservative community. A community that imposes its principles that constitute a yoke for African women. A yoke perceived as natural and normal these women must bear and enjoy quoting Tambu's mother. But Dangarembga, author of the two novels under study uses her controversial narrator with the feminist approach to re-orient firstly women mentality to change their own social life and undo the yoke of patriarchy and face colonialism as it is practiced in Zimbabwe. The author makes as well a menacing click in the mind of African conservative men. This is, formal education has been the only efficient instrument to succeed the complicated task. All the same, like her Ghanaian sister Ama Ata Aidoo and her junior Nigerian sister Lola Shoyin, Tsitsi Dangarembga has written books which will stand in time and space though Tambu has missed her final goal, object of her determination. Maybe Tsitsi is showing the undefeatable power of colonialism over the colonized societies. She has being humiliated by working for Tracy, her white former classmate- now her boss. The one who has stolen her place at Sacred Heart. But finally, *The Book of Not, a sequel of Nervous Conditions* seems to deceive readers in the end. But what has been of paramount importance is that the fire for women commitment and emancipation has been inflamed.

WORKS CITED

1. Aguessy, Yélian. C. A Combat for Formal Education in Binwell, *A Cowrie of Hope*, Revue du CAMES/ Lettres, Langues et Linguistique. 2004.
2. D'ALMEIDA F. Ayélé. *Squaring Marital Life With Self-Realisation: A daunting Challenge in AMA ATA AIDOO'S CHANGES*. Geste et Voix n°8. 2013
3. Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*. United Kingdom: Ayeibia Clarke Publishing Ltd, 2004.
4. _____. *The Book of Not, a sequel of Nervous Conditions*. 2006. UK.
5. Eze, Chielozone. "Feminist Empathy: Unsettling African Cultural Norms in *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*". Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. 2015.
6. OXFORD Advanced Learner's DICTIONARY, 6th edition
7. La Tayna, M. Purnell. I Think I am a Feminist, A study of Feminism Identity Development of Undergraduate College Women, Thesis of Doctorate of Philosophy in the Education School of Indiana University. 2006
8. MBATHA, P.: 883007. A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988)
9. Shoneyin, Lola. *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*. Abuja, London. Cassava Republic Press. 2018
10. Sinyangwe, Binwell. *A COWRIE of HOPE*. London: Heinemann. 2000.
11. Smith, Ann. Girl Power In *NERVOUS CONDITIONS*: Fictional Practice as a research site. Revue des Sciences de l'Éducation de MCGILL. Vol.35 N°3 AUTOMNE 2000.
12. Tasmia, Moslehuddin. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*: The Emancipation of Women in Africa. Manarat International University Studies, 2(1): 78-84, December 2011.
13. Torent, Régine. First Ladies: D'Eleanor Roosevelt à Hillary Clinton. Bruxelles: Editions Racine, 2006.
14. <http://www.researchgate.net>. 10th February, 2019 at 00:39
15. <https://www.researchspace.ukzn.ac.za> 10th February, 2019 at 00:45
16. <https://www.en.m.wikipedia.org> 11th February, 2019 at 7:06