

**Examination of Identity and Alienation in
Postcolonial Literature:
Analysis of Nervous Conditions
by Tsitsi Dangarembga**

**دراسة الهوية والاعترا ب في أء ما بعد الاستعمار: تحليل
رواية الحالات العصبية للكاتبة تسيتسي دانغاريمبغا**

Asst. Inst. Zainab Ibrahim Alwan
Department of English Language/ Collage of Education
(Ibn-Rushd)/ Baghdad University

م.م. زينب إبراهيم علوان
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية/ كلية التربية (ابن رشد)/ جامعة بغداد

zainab.i@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Examination of Identity and Alienation in Postcolonial Literature: Analysis of Nervous Conditions by Tsitsi Dangarembga

**دراسة الهوية والاعترا ب في أدب ما بعد الاستعمار: تحليل
رواية الحالات العصبية للكاتبة تسيتسي دانغاريمبغا**

Asst. Inst. Zainab Ibrahim Alwan
Department of English Language/ Collage of Education
(Ibn-Rushd)/ Baghdad University

م.م. زينب إبراهيم علوان
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية/ كلية التربية (ابن رشد)/ جامعة بغداد

zainab.i@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq

الملخص

تُحلل هذه الدراسة موضوعي الهوية والاغتراب في رواية تسيستي دانغاريمبغا المؤثرة "حالات عصبية"، مستخدمةً نظرية كيمبرلي كرينشو في التقاطع. تدور أحداث القصة في زيمبابوي ما بعد الاستعمار، وتُقدم تمثيلاً آسراً للتداخلات بين الجندر والعرق والطبقة والإرث الاستعماري، والتي تؤثر على تجارب الشخصيات في الهوية والاغتراب. مستفيدةً من نظرية كرينشو التقاطعية، يتناول هذا البحث التفاعل المتعدد الأوجه للتصنيفات المجتمعية وعلاقات القوة في الرواية، كاشفةً عن صراعات متعددة الطبقات التي يخوضها الأفراد وهم يتفاوضون على هوياتهم في سياق ما بعد الاستعمار. من خلال دراسة مُفصّلة لرحلة تامبودزاي وقضايا القمع والمواجهة المُتشابكة في السرد، يصوّر هذه البحث كيف يعمل التقاطع كوسيلة تحكم لفهم تعقيدات الهويات ما بعد الاستعمارية وقوى الاغتراب الحتمية التي تُنير حياة الشخصيات. ومن خلال وضع تجارب الشخصيات في سياق المشهد الاجتماعي والتاريخي الأوسع لزيمبابوي ما بعد الاستعمار، يُظهر هذا التحليل الإجراءات المُعقدة لتطور الهوية، والتنازلات الثقافية، والقدرة على التأثير في مواجهة الاختلافات النظامية والمتاعب الاستعمارية. كذلك تقوم هذه الدراسة حول موضوعي الاغتراب والهوية، حيث تتفاوض الشخصيات على تعقيدات هوياتهم الفردية والجماعية في ثقافة تتميز بالظلم البنيوي والتاريخي، ويشير هذا التحقيق إلى الإجراءات المعقدة لتطوير الهوية، والتسوية الثقافية، والوكالة في مواجهة الاختلافات النظامية والمتاعب الاستعمارية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاغتراب، الهوية، التقاطع، ما بعد الاستعمار، العرق

Abstract

This research explores the themes of identity and alienation in Tsitsi Dangarembga's famous novel, *Nervous Conditions*, through Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory. The story takes place in postcolonial Zimbabwe and delivers a fascinating illustration of the intersecting domains of gender, race, class, and colonial legacies that shape the characters' experiences of identity and alienation. Benefitting from Crenshaw's intersectional paradigm, this article explores the multidimensional interface of societal categorizations and power relations in the novel, revealing the complex dynamics of individuals as they negotiate their identities in a postcolonial context. Through a thorough examination of Tambudzai's journey and the problems of suppression and clash interlocked in the narrative, this study shows the ways in which intersectionality works as a governing tool for understanding the intricacies of postcolonial identities and the unavoidable forces of alienation that enlighten the characters' lives. By contextualizing the characters' experiences in the larger socio-historical setting of postcolonial Zimbabwe, dangarembga deftly examines the intersecting dynamics of colonialism, sexism, and cultural struggle that mold and constrain personal identities via Tambu's journey. The novel's narrative revolves on the themes of tyranny and identity, as the characters negotiate the intricacies of their individual and group identities in a culture characterized by structural and historical injustices. This investigation indicates the convoluted procedures of identity development, cultural compromise, and agency in the face of systemic differences and colonial hassles.

