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Master Dissertation

Exploring Gendered Perspectives and Emotional Repression in African Female Literature: A Psychoanalytic and Black Feminist Examination of Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions.

Submitted by:

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my departed aunt, *Nadjiba DJENANE*, and my grandmother, *Bachra ZIRE*, for their strength, resistance, and courage also, to my departed grandfathers, *Mouhoub BENCHENNOUF* and *Abdelalli Djenane*, for being artistic sources of inspiration.

To my mother, *Leila*, for her unwavering support and endless love, and to my father, *Tarek*, for providing me with all the comforts needed to complete this work. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to my little sister *Yasmine* for always being by my side

I Love you so Much.

To my other family members I am deeply grateful to all of you for your constant support and belief in me.

To myself I express my gratitude for my hard work and strength.

Finally, this work is dedicated to every *Woman* who struggles to achieve her dreams and fights to make her voice heard far and wide.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the psychological struggles and identity formation of Tambu, the protagonist in Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel "Nervous Conditions," through the lenses of psychoanalytic feminism and Black feminist theory. It delves into the intersection of gender, race, and class in colonial Rhodesia, highlighting the systemic barriers Tambu faces in her pursuit of education and autonomy. The analysis reveals how patriarchal and colonial structures influence her mental health and sense of self, examining her relationships with family members and authority figures. These dynamics emphasize the socio-political implications of her narrative, reflecting the complex realities of African women navigating oppressive societal norms. Additionally, the thesis considers how African female writers, through their literary works, challenge colonial narratives and gender stereotypes, reclaiming agency and cultural identity in postcolonial discourse. The findings emphasize the potential for education and self-agency to transform negative influences into empowerment, offering insights into the psychological challenges faced by African women in their quest for liberation and intellectual empowerment.

Key words: African women, Black feminism, education, mental health, psychoanalytic feminism, societal expectations.

المستخلص

ستكشف هذه الأطروحة الصراعات النفسية وتكوين الهوية لدى تامبو، بطلنة رواية حالات عصبية، من خلال فحص تقاطع الجنس، العرق، والطبقة الاجتماعية في روديسيا الاستعمارية. تعتمد الأطروحة على نظرية النسوية التحليلية النفسية ونظرية النسوية السوداء، مسلطة الضوء على الحواجز النظامية التي تواجهها البطلة في سعيها للحصول على التعليم والاستقلالية. تتناول الدراسة التحليلية تأثير الهياكل الأبوية والاستعمارية على الصحة النفسية والشعور بالذات لدى تامبو، وذلك عبر فحص علاقاتها مع أفراد الأسرة والشخصيات ذات السلطة في الرواية. تعكس هذه الديناميكيات الآثار الاجتماعية والسياسية في سردها، وتبرز الواقع المعقد للنساء الأفريقيات وانتقالهن عبر المعايير المجتمعية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تستعرض الأطروحة كيف تتحدى الكاتبات الأفريقيات من خلال أعمالهن الأدبية السردية الاستعمارية والقوالب النمطية المحددة لكل جنس، مستعيدات الوكالة والهوية الثقافية في الخطاب ما بعد الاستعماري. تؤكد نتائج هذا العمل على إمكانيات التعليم والوكالة الذاتية في تحويل التأثيرات السلبية إلى تمكين، مقدمة رؤى حول التحديات النفسية التي تواجهها النساء الأفريقيات في سعيهن للتحرر و التمكين الفكري.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النساء الأفريقيات، نظرية النسوية السوداء، التعليم، الصحة العقلية، نظرية النسوية التحليلية النفسية، التوقعات المجتمعية.

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General Introduction

The interconnected influence of race, gender, and the impact of colonization and decolonization are the fundamental concepts in postcolonial African novels. The Zimbabwean author Tsitsi Dangarembga, through her seminal work *Nervous Conditions*, provides a profound exploration of these themes, specifically focusing on the experiences and voices of African women; she challenges patriarchal norms and captures the complexities of Zimbabwean identity and history, explaining the multifaceted impact of colonialism while exploring the intersectionality of female oppression.

Published in 1988, *Nervous Conditions* is set in postcolonial Zimbabwe, formerly known as Rhodesia, during the late 1960s and early 1970s. This period marked a critical transition from colonial rule to an independent nation and witnessed the rise of black feminism as a distinct and significant movement. In this historical context, Dangarembga's narrative delves into themes such as gender, colonialism, education, and identity, examining their profound impact on the female characters within the novel.

This research is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter serves as a comprehensive introduction of key terms gendered perspectives and psychological repression and their importance in the realm of postcolonial feminist literature. Then, it introduces two theoretical frameworks psychoanalytic and black feminisms and their concepts that will guide the next chapter which is considered as the main part of the study. It is devoted into the analysis of the cultural settings of the novel and their impact on the protagonist's psych and mental health, by proving her mental disorder from some extracts and passages of the novel applying reader response theory.

This extended analysis of Tsitsi Dangarembga's "*Nervous Conditions*" will provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between race, gender, and colonial

history. It will shed light on the psychological and social effects of these intersecting forces on African women, emphasizing the significance of their voices and experiences in the broader narrative of postcolonial identity and resistance.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the rich thematic content of the novel there exists a gap in the scholarly examination of the nuanced ways in which gender, education, and cultural identity intersect in the novel. This research will shed lights on the neglected aspect of black women's mental health emphasizing the potential for women to transform negative influences through education and self-agency into empowerment.

The Research Primary Question

- How do repressed desires manifest the female characters' lives in the context of art and education?

Sub- Questions

- How do societal expectations and taboos around genders impact the individual's behaviour and identities?
- How do unconscious desires, conflicts and repression play a part in the foundation of gender roles and identity?
- What can a psychoanalytic feminist analysis provide for understanding the female characters' experiences?

Research Aims

This research aims to put emphasis on exploring gendered perspectives within the black women's community, with a careful consideration of intersectionality in both literary and psychological analyses. Additionally, the study engages with contemporary issues related to mental health and societal expectations, promoting a greater awareness of the psychological challenges faced by black women. Ultimately, this study aspires to inform and influence

societal attitudes toward female mental health, fostering a more inclusive and understanding perspective.

Research Objectives

This research seeks to achieve a comprehensive understanding of various dimensions within Tsitsi Dangarembga's "Nervous Conditions." Firstly, it requests to conduct a detailed analysis of the gendered perspectives on the experiences of the female characters. In this context the study seeks to figure out the complexities of how these females shape their identities within the postcolonial Zimbabwean context. Secondly, the research delves into the manifestations of psychological repression within the narrative and investigates its consequences on the mental health of female characters; it involves examining the complex ways in which societal expectations and colonial legacies contribute to the female characters' psychological struggles. Lastly, the research intends to shed light on the resilience and strategies employed by these characters within the complex sociocultural and historical landscapes depicted in 'Nervous Conditions' by applying black feminist theory and psychoanalytic feminist theory as a conceptual framework to gain insights into how the female characters respond to repression and navigate their quest for agency.

Literature Review

Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* is a novel that delves into the intricate issues of gender, colonialism, and identity where the author attempts to analyse these themes through the lens of her protagonist Tambuzada. This literature review provides an overview of the previous scholarly works where they tend to explore different themes such as self-autonomy, gender roles, postcolonial identity, women's empowerment, intellectual hysteria, pathology, focusing particularly on Nyasha and Tambu.

Lindsay Pentolfe Aegerter's article, "*A Dialectic of Autonomy and Community: Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions*,"(1996) explores the tension between individual

autonomy and communal responsibilities in the novel. She examines how the characters, particularly Tambu and Nyasha, navigate their desires for personal freedom within the constraints of their societal and familial roles. The article highlights the interplay between personal identity and collective identity, showing how Dangarembga critiques both colonial and patriarchal structures that limit the autonomy of African women.

Following the same suit, Deepika Bahri's article, *"Disembodying the Corpus: Postcolonial Pathology in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions,"*(1994) delves into the complex ways colonial and patriarchal oppressions manifest in the characters, especially focusing on Nyasha, analysing how Nyasha's struggles with anorexia and bulimia symbolize a broader socio-cultural pathology. Her body becomes a site of resistance against the multiple layers of oppression: colonialism, patriarchy, and traditional cultural expectations.

Rosemary Moyana's article *"Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions: An attempt in the feminist tradition"*(1994) delves into the novel, examining it through a feminist lens. The article discusses how the novel explores themes related to gender, power dynamics, and the experiences of women in Zimbabwean society. It analyses how the characters navigate societal expectations, challenges to their autonomy, and the impact of colonialism on their lives. Additionally, Moyana might explore how Dangarembga employs feminist principles in her storytelling and whether the novel contributes to feminist discourse within African literature.

"Melancholic Women: The Intellectual Hysteric(s) in 'Nervous Conditions'"(1995) by Supriya Nair explores the representation of women, particularly the intellectual and psychological experiences of female characters, in Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel "Nervous Conditions." The term "melancholic women" and "intellectual hysteric(s)" suggest a focus on the emotional and psychological states of the female characters, possibly exploring themes of depression, anxiety, and the societal pressures that contribute to their mental health struggles.

These articles have provided a thorough examination on female characters particularly Niasha's mental health neglecting the fact that Tambu's the protagonist of the novel mental health is the most affected. This research will contribute on proving Tambu's mental disorder and how psychological trauma and repression can also lead African women to adopt feminist concepts to reach intellectuality and empowerment.

Methodology of the Research

This research will employ descriptive qualitative methods, including contextual analysis of culture, reader-response, and psychoanalytic interpretation. A detailed examination of key passages will be conducted to identify recurring themes related to gender, psychological repression, and resistance, in addition to the application of key theories that will contribute to address the discrepancy intended to be studied such as psychoanalytic feminist theory, and black feminism.

Significance

This research is devoted to a thorough analysis of the portrayal of gendered roles and psychological repression within the experiences of black women. By examining how literature reflects and shapes societal attitudes, this study contributes to the on-going development of psychoanalytic feminist theory, showcasing its relevance in solving complex narratives of African literature.

