

Review

The formation of a hybrid identity in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

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Colonization was one of the bitterest phenomena during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Imperial powers colonized some particular territories and plundered their capital. Beside economic damages, the colonizers obliterated local cultures of their colonies and imposed new ideologies on native people. Western cultural hegemony resulted in the formation of a new hybrid identity in the colonized natives. This article investigates Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) through a postcolonial approach. *Nervous Conditions* relate the double suffering of females in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, a former colony of Britain. Rhodesia was a settler colony where the whites' minority deposed local rulers late in the nineteenth century and began to administer the territory. The main discussion of this paper consists of two sections. The first part analyses gender discrimination as a great obstacle for women in the colonized Rhodesia, and the second part deals with racial discrimination practiced by colonizers, as well as the identity crisis experienced by the natives. Since colonization is one of the consequences of imperialism and postcolonial literature examines its consequences, this article begins with a brief introduction regarding postcolonial literature and British imperialism followed by a short background of Rhodesia.

Key words: *Nervous Conditions*, postcolonial literature, imperialism, racial and gender discrimination, identity crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial literature is one of the most controversial branches in the realm of literature. In general, postcolonial literature refers to the works concentrating on the impacts of colonization in the former colonies following their independence. However, majority of critics develop this simple definition to be more comprehensive, because a noticeable body of postcolonial literature encompasses the period preceding the independence of the colonized countries. Therefore, we should seek out more details about the areas of interest regarding this subject. Lois Tyson clarifies the "overlapping topics" of postcolonial literature as follows:

1. The native people's initial encounter with the colonizers and the disruption of indigenous culture,

2. The journey of the European outsiders through an unfamiliar wilderness with a native guide,
3. Othering (the colonizers treatment of members of the indigenous culture as less fully human) and colonial oppression in all its forms,
4. Mimicry (the attempt of the colonized to be accepted by imitating the dress, behavior, speech, and the lifestyle of the colonizers),
5. Exile (the experience of being an "outsider" in one's own land or a foreign wanderer in Britain),
6. Post-independence exuberance followed by disillusionment,
7. The struggle for individual and collective cultural identity and the related themes of alienation, unhomeliness (feeling that one has no cultural "home", or sense of cultural belonging), double consciousness (feeling torn between the social and psychological demands of two antagonistic cultures), and hybridity (experiencing one's cultural identity as a hybrid of two or more cultures),

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8. The need for continuity with a pre-colonial past and self-definition of the political future (Tyson, 2006).

Since no postcolonial literary work can include such a vast variety of topics, every writer usually tries to limit his/her work to one or two of the subjects mentioned above. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, in which the author clearly shows the destructive impacts of colonization on the indigenous people in Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, focuses mainly on the oppression of females as well as the formation of the hybrid identity in this territory. As depicted in this novel, the British Empire imposes its cultural practices on the natives to the extent that they willingly and unwillingly forget Shona, their native language, and endeavor to speak English in order to indicate their social prestige. The hegemony of the British Empire ruins the cultural identity of the colonized people, and motivates them to adopt a new identity. According to Edward Said, a leading postcolonial critic, the colonizers consider the colonized natives as barbarous and uncivilized whose identity should be reshaped based on European norms. This is a strategy taken by the colonizers to justify their presence in the colonized countries. Likewise, the indigenous people in Rhodesia are supposed to learn how to write and speak in English rather than Shona. Accordingly, they begin to adopt Englishness in all its aspects from education to clothes and behavior. They find themselves in an ambivalent 'nervous condition' after the departure of colonizers. That is to say, they have a hybrid identity which is neither native Shona nor British.

Edward Said's arguments are the main source of reference for revealing the true nature of imperialism and colonization. He is well known for his iconoclastic ideologies regarding the reality of imperialism and the misleading depiction of the East in the Western texts. In his *Orientalism* (1979) Edward Said says that Western authors knowingly and unknowingly work as the agents of the West to justify the presence of Europeans in the East. They divide the world into two areas: the West and the East, the former as the symbol of civilization and the latter that of barbarity. He argues in this way:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and (most of the time) the Occident. Thus, a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorist, economists, and imperial administrators have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborating the theories, epics novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the orient, its people, customs, mind, destiny, and so on (Said, 1979).

Since the hegemony of West has a great domination over the mind of the colonized natives, most of them are deceived into thinking that colonizers trouble themselves

to help them put away the world of barbarity. This is why some characters in *Nervous Conditions* are so interested in colonizers and try to imitate them. Nevertheless, the degree of vulnerability of characters in the face of Western hegemony is not the same.