Keywords: Alienation, Identity, Intersectionality, Post-colonialism, Race

1) Introduction

As stated by Leela Gandhi (1998), post colonialism, as one of the most significant theories of literature goes back to the Subaltern Studies group in South Asian studies. The terms "postcolonial" and "post-colonialism" indicate features of the subject matter which state that the decolonized world is a place of absurdities, of misinterpretations, of hybridity, and of restrictions (Johnston, 1981, p. 561). Post colonialism therefore denotes a theory that came into being after most of the colonized nations achieved their liberty. It is expressed by Fox and his coauthors (2004) that post colonialism is a grand culture that is affected by the imperial/colonial procedure from the time of colonization to the current time after a country has publicly attained its liberation (p. 46).

It is claimed that postcolonial literature is chiefly obsessed with writing back to the beginning of colonialism (McLeod, 2007, p. 25). According to O'Reilly (2001), when a critic examines a postcolonial text, s/he is aware that some significant subjects are the manipulation of native cultural customs, the adoption of English, and the influence of colonialism and its outcome (p. 61). One of the most contentious subfields in literature is postcolonial literature. Postcolonial literature often refers to works that focus on how colonialism affected the former colonies after they gained their freedom. However, because a sizable corpus of postcolonial literature covers the time before the colonized nations gained their freedom, the majority of critics expand this straightforward definition to be more thorough.

Postcolonial literature has long been regarded as a powerful platform for discussing multifarious themes of

identity and alienation in the framework of decolonization and cultural hybridity. In fact, in the realm of postcolonial literature, elaborate examinations of identity and alienation function as critical perspectives through which the intricacies of socio-political landscapes are dissected. Tsitsi Dangarembga's important work, *Nervous Conditions* (1988), represents a moving narrative that probes deeply into the interaction of identity, power relations, and the durable legacy of colonialism in Zimbabwe. Through the eyes of its central character, Tambudzai, the novel shows the multilayered experiences of human beings struggling with the intersections of gender, race, class, and colonial history.

Kimberlé Crenshaw's idea of intersectionality is essential to the analysis of identity and alienation in postcolonial literature. Crenshaw, a distinguished critical racial theorist and legal scholar, provides a crucial framework for understanding intersecting identities and strategies for navigating oppression and power relations. In her *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*, Crenshaw assembles a collection of her foundational writings that examine intersectionality and its relevance across several fields, including feminism, social justice, and law. Intersectionality posits that several social categories, including gender, class, sexual orientation, and ability, interact to influence individuals' experiences of oppression and discrimination. It asserts that when individuals' identities intersect, they may encounter distinct types of discrimination and disadvantage (2017).

Crenshaw's groundbreaking theory emphasizes the interrelation of social categories, illustrating how many types of oppression and identity converge to influence individuals'

lived experiences. Understanding the intricate dynamics of power, privilege, and marginalization that shape the experiences and relationships of the novel's protagonists is enhanced by examining *Nervous Conditions* via this theoretical lens. This article will employ intersectionality theory as a framework to thoroughly examine the themes of isolation and self-discovery in the aforementioned novel. This study seeks to elucidate the intricacies of identity formation, resistance, and agency concerning institutional discrimination and cultural encumbrances by situating the characters' conflicts within the wider socio-historical context of postcolonial Zimbabwe.

2) Literature Review

Numerous academics have studied Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*' issues of oppression and identity in great detail. This illustrates the novel's importance in postcolonial studies, and the current piece was composed to maintain continuity. The book has been analyzed by scholars from their different perspectives, each of which advances our knowledge of the societal problems it tackles. The representation of gender and how it affects identity is one significant topic in literature. How gender norms and expectations influence the experiences of the female characters in *Nervous Conditions* have been studied by critics such as Rachael Gilmour and Flora Veit-Wild. Both authors emphasize how Dangarembga critically evaluates the patriarchal systems that restrict women's business and prospects, emphasizing the intersection of colonial oppression and gender.