Chapter One: Unveiling the Complexities in African Female Writings

Introduction

Africa has a long history of varied storytelling that reflects its different cultures and histories, but despite this, the continent has usually been portrayed through stereotypes and simplistic narratives. In this variety of storytelling, female voices have been marginalized, their stories overshadowed by dominant patriarchal norms. However, in recent decades, there has been a remarkable upturn of African female writers; they emerge as powerful voices producing narratives that surpass geographical and cultural boundaries and reshape the African literary field as many oppressed populations and patriarchal norms are amplified and challenged by these narratives. Their works tackle themes like identity, belonging, power relations, and social injustice. Every component represents the rich content of African womanhood, offering insightful perspectives into the diverse realities of women across different regions, languages, and historical periods.

Additionally, African female writers explore intersectional viewpoints, feminist critiques, and postcolonial theory. This allows for comprehending the complexities inherent in their texts, highlighting their significance not only within African literature but also in the global sphere, where the main focus is on gender, race, and culture.

Moreover, these writers challenge stereotypes by presenting narratives that reject reductionist frameworks and provide a nuanced representation of African women's agency and complexity. To sum up, African female works engage with the richness and contradictions of African womanhood, enriching and introducing new concepts within the African literary field and the world at large.

1.1 Practical Definitions

1.1.1 Gendered Perspectives

The Cambridge Dictionary defines the term ‘gender’ as a group of people in a society who share particular qualities or ways of behaving, which that society associates with being male, female, or another identity. In the grammatical sense, Merriam-Webster attempts to define ‘gender’ as a subclass within a grammatical class such as noun, pronoun, adjective, or verb of a language that is partly arbitrary but also partly based on distinguishable characteristics such as shape, social rank, manner of existence, or sex and that determines agreement with and selection of other words or grammatical forms.

Based on these two definitions, gender as a concept is far more complex than a mere classification built on biological differences. It embraces a broad scope of roles, behaviours, and expectations that society attributes to individuals based on their perceived sex. At its core, gender serves as a framework through which individuals navigate their identities and relationships. Gender has gained a meaning referring to the behavioural, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex, as in gender roles (Merriam-Webster). From early childhood, societal norms dictate what it means to be a boy or a girl, recommending certain behaviours, interests, and aspirations accordingly. These gendered expectations extend beyond childhood into adolescence and adulthood, influencing career choices, personal interests, and social interactions, and allowing each gender to navigate life through their perspectives.

Gender relations are accordingly defined as the specific mechanisms whereby different cultures determine the functions and responsibilities of each sex. They also determine access to material resources, such as land, credit, and training, and more ephemeral resources such as power. The implications for everyday life are many and include the division of labour, the responsibilities of family members inside and outside the home, education and opportunities

for professional advancement, and a voice in policy-making. Social scientists and development experts use two separate terms to designate biologically determined differences between men and women, which are called sex differences, and those constructed socially, which are called gender differences. Both define the differences between men and women, but they have different connotations (FAO).

The gender perspective focuses particularly on gender-based differences in status and power and considers how such discrimination shapes the immediate needs, as well as the long-term interests, of women and men (UN Women Training Centre).

The definitions provided suggest that gender perspectives refer to the ways in which gender is understood, interpreted, and represented in various contexts, including social, cultural, economic, and political spheres. It involves analysing and critiquing the roles, expectations, and power dynamics associated with being male or female, as well as recognizing the diversity of gender identities beyond the binary framework.

Anderson categorizes gender perspectives into two gender theories. Interactionist gender theory highlights the dynamic and on-going aspect of gender as a social phenomenon that is created and expressed through daily social exchanges. The focus is on how individuals actively participate in and perceive gender norms, roles, and expectations within social contexts. On the other hand, Structuralist gender theory emphasizes the wider societal structures and institutions that influence and restrict gender relationships. This study explores the impact of power dynamics, institutional practices, and cultural norms on the creation and perpetuation of gender inequality.

1.1.2 Psychological Repression

When individuals experience thoughts, emotions, or memories that create internal conflicts or distress, the mind may repress those elements into the unconscious to prevent them from surfacing into conscious awareness. In this sense, psychological repression is a

concept in psychology that refers to the unconscious blocking or exclusion of thoughts, memories, or desires from the conscious mind. It is considered as a defense mechanism that the mind employs to protect itself from thoughts or memories that are regarded as threatening or socially unacceptable.

For example, a little girl experiences the Electra complex in which she develops an attraction for her father but realizes that she cannot compete with her mother. Thus, she gives up that affection and learns to become more like her mother. This is not without some regret; however, Freud believed that the girl feels inferior because she does not have a penis and experiences penis envy. She must resign herself to the fact that she is female and will have to learn her inferior role in society. If she does not resolve this conflict successfully, she may have a weak sense of femininity and grow up to be a castrating female who tries to compete with men in the workplace or other areas of life. The formation of the superego takes place during the dissolution of the Oedipus and Electra complex (Traylor et al.).

According to Freud, the very act of entering into a civilized society entails the repression of various archaic desires. Each person's psychosexual development includes the surpassing of previous love-objects that are tied to earlier sexual phases. However, even well-adjusted individuals still betray the insistent force of those earlier desires through dreams, literature, or Freudian slips (Felluga). People might repress unwanted memories of past relationships, traumatic childhood experiences, taboo desires, or strong emotions, especially those associated with negative or uncomfortable experiences (Curtis).

The purpose of repression is to protect the individual from anxiety and emotional pain by pushing such traumatic experiences into the unconscious mind. However, Freud believed that repressed thoughts and feelings could resurface later in life, causing psychological distress and disorders such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Faster Capital).

Repression can have both positive and negative effects on motivation. It can motivate individuals to achieve their goals by pushing them to work harder and overcome obstacles. For instance, a person who has repressed their fear of failure may be more driven to succeed in their endeavours. On the other hand, repression can also hinder motivation by creating a sense of inner conflict and anxiety. For example, a person who has repressed their anger may struggle to assert themselves in a situation that calls for it, leading to a lack of motivation and a feeling of helplessness (Faster Capital).

1.2 The Importance of Examining Gendered Perspectives and Psychological Repression in Postcolonial African Feminist Novels

The form of resistance adopted by colonized women intersects with the interests of colonized men, whose advantages over women were only relative to their own repression. Women, as doubly colonized first by white colonialism and second by black masculinity are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of value through the gendered response by the black man to his racial oppression. These two oppressions are thus irrevocably intertwined; the more feminized the black man is by white men, the more he is made inferior, the more he needs to assert his masculinity and superiority over black women (Begum 104-05).

According to H.S Begum, studies of women thus concentrated on their lives as mothers, wives, and lovers, leading to a disproportionate attention to the sexual aspects of their lives. One can learn the most intimate details of an African woman's sex life while remaining ignorant of the many aspects of her social and economic life. African women writers, on the one hand, have succeeded in liberating women from the mystique of motherhood by presenting both its joys and pains, and a woman's experiences of motherhood within the context of larger social problems.

Examining gendered perspectives and psychological repression in postcolonial African feminist literature is crucial for understanding the experiences of African women in

the context of the pre- and postcolonial phases. African feminist literature, as part of African feminism, sheds light on the diverse challenges, unique perspectives, and intersecting oppressions faced by African women. These works provide a platform to legitimize the voices and experiences of African women, highlighting their struggles for liberation and resistance against various forms of oppression (Zerai et al.).

It explores the ways in which women react to oppression, both physically and psychologically, and how they are struggling for liberation. Lani V Jones and Ford emphasize that the psychological distress experienced by African American women, for example, is often attributed to systemic oppression such as racism, sexism, and classism, rather than individual psychopathology.

Examining these perspectives can gain insights into the unique challenges faced by African women and the ways in which they have resisted and overcome these challenges. Additionally, understanding the psychological repression experienced by these women can help to understand the impact of colonialism and patriarchy on their lives and the ways in which they have been silenced and marginalized.

1.3 Psychoanalytic Feminist Theory

Researchers like Mujiono and Moh. Zalhairi agree that psychoanalytic feminist theory is a branch of feminist theory that explores the psychological aspects of gender inequality and oppression. It emerged as part of the broader feminist movement, aiming to reinterpret Freudian concepts related to the subconscious, unconscious, emotions, and childhood development. Other researchers, like Regine Bendel and Agelika Schmidt, share the same concept that psychoanalytic feminism is categorized within the broader spectrum of feminist theories, alongside liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, postmodern/poststructural feminism, and third world/postcolonial feminism.

The 1960s and 1970s saw the rise of the second wave feminist movement, which brought renewed attention to issues of gender inequality and women's liberation. During this period, feminist scholars have begun to question psychoanalytic theory with a critical eye, seeking to uncover its assumptions about gender and sexuality. Beauvoir takes Freud to task for not considering the social origins of masculine and paternal power and privilege and deems his theory inadequate to account for woman's otherness. If women envy men, she argues, it is because of the social power and privilege they enjoy, and not because of anatomical superiority (Zakin et al.).

1.3.1 Identity Construction

Psychoanalytic feminists argue that unconscious processes play a crucial role in constructing identity. Sigmund Freud's theories, particularly those related to the unconscious mind, highlight how unconscious desires, fears, and conflicts influence an individual's sense of self. For example, psychoanalytic feminists might examine how unconscious fantasies and anxieties about gender roles, derived from early childhood experiences and family dynamics, shape one's gender identity.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, gender identity is the result of a very complex development that is dialectically related to a more global developmental process of mental growth. Gender, psychosexual, and identity development are all intertwined; masculinity and femininity are largely constructed by interpersonal transactions in the intersubjective field at a given time and in a particular culture (Barbieri 75).

The theory pays particular attention to the role of maternal and paternal influences in identity construction. Nancy Chodorow, for instance, explores the ways in which early mother-child relationships shape individuals' capacities for intimacy and empathy, which in turn influence their gender identities and relational patterns.

I have relied on a theory which suggests that features of adult personality and behaviour are determined, but which is not biologically determinist. Culturally expected personality and behaviour are not simply “taught,” however. Rather, certain features of social structure, supported by cultural beliefs, values, and perceptions, are internalized through the family and the child’s early social object relationships. This largely unconscious organization is the context in which role training and purposive socialization take place. (Chodorow54)

Similarly, psychoanalytic feminists may analyse the impact of paternal authority and the internalization of patriarchal norms on identity development.

1.3.2 Object Relations Theory

Object relations theory is a key concept within psychoanalytic feminism developed by psychoanalysts such as Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, and Ronald Fairbairn. It suggests that the formation of the individuals’ interpersonal relationships, particularly in early childhood influence the individual subjectivity and gender identity. It emphasizes the importance of the mother-child relationship in early development.