By representing the disruptive influence of colonization over the local Rhodesians, Tsitsi Dangarembga unravels females' status in a colonized society. She chooses a female as the protagonist of her novel in order to show that women are doubly colonized in the colonized African society. Actually, they are marginalized both by patriarchal 'norms' and racism. Dangarembga shows the suffering of women in Rhodesia through the depiction of Tambudzai's, the protagonist, ordeal in rising to the status of an educated woman. Tambudzai gets it in two ways. On the one hand, she suffers the horrible influence of colonization and its resultant racial inequalities; on the other hand, she is subjugated by the patriarchy which is a serious obstacle for a female in African society. She is not granted any chance to receive an education as long as Nhamo, her elder brother, is alive. When Tambudzai insists on enrolling at school, her father disillusiones her and says:

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

Since the incidents of *Nervous Conditions* take place in Rhodesia, and Rhodesia used to be a British colony, this paper begins with a short history of the British Empire, especially concerning the colonization of Rhodesia, as well as a brief background of Rhodesia. Following this short description regarding the British Empire and the process which led to the independence of Southern Rhodesia under the name of Zimbabwe, this study investigates the detrimental impact of colonization on the indigenous people in Rhodesia, especially on women.

DISCUSSION

The emergence of Britain as an empire

The Act of Union between England and Scotland formed Great Britain in 1707. England had incorporated Wales to its territory through the Act of Union with Wales during the reign of Henry VIII. The next step was the subjugation of Ireland; therefore, England invaded Ireland in numerous occasions at the turn of the seventeenth century under Elizabeth I, and occupied some Irish regions. According to John Mcleod, the gradual domination of England over Ireland began in 1601 as a consequence of 'defeat of Gaelic forces at the Battle of Kingsale' (Mcleod, 2007) and was fully accomplished in 1801.

The industrial revolution contributed to the formation of

a flourishing economy in England. Many factories were launched and a new rich middle class emerged. These factories needed raw materials which could be found in Asian, African and American countries. These territories had great raw materials and cheap human labor. The British Empire colonized such undeveloped countries and utilized them by destroying their economies and plundering their resources. The raw materials were taken from the colonized countries to England in order to supply the British factories. Subsequently, England exported the products of these factories to its colonies which were considered as the great markets for British products. Likewise, the British Empire turned out to be the wealthiest empire throughout the world.

The first attempt of Britain to conquer the non-European countries and subjugate them as its colonies was made after the 1604 Treaty of London which put an end to the hostility between England and Spain. To quote from Nicholas Canny

Now at peace with its main rival, English attention shifted from preying on other nation's colonial infrastructure to the business of establishing its own overseas colonies (Canny, 1998).

'The First British Empire' emerged after the conquest of North America, and large portions of the Caribbean. Since the most important purpose behind 'The First British Empire' was economic gain, this phase of imperial occupation is sometimes called 'mercantile empire' (McLeod, 2007). The second phase of advancement for the British Empire took place in India. The primary enterprise of England in India was the establishment of English East Indian Company in 1600 during the reign of the Mughal Dynasty (1526 to 1857) in India. Nevertheless, it was not until the eighteenth century that England was in full control of India, because the Mughal Dynasty was powerful throughout the seventeenth century. After all, France was a potential rival for England in India. England and France engaged in a battle over India in 1757 ending in the victory of the British forces. Gradually, the whole subcontinent of India came under the direct control of British rule. India was the most lucrative colony of the British Empire.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Britain was the dominant imperial power in the world. Victory over Napoleon marked the beginning of British quick imperial advancement. Britain was a monopolist power without confronting a serious challenge thereafter. Moreover, the British economic boom of the nineteenth century contributed to the rise of Britain as the leading commercial and military power in the world.

The last phase of British colonization began in Africa during the 1880s and 1890s. Britain had already taken over the control of Gambia, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and the Cape Colony in the 18th century. The struggle of the British Empire in Africa led to annexation

of Egypt, the Central Africa Federation (Northern and Southern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland), and Nigeria (McLeod, 2007). Africa was a potential and rich continent in terms of resources for the rapacity of European powers. Therefore, they were always competing to colonize more and more African countries. This competition was called 'Scramble for Africa'.

Germany turned out to be a threat for Britain by the turn of the twentieth century. Germany was rising rapidly as a new military and industrial power. Feeling the potential menace of Germany, the British authorities formed an alliance with Japan, France, and Russia. Britain declared war on Germany in 1914 and the First World War broke out. The outcome of the war was the victory of the Allies. Consequently, Britain gained some more colonies and Germany lost its colonies in favor of the Allies.

