

**LIFE IN A NERVOUS CONDITION: TRANSGRESSING A GOVERNING ORDER IN TSITSIDANGAREMBGA'S NERVOUS CONDITIONS AND ARUNDHATI ROY'S THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS**

*Dr. Javaid Iqbal Bhat, Dept. of English, South Campus, University of Kashmir*

**Abstract:**

*The essay argues that the female protagonists in Tsitsi Dangarembga's (1959- ) Nervous Conditions (1988) and Arundhati Roy's (1961- ) The God of Small Things (1997) strive against the "multiple subjectivities" (D'Souza 10), especially the patriarchal norms and regulations in the larger context of the continuum from colonial to postcolonial structures; their life stories are not marvellous for the triumphs registered but the endeavour made to fracture the unyielding structures of a society hardened by the masculine command, in their respective socio-cultural situations. Besides juxtaposing and contrasting the treatment of the situations, challenges, victories and imaginations of the female protagonists, the postcolonial reaction to the convergence of racial and linguistic colonialism will be foregrounded.*

**Brief Analytical Summary**

The NC is set in Umtali, in the former southern Rhodesia, during the 1960s and 1970s. It is the first published novel in English by a black Zimbabwean woman (Vizzard 205). Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (NC henceforth) is an autobiographical novel, of growing up in a colonial circumstance. The title is drawn from the Preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) wherein it is stated that the "status of 'native' is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among colonized people with their consent" (Sartre 20). Tambu or Tambudzai, the protagonist of the novel, narrates her experience in the backdrop of the patriarchal organization of the Sigauke Family. Narrated in a flashback, just as the other two novels in this selection, Tambu is rather surprisingly unmoved, rather happy, at the death of her brother Nhamo by mumps. "I was not sorry," says Tambudzai "when my brother died" (1). The reason for this rather dramatic response to the death is that only when her brother was dead had she got an opportunity to study at the Mission school. An important event in the novel is the arrival of Tambu's uncle, Babamukuru and his family from England. Tambu and her cousin sister Nyasha come close to each other, not without a distinct conflict in their self-identification. Nyasha has lost touch with the native Shona language, for which she begins to nurse regrets. While Tambu is observing the dictatorial behaviour of Babamukuru, and his Christian and Western predisposition, Nyasha becomes more assertive in the family, at one point almost using her fist against the father. With a bicultural upbringing, Nyasha is caught in a cultural bind as a hybrid between the West and the native Shona culture, and is in the middle of an aggravating identity predicament. Her father insists on imbibing the western values while his daughter is unwilling to follow the dictates, and tries to come closer to the native cultural moorings. She wanted to read *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, but her father fearing sexual promiscuity and immoral behaviour, is against that and keeps the book away from her, which she resents as an attack on her independent choice. Eventually, like some of the writings of Bessie Head (1937-1986), especially *A Question of Power*, and Dambudzo Marechera's (1952-1987) novel *House of Hunger* (1977), NC finds its architecture in the exposition of emotional and mental illness, the mother Mainini's depression, Nyasha's anorexia and bulimia, and Tambudzai's own melancholia.

*The God of Small Things* (*GST* henceforth), a novel which sold over six million copies in forty different languages (Mullaney 77), is set in the small town of Ayemenem, in the southern Indian state of Kerala. The *GST*, again, narrated in a flashback style, projects Rahel as the protagonist and the story “takes place during thirteen days in December 1969 and one day in June 1992” (Giles 4). Rahel and Estha are siblings, two-egg dizygotic twins born eighteen minutes apart, in the Ipe Family (6), an uppercast Syrian Christian family in Ayemenem. The novel tracks the growth of consciousness, through a series of closely linked incidents. An important episode is the relationship between their mother Ammu, and Velutha, a relationship which resembles in its social ramification to that of Mary Turner and Moses in *The Grass is Singing* (1950) by the Nobel Prize winning Doris Lessing (1919-2013), with almost similar penalties. After the cousin of Rahel, Sophie Mol, drowns and later dies, Velutha is falsely implicated and interrogated to death in the police station. The cousins carry the harsh remorse of hiding the truth about Sophie Mol's real reason of death.