Psychoanalytic feminists, such as Nancy Chodorow, explore how the early mothering experience, characterized by proximity, nurturance, and dependency, shapes individuals’ sense of self and capacity for intimacy. For example the boy tries to reject his mother and deny his attachment to her and the strong dependence upon her that he still feels. He also tries to deny the deep personal identification with her that has developed during his early years. He does this by repressing whatever it takes to be feminine inside him and by denigrating and devaluing whatever he considers to be feminine in the outside world. As a societal member, he also appropriates to himself and defines as superior particularly in social activities and cultural spheres. Nurturance, and dependency, shape individuals’ sense of self and capacity for intimacy (Chodorow 51).

Objects refer to people or physical items that symbolically represent a person or part of a person. Object relations, then, are our internalized relationships with those people (Fritscher). Psychoanalytic feminists examine how these internalized object relations contribute to the formation of gender identities and relational patterns. For example, individuals may internalize gendered expectations and stereotypes from early caregivers, leading to the development of gendered self-concepts and relational styles.

1.3.3 African Women's Oppression and Sublimation

African women face multiple forms of oppression socially and economically, where African societies maintain traditional roles and women are subjected to fulfil domestic duties and granted fewer opportunities for education and employment compared to men. As Stephan Klasen and Francesca Lamanna agree, gender inequality in education and employment has been shown to have adverse effects on economic growth, further perpetuating disparities faced by African women.

Additionally, the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse they encounter is normalized. For example and as mentioned by Sidney Ruth Schuler and Farzana Islam, the acceptance of violence against women within marriage, as seen in cultural contexts can lead to unreported cases of abuse due to shame and normalization of such behaviour.

Furthermore, intimate partner violence has physical and mental health consequences and can hinder women's opportunities to access health care. African American women in particular, face disparities in physical health problems, and health care access, which worsen by experiences of particular violence (Iverson et al.).

African women have limited access to healthcare services; here the economic factors play a role as women with no formal education are less likely to be covered by health insurance, highlighting the link between education, socioeconomic status, and healthcare access (Amu et al.). As well cultural norms, discrimination, and language barriers impact the

access to health care for African women (Peréz-Urdiales et al.). For example, the experiences of women who are deaf or hard hearing in south Africa reveal communication barriers, negative attitude from healthcare professionals emphasizing the need for inclusive and accessible healthcare service (Masuku et al.).

African women, like women from all cultures, employ various strategies to cope with and navigate these forms of oppression and their repressed desires within the context of their societies. One of these strategies is sublimation which Rainer Weber et al define as defense mechanism that involves redirecting unconscious desires or unacceptable thoughts into socially acceptable or productive outlets. This process allows individuals to cope with internal conflicts by transforming negative emotions or impulses into constructive behaviours. It is considered part of a category of mature defenses that also includes anticipation, humour, and suppression (Ciocca et al.).

On the other hand, Freud originally described sublimation as a defense mechanism where forbidden thoughts and emotions are redirected towards creative or socially valued attempts (Cohen et al.). This redirection of impulses into productive activities is seen as a way to manage internal conflicts and enhance psychological well-being (Davis). Furthermore, sublimation has been linked to positive psychology, emphasizing its role in transforming restraining forces into driving forces for personal growth and creativity (Vaillant).

For African women, sublimation can be seen as means of asserting agency and resistance within oppressive structures. This might involve channelling creative energy like art which serve as a powerful tool for them to address their oppression and express their repressed desires. By engaging in artistic practices, African women can reclaim their narratives, challenge societal norms, and foster resilience (Hongo et al.).

1.4 Black Feminism Theory

Scholars like Taylor Christopher and Christa J Porter agree that black feminism is a movement emerged from feminist thought which focuses on black women's experiences and struggles including of colonialism and slavery to bring about positive change within their communities. Black feminism serves as an intellectual platform that allows researchers to focus on race, particularly Blackness, at the intersections of gender and class. This form of feminism addresses the unique forms of oppression faced by Black women, such as racism, sexism, and classism, throughout history.

The development of Black feminism is closely intertwined with the advancement of intersectional ideas in scholarship and activism, with Black women playing a central role in expanding equity and challenging societal norms (Núñez et al.). In his article, Lani V Jones mentions that Black feminisms place African American history and culture at the core of the experiences of women of African diaspora, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and valuing these perspectives. The movement has evolved to envision liberation through the lens of Black women's experiences, challenging traditional notions that have excluded or marginalized Black women (Devost).

Siddiqui Sophia views Black feminists, who champion intersectionality, have faced opposition from mainstream feminism, which marginalises the concerns of Black women. This contradiction emphasises the importance of acknowledging and dealing with the challenges experienced by Black women within the wider feminist conversation. In addition, the process of organising across communities can be challenging due to the presence of various priorities, methods, and levels of resource availability.

Black feminists agree for an inclusive form of feminism that prioritises the experiences of marginalised populations, questioning the limited and Eurocentric aspects of classic feminism. The continuous redefining of feminism exemplifies the ever-changing

character of Black feminist philosophy and its dedication to eliminating interconnected systems of oppression.

1.4.1 Intersectionality

Kimberley Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality, to be rooted in Black feminist thought. Intersectionality described the way multiple identities, based on race, gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality are systematically and structurally oppressed (Mkhize 644). In the context of African women, intersectionality is relevant as it allows for a nuanced understanding of the multiple forms of discrimination they face due to the intersection of race, gender, class and others (Harris).

In addition, historical and colonial legacies intersect also with gender and race to create complex forms of oppression through the lens of intersectionality. Elizabeth R Cole et al has found that theorists like Hurtado emphasize on how structural inequality influences the interaction between women of different racial/ethnic backgrounds arguing that the interests of White women and women of colour are significantly divided due to their relationship with White males, who hold the highest level of privilege in American society in terms of race and gender. White women, as wives, mothers, and daughters of White males, receive social and economic advantages due to the current inequalities. Consequently, even individuals who identify as feminists may unintentionally contribute to maintaining the existing social order. On the other hand, women belonging to ethnic minority groups typically do not have a strong motivation to please Caucasian males in their intimate relationships. As a result, they have greater freedom in their awareness, opposition, and demonstration against societal norms.

Historical and colonial legacies intersect with gender and race to create complex forms of oppression through the lens of intersectionality. The concept of the coloniality of gender captures this intersection, highlighting how gender, race, and colonial legacies intertwine to shape individuals' experiences of oppression and privilege (Reeploeg). These intersections are

crucial in understanding the multifaceted nature of discrimination faced by marginalized groups, particularly women of colour.

The enduring impact of colonialism is clearly apparent in the marginalisation and objectification of the bodies of Black women, as seen in historical figures such as Sara Baartman, reflecting the unequal distribution of power that arises from the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality (Stephens & Boonzaier). These historical narratives not only symbolize power inequities but also exemplify the fragmentation and disembodiment of Black subjectivities under colonial rule. Additionally, the long-lasting influence of colonial logics goes beyond racial legacies and affects several interconnected kinds of discrimination and oppression (Scauso et al.85).

The experiences of African women are complicated and cannot be comprehensively grasped by examining any single part of their identity in isolation. Intersectionality clarifies the process in which many systems of oppression; including racism, sexism, and colonialism, intersects to create unique challenges for African women. For instance, the encounters of female economic migrants from various African nations may change depending on their different backgrounds of colonialism and oppression, showing the significance of taking into consideration these overlapping aspects. (Richter et al.2-3).

Intersectionality plays a crucial role in the literary exploration of African female writers. By incorporating an intersectional lens, these writers highlight the interconnected nature of social categories and the ways in which they intersect to create unique forms of oppression and privilege. Through their narratives, African female writers illuminate the complexities of identity and challenge monolithic representations of women's experiences (Mkhize).

According to R Siva et al, African female writers engage with the legacy of colonialism and its impact on gender and race dynamics. They often depict the struggles and

resilience of African women who have been historically marginalized and silenced, by portraying indigenous women who were denied authorial voices in male-dominated spaces. These writers reclaim narratives and challenge dominant power structures; on the other hand, other writers use their works to navigate issues of identity formation and representation. They explore how intersecting identities shape individuals' experiences and influence their sense of self, by delving into themes of race, gender, and culture, and offering nuanced portrayals of characters that find difficulties with the complexities of their identities (Uimonen).

African female writers explore the intricacies of race, gender, and other social categories in their writings, navigating various aspects of their identities. They use their works to provide detailed and complex depictions of individuals who struggle with the conflicting aspects of their identities, by bringing attention to the varied experiences of African women.

1.4.2 Resilience and Resistance

African women have shown remarkable resilience in the face of systemic injustice, using their strength and ability to navigate the challenging circumstances. Scholars have studied the resilience of African women, examining how they deal with and overcome challenges; also, African women have demonstrated resilience in coping with stress and trauma, while experiencing prejudice and injustice. They have become experts at projecting strength while hiding their interior troubles. (Abrams et al.2).

As mentioned in Olutoyin O. Babatunde-Sowole et al-Sowole's et al article the concept of resilience among African women has been examined in various contexts, including migration experiences, HIV/AIDS, cardiovascular health, and intimate partner violence. African migrant women have shown resilience in the face of adversity, drawing on their inner strength to navigate challenges in new environments. Makandawire-Vlhm Lucy et al argue that the resilience of African women is intertwined with their ability to resist and challenge systemic oppression. Women demonstrate resilience in resisting oppressive structures and

advocating for change within their communities. Their ability to navigate and overcome barriers is a testament to their strength and determination in the face of adversity.

In contemporary times, African women continuously challenge and oppose systematic injustice by engaging in grassroots activism, advocating for women's rights, as well as participating in political activities. Women-led organizations like the African Women's Development Fund and the Panzi Foundation have been pivotal in advancing gender equality, promoting reproductive rights, and combating gender-based violence across the continent (Gasman et al.).

Furthermore, they have used storytelling, art, and literature as means of resistance and resilience. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Tsitsi Dangarembga, and Buchi Emecheta are writers who use their literary works to enhance the influence of African women, question stereotypes, and regain control over narratives that have traditionally been marginalised. The storytelling of these women has emphasised the ability of African women to face, show power, and take action in challenging circumstances (Mushonga et al.).

Moreover, these writers employ storytelling as a means to raise the voices of marginalised women and reclaim tales that have been historically silenced. Through their narratives, they challenge stereotypes, confront social injustices, and celebrate the resilience of African women in the face of systemic oppression, by emphasizing on the experiences of women in their stories, and highlighting the power of resilience in overcoming adversity (Farid et al.).