Nevertheless, anticolonial movements emerged after the Second World War. Despite being victorious in the war, Britain was no longer able to keep its colonies. Egypt, India, and Ireland were among the first countries gaining independence in 1922, 1947, and 1949, respectively. Indian independence was a great loss to Britain. These developments had a domino effect on the strength of the British Empire. Once the greatest authority throughout the world, British Metropole disintegrated gradually through the loss of Asian and African colonies. Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Gambia, Botswana, Mauritius, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe (previously Rhodesia) were the African colonies of Britain lost after The Second World War (McLeod, 2007). Britain was no longer a distinguished vast empire after the 1980s. The process of decolonization was accomplished in the 1980s, although there are still some territories under the control of Britain.

The historical background of Rhodesia

Before the arrival of British commissioners in 1880s, Rhodesia was called South Zambezia. It used to be ruled by a powerful Matabele tribe headed by Lobengula, the King. South Zambezia was a country with high quality lands and great gold mines, as an enticing site to be plundered by the European powers. Portugal was the first European country to raid South Zambezia, but it was not until 1888 that South Zambezia faced the real another invasion. Cecil Rhodes, a British diamond magnate signed a contract with Lobengula and began his profitable commerce in South Zambezia. Based on this treaty the indigenous rulers agreed to avoid entering into any new correspondence with the other European countries without confirmation of their British masters. Cecil Rhodes was not merely a trader. He performed his role as the agent of the British Empire in Southern Africa. Cecil Rhodes was so influential that Rhodesia was named after him. He obtained a concession for mineral rights from Lobengula, the king, in 1888, and established

The British South African Company. King Lobengula sold the mineral rights for twelve hundred pounds a year, one thousand rifles, one hundred thousand rounds of ammunition and a steamboat. This contract was a great damage to Rhodesia.

The British officials in London authorized Cecil Rhodes to handle the affairs of Rhodesia and equipped him with armed forces. Rhodes claimed the fertile lands of Rhodesia soon after he obtained the confirmation of Queen Victoria to dominate the territory. He gradually took the control of almost the entire Rhodesia. The British South African Company's armed forces attacked the ruling native tribe in Rhodesia to subjugate it and obtain more and more lands. The British forces defeated the natives through the utilization of modern European weapons such as Maxim guns, and killed Lobengula in 1894. The murdering of the king was a fatal blow to the native Rhodesians. They had to abandon their resistance. The settlers from England arrived in large numbers during subsequent years. Consequently, the white settlers participated in the administration of Rhodesia headed by Cecil Rhodes. They would soon replace Cecil Rhodes and his British South African Company. Following the confiscation of the best lands by the new settlers, the natives became merely cheap laborers.

Nonetheless despite the oppressive policies of The British South African Company in Rhodesia there was still some hope for the natives, because they could cultivate a small portion of the lands. Moreover, they were granted some civil rights to mitigate their grief.

Meanwhile more white settlers arrived and the domination of The British South African Company turned out to be unbearable for the white minority, because they could not tolerate even the least rights given by Cecil Rhodes to the miserable indigenous black natives. Therefore, a Legislative Council was established in 1899 and power was gradually shifted from Cecil Rhodes and his company to another group of whites who were more merciless. The first formal government in Rhodesia was established in 1923 and Rhodesia became a colony of Britain.

This process continued until 1960s when a Labor Government resumed power in Britain. Since the racist policies of Britain in South Africa had brought about infamy for this country, the newly elected government in London tried to relieve international pressures over Britain. Consequently, London officials decided to hand over power to black majority rule, but the white government in Rhodesia under the Prime Minister Ian Smith did not tolerate such measures and declared the Unilateral Declaration of Independence on 11 November 1965. The international reactions to UDI were swift. The British Government imposed sanctions on Rhodesia and the members of the United Nations did not recognize this country. Meanwhile, Rhodesian nationalists rebelled and the civil war broke out. Since there was no direct

confrontation between the white forces and black rebels, it was nearly impossible for Ian Smith and the government to suppress the riot. The policy of guerrilla war taken by the black nationalists overpowered Ian Smith. Nowhere was secure for the white settlers. Moreover, the Rhodesian Government was debilitated by international sanctions and gradual emigration of the whites. UDI ended in 1979 and the British Government granted independence to Rhodesia. Robert Mugabe won the election in 1980 to be the first Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, the new name for Rhodesia.

Violation of femininity and female desire to receive an education in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

As mentioned in the introduction of this study, the women are actually doubly colonized in a colonized society. They suffer racism imposed on them by the colonizers in addition to being suppressed by the males. The colonizers deprive the indigenous people of their social rights as well as all their useful belongings such as their lands. Tambudzai's grandmother explains to her grandchild how the whites confiscated their lands and made a misery of their lives:

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).

Tsitsi Dangarembga quoted the name of her novel from Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of The Earth* (1961) where Sartre argues that the condition of natives in a colonized society is a nervous condition. The wretched natives are displaced by the colonizers from their ancestral lands and forced to work for the minority white settlers as slaves. Accordingly, the natives lose everything and their concern will be solely to provide food to escape starvation. Education is not of primary importance in such a situation for the natives, especially for females.