The impact of colonialism on identity formation is another important and well-researched element of the book. On their side, academics like Elleke Boehmer and David William Cohen have examined the conflicts that the characters face between traditional African beliefs and Western cultural encroachments. Therefore, their study illustrates the complexity of identity in a postcolonial environment by examining the cultural and psychological difficulties that arise from the colonial encounter.

Additionally, internalized oppression has drawn a lot of attention. The way that characters like Nyasha internalize the repressive influences in their environment and engage in self-destructive actions has been examined by critics in *Tsitsi: Exploring Identity and Oppression*. In order to better understand how Tsitsi Dangarembga portrays the fight for autonomy and self-acceptance, Jeanette Treiber's thesis explores the psychological aspects of internalized oppression.

Furthermore, a major theme in the literature has been the novel's emphasis on education. Researchers have emphasized Tambu's desire of education as a major theme in the story, looking at how her existing power relations are both challenged and reinforced by knowledge. The dual role that education plays in forming identity and resistance is highlighted by the work of Roberta Bozzetti and others. The academic discussion of *Nervous Conditions* often highlights the book's deep thematic complexity and ongoing significance in postcolonial literature.

This essay aims to expand on previous research by addressing these many critical viewpoints and providing a

sophisticated interpretation of oppression and identity in Dangarembga's seminal work.

3) Synopsis of the Novel

Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel *Nervous Conditions* is set in postwar Zimbabwe and follows the lives of Tambudzai (Tambu) Sigauke, a young girl motivated to seek an education despite socio-cultural difficulties. The story opens with Tambu's youth in a small town, where she lives in poverty and is originally denied the chance to study at school due to her family valuing more her brother Nhamo's schooling. After Nhamo's death, Tambu attends the mission school managed by her rich uncle, Babamukuru. Tambu's life changes dramatically when she travels from her remote home to her uncle's mansion. At the mission, Tambu is exposed to Western education and ideals, which cause an internal struggle between her desires and her cultural tradition.

The work explores the experiences of various female characters, including Tambu's niece Nyasha, who suffers with the psychological effects of adjusting within two societies after returning from England. The protagonist's struggles with eating disorders and her father's power underscore patriarchal and colonial limits. *Nervous Conditions* explores topics such as identity, gender roles, cultural conflict, and structural oppression via its characters' perspectives. The story highlights the female characters' strength and independence as they negotiate postcolonial society.

4) Methodology

Intersectionality signifies that individuals experience oppression and discrimination not via singular, isolated identity markers, but through the complex interplay of several interrelated identities. Crenshaw's theory emphasizes the necessity of considering crossing axes of identity to comprehend the complete spectrum of people's experiences and challenges in contending with societal institutions.

Kimberlé Crenshaw's groundbreaking research in critical race theory and intersectionality has significantly shaped and influenced discourse on identity, power dynamics, and social justice. Crenshaw, a significant legal scholar and advocate for civil rights, introduced the concept of intersectionality to analyze how various aspects of identity, including race, gender, class, and sexuality, intersect and interact to shape individuals' experiences within systems of oppression and privilege.

In postcolonial literature, Crenshaw's intersectionality theory provides a crucial perspective for analyzing the many facets of identity and alienation expressed in writings like Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. By analyzing the interconnections of race, gender, nationality, and other identity markers, readers will get a profound understanding of the complex ways in which colonial legacies and global power systems shape individuals' identities and feelings of belonging.

5) Discussion

5.1. Characters and Their Struggle with Alienation

Intersectionality denotes the interactions among many identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, class, and race that contribute to the manifestation of both oppression and agency. The author substantiates this assertion by illustrating how the female protagonists in Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel maneuver through gender identification within a patriarchal and colonial context. The heroine Tambu's battle against gender and social seclusion is reflected throughout her journey. She has sentiments of demotion and conflict as a young girl in a patriarchal setting, particularly at home, where her brother Nhamo receives greater scholastic possibilities.

She observes that, within her family, the aspirations and emotions of the women were neither considered urgent nor acknowledged as legitimate entities. Consequently, the main cause of the encounter between the two siblings is Tambu's loss of opportunity to start early education since her brother, the male child, is given precedence. So, her alienation is not just from her family but also from her cultural identity, as she deals with the expectations placed on her as a girl.