To sum up, African women's resilience in the face of systemic oppression serves as evidence of their innate strength, creativity, and capacity to achieve success despite hardship.

1.4.3 Black Women's Agency

African female writers play a significant role in reshaping narratives of African femininity by depicting acts of resilience and resistance in their narratives; also they explore

the concept of agency and its importance in empowering African women to challenge oppressive systems, assert their rights, and shape their own destinies.

Olga Bailey views that by portraying characters who exhibit agency, African female writers highlight the power of individual choice, action, and self-determination in reshaping narratives of African femininity. These characters navigate complex social structures, confront systemic oppression, and assert their autonomy in the face of adversity. Through their narratives, these writers celebrate the agency of African women, showcasing their ability to resist, survive, and thrive in challenging circumstances. Furthermore, African female writers use storytelling as a tool to amplify the voices of marginalized women and reclaim narratives that have been historically silenced. By shedding lights on the experiences of women and empowering readers to see the strength and resilience inherent in African women. They also challenge stereotypes, confront social injustices, and celebrate the agency and self-determination of African women in shaping their own stories.

Historical barriers to women's agency and empowerment in Africa have been rooted in systemic inequalities, cultural norms, and social structures that have limited women's ability to exercise autonomy and influence over their lives. According to Naila Kabeer One significant barrier to women's agency in Africa has been the persistence of patriarchal norms and gender roles that prioritize men's authority and control over women. Traditional beliefs and practices have often lowered women to subordinate positions within families, communities, and societies, limiting their ability to make independent choices and assert their rights. This has perpetuated a power imbalance that has constrained women's agency and autonomy. Moreover, economic disparities and limited access to resources have posed significant challenges to women's empowerment in Africa. Women have faced barriers to education, employment, land ownership, and financial independence, which have restricted their ability to exercise agency and influence their economic well-being. These structural

inequalities have reinforced gender-based disparities and hindered women's ability to break free from cycles of poverty and marginalization (Jewkes & Morrell 6)

Cultural practices and social norms have also served as barriers to women's agency in Africa, imposing restrictions on women's behaviour, mobility, and decision-making. Traditional customs, such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, and gender-based violence, have undermined women's autonomy and undermined their ability to exercise agency over their bodies and lives. These harmful practices have perpetuated gender inequality and limited women's ability to assert their rights and make choices that align with their own aspirations (Ryan & Haslam 81-90).

Feminist theories of agency emphasize the importance of women's ability to make choices, exercise control over their lives, and assert their rights. African female writers have depicted characters that embody agency through their actions, decisions, and resistance to oppressive systems. These characters navigate societal expectations, challenge gender norms, and assert their autonomy, showcasing the power of agency in shaping their own destinies (Upadhyay et al.). By drawing on feminist theories of agency and empowerment, African female writers have redefined narratives of African femininity, challenging stereotypes, and amplifying the voices of marginalized women. Through their works, these writers have empowered readers to see the multifaceted experiences of African women, celebrate their agency and resilience, and advocate for gender equality and social justice. By incorporating feminist theories into their narratives, these writers have contributed to a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of African femininity and the importance of agency and empowerment in shaping women's lives (Cunningham et al.).

1.4.4 African Women in Facing Double and Triple Jeopardy

As mentioned by Chaney et al, double jeopardy refers to the idea that individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups, such as being both a woman and a person of colour,

experience compounded discrimination. This means that African women may face discrimination that is more severe due to the intersection of their gender and race (Cassese et al.). They face discrimination and marginalization on the basis of both their race and gender, which creates unique challenges and disadvantages. For instance, they may encounter stereotypes and biases from both racial and gendered expectations, leading to limited opportunities and increased vulnerability to various forms of violence and exploitation.

In the context of the workplace, Jennifer Berdhal et al research has indicated that minority women, including African American women, may be subject to double jeopardy, experiencing more harassment due to being both women and members of a minority group. This highlights how African women can face unique challenges that stem from the intersection of their gender and race. Furthermore, in the political sense, Amanda Mosier et al argue that Black women candidates may face double jeopardy in terms of voter perceptions of electability, as they may be perceived as having fewer traditional leader traits compared to other candidates.

Double jeopardy highlights the need to address both racism and sexism in understanding and addressing the experiences of these women. Studies have shown that African American women with disabilities, for example, may experience triple jeopardy, facing oppression based on their gender, race, and disability simultaneously (Moodley & Graham).

Triple jeopardy extends this concept to include the intersecting oppressions faced by Black women who also belong to other marginalized groups, such as those with disabilities. As it is indicated by Mandira Ray et al, the healthcare sector also reflects disparities faced by African women; studies have shown that African American women with triple-negative breast cancer have a higher risk of death compared to white women, even after controlling for

various factors. This demonstrates how the intersection of race and gender can impact health outcomes for African women.

The concept involving the combined effects of social disadvantage by race, age, and gender (Ferraro & Farmer 319). This emphasizes the compounded effects of multiple forms of oppression on the lives of Black women. For instance, a Black woman with a disability may experience discrimination and marginalization based on her race, gender, and disability simultaneously. Additionally, the concept of triple jeopardy, as explained by Lisa Bowleg et al is how African women navigate racism, sexism, and heterosexism simultaneously, showcasing the multifaceted nature of their challenges.

Triple jeopardy underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing the complex intersections of race, gender, and other social identities in understanding the experiences of Black women and advocating for their rights and liberation.

African female writers often explore the intersectional experiences of African women, highlighting how race, gender, and sometimes other identities intersect to shape their lives. Double and triple jeopardy concepts help unveil the layered nature of oppression faced by African women, the research by Jessica Remedios et al underlines the significance of recognizing the intersectional nature of social identities, emphasizing how overlapping identities influence lived experiences. This intersectional perspective is crucial in comprehending the nuanced forms of discrimination faced by African women, as it considers the intertwined effects of race, gender, and other social categories.

1.5 Deconstructing Colonial Narratives through Language and Power

Language has a significant role on power dynamics and narratives in colonial contexts, it serves as a powerful tool for colonial powers to establish control and maintain their authority over colonised populations. The use of dominant languages functioned as a means of linguistic imperialism, erasing indigenous languages and marginalizing local cultures; in

other words, the dominance of colonial languages is connected to the development of colonial narratives, which aims to justify and validate colonial governance by portraying colonized people as inferior and in need of civilization. As confirmed by L. Ngope, the privileging of colonial languages in education and literature maintains the influence of colonialism on African societies.

Nevertheless, despite the presence of these methods, language also becomes a platform for opposition among colonised societies. According to Monteiro-Ferreira, African literature regardless of language used serves as a tool for challenging and reshaping colonial narratives power dynamics, by using African languages in literature that allow writers to move away from reproducing colonial models instead creating narratives that authentically reflect African experiences. In other words, through the act of reclaiming and conserving indigenous languages, colonised communities affirmed their cultural identities and actively opposed assimilation into imperial standards.

1.5.1 Colonial Legacy

The influence of colonial languages and discourse on African literature and perceptions of gender is profound and enduring. It shapes both the content and form of literary works, as well as societal attitudes towards gender roles and identities. The historical legacy of colonialism has left a lasting impact on the linguistic landscape of Africa with colonial language such as maintaining dominance in education and literature (Ngope). This maintenance of colonial languages in educational systems influences how narratives are constructed, including those related to gender (Cele 35).

The intersection of colonial languages and gender discourses is evident in African literature. The choice of language in literature reflects power dynamics and can either challenge or reinforce colonial narratives. As the use of colonial languages in literature can perpetuate colonial legacies and influence perceptions of gender roles, the dominance of

colonial languages in literary spaces can shape how gender is portrayed and perceived, often reinforcing traditional gender norms and power structures (Luyt 36).

According to Pontso Moorosi, the portrayal of gender is often influenced by colonial languages and discourses in African literature. The use of a certain language in literature can maintain gender stereotypes rooted in cultural and traditional norms, impacting how African women are perceived and represented. The choice of language in literature can either challenge or reinforce these stereotypes, highlighting the role of language in shaping perceptions of gender in African societies.

The influence of colonial languages and discourses on African literature and perceptions of gender is profound. The continued dominance of colonial languages in literary spaces preserves power dynamics and influences how gender is portrayed and understood.

1.5.2 Decolonizing Discourse

African female writers have employed various strategies to reclaim languages and disestablish colonial narratives in their literary works. These strategies challenge the dominance of colonial languages and reshaping narratives that have historically been influenced by colonial perspectives.

One of the key strategies employed by them is the choice to include indigenous African languages into their writing to reclaim linguistic heritage and challenge the hegemony of colonial languages. This linguistic choice not only serves to authentically represent African cultures and identities but also break down the colonial narrative that privileges European languages (Monteiro-Ferreira).

Furthermore, they employ storytelling techniques that draw on oral traditions and indigenous knowledge systems which means incorporating oral storytelling practices into their written works, as a consequence, these writers serve as a bridge between oral and written traditions, challenging Western literary norms and colonial narratives that devalue indigenous

knowledge (Kammampool 28). In addition, African female writers employ their narratives and use their characters and plots to tackle and dismantle colonial prejudices and portrayals of gender that depict African women in restricted and stereotypical roles.

As mentioned by Lungile A Tshuma and Ndlovu, these writers engage into history and memory within their narratives, by revisiting and reshaping historical events from a colonial perspective, also humanizing the past, challenging the one-dimensional colonial narratives that have misrepresented African history.

African female writers employ a range of strategies to reclaim languages and subvert colonial narratives in their literary works. By incorporating indigenous languages, drawing on oral traditions, challenging gender stereotypes, reimagining history, and resisting colonial legacies by asserting their cultural identities in the literary landscape.

1.5.3 Postcolonial Theory and Feminist Critique

African female writers have employed postcolonial and feminist perspectives to challenge colonial narratives that historically marginalized African women and spread stereotypes, by critically addressing issues such as gender roles, and cultural identity where they defeat the Eurocentric perspective and challenge the terms of colonial criticism (Wade). Through their narratives, they aim to reclaim agency, challenge essentialist portrayals, and present alternative viewpoints that shed light on the experiences and voices of African women (McEwan). As a result, these writers have reshaped landscapes, opposed dominant discourses, and empowered marginalized voices due to the intertwining of linguistic diversity, cultural heritage, and feminist viewpoints (Bamiro).