Racism, poverty, and African traditional cultural practices increase the illiteracy of women in African countries. Consequently, women are encouraged by males to be submissive laborers at home. The resultant illiteracy deprives women of participating in social activities. Thus, they will be ignorant of their rights and

fail to organize their efforts to enjoy social rights. Females have no place in liberation movements in such a society and can't move toward enlightenment.

Since the men determine the decencies for women in Rhodesia, the women generally play a submissive role at home in order to gain the favor of their husband as decent women would do. Actually, the women are trained to be silent. The women will be considered virtuous and decent as long as they are obedient workers whose concern is nothing but satisfaction of their husbands' desires. A good description of females' position is given by Tambudzai's mother. Reminding Tambudzai of the real status of women in the colonized Rhodesia, Ma'shingayi says:

Aren't we the ones who bear children? [...] When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them. And these things are not easy; you have to start learning them early, from a very early age. The earlier the better so that it is easy later on. Easy! [...] and these days it is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength (Dangarembga, 1988).

Ma'shingayi is the paragon of an ideal wife in Rhodesia. She represents the conventional image of an African woman who endures, and works both at home and in the fields without grumbling about her life. She has no voice of her own, therefore, she is admired by her husband.

Colonization aggravated the status of women in society. Prior to colonization there was enough land for the natives and the greatest burden of family was carried by the male members. But after the arrival of European colonizers, the men had to take long trips to gold and copper mines in order to work for avaricious colonizers. Therefore, the women had to undertake those responsibilities previously assumed by men. Consequently, there was little chance for them to be educated at school. Generally, only the boys had the right to receive an education if a family could provide the fee, because the boys were considered superior in all aspects. Hence, it is Nhamo, Tambudzai's elder brother, who is given the opportunity to attend the school. Talking to his younger sister contemptuously, Nhamo reminds Tambu that she should forget her dreams about education:

'But I (Tambudzai) want to go to school'
'Wanting won't help'
'Why not?'
'It's the same everywhere. Because you are a girl'
(Dangarembga, 1988) .

Nhamo considers himself superior to Tambudzai due to his gender. Although Nhamo and his sister live in the same world, gender discrimination places Tambudzai

lower than Nhamo in the hierarchy of male dominated Rhodesia. Tambudzai tries to resist the patriarchal authority in her family. She grows her own mealies, then sells them to provide school fee. She manages to enroll in the local school, but is not able to attend the mission as long as her brother is alive. Mission is a European based school headed by Taambudzai's educated uncle, Babamakuru. Nevertheless, Tambudzai is given a chance to pursue her education in the mission when her brother dies of an illness. Nhamo's death is a good opportunity for Tambudzai to prove her competence. Sexual discrimination has annoyed Tambudzai to the extent that she is not sorry about her brother's death. She says:

I was not sorry when my brother died. Nor am I apologizing for my callousness, as you may define it, my lack of feeling. For it is not that at all (Dangarembga, 1988).

Nhamo's death leads to Tambudzai's liberation. She cannot persuade herself to mourn for her dead brother, because Nhamo was always hostile towards her and permanently reminded Tambudzai of his superior gender. Nhamo is a bad natured boy who cannot even tolerate Tambudzai's success in her small field, because Tambudzai had arranged to grow mealies for school fee. Therefore, he steals the mealies to prevent Tambudzai's from attending school. However, following Nhamo's death Babamakuru persuades Jeremiah, Tambudzai's father, to let her daughter leave the squalid homestead and go to the mission in order to resume her education. Tambudzai escapes the horrible circumstances of rural life and leaves behind her poverty-stricken family to fulfill her dreams. Two obstacles of destitution as the result of colonization, and presence of a male sibling had blocked her way, but Nhamo's death and generosity of her rich uncle who was educated in Europe by the whites to propagate western manners in Rhodesia, paved the way for her to attend the mission and experience the urban life. In Babamakuru's house she would eat nice food and get rid of her shabby clothes. The British colonizers have robbed Tambu's family and the other natives of all their capital and forced them to live in poverty and suffer racism, but Tambu is lucky to escape the entrapment. Nonetheless, she would not be able to study at mission if she had another brother.

The selection of Tambudzai as the next student, after Nhamo, in Jeremiah's household is not for Tambudzai's welfare. Babamakuru does not select Tambudzai for her personal growth, but for her prospective financial contribution to her father. She is expected to provide for her family after graduation. Babamakuru says that Tambudzai 'must be given the opportunity to do what she can for her family before she goes to her husband's home' (Dangarembga, 1988). Tambudzai eventually attends the mission after Nhamo's death.