Tambu's yearning for education and self-empowerment is met with resistance, exemplifying how her gender restricts her chances. Her alienation is compounded by social standards that diminish women's education and individuality. As Baharvand and Zarrinjooe (2012) also claim, the women living in this society are in fact doubly colonized since they suffer racism enforced on them by the colonizers as well as

being repressed by males. The colonizers dispossessed the native people of their social rights along with all their worthwhile properties like their lands (p. 30). Tambudzai's grandmother talks to her grandchild about how the whites took away their lands and made their life so miserable:

Your family did not always live here, did not move to this place until after the time I was married to your grandfather. We lived up in Chipinge, where the soil is ripe and your great grandfather was a rich man in the currency of those days, having many fat herd and cattle, large fields and four wives who worked hard to produce beautiful harvest [...] Wizards (the whites) well versed in treachery and black magic came from the south and forced the people from the land. On donkey, on foot, on horse, on ox-cart, the people looked for a place to live. But the wizards were avaricious and grasping; there was less and less land for people. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 27)

As she moves to a mission school, Tambu goes through a cultural shock. She struggles with twofold identities, including her traditional backgrounds and the Western principles inculcated in her education. This brawl contributes to feelings of alienation from both her family and her new background.

Also, Nyasha, Tambu's cousin, symbolizes the conflict of cultural identity and the pressures of colonialism. Having been educated in England, she goes back home with a sense of displacement that worsens her alienation. Nyasha's experiences in England create a crack between her and her family, who want her to obey the conventional rules. For example, when Nyasha comes in late from a dance after

talking alone with a boy, her father equates her with a who are. She is in fact regarded as evil, whereas her father is the sensible symbol of virtue. Tambu felt,

bad for her [Nyasha] . . .thinking how dreadfully familiar that scene had been, with Babamukuru condemning Nyasha to whoredom, making her a victim of her femaleness, just as I had felt victimized at home in the days when Nhamo went to school and I grew my maize. The victimisation, I saw, was universal. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 115)

Nyasha's struggle emphasizes the alienation felt by those who are trapped between two worlds. Her clash with her identity brings about psychological health struggles, representing the mental toll of colonialism and gender domination. Her alienation is not just societal but intensely interior, as she copes with her sense of self. As stated by McWilliams (1991), during the last pages of the novel while starving herself to the threshold of death, Nyasha falls into the Manichean trap of good against evil again (p. 108).

Also, as Shaw (2007, p. 11) argues, Nyasha does not have any sexual affairs in the novel. Her astuteness, rational curiosity, and personal bravery make her suspicious, like an attractive woman who in Shona culture is regarded as corrupt or substantially unprincipled owing to her prettiness (p. 11). Nyasha petulantly jokes that "even on my wedding day they'll be satisfied only if I promise not to enjoy it" (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 119).

It can be inferred that Nyasha stands for the conflict of belonging to two worlds. Her education and acquaintance with Western principles establish a gap between her and her

family, chiefly her father, Babamukuru. This rift is aggravated by her struggles with outlooks regarding femininity and submission in a masculine society. She says, "I was not going to be the kind of woman who was just a wife. I was going to be a woman who had a career" (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 75). This quote represents Nyasha's craving to proclaim her freedom and search for an identity beyond conventional roles. As she begins her education there, she believes that she "had to be one of the best. Average simply did not apply; I had to be absolutely outstanding or nothing" (p. 25). Nevertheless, her ambitions bring about a conflict with her family, principally with her father, who symbolizes the traditional patriarchal authority.

Also, like Tambu, Nyasha constantly attempts to act according to his wishes throughout the text. However, she is recurrently powerless to entirely represent his cravings. Sometimes she tells Tambu, "I look at things from his point of view, you know what I mean, traditions and expectations and authority that sort of thing, and I can see what he means and I try to be considerate and patient and obedient, really I do. But then I start thinking he ought to look at things from my point of view and be considerate and patient with me, so I start fighting back and off we go again." (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 190)

Ma'Shingayi, Tambu's mother, also embodies the older generation's devotion to traditional roles. Ma'Shingayi and Babamukuru's wife, Maiguru, are both the trapped females, and victims of what Tambu's mother alludes to as the "weight of womanhood" (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 16). She talks about this burden and says,

This business of womanhood is a heavy burden.... How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide (sic) today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. ... [Y]ou have to start learning them early.... The earlier the better so that it is easy later on.... (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 16)

Her character demonstrates the intersection of gender and class in colonial Zimbabwe. As a woman in a masculine society, Ma'Shingayi experiences economic marginalization. Her reliance on her husband and the restrictions placed on her agency lead to her alienation. Moreover, Ma'Shingayi's character echoes the strain between tradition and modernity. Her resistance to Tambu's desire for education epitomizes a sort of alienation entrenched in fright of losing cultural identity.