The intersection of postcolonial theory with feminist literary criticism has a role in challenging colonial narratives, reinforcing marginalized voices, and reshaping representations of gender, power, and identity.

1.6 Motherhood and Maternal Identity

Motherhood holds a cultural and social importance in African societies, influencing the construction of identity, gender roles, and relationships within communities. The concept in African societies is complex, involving ideas of nurturing, caregiving, and community building; female writers of Africa examine these complexities in their works, shedding lights on its cultural, social, and personal dimensions. According to Oloruntoba-Oju and Oloruntoba-Oju, motherhood is generally seen as a fundamental element of women's identities and their roles in society. It transcends biological connections and covers the duties of nurturing and caring for children, as well as extended family members and community at large.

The theme of motherhood in African societies is often intertwined with issues of identity, agency, and empowerment. African female writers have depicted motherhood as a site of resistance, where women navigate societal expectations while asserting their autonomy and individuality (Ogunfolabi). In other words, they have explored the complexity of motherhood, presenting subtle depictions that reject stereotypes and celebrate the resilience and strength of African women. They put emphasis on the varied experiences of motherhood, delving into themes of selflessness, affection, grief, and empowerment. Their works function as a platform for reclaiming narratives, questioning patriarchal norms, and raising the voices of women who navigate the intricacies of parenthood in many social circumstances (Rodriguez 62).

Traditional roles and expectations placed on African women as mothers and caretakers are rooted in cultural norms, societal structures, and historical practises where motherhood is considered as central aspect of women's identities. Uchenna Efobi et al and Brown et al agree on one point that African women are often expected to fulfil traditional roles as the main caregivers in their families and communities including raising children, dealing with the

household matters, offering emotional support, and paying attention to the needs of other family members which they reinforce gendered roles within African societies.

Additionally, Faye Z Belgrave et al mention that the traditional roles and expectations placed on African women as mothers and caretakers intersect with issues of gender inequality, economic disparities, and social hierarchies. Women's roles as caretakers are often undervalued and unrecognized, leading to challenges in accessing resources, opportunities, and support for their caregiving responsibilities; because, these expectations placed on them reflect deeply fixed cultural norms, gendered expectations, and societal structures, limiting their opportunities for advancement, and reinforce patriarchal norms.

On the other hand, the psychological implications of motherhood and maternal relationships in postcolonial African feminist novels are multifaceted, reflecting the intersection of cultural expectations, historical legacies, and personal experiences. The portrayal of motherhood often explores the psychological impact of societal expectations, gender roles, and cultural norms on women's experiences as mothers. These novels delve into the psychological change of navigating traditional roles and expectations placed on African women, highlighting the internal conflicts, emotional struggles, and personal growth that goes with motherhood in postcolonial settings (Stevens-Watkins et al.).

Maternal relationships are depicted as sites of resilience, resistance, and change, where women navigate complex dynamics of power, agency, and identity. The psychological implications of these relationships are examined through the lens of race, gender, and colonial histories, shedding light on trauma, resilience, and healing (Beckham et al.). Furthermore, African female writers delve into the psychological complexities of motherhood in the face of intersecting oppressions such as racism, sexism, and economic disparities. These novels explore how the psychological well-being of African women is influenced by the intersections of race, gender, and class, highlighting the resilience, agency, and resistance that women

express in the face of systemic inequalities (Wachter & Snyder). The psychological implications of motherhood and maternal relationships within novels also touch upon themes of identity, belonging, and cultural heritage, examining how women navigate the psychological challenges of balancing multiple identities, negotiating cultural expectations, and asserting their agency within patriarchal and colonial frameworks (Airhihenbuwa et al.).

In addition, reimagining motherhood in postcolonial feminist's writings challenge traditional narratives, ruin stereotypes, and empower women to redefine their roles and identities. They dig into the psychological implications of motherhood and maternal relationships, offering a nuanced perspective on the intersection of gender and power dynamics within African societies, providing a platform for women to assert agency, challenge patriarchal norms, and navigate the complexities of gender roles through their reimagining of motherhood, and portraying diverse experiences of mothers (Dolman et al.).

The postcolonial African feminist novels offer a fresh perspective on motherhood, contributing to discussions on gender and power by critically analysing traditional roles, challenging stereotypes, and empowering women to assert their agency and autonomy in shaping their identities and experiences as mothers and care providers. These stories confront oppressive systems, prioritise marginalised voices, and promote a society that is more inclusive and equal. They empower women to redefine motherhood based on their own experiences and desires.

Conclusion

From themes of identity and belonging to power relations and social injustice, African female writers delve into the complexities of womanhood, providing detailed perspectives on the multiple perspectives of women throughout the continent. Their examination of intersectional viewpoints, feminist critiques, and postcolonial ideology enriches the

complexity of their stories, shedding lights on the numerous and challenging aspects of African women's experiences.

Additionally, their contributions serve as a powerful reminder of the revolutionary influence of storytelling, as they reshape perspectives and question existing narratives. Their voices meet throughout the continent, encouraging discussions and raising movements aimed at bringing about societal transformation. By embracing the complexity and paradoxes of African femininity, these writers are creating a path towards a literary environment that is more inclusive and fair, where every voice is honoured and every tale has the chance to be heard.

To sum up, the rise of African female writers signifies a crucial turning point in the context of African literature, marking a revolutionary shift from stereotypes and simplistic storytelling towards a rich collection of varied voices and viewpoints. Their storylines delve into the basis of the human experience, exploring themes of identity, belonging, and the quest of personal power in a society influenced by patriarchal conventions. Through each page, they present a challenge to tackle the complex issues of womanhood in Africa, urging readers to look beyond the surface and embrace the wide range of female perspectives.

Chapter Two: Tambu's Psychological Struggles in Nervous Conditions from Psychoanalytic Feminist and Black Feminist Views

Introduction

In Tsitsi Dangarembga seminal novel *Nervous Conditions*, the character Tambuzada emerges as a powerful protagonist whose journey sums up the complexities of postcolonial African womanhood; she navigates the intersections of gender, race, and class in colonial Rhodesia and the expectations placed on her as a young African woman who seeks for education and autonomy.

The novel represents the challenges faced by African women in patriarchal and colonial societies where intersecting forms of oppression shape their identities and experiences; in addition, it reflects the broader socio-political context of postcolonial Africa. As from the protagonist's perspective, Dangarembga offers an exploration of the psychological effects of colonialism and patriarchy on African women's lives.

To delve deeper into the protagonist psyche and clarifying her experiences a psychoanalytic feminist theory will be applied to allow us examine the unconscious motivations and conflicts that control Tambu behaviour, shedding lights on her internal struggles and emotional complexities; moreover, Black feminist theory will be used to provide a critical framework for understanding how her intersecting identities as a black woman are related to her experiences and resistance.

Analysing Tambu's psychological struggles through these perspectives not only enriches the understanding of her character but also emphasizes the broader socio-political implications of her narrative because, it helps gaining insight into the ways in which colonialism, patriarchy, and racism intersect to shape African women's subjectivities and agency.

2.1 Contextualizing the Novel

Nervous Conditions, provides an exploration of postcolonial Zimbabwe through the intersecting narratives of its characters, particularly Tambudzai and her family and is set between Zimbabwe's transition from colonial rule to independence where it weaves together themes of education, gender dynamics, and cultural identity. Tambudzai's journey from rural poverty to educational opportunity at her uncle's mission school serves as a lens through which Dangarembga critiques the common impacts of colonialism on Zimbabwean society. The novel illuminates the complexities of navigating traditional Shona values alongside Western education, as the protagonist and her cousin Nyasha grapple with the pressures of assimilation and the erosion of cultural heritage. Through nuanced character portrayals and vivid storytelling, Dangarembga exposes the inequalities and power dynamics that shape familial relationships and societal expectations, highlighting the resilience and agency of women amidst patriarchal norms. *Nervous Conditions* thus emerges not only as a narrative of personal growth and societal change but also as a critique of colonial legacies and their enduring effects on identity and autonomy in postcolonial Africa.

2.1.1 A Feminist Biography of Tsitsi Dangarembga

Within the broad field of African literature and cinema, Tsitsi Dangarembga emerges as prominent figure, offering through her voice profound insights on humanity. Her early life takes place in postcolonial Zimbabwe and her story is a combination of personal development and societal examination, providing insights into the intricacy of gender, culture, and power dynamics. In addition to education, these factors have influenced her emergence as a notable figure in African discourse, particularly within the context of feminism.

Dangarembga's feminist interest and perspective are shaped by her family background and early experiences as reflected in her seminal work *Nervous Conditions*, her childhood in colonial Rhodesia has exposed her to the complexities of gender roles, societal expectations,

and the impact of colonialism on African families, as a result her examination on African femininities in the novel reveals the interaction between families and the societal norms imposed on women; in other words, the exploration of African femininities in *Nervous Conditions* sheds light on the ways in which familial relationships and societal norms influence the construction of gender identities and the pursuit of autonomy within a patriarchal and colonial context (Gadzikwa).

In addition, her portrayal of African femininities is informed by her personal experiences and observations, rooted in her personal and familial encounters with colonialism, education, and gender dynamics, because her childhood in colonial Rhodesia provides her direct encounters with the challenges of navigating identity, education, and gender roles in a postcolonial setting and her observations of these challenges faced by African girls and women in accessing education and asserting their agency within patriarchal and colonial structures have informed the underlying themes of *Nervous Conditions* (Okereke & EgbungMufti).

Moreover, Gadzikwa and Mufti urge that her engagement with feminist discourse and her portrayal of African femininities in the novel are reflective of her critical observations of the intersecting oppressions faced by women due to their class, race, and gender which means, the formative experiences and influences that contributed to Tsitsi Dangarembga's understanding of gender dynamics and women's issues are deeply rooted in her personal encounters with colonialism, education, and the complexities of African femininities, as the novel serves as a platform for her to articulate the multifaceted nature of African femininities and to challenge the oppressive power dynamics that shape the lives of women in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

Delving into her career, Dangarembga has made significant contributions to African literature and cinema, particularly in addressing themes of gender, identity, and colonialism.

She is a prominent figure in the field of Zimbabwean literature and has also explored the industry of filmmaking, enhancing the cultural setting with her varied artistic representations.