Suppressive authority of males can be traced throughout *Nervous Conditions*. Babamakuru is the most authoritative male figure in this novel. He endures no disobedience from his dependants. Babamakuru is the educated head of Sigauke Clan. He performs his role as a godlike benefactor who helps the wretched and destitute members of the clan. He is a practitioner of colonizer's will. Educating in London and learning the cultural practices of the whites, Babamakuru propagates the European ways in the mission in which he is the headmaster.

Babamakuru is like a feeble mouse as long as he is before the white colonizers, but this humiliation is converted to aggressive behavior when he is back to his family. He expects an unquestioning obedience from his family. Babamakuru permanently threatens his dependants to stop providing for them if they challenge him. Therefore, Tambudzai who is taken from the dirty homestead to the mission in order to live with Babamakuru's family and receive an education through the charity of Babamakuru, remains silent and grateful to her uncle without any remarkable resistance against his oppression. Tambudzai tries to have a deferential attitude towards him. Babamakuru admires Tambudzai as a decent girl as long as she obeys.

The belated wedding of Tambudzai's parents is the only occasion in which Tambudzai resists Babamakuru's will. Babamakuru believes that Jeremiah and Ma'shingayi who have lived together as a couple for nearly twenty years should be legally married at church, because their entire marital affair has been illicit since their elopement without formal marriage about twenty years ago. Consequently, Babamakuru forces Tambudzai's parents to have a Christian wedding at church. This is too horrible for Tambudzai and her family. Enforcing the European rules and convention, Babamakuru challenges the Shona culture of Rhodesia and holds Tambu's parents in derision before the others by taking them to the church in wedding clothes. Moreover, Tambudzai believes that this foolish wedding questions her own legitimacy when she remarks:

The whole business reduced my parents to the level of the stars of a comic show, the entertainers [...] (It was) A wedding that made a mockery of the people I belonged to and placed doubt on my legitimate existence in this world (Dangarembga, 1988).

Tambudzai does not attend the wedding despite Babamakuru's threats. Therefore, she receives fifteen lashes as the result of disobeying her uncle. This event reveals the real nature of Babamakuru as a conventional male for Tambudzai. Babamakuru is a domineering man at his home. He gets the entire salary of his wife, Maiguru, who was educated in London. Babamakuru spends the salary of his wife for his own poor relatives. Babamakuru and his wife, Maiguru, both have got master

degrees from England, but Maiguru has no voice at home. It does not matter that the women are educated or illiterate, urban or rural. All women, regardless of being illiterate or educated are supposed to be submissive at home in Rhodesia. They have learned that they always need a man to accompany and protect them. Accordingly, Maiguru goes to a man (her brother) and asks for help when she leaves home in a rage after having a quarrel with her husband.

Maiguru needs a man to protect her and give her a sense of value; therefore, she abandons her resistance within a week and returns home. It seems that she has no concept of independence in her mind. She tolerates Babamakuru's oppression in order to keep him as her husband. Maiguru swallows her pride and remains a silent woman. As Hamza Mustafa Njozi mentions:

She (Maiguru) obeyed and served Babamakuru with slavish devotion because she believed to do so would maximize her comfort and minimize her pain...She willingly sacrificed her freedom in exchange for security (Njozi, 2005).

Not only Maiguru, but also the majority of females in *Nervous Conditions* are obedient servants of men. Nevertheless, there are some serious opponents among the females too. Babamakuru's intellectual girl, Nyasha is one of the females who dare to challenge the authority of a male. Unlike Tambudzai who chooses to be submissive in order to gain Babamakuru's favor, Nyasha defies Babamakuru and the patriarchal structure of Rhodesian society. She does not want to fall a victim of habitualized and blind submission to male authority. Likewise she tells Tambudzai:

You've got to have some conviction, and I'm convinced I don't want to be anyone's underdog. It's not right for anyone to be that. But once you get used to it, well, it just seems natural and you just carry on. And that's the end of you. You're trapped. They (males) control everything you do (Dangarembga, 1988).

Nyasha is courageous enough even to hit back her father when he accuses her of being a whore. As a matter of fact, returning from a dance, Nyasha stays out late with a boy without any sexual intention; but Babamakuru accuses her of being a whore and lands a blow on her. Nyasha hits him back and they begin to beat each other. Nyasha is punished for her femaleness. She would not be treated like a whore if she were a male figure like her brother, Chido, who is always late for home flirting girls. Nyasha is the symbol of innocence in *Nervous Conditions*. Her westernized parents take her to London where she loses her native identity during their long presence in England. Upon their return from England, Babamakuru plays the role of a colonizer for his household. Meanwhile, Nyasha is the one who pays the most for this circumstances;

because unlike the other females she cannot remain silent against the Rhodesian Patriarchy and western hegemony. She is entangled in physical as well as emotional breakdown due to the harshness of her father, who is the center of crisis at his home.