Ma'Shingayi's identity is to a great extent defined by her socioeconomic position and her role as a mother. She symbolizes the struggles of women who are limited to the household space and bear the burden of family. Her character thus stands for the restricted opportunities offered to women of her class. She says, "A woman's place is in the home. That's what my mother said" (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 43). This statement summarizes the social expectations that Ma'Shingayi sustains, thereby internalizing traditional gender roles. Her obedience of these roles emphasizes the restraints placed upon women in her class.

5.2. Intersectionality of Race, Class, and Gender

In *Nervous Conditions*, the intersectionality of race, class, and gender works as a highly important subject for understanding the multilayered experiences of the characters, chiefly Tambu as the leading role. This intersectional examination shows how these interrelated societal categories affect individual identities and experiences of alienation in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

The racial issues in *Nervous Conditions* are engrained in the colonial history of Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia). The story depicts racial discriminations, and the way in which the white minority has authority over the black majority. Tambu's family, being black and financially in need, symbolizes the difficulties of native people living under colonial rule. "It's the Englishness ... it will kill them all if they are not careful" (Dangarembga, 1987, p. 204).

Western colonialist has succeeded in "killing" her by brainwashing her into believing in the inferiority of her race, her people and her culture. The racial strains are noticeable in the educational opportunities obtainable to Tambu and her brother, Nhamo. Whereas Nhamo has the chance to join a mission school, his privilege is due to both gender and ancestral anticipations, as he is male. Tambu's longing for education and self-improvement is subdued by her race and gender, exemplifying how colonialism has preserved systemic disparities that relegate black females. "We spent a lot of time consumed with this kind of terror. We didn't speak of it amongst ourselves. It was all too humiliating, but the horror of it gnawed within us" (p. 59).

Racism along with such matters as poverty and African conventional cultural traditions play important roles in the inability of women to read and write in many African nations. Therefore, women are forced by males to be passive workers at home. The subsequent illiteracy deprives women of taking part in communal activities and, accordingly, they will be uninformed of their rights. Women actually have no place in freedom movements in such a society and are not able to move toward education.

According to Uwakweh (1995), *Nervous Conditions* is nonetheless representative of the experiences of many African women who have suffered the double oppression of patriarchy and colonization. The presence of these dual factors in the novel accounts for the interplay between indigenous forms of female oppression and the economic/cultural forces of colonial oppression. Dangarembga seems to suggest that patriarchy, as is expressed in all forms of male domination of the female, heightened by the contradictions of colonial experience, creates the nervous state or psychological condition which afflicts the female characters in varying degrees of intensity.

As a metaphor, "Nervous Conditions" appropriately expresses the double predicament of the woman in African societies (p. 78). The colonialism may succeed in making many black people see their past as one wasteland of no achievement. This is the case with Tambu who fails to get past her negativity and does not succeed in appropriately placing herself within the white space of the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart, a prestigious boarding school, by letting her past "speak" to her (Hall, 1990, p. 226).

This explains the utter shock the black girls reveal when in Sister Catherine's attempt to comfort Tambu after her fight with Ntombi, she touches Tambu's chin and Ntombi's head: "A white hand on hair! We gaped! We had never seen it." (p. 78) It elucidates why after having touched Sister Catherine's hand Tambu feels that "I had soiled my teacher in some way" (p. 32) because of the belief in the impurity of her race.

Class also plays an important role in the characters' lives and desires. As a matter of fact, class is extremely merged with the characters' identities and their experiences of alienation. Tambu struggles with her family's lack of high class situation and the social expectations enforced upon her as a girl in a patriarchal and economically destitute setting. The novel starts with Tambu's consciousness of her family's monetary problems and the restrictions they impose on her goals. Once she says, "I was not a girl who could afford to be a burden. My father was a poor man, and my mother was a poor woman, and I was a poor girl" (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 10). This citation depicts Tambu's acknowledgment of her socioeconomic position and how it affects her identity. The burden of poverty is not merely an economic issue but also a moving and mental one that leads to her alienation.