"At this point she became influenced by the celebrations of Zimbabwe's independence, began reading contemporary African literature, and discovered the oral tradition of the Shona. While at the university, Dangarembga also wrote several plays for the college drama group, including *The Lost of the Soil* (1983), which she also directed, and *She No Longer Weeps* (1987). In addition, she joined Zambuko, a theatre group, and in 1985 published her first story, 'The Letter,' in Sweden. She gained literary repute in 1988 with the publication of *Nervous Conditions*, which has been acclaimed by critics. Dangarembga also maintains an interest in film direction. She continued her schooling at the Deutsche Film und Fernseh Akademie in Berlin and composed the storyline upon which the movie *Neria* (1992) was based, and also co-wrote the screenplay for *everyone's Child* (1996), which has been shown all over the world. In 2006 she published the novel *Book of Not*, which continues the story of the narrator of *Nervous Conditions*"(Dangarembga, Tsitsi (1959-).

Dangarembga's examination of gender dynamics, identity, and colonialism in *Nervous Conditions* presents a detailed depiction of the difficulties encountered by women in Zimbabwean society. The novel explores the overlapping forms of oppression experienced by women as a result of their social class, race, and gender. It offers significant perspectives on the intricate nature of African femininities and the influence of colonialism on family and educational relationships.

2.1.2 Settings of the Novel

The impact of colonialism in Zimbabwe, as in several regions of Africa, has a lasting influence on the nation's socio-political, economic, and cultural aspects. The historical setting of colonialism characterised by violent invasion and occupation by European powers has had

a lasting impact on Zimbabwean society, establishing legacies of exploitation and inequality that continue to nowadays.

According to Munyaradzi Hwami, the colonial legacy in Zimbabwe once known as Rhodesia influences many aspects of the country, where whites being called settlers and oppressive foreign invaders, shaping the power dynamics and societal structures. One critical aspect influenced by colonialism is land tenure. The politics of land, both during colonial times and in the post-colonial era, have been central to Zimbabwe's history (Cheater). The landholding systems in Zimbabwe have roots in the colonial past but have evolved over time, impacting agriculture and people means of living (O'Flaherty).

Additionally, the impact of colonialism on Zimbabwe have enduring impacts on power dynamics along racial and class lines. The racial, political, and social class hierarchies that are established under European colonialism have continued into the post-independence era, sustaining inequalities and power differentials (Chimbi & Jita). The colonial structures of power and privilege that is shaped by a century of colonial dominance and white privilege have continued to influence political and economic interests in independent Zimbabwe (Mhazo & Maponga).

The colonial practices and structures in Zimbabwe influence the power dynamics based on racial and class dimensions. As the long consequences of colonialism such as the establishment of racial hierarchies, economic inequalities, and political ideologies still have an impact on present day Zimbabwean society.

According to Meyre Ivone Da Silva, the novel *Nervous Conditions* portrays the transition from colonial rule to post-colonial independence and the challenges of nation-building in the consequence of colonialism. Through the protagonist Tambudzai, the novel explores the complexities of navigating identity, education, and gender roles in a changing post-independence society, reflecting the struggles of Zimbabweans as they navigate the

legacy of colonialism and seek to build a new nation. The narrative delves into the tensions between tradition and modernity, the clash of Western and indigenous values, and the quest for agency and autonomy among the restrictions of a post-colonial world. The challenges of establishing a nation following the end of British rule are embodied in the novel in which they explore the complexities of shaping a national identity combining the past with the present, and addressing the legacies of colonial oppression and cultural erasure. This means the author highlights through the characters' experiences and interactions the struggles of building a unified and different nation while exploring the scars of colonialism that continue to shape social hierarchies and power dynamics.

Moreover, *Nervous Conditions* sheds light on the enduring impacts of colonial education systems and their role in shaping post-colonial identities and aspirations. The novel critiques the Eurocentric curriculum imposed during colonial rule and its lasting effects on the psyche of the characters, illustrating the challenges of decolonizing education and reclaiming indigenous knowledge in the quest for nation-building. The tensions between Western education and traditional values depicted in the novel mirror the broader societal struggles of Zimbabwe as it seeks to redefine itself after colonialism (Da Silva 22).

2.1.3 Plot and Female Characters

The novel *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga is about the story of Tambudzai a young girl living in Rhodesia in the late 1960's and early 1970's seeking for education and a better life. The novel is autobiographical where it is narrated by the protagonist herself as she navigates her family, education, and societal expectations. She begins her story with a provocative statement "I was not sorry when my brother died". Tambu looks back at the year 1965, when her father, Jeremiah, has decided that Nhamo, her older brother, would go to the mission school and live with Babamukuru, his uncle. She remembers how her father was always grateful for his brother's generosity, since he has educated himself and thus found

financial success. Babamukuru and his wife, Maiguru, has moved to England with their children, Nyasha and Chido, for five years. Without Babamukuru's support, Tambu's family face struggles

Despite the family's poverty, Tambu's parents were able to raise the fees to send Nhamo to school. There was no enough money to send Tambu as well, so she has decided to grow and sell vegetables and raise the money herself. One day the extended family has gathered to celebrate the return of Babamukuru and his family whose later proposed educating a member of each family; as a result, her brother is the chosen one for this opportunity but after his sudden death, Tambu is selected to replace him where she becomes fully involved in her studies and soon learns the rhythms of the household, witnessing Nyasha and Babamukuru's frequent fights, also learns that Maiguru is highly educated. At the end of the term Nyasha and Tambu attend a dance party and at the end of the evening, Nyasha resists coming inside, still trying to master a new dance one of the boys is teaching her. When they finally enter a violent argument erupts between Babamukuru and Nyasha, ending with him vowing to kill her for performing the taboo act of assaulting her own parent.

During the school vacation, Babamukuru is unsatisfied to find Lucia pregnant with Taksure and still living in the homestead. At the end, he decides to let them stay at the family meeting then deciding that Tambu's parents must marry in a formal Christian ceremony. As a result, she refuses this, pretending illness to not attend the wedding, which has led her to receive a severe punishment from her uncle. She is forced to perform the maid's duties for two weeks. Babamukuru also disrespects his wife and never acknowledges her efforts towards the family, including her economic contributions, causing her to leave and stay with her son.

Tambu has the chance to study at the esteemed mission school. Her uncle opposed her at first, but he accepts later. Naysha, in return, starts acting cold towards her, upset that her best friend will soon be leaving, and she will be left alone with her father. As she leaves, she

finds herself sharing a crowded room with other African girls and being busy with her studies, she falls out of touch with Nyasha. When she returns home, she finds her changed, thin, and suffering from a severe eating disorder, diagnosed by a psychotic episode. But after seeing a psychiatrist, she slowly regains her health. Tambu is now set into confusion, wondering and questioning her world and the influences that it applied on her by witnessing the situations of her cousins; one is mentally ill and the other already has a white girlfriend, in addition to their mother's sadness.

There are essentially two Tambus in the novel, and the narrator successfully generates tension between them. She explores her own conflicted perceptions not only as a teenager but also as an adult re-examining those years. This dual perspective gives the novel richness and complexity. She first introduces herself to the reader harshly, claiming the fact that she is not upset that her brother has died. However, under this tough portrayal she draws for herself, there is a hardworking girl who is eager to advance herself and to learn more about the world and her place within it. Unfortunately, Tambu faces strict gender expectations from a patriarchal system and must cope with living in a segregated and colonized country that prevents her from fully embracing her future. At the end of the novel, she learns to respect her Shona heritage and to accept that the white way isn't always the best.

Furthermore, Nyasha is depicted as a symbol of the pressures to embrace modernity, change, enlightenment, and self-improvement; she is captured as complex and multifaceted character and her dual nature reflects her status as the product of two worlds Africa and England. On one hand she is emotional and passionate while the other she is rational and profound in her thinking. Nyasha's changeful nature and undergrounded identity, isolation, and loneliness are her reward for being unconventional and independent. Through the novel the elements that defines her and the aspects of her personality become the sources of her

breakdown, her relationship with her father leads to self-hatred resulting in an eating disorder and mental illness.

Moreover, Maiguru may represent a subtle but emerging voice of feminism in the novel. She is a character who grows increasingly concerned about the development of her children and their responses to various cultural traditions due to her own experiences of trying to balance the attitudes and behaviors that come from two different worlds. For example, at first, she defends and supports her children's differences they have achieved from living in a Western society from those who live in Rhodesia, claiming that they have lost their ability to speak in Shona, their mother tongue, but later, her reactions and attitudes change when she has realized the pressure that has been placed on her children as a consequence of these cultural conflicts. She also witnesses her role as an educated woman being reduced to a traditional role as a servant, and her confrontation toward her husband is an act that has led her to rebel and leave her home. Maiguru represents a realistic model of modern womanhood.

2.2 The Interconnected Nature of Gender, Race, and Class in Tambu's Experiences

Tambu, throughout the novel experiences a complex interchange of gender, race, and class identities that shape her journey and interactions within the narrative. The concept of intersectionality, as proposed by Leslie McCall, becomes crucial in understanding how these multiple structures of identity intersect and influence Tambu's experiences. Her story reflects the complicated connections between being White and Black, as discussed by Mufti, highlighting the need to unravel the mysteries of identity and its ties to various phenomena.

Her experiences are not defined by one aspect of her identity but are influenced by the intersection of race, gender, and class. This intersectionality framework as discussed by Hae Choo et al emphasizes how power dynamics are related. Tambu's interactions with her cousin Nyasha, as analyzed by Katrina Thompson et al, further illustrate the complexity of identity

and culture, highlighting how language and heritage play a significant role in shaping their identities.

Tambu's character defies societal expectations, especially regarding women's roles, and navigates the constraints imposed by her gender, race, and class. This connects with the findings of Rashmi Nair and Vollhardt who argue that individuals' experiences are influenced by the intersection of multiple identities, such as race, gender, and class, which collectively impact their outcomes.

For further explanation, Tambu's experiences are profoundly shaped by the intersecting identities of race, gender, and class within the context of colonial Rhodesia. Tambu belongs to the Shona ethnic group in Zimbabwe, as a black African she faces systemic racism and discrimination under the colonial rule of the white minority which are portrayed in the lack of education and employment for black women. Here race not only affects her access to these opportunities but also influences how she perceives herself and how others perceive her.