Derek Wright believes that Babamakuru is the hysteric character and the center of neurosis in his nuclearized family, the one who stays well by making the well ones sick, the nervous condition of the native in the Fanonian title, and the one whose power-complex is fueled by colonialism long suppression of traditional male authority in Africa (Wright, 1997). Babamakuru behaves like a magistrate whose jurisdiction spreads throughout his poor clan. As an African, he is held in contempt by the colonizers. Therefore, he oppresses the feeble people, especially the females to get rid of his inferiority complex. Babamakuru judges the others based on his own criteria. He punishes his subjects, makes decision for them, determines their future life, and forces them to "obey and endure". Sometimes the accused female is not allowed even to defend herself. The assembly of men in which the male jury of the clan headed by Babamakuru decides about Lucia's (Tambudzai's aunt) immoral sexual behavior is an example of Babamakuru's oppression he condemns Lucia in his local court without letting her defend herself.

Tsitsi Dangarembga depicts the pathetic situation of females in Southern Rhodesia throughout her novel. The wretched women should tolerate the humiliation of blackness as well as the oppression imposed on them by males. The next section of this study focuses more closely on colonization and investigates its impacts over the local Shona culture and the Rhodesian people.

Identity crisis in Rhodesia as depicted in *Nervous Conditions*

The formation of hybrid identity is a significant issue in the colonized countries. The majority of postcolonial fictions focus on hybrid identity resulting from the intermingling of native identity and European idealized identity. Identity is generally derived from one's past, traditions, customs, culture, and the surrounding in which one is raised. This native identity is exposed to threat by the arrival of colonizers, because the European invaders dominate the entire cultural practices and language of natives and try to expand their domination by utilizing language as well as education as potential devices for controlling indigenous people and changing their identity. According to Ashcroft et al. 2002):

One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language. The imperial education installs a 'standard' version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalizes all 'variants' as impurities [...] Language becomes the medium through which a

hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order', and 'reality' become established (Ashcroft et al., 2002).

The dominance of colonizers over the language, educational system, and identity formation leads to the disruption of native identity. This situation is aggravated in settler colonies where a large number of whites live in the colonized territory and rule over it. The colonizers institute their own educational system in the settler colonies in order to impose a new culture, a new language, and a new way of life onto the native people, which advocates the superiority of West and its culture. They regard their language as a device which is able to teach the natives different aspects of civilization. Accordingly, the colonized people turn to be bilingual nations. In case of the British Empire, English becomes the language of government and education in the settler colonies. Consequently, the native languages of the colonized countries are marginalized. The natives attend white schools and get familiar with the culture which is supposed to civilize them. The indigenous people learn the language of the colonizers and begin to speak it even at home. Some of them consider the new language as a sign of prestige. They adopt the manners of 'beautiful' and 'attractive' whites; hence, forget a great portion of their local practices which appear to have no value. Since the natives, especially those who attend the white schools are brainwashed into thinking that the whites are going to civilize them; a good image of the colonizers is shaped in their mind which make it difficult for the leaders of liberation movements to disillusion them. Tambudzai's impression of the colonizers is a good example of this phenomenon. She says:

They (the whites) had come not to take but to give. They were about God's business here in darkest Africa. They had given up the comfort and security of their homes to come and lighten our darkness. It was a big sacrifice that the missionaries made. It was a sacrifice that made us grateful to them [...] We treated them like deities (Dangarembga, 1988).

Tsitsi Dangarembga attempts to depict the victimization of Shona culture as well as language, and the eagerness of educated characters to imitate the honorable Whites in her book. There are many references to adaptation of Englishness and the resultant gradual oblivion of Shona in *Nervous Conditions*. For instance, Maiguru tells Tambudzai that her children who have been trained in the white schools "don't understand Shona very well any more, and have been speaking nothing but English for so long that most of their Shona is gone" (Dangarembga, 1988). Nhamo is another character who puts away Shona just after a short period since his presence in the mission, a white school where English is advocated over Shona as the superior language of enlightened Europeans.

Therefore, Nhamo begins to speak English soon after he leaves the rural homestead to attend the mission headed by his uncle. Tambudzai regards this phenomenon as "a terrible change".

Returning home from the mission after a year, Nhamo turns out to have changed drastically both in terms of appearance and personality. The most important change is related to the language. Tambudzai remarks that Nhamo "had forgotten how to speak Shona" (Dangarembga, 1988). Nhamo is even so mean and contemptible to announce that he is no longer Jeremiah's son. Just like Babamakuru who grovels to the whites for promotion, Nhamo is always cringing before Babamakuru to gain his favor, because he knows that his uncle is the one who has taken him away from impoverished rural life to the white school where he can learn Englishness. This sort of humiliation is observed in the life of the majority of characters in *Nervous Conditions*. Actually, the natives are taught to be humble without minding their own lost dignity.