As mentioned earlier, Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality examines how diverse social identities, such as race, gender, and class, intersect to shape the experiences of repression. She says, "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects" (Crenshaw, 2017, p. 5). In *Nervous Conditions*, class intersects with gender and race in order to obscure Tambu's journey toward self-actualization. This

understanding is crucial when analyzing how class and gender intersect in Tambu's life. For instance, her aspirations for education are continually thwarted not only by her gender but also by her family's economic situation. The privilege of education, which is a pathway to opportunity, often becomes unattainable due to class constraints.

Colonialism had devastating impacts on indigenous communities, as shown by the financial strife in Tambu's family. The luxury of the European conquerors and the educated Black elite, like Babamukuru, a relative of Tambu, is associated with the family's insufficiency. Education is both a path to communal autonomy and a foundation for alienation for Black people due to the divisions within the class that create a diversified hierarchy. In the midst of her internal struggle, Tambu gets an education in her uncle's house. She struggles with the guilt of leaving her family and with the classism of the well-off. This inner struggle is well portrayed in the story. When considering this problem, it is important to keep in mind that people's racial identities and socioeconomic standing often interact to determine the privileges that are available to them.

Because gender obscures Tambu's racial and socioeconomic experiences, it is an integral part of her identity. Because of the pressure to conform to stereotypical gender roles, women in patriarchal societies are often expected to keep a low profile. The upheaval in Tambu's family and community prevents her from pursuing her dreams of education and independence. Ma'Chido, her mother, who is bound to put household duties ahead of her own ambitions, exemplifies traditional views of women. This generational collapse highlights the constraints placed

on women, particularly black women, who endure simultaneous oppression from colonial powers and patriarchal systems.

The gender, ethnicity, and class of the individual significantly influence the evaluation of Tambu's education. Although Tambu's sibling, Nhamo, has made a name for himself in the academic community, his motivations are viewed with skepticism. In her society, she perceives few opportunities for women, which complicates her pursuit of autonomy. The narrative illustrates how gendered expectations can exacerbate feelings of isolation, as Tambu is a Black girl residing in a culture that frequently disparages her, "then you will be what you want. It will make you look like them, all pink like a European!" (p. 141)

5.3. Reclaiming Identity in a Postcolonial World

The central theme of Tsitsi Dangarembga's work is the reclamation of one's identity in a postcolonial context. This theme reflects the challenges faced by individuals in a society influenced by colonial forces, including racial, gender, and economic issues. The protagonist Tambu's explorations and victories as she embarks on a journey of self-discovery and validation are centered on the reclamation of her apostolic identity.

The central theme of *Nervous Conditions* is around Tambu's quest for self-discovery under the conflicting influences of colonial education, patriarchal views, and cultural traditions. Tambu knows, even before the novel starts, that the colonial power structures have lowered her position as a Black girl in this society. She has a special

desire for education because she wants to escape the limitations imposed on her by her gender and her family's financial situation. Education, in her view, is a tool for self-improvement and reclaiming her individuality from a culture that all too often seeks to define her in relation to others.

Tambu struggles with the conflicting demands of being a dedicated student and a caretaker for her family as she makes her way through her scholastic career. This conflict exemplifies the broader challenge faced by several postcolonial people caught between their traditional responsibilities and their modern dreams. As Tambu faces the dominant macho and classist ideology in her village and discovers new ideas and chances in her uncle Babamukuru's house, her experiences there are seen as a microcosm of this fight. "I want to ask are you aware who gave birth to you? Can you tell me which stomach you came out of! Or do you think you dropped from a tree big and ripe like that! Or sprang from a well" (p. 226).

Throughout *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga stresses the importance of cultural identity as a foundation of strength and resilience. During her voyage, Tambu thinks about her family's traditions, values, and the impact of her Shona ancestry. The contrast between her family life and her experiences at the mission school shows how cultural displacement is common after colonial schooling. This is an important part of reclaiming one's identity in a postcolonial context.

Reclaiming her identity, for Tambu, means standing up for her culture and fighting against the colonial narratives that try to erase it. Challenges arise during this reclaiming

process as she navigates cultural and familial norms that value conformity over individuality. As she strives to establish a space that respects her ancestry while also embracing personal progress, the conflict between tradition and modernity becomes a prominent motif in her journey. “Tambu feels of being black in a racist world, this “feeling of not existing. Sin is black as virtue is white. All those white men ... cannot be wrong. I am guilty. I do not know of what, but I know that I am not good” (p. 65).