Concerning gender, as a young girl she struggles with patriarchal norms and expectations of her society; she is expected to follow traditional roles which limit her autonomy and opportunities for personal growth. The denial of education based on her gender impacts her sense of self-worth and identity. She engages with feelings of frustration as she questions the fairness of societal expectations that privilege boys over girls. Her desire for education becomes dependent on her sense of identity and agency, feeding her psychological disorder as she confronts the constraints imposed by gender norms. In addition, Tambu's gender comes together with her race, as black women in colonial Rhodesia are doubly marginalized facing both racial and gender discrimination.

For class, Tambu comes from a poor family; she is aware of the disparities between her family circumstances and those of her wealthy relatives; as a result, class intersects with

race and gender while she navigates the complexities of social mobility within a colonial society that privileges whiteness and wealth. Tambu's aspirations for education and self-improvement are shaped by her class background as she seeks to go beyond the limitations imposed by poverty and oppression. Psychologically speaking, she experiences feelings of inferiority and shame in comparison to her wealthier relatives, particularly her aunt and uncle, whose success highlights the disparities in opportunities and privileges based on class.

2.3 Power Imbalances and Mental Health in Nervous Conditions

The narrative delves into the complex dynamics of power and its profound implications on mental health within postcolonial Zimbabwean society. Through characters like Tambudzai and Nyasha, Dangarembga portrays how patriarchal authority, colonial influences, and societal expectations shape their identities and psychological well-being. The protagonist journey from rural poverty to educational opportunity under her uncle's authority underscores the complexities of navigating personal ambition among familial obligations and gendered norms. Meanwhile, Nyasha's struggle with cultural alienation and mental illness exposes the psychological toll of resisting the influence of power imbalances on individual agency and highlight the challenges of maintaining mental health in a society marked by inequality and cultural conflict.

2.3.1 Power Dynamics between Tambu and Male Characters

The character navigates complex power dynamics with the male characters in her life, which significantly impact her mental health. The interactions with her brother and uncle shape her experiences and contribute to affect her psychological well-being. Male characters in the novel, such as Babamukuru and Nhamo, exert authority and control over Tambu's life, reflecting broader gender hierarchies in colonial Rhodesian society. Babamukuru, as the patriarch of the family, holds power and influence over Tambu and her aspirations. His decisions regarding Tambu's education and future opportunities have a profound impact on

her sense of agency and self-worth. His authority imposes additional pressure on Tambu, leading to a high level of stress and anxiety. The power dynamics within the family, where male authority figures dictate Tambu's choices, can result in feelings of helplessness and emotional distress for her. Similarly, Nhamo, Tambu's brother, benefits from societal privileges as a male heir, reinforcing his superiority over Tambu. These power dynamics contribute to Tambu's feelings of powerlessness and resentment, as she struggles with the limitations imposed by male authority figures on her life choices and opportunities.

As a result, the power dynamics between Tambu and male characters have a significant impact on her mental health and emotional well-being. Tambu experiences feelings of frustration, anger, and helplessness as she confronts the limitations imposed by males' authority on her autonomy and aspirations. The denial of education based on her gender, in particular, takes a charge on Tambu's mental health, leading to feelings of inferiority, worthlessness, and anger. In addition, her interactions with male characters contribute to her internalized sense of inferiority and self-doubt, as she internalizes societal messages about women's subordinate status and lack of agency. These psychological pressures increase Tambu's struggles with identity formation and self-esteem, contributing to her overall sense of psychological distress and vulnerability.

2.3.2 Gendered Roles and Stereotypes

Societal expectations and gender roles significantly influence an individual's sense of self and mental health. These constructs can have varying impacts, positive or negative, depending on their distribution with societal norms. In the novel the character Tambu is affected by societal expectations and gender roles, shaping her self-perception and mental state.

Research by Melissa Arnone et al shows conflicts between one's self-perception and societal gender expectations can have adverse effects on mental well-being. This conflict can

lead to internal struggles and feelings of inadequacy when individuals feel pressured to conform to societal norms that do not cope with their true selves. Additionally, studies by Mark Hatzenbuehler et al highlights how stigma and minority stress related to gender and sexual orientation can negatively impact mental health. Tambu, as a young woman in a patriarchal society, may face additional stress and obstacles due to the societal expectations imposed on her gender.

Moreover, research by Y. Wong et al. suggests that adhering to masculine norms can influence mental health outcomes. In Tambu's case, societal expectations of masculinity may affect the behaviours and attitudes of her male relatives towards her, further shaping her self-perception. Additionally, findings by Brian Cole and Ingram indicate that gender role conflict and self-stigma can hinder individuals from seeking help for mental health issues, a factor that could be relevant to Tambu if she struggles to express her emotions or seek support due to gender norms.

Furthermore, the work by Amanda Diekman and Schmader points out that societal institution are structured around gender, establishing norms and expectations that individuals incorporate. This incorporation of gendered norms can lead individuals like Tambu to regulate their behaviour to meet societal expectations, impacting their self-concept and mental well-being.

For deeper analysis, one of the most significant ways societal expectations and gender roles affect Tambu is through the denial of education based on her gender. Her desire for education is hindered by the belief that girls should prioritize domestic duties over academic pursuits. This denial not only limits her opportunities for personal growth and self-fulfilment but also undermines her sense of self-worth and agency. Tambu internalizes the message that her aspirations are less important than those of her male equivalents, leading to feelings of frustration, insufficiency, and resentment.

In addition, Tambu is expected to fulfill traditional domestic roles, such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for the family based on her gender. These expectations limit her autonomy and opportunities for personal development, reinforcing the idea that her value lies in her ability to serve others rather than pursue her own aspirations. These experiences of domestic labor contribute to feelings of invisibility and marginalization, as her desires and needs are subordinated to the interests of male family members.

2.3.3 Glass Ceiling

As discussed by Ahmed Al-Asfour et al, gender discrimination can act as barrier to Tambu's education and self-development; it may limit Tambu's choices and opportunities, reinforcing traditional roles that confine women to certain societal expectations. In other words, Tambu's access to education is restricted by societal norms that prioritize the education of boys over girls. Despite her academic potential, Tambu faces resistance from her family when she expresses a desire to attend school. The prevailing belief is that girls should focus on domestic duties rather than academic pursuits, effectively limiting Tambu's educational opportunities. This denial of access to education acts as a barrier to her intellectual and personal development, reinforcing gender disparities and sustaining cycles of inequality.

Additionally, the lack of resources and support for women's education, as noted by Amy Diehl & Dzubinski can pose challenges for Tambu's educational advancement. Inadequate access to educational opportunities and institutional barriers may hinder her ability. This means the economic limitations also contribute to Tambu's inability to pursue her education. Her family struggles financially, making it difficult for them to afford school fees, uniforms, and other expenses associated with education. As a result, she is unable to access the resources necessary to apply in school and further her academic aspirations. Financial barriers foster gender inequalities, as girls from poor families like Tambu are affected by the lack of access to education compared to their male equivalent.

Furthermore, as a young girl she lacks role models and support systems that could help her navigate the challenges of going after her education. She is surrounded by family members who preserve gender stereotypes and discourage her from pursuing her academic ambitions. The absence of support further isolates her and reinforces her sense of marginalization. Without guidance or encouragement, Tambu struggles to overcome the barriers to her education and self-development.

These barriers collectively create a metaphorical glass ceiling that hinders Tambu's progress and limits her opportunities for education and self-improvement. Despite her intelligence and ambition, she is always discouraged by systemic inequalities and societal expectations that prioritize the interests of men over women.

2.4 Psychoanalytic Feminist Analysis of Tambu's Mental Health

Tambu's mental health journey is a testament to the intricate interplay of gender, power dynamics, and personal agency within colonial Zimbabwe. Through a psychoanalytic feminist lens, Tambu's experiences reveal the complexities of navigating familial expectations, societal constraints, and her own quest for autonomy.

2.4.1 Identity Construction

Tambu's sense of self is intertwined with her familial roles, particularly within the traditional gender expectations of her rural Zimbabwean family. As a young girl, she is expected to fulfil domestic duties and care for her family members, depicting the gendered roles assigned to women in her community. Nhamo's death disrupts these traditional roles, pushing her to confront the limitations of her gender within her family dynamic and serves as a chance for her desire to challenge societal norms and pursue opportunities traditionally reserved for boys, such as education.

In addition to her familial roles, Tambu's identity is also shaped by broader societal expectations related to gender and race. Living in colonial Rhodesia, she faces barriers to

education and social mobility due to racial discrimination and patriarchal structures. Gendered expectations direct her position within society, reinforcing the notion that women should prioritize domestic responsibilities over personal desires. However, these societal norms restrict her agency and self-determination, highlighting the influence of patriarchal and colonial systems. Her interactions with authority figures, such as her uncle illustrate the power dynamics inherent in colonial Rhodesian society, further shaping her opportunities and limitations.

Tambu's sense of identity emerges through her negotiation of familial and societal roles, as she navigates the tension between tradition and modernity, obedience and rebellion. Her quest for education symbolizes her resistance against patriarchal and colonial oppression, challenging the gendered and racial norms that limit her opportunities.

Also her relationships with female relatives, particularly her aunt Maiguru and cousin Nyasha, provide alternative models of womanhood and empowerment. These relationships offer Tambu support and inspiration as she seeks to assert her autonomy and challenge oppressive structures. Through her journey of self-discovery and empowerment, she confronts and resists the gendered and racial expectations placed upon her, leading her own path towards liberation and self-determination.

2.4.2 Object Relations

Tambu's relationships with her family members are not only marked by the continuation of traditional gender roles but also by the differences of power dynamics and the shifting dynamics following Nhamo's death. Within her rural Zimbabwean family, she is brainwashed into a set of gendered expectations that assign her domestic responsibilities and subordinate her to male authority figures. These expectations not only reinforce societal norms but also set in Tambu a sense of inferiority and powerlessness, as she witnesses the special treatment afforded to her brother, Nhamo whose death disrupts these gender roles,

encouraging Tambu to confront the limitations imposed on her by her gender within her family dynamic. This event forces her family to reassess their expectations and perceptions of gender.

Tambu's determination to pursue education challenges the traditional gender roles of her family, particularly her father, who views her dreams threatening to the established order. His resistance to her ambitions adds to her feelings of powerlessness and isolation, as she struggles with the rejection of her desires for self-improvement and autonomy.

Moreover, her relationship with her cousin Nyasha, further complicates her struggles with mental health. Nyasha's rebellion against societal norms and her pursuit of independence serve as a source of inspiration for Tambu, encouraging her to assert her agency and challenge patriarchal structures.