Being educated in such a situation could not give the indigenous people a sense of self-esteem. Babamakuru is an educated man who has got his master degree from England, but education is not a source of enlightenment for him. As a matter of fact, Babamakuru does not attend the university to gain critical power but to get a degree and later find a job. Then he can have food and clothes. He needs education for earning money, and there is no choice for him to attend the university but through the whites. Therefore he cringes to the colonizers to hit the target. Babamakuru considers his honorable social status "as a result of the kindness, and generosity of those whites who had singled him out for special elevation among millions of unfortunate blacks, and for which he was eternally grateful" (Njozi, 2005).

The colonizers choose some particular people like Babamakuru among the natives and take them to Europe in order to train them how to behave as their advocate in the colonized countries upon their return from the West. The whites expect these eager natives to "endure and obey" in return for the money they get. Consequently, striving for economic prosperity, Babamakuru becomes a slave who should totally forget about his dignity. He is supposed to cultivate the Rhodesians based on the western criteria and teach them to assume a new identity. Babamakuru teaches his students the Englishness of the whites. Therefore, they are trained based on the will of the colonizers. These keen disciples imitate western manners, then willingly and unwillingly forget a great portion of their past. They acquire a new hybrid identity which is neither African nor European.

People like Babamakuru and Nhamo are brainwashed into thinking that their white masters are godlike paragons of highly advanced and benevolent men perfect to be taken as the models of civilization, humanity, and wealth. Consequently, Nhamo is proud of forgetting Shona and learning western behavior. Nhamo's new

identity is a matter of pride and joy for him. He is unaware of the threat which is behind his white mask. Believing in the efficiency and goodwill of the whites, those native Africans who attend the white schools accept whatever the colonizers say without any critical evaluation. Such a blind submission to the colonizers is what Nyasha warns Tambudzai about:

It's bad enough when a country gets colonized, but when the people do as well! That's the end, really, that's the end (Dangarembga, 1988).

According to Edward Said, the European colonizers legitimize their hegemony over the colonized countries by claiming that they are going to civilize the barbarous natives and raise them to the European Standards. Nyasha remarks that when the presence of the European colonizers is justified and the natives believe in their goodwill, it will be easier for these wicked whites to plunder their colonies and transform the identity of the natives without confronting any serious challenge. A noticeable example of such a phenomenon is Tambudzai's misinterpretation about the British colonizers when she says that the whites have come to help them in their emeralds. Tambudzai, Babamakuru, and Nhamo are "good Africans" as defined by the colonizers. They are like "cultivable land", apt to receive any kind of plantation.

Nonetheless, there are always some intellectual opponents among the indigenous people in a colonized country. They try to disillusion the native people and warn them about the real intent of the colonizers. Sometimes the colonizers raise these opponents within themselves. Nyasha is such an intellectual. As an African who lived in England over four years, Nyasha is a westernized girl who has forgotten parts of her native culture. She learned in England that Europeans are superior to Africans in all aspects; hence the African inferior cultural practices should be replaced with the western culture which is able to civilize the barbarous Africans. Moreover, the magnificent and luxurious appearance of Britain allured Nyasha as well as her father, Babamakuru, and persuaded them about the competence of the whites to civilize them and develop their poor country.

So far Nyasha is a product of westerization, but since she is an intellectual, the gradual changes began to happen regarding her viewpoint about the whites. She challenges the authority of her father and ascribes his violent behavior to the colonizers. Nyasha blames the whites for all their misfortunes and says that no longer she will believe in what the whites teach her. She tells Tambudzai:

They (the whites, the missionaries) have done it to me [...] they did it to them (her parents) too [...] to both of them, but especially to him (Babamakuru). They put him through it all [...] why do they do it Tambu [...] to me and

to you and to him? Do you see what they have done? They have taken us away [...] they have deprived you of you, him of him, ourselves of each other. We're groveling [...] I won't grovel. Oh no, I won't. I'm not a good girl (Dangarembga, 1988).

Nyasha confirms that she does not want to be a good African as defined by the colonizers. According to the colonizers, a good African is supposed to accept what the whites say, without putting them into test. A good African is the one who admits her/his inferiority and gratefully resorts to the western culture for civilization. Nyasha rejects all these notions and emphasizes that she does not want to be a good African in this way anymore. Regurgitating what she has accepted in the white schools up to now, Nyasha tears the history books written by the colonizers. She realizes that " she can't continue to absorb and be absorbed by the histories of colonialism; she refuses to submit peacefully to a role of well-educated and respectable wife in alliance with the dominant ruling powers" (McWilliams, 1991).