The reclamation of identity is complicated due to the gender-related issues within the story. Tambu's experiences as a young Black woman in a patriarchal setting highlight the intersection of gender and postcolonial identity. The novel comments on how colonialism has reinforced patriarchal structures that stifle women's voices and agency. Tambu's endeavor to establish her identity represents the wider feminist movement in postcolonial discourse, which seeks to confront and dismantle inequitable systems that exclude women. More significantly, it manifests in her loss of self-such that for her, it becomes “harrowing to be part of such undistinguished humanity” (p. 211).

Tambu's battle against the limitations imposed by her gender is a significant assertion of conflict. Her determination to pursue education and express her voice is viewed as a form of reclamation, challenging the traditional norms that seek to confine her. The associations she has with other women, such as her cousin Nyasha, similarly show the difficulties of female identity in a postcolonial context. Nyasha's struggles with cultural displacement and revolt against patriarchal prospects echo Tambu's journey,

underlining the significance of unity between women in reclaiming their identities.

Finally, it must be stated that by the end of the novel, Tambu is ready to question all matters that have affected her individual and political life, "... a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being' ... identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within the narrative of the past ..." ((Dangarembga, 1988, p. 30). Thus, she plans to use her past and her country's history in order to establish new positions of action (McWilliams, 1991, p. 111). Moreover, at the end of *Nervous Conditions* Tambu declares, "something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and to refuse to be brainwashed" (Dangarembga, 1987, p. 204). This assertion suggests a determination to get a western education without losing her cultural values and sense of identity

6) Concluding Remarks

To conclude, the inspection of identity and alienation in postcolonial literature and especially in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* through the theoretical framework of Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality has offered thoughtful understandings of the intricacies of individual experiences in a postcolonial setting. Through the paradigm of intersectionality, we have perceived how the intersections of gender, race, class, and colonial histories link to affect the characters' identities and experiences of alienation in Zimbabwe.

By examining the convolutions of Tambudzai's journey and the subjects of power, resistance, and cultural

conciliation portrayed in the novel, this paper has accentuated the effect of intersectionality as a tool for unveiling the multifaceted layers of dominion and privilege that determine the characters' lives. The investigation of how societal categorizations interconnect to engender distinct systems of demotion and endorsement has emphasized the ways in which identity is formed in postcolonial cultures.

Additionally, the present investigation has underscored the transformative proficiency of literature in supporting downgraded voices, confronting main narratives, and cultivating a greater understanding of the impediments of identity and alienation in a postcolonial situation. Through the examination of *Nervous Conditions*, I have been able to appreciate the resilience, agency, and insolence shown by the characters in the face of widespread distinctions and colonial legacies, presenting the power of storytelling in repossession of different identities.

Furthermore, it becomes ostensible that the intersections of identity and alienation are not isolated but amalgamated, which shows the larger social and historical forces at play. This analysis acts as the indication to the permanent use of literature in analyzing structures of power, strengthening relegated voices, and supporting a more inclusive and neutral society.

References

- Baharvand, P. A., & Zarrinjooee, B. (2012). The Formation of a Hybrid Identity in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. *African Journal of History and Culture*, 4(3), 27–36.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (2017). *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*. The New Press.
- Dangarembga, T. (1988). *Nervous Conditions*. Routledge.
- Fox, R. E., Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2004). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. Routledge.
- Gandhi, L. (1998). *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In Rutherford, J. (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 223-237). London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Johnston, R. J. (1981). In *The Dictionary of Human Geography*. Basil Blackwell.
- McLeod, J. (2007). *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester University Press.
- McWilliams, S. (1991). Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*: At the Crossroads of Feminism and Post-Colonialism. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 31(1), 103-112.
- O'Reilly, C. (2001). *Post-colonial Literature*. Cambridge University Press.
- Shaw, C. M. (2007). You Had a Daughter, but I Am Becoming a Woman: Sexuality, Feminism and Postcoloniality in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and *She No Longer Weeps*. *Research in African literatures*, 7-27.

- Uwakweh, P. A. (1995). Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's "Nervous Conditions". Research in African Literatures, 26(1), 75-84.