In this way, Tambu's relationships with her family members reflect the intricate interplay of gender, power, and mental health. The disruption of traditional gender roles following Nhamo's death encourage her to confront the limitations imposed on her by societal norms, while her family's resistance to her aspirations adds to her feelings of inadequacy and isolation, because through her experiences, the novel sheds light on the profound impact of familial dynamics on individual agency and well-being, highlighting the complexities of navigating gendered expectations and asserting one's autonomy within a patriarchal society.

Furthermore, her relationships with authority figures, particularly Babamukuru, play a role in shaping her mental health and. As the head of the family and a prominent figure in their community, he exercises control over Tambu's life and future opportunities, because His decisions regarding her education and social mobility impact her sense of self-worth and agency, as she navigates the power dynamics inherent in their relationship. His authority over Tambu reinforces the societal norms and expectations that perpetuate gender and racial inequalities in colonial Rhodesia. As a black girl, she faces systemic barriers to education and

social advancement because of her gender. As a result his control over her education reflects the broader societal structures that limit opportunities for black girls like her, reinforcing feelings of helplessness and alienation. His prioritization of Nhamo's education over Tambu's emphasizing the gender disparities and unequal treatment within their family; raise her sense of inferiority and exclusion.

In sum, Tambu's relationships with authority figures portray the ways in which patriarchal and colonial structures influence her mental health and. Babamukuru's control over her life reinforces societal norms that sustain gender and racial inequalities, highlighting the barriers she faces in following her dreams and desires. These experiences contribute to Tambu's feelings of frustration, helplessness, and alienation as she grapples with the limitations imposed upon her by oppressive societal structures.

2.4.3 Coping Mechanisms, Sublimation, and Repression

The protagonist insistence on education, serves as a multifaceted coping mechanism and a powerful form of resistance against the oppressive patriarchal and colonial structures that restrict her life. Education becomes a means for Tambu to assert her autonomy and challenge the limitations imposed upon her by societal norms that prioritize domesticity and subordinate women. Her academic ambitions reflect a subconscious desire for self-improvement and empowerment, as she seeks to transcend the gendered expectations and systemic barriers she faces as a black girl in colonial Rhodesia. However, Tambu's academic pursuits are not without their challenges. Navigating a white educational system brings its own set of tensions, compounded by the discrimination and prejudice she encounters.

Despite these obstacles, her determination to succeed academically reflects her subconscious resilience to overcome adversity, as she embodies the strength and determination of marginalized individuals striving for liberation and empowerment in the face of systemic oppression.

Tambu's subconscious processes of repression and sublimation play a crucial role in her psychological coping mechanisms as she navigates the challenges of her environment. Repression manifests in her tendency to suppress her emotions and desires, particularly in response to the trauma and adversity she faces. The unwillingness to confront feelings of anger and dissatisfaction reflects her subconscious efforts to maintain a sense of control, as she internalizes the societal expectation to remain resilient, burying her emotions beneath a facade of strength.

In contrast, sublimation offers Tambu a constructive outlet for channelling her emotions and energy into productive pursuits, through transforming her negative feelings into a driving force for self-improvement and empowerment, by focusing on her studies and intellectual pursuits to find a sense of purpose and fulfilment, empowering her to transcend the limitations imposed upon her by societal norms and expectations.

Tambu's subconscious coping mechanisms of repression and sublimation illustrate her resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity. While repression may temporarily shield Tambu from the overwhelming emotions associated with her circumstances, sublimation offers her a path towards self-expression and empowerment. Together, these processes reflect Tambu's complex inner workings as she navigates the complexities of her environment and asserts her agency within oppressive structures.

2.5 Proving Tambu's Mental Disorder through Textual Evidence

In the novel, the protagonist struggles with mental health implicitly that is portrayed through passages depicting her inner chaos, emotional distress, and psychological challenges, while the novel does not explicitly diagnose her with a specific mental health disorder, but it offers insights into her mental health through her experiences and interactions.

The extract "I was not sorry when my brother died," quoted from the opening of the novel, provides insight into Tambu's mental health and emotional state. It speaks about her

psychological struggles. Her relationship with her brother Nhamo is characterized by jealousy and rivalry resulting from gender disparities and unequal treatment they experience within their family. So her lack of sorrow at his death could be from unresolved feelings towards him, reflecting the complex dynamics of their sibling relationship. Additionally, it could be a manifestation of internalized gender norms that discourage emotional expression and vulnerability for women. Another potential analysis can indicate that Tambu is unable to express openly what she is truly feeling, suggesting that she may suppress her true feelings as a coping mechanism.

"I felt a constriction, a sense of panic. I felt something reaching out from inside me to meet him, to ward him off. I was afraid of something. I knew that. I was afraid of being afraid, and in that moment, I saw that they were not the same thing, that being afraid was not the same as knowing you were afraid". This quote from chapter ten signifies that Tambu's internal monologue provides an affecting insight into her inner struggles and emotional confusion. Her introspective reflections reveal anxiety and distress that fill her psyche, highlighting the profound impact of her emotional experiences on her mental well-being. Tambu's realization that being afraid is not the same as knowing one is afraid emphasizes the nature of her emotional state and the intricacies of her inner world. "Who am I? What do I want? These questions echoed in my mind, haunting me day and night. I felt lost, adrift in a sea of uncertainty and self-doubt" is another quote extracted from chapter sixteen that underlines her persistent doubts and insecurities that contribute to her disordered mental health.

"My stomach contracted, a squeezing sensation that radiated upwards to my throat, threatening to choke me. I felt nauseous, dizzy, my head spinning with a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions I couldn't control". Quoted from chapter twelve, Tambu describes the physical manifestations of her emotional distress, offering insight into the profound mental

health struggles take on her physical well-being. As she recounts the sensation of her stomach contracting and a squeezing feeling rising to her throat, she portrays the manifestation of her inner struggles. The accompanying feelings of vomiting, dizziness, and overthinking further underscore the intensity of her emotional upheaval. These physiological responses serve as an illustration of the profound impact of Tambu's mental health struggles on her physical body, highlighting the interconnectedness of mind and body in her experience of distress.

These passages and extracts from *Nervous Conditions* offer insights into Tambu's struggles with disordered mental health, portraying her inner struggles, emotional distress, and psychological challenges. While the novel does not provide a clinical diagnosis, it sensitively portrays her experiences and emotions, inviting readers to empathize with her struggles and complexities as she navigates the complexities of her environment and asserts her agency within oppressive structures.

Conclusion

Throughout the analysis of Tambu's psychological struggles in the novel *Nervous Conditions*, several key findings have emerged, shedding light on postcolonial African womanhood and the intricate intersection of gender, race, class, and mental health within colonial and postcolonial contexts. This comprehensive examination reveals the profound and multifaceted impact of colonialism and patriarchy on her psyche.

From her initial aspirations for education to her internalized conflicts about cultural identity and familial expectations, Tambu's narrative reflects the common influence of colonial structures and patriarchal norms on African women's lives. Her pursuit of education symbolizes not only a personal desire for self-improvement but also a broader struggle against the limitations imposed by a colonial and patriarchal society. This journey is fraught with internal and external conflicts, as Tambu navigates the expectations placed upon her by her family and society at large.

In consequence, a psychoanalytic analysis uncovers the anxieties, desires, and traumas that shape her behavior and decision-making, highlighting the complex interplay between individual psychology and broader socio-political forces. Tambu's experiences of alienation and guilt are symptomatic of the deep psychological scars left by colonialism and patriarchy. Her internal struggles with identity and belonging are exacerbated by the dual pressures of conforming to traditional cultural norms while simultaneously trying to meet the demands of a colonial education system.

Furthermore, exploring Tambu's experiences through a Black feminist lens emphasizes the intersectionality of her identity as a black woman navigating multiple forms of oppression. Her struggles with self-worth, agency, and belonging highlight the marginalization of black women's voices within both colonial and postcolonial societies. This intersectional perspective reveals how race, gender, and class interconnect to shape Tambu's experiences and the challenges she faces. Black feminism, with its focus on the lived experiences of black women provides a critical framework for understanding the unique oppressions she endures and the resilience she demonstrates.

In conclusion, the analysis of Tambu's psychological struggles in *Nervous Conditions* emphasizes the broader implications for understanding the intersection of gender, race, class, and mental health in postcolonial contexts. Her story serves as a powerful reminder of the enduring effects of colonialism and patriarchy on African women's lives. It underscores the need for feminist interventions that address the inequalities and injustices faced by marginalized communities. By raising the voices of characters like Tambu and engaging with their narratives through critical lenses such as psychoanalysis and Black feminism, we can better understand the complexities of their experiences and advocate for more inclusive and equitable social structures.

This comprehensive analysis not only highlights the personal struggles of Tambu but also calls for a continued examination of the structural forces that shape the lives of African women. It encourages a deeper engagement with the narratives of marginalized individuals, fostering a more nuanced understanding of the interconnected oppressions that define their realities. Through this engagement, the systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality can be dismantled, and the empowerment of women like Tambu in their pursuit of self-actualization and justice can be supported.

General Conclusion

Based on these facts, postcolonial Zimbabwe witnessed the enduring effects of colonization and the struggles for self-identity that led to a shift in culture and language, also to a development of distinct identities and communities.

By conducting a deep analysis, the study delved into the complex intersectionality of gender, race, and class with the postcolonial African female writings, particularly Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel *Nervous Conditions* where both black and psychoanalytic feminisms helped to explore the complexities of gender perspectives and psychological repression, seeking to understand how repressed desires manifested in art and education.

In addition, the study succeeded in solving the problem identified by emphasizing the neglected aspect of black women's mental health, taking the protagonist of the novel as an example to portray this issue by proving her mental health disorder signs which were influenced by different factors including gender perspectives, power dynamics, and repressed desires through extracts and passages from the narrative, applying a contextual analysis of culture and reader-response theory to understand the relationship between an individual's desires and cultural expectations and how they influenced their psych and well-being.

Overall, this dissertation contributed to the on-going development of psychoanalytic feminist theory and shed light on the portrayal of gendered roles and psychological repression within the experiences of black women. By understanding how literature reflected and shaped societal attitudes, this study emphasized the relevance of psychoanalytic feminist theory in analysing complex narratives in African literature, ultimately fostering a greater understanding of the intersectionality of gender, race, and class in postcolonial contexts.

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