Nyasha turns to be critical of what the western education has taught her about the colonizers and their purposes. Nyasha's rejection of colonial authority by tearing her books is accompanied by vomiting the food she is forced to eat due to her father's insistence. Babamakuru always forces Nyasha to eat all her food in spite of Nyasha's unwillingness. Therefore, she eats the food and immediately vomits it after leaving the dinner table. Food becomes a sign of resistance for Nyasha against the "neocolonial patriarch's oppression". Nyasha challenges her father's authority, and just in the same way she rejects the colonial education through her reaction to the imposed food and books. Actually, she extends regurgitation from food to the western education as well as identity.

Nyasha stands for intellectual resistance, because she believes in racial and gender equality. She tells Tambudzai that she does not want to be "anyone's underdog". Nyasha believes that the people should not act based on the obligation and necessity, but rather based on the "conviction", because everybody should have some conviction. She resists any sort of oppression based on her own conviction which persists on racial and gender equality, as well as human dignity. Since Nyasha is the representative of resistance in *Nervous Conditions*, Tambudzai tries to imitate her, but she can't be a true follower of Nyasha. Unlike her counterpart, Tambudzai merely deceives herself about maintaining her own dignity. She reprimands her brother, Nhamo for neglecting his native identity, and also for his flattery to Babamakuru; but her own behavior is not noticeably contrary to Nhamo's after she leaves the homesteads and learns Englishness in the westernized school headed by Babamakuru. Tambudzai ascribes her subservience to Babamakuru, as well as her praise of the whites to her wisdom. As a matter of fact, rational behavior is her lame excuse which leads to self-deception. Apparently,

Tambudzai is an opponent of flattery and submission to the whites, but actually she is a rural girl who violates her self-esteem in order to get rid of her squalid rural life and to place herself in the urban society. Her only resistance to Babamakuru and the European conventions goes back to her denial of attending the contemptuous and foolish wedding arranged for her parents by Babamakuru.

Tambudzai's motivation concerning receiving an education is not related to enlightenment. She leaves her destitute family and attends the mission to guarantee food for herself in future. As mentioned before, unlike Nyasha, Tambudzai admires the whites in spite of her apparent disapproval of colonization. She regards the colonizers as "holy" men who trouble themselves and leave their luxurious homes in Europe in order to civilize the barbarous Africans. Therefore, she adopts the European manners and later on views her past life with contempt. Nevertheless, Tambudzai's illusion does not survive for a long time. As she stays in touch with the colonizers, more and more facts regarding racial discrimination are revealed to her. She succeeds in her education at the mission and manages to enroll at Sacred Heart College as a top student but racial discrimination disregards her in relation to the white students in this college and functions as an obstacle for her success in the college. Tambudzai is forced to live in a small room with the other African students in Sacred Heart College, while the white students reside in the beautiful large rooms in the college dormitory. Actually Tambudzai is treated as an "other".

Conclusion

As discussed in the previous sections of this study, the British Empire colonized numerous countries in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The purpose behind colonization was economic and political advancement. Imperial powers such as England and France divided the world among themselves and oppressed indigenous people of their colonies to reach their wicked goals. They expropriated lands and raw materials of their colonies and forced the native people to work for them as cheap laborers. On the other hand, the colonized countries were considered as potential markets for the western products. The justification of such an oppressive colonization was the notorious claim that barbarous natives should be ordered and released from barbarity. Based on this allegation, the superior white nations should carry the burden of civilizing the barbarous nations. Consequently, the imperial powers colonized a great portion of the world and plundered the capital of colonized territories. The colonizers planned to obliterate the indigenous cultures and impose a new identity, which is appreciative of the West, on natives. Likewise, the natives were brainwashed into thinking that the Western colonizers trouble themselves to civilize them.

The incidents of *Nervous Conditions* take place in Southern Rhodesia, a former settler colony of the British Empire. In a settler colony, the number of white colonizers who reside in the colonized country quickly increases, and then they overthrow the native rulers and establish a minority government to rule the colony. Tambudzai, the female protagonist of *Nervous Conditions*, narrates the story of some pathetic females who are doubly colonized in Rhodesia. Tambudzai, Nyasha, Maiguru, Ma'shingay, and Lucia represent the wretched women of Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, who suffered both racial and gender discrimination. They have no right to receive an education, because they are inferior to men. Moreover, they should work at home and in fields, thus there is no time for them to attend school. On the other hand, they are victims of racial inequality which is practiced by the white colonizers who consider them as inferior black creatures. Consequently, not even education can release those who manage to receive an education through ordeal, from misery. That is why Maiguru is entrapped in spite of getting a master degree, and Tambudzai is treated as an "other" in Sacred Heart College.

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