### **Escape, Entrapment and Rebellion**

A common source of disquiet in both narratives is the rigid patriarchal structure and the various instruments it deploys to endorse and consolidate its position. If Rahel and Estha are under the tight control of the Ipe Family, with Pappachi (Grandfather) and Chacko, the Marxist uncle, dominating the family scene, in *NC*, the Sigauke family is under the thumb of the uncle Babamukuru. Both Chacko and Babamukuru insist on following their dictates, the latter enforcing a ruthless sexual and academic code of conduct. In both, the female protagonists are aware of the anxiety caused by the behaviours of men, both black and white, and close and far ones. These patriarchal families, with patrilineal and patrilocal customs and conventions, have set up and congealed Love Laws, in which sanction is given to only certain kinds of love while others are forbidden. However, in both texts, these and other unwritten laws are broken; the traditional boundaries are crossed, thereby challenging the sexist conditioning. As the narrator says in *GSL*:

Looking back now, to Rahel it seemed as though this difficulty that their family had with classification ran much deeper than the jam-jelly question.

Perhaps Ammu, Estha and she were the worst transgressors. But it wasn't just them. It was the others too. They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much. The laws that make grandmothers grandmothers, uncles uncles, mothersmothers, cousins cousins, jam jam, and jelly jelly. (16)

Rahel's mother, Ammu, belongs to a Syrian-Christian family but she decides to marry a Hindu, Baba, of Bengali background. Following the convention of patrilocality, she stays in her husband's house, and gives birth to Rahel and Estha. Later, she divorces her husband, after he wanted to improve his prospects in the company he was working by offering his wife to his boss, Mr. Hollick, and returns to her home state of Kerala, where she is not well-received, even her children are treated badly, for having a Hindu father. Baby Kochamma, another important female character, also marries outside the family, and goes with one Irish Jesuit, Father Mulligan. Baby Kochamma is the one who makes the children and Ammu feel unwelcome after the return from Bengal, reflecting how women have themselves become parties to the enforcement and perpetuation of a harsh patriarchal system. The ultimate rebellion is Ammu's romantic and transgressive sexual relationship with the untouchable Velutha, belonging to the Paravan subcaste, the lowest among the untouchables in the Hindu Caste System, which has historically been disconnected from the three other castes, to the extent that even the shadow of an untouchable was considered contaminating. Underneath Ammu's longing to “touch the Untouchable” (Bose 64) is her desire to know both the Other/historically Otherise (the ever internally colonised in the Hindu Caste System), or that which we react to with horror and disgust, and the sacred, which converge in the character of Velutha (Fox 37). The

desire is counterproductive. Once Ammu's relationship with the untouchable is exposed (ironically, it is Velutha's father, VellyaPaapen, who comes running and crying with the information to Mammachi that his son and their daughter have become lovers!), Baby Kochamma and other family members manipulate the incrimination of the untouchable Velutha in the "murder" of Sophie Mol; the latter had, however, drowned accidentally after the boat capsized in the river, and who had turned "pale and as wrinkled as a dhobi's thumb from being in water for too long" (3). Before Ammu could vouch for his innocence, the police, mirroring the bias against untouchables in the caste-ridden society, had killed him during interrogation. Towards the end of the narrative another love law is broken and a new one produced, this time a more radical turn is wrought when Rahel and Estha are shown to enter into an incestuous relationship, perhaps trying to find a healing touch from the wounded family history. The narrator as a witness to the final alarming crossing of boundary, affirms "once again they broke the Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much" (16).

Being hemmed in by patriarchal system, the insurgence against unquestioned authority is seminal to *NC*. The female voice and body "maligned and inscribed by patriarchal and colonial practice, becomes a powerful site of resistance in the novel" (Patchay145). When Babamukuru, the western educated, Christianised patriarch of the family believes the marriage between Tambu's parents, Jeremiah and Shingayi, has to be sacralised in a Christian ceremony, the protagonist feels agonized. Her question is that if the previous wedding in the native style was wrong, then she and her siblings are illegitimate children. However, her uncle is dead against any defiance to his position. "I am the head," he affirmed "of the house. Anyone who defies my authority is an evil thing in this house, bent on destroying what I have made" (167). Moreover, Babamukuru, as head of the Mission School, is not only trying to Christianise but also westernize the children of the community at the cost of the local customs and traditions and the all-important Shona language. Such an attitude engenders psychological problems, a kind of cultural schizophrenia, as his own daughter, after coming into contact with the Shona culture, following her return from England, wants to recast herself in the native fashion, an idea which is resisted by her father, who wants her to fashion herself as per his domineering expectation. Not all women in the narrative share the same fate. Ma' Shingayi, Tambu's mother, laments the double-bind of being a woman and having the black color. She underlines the double burden of being a woman in Zimbabwe. Not seeing any sign of hope of release Ma' Shingayi, advises her daughter Tambu to bear with strength the problem of womanhood in Zimbabwe. "And these days it is worse," mother tells her daughter "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" (23). Ma' Shingayi is the figure of acquiescence to norms which have congealed in the society for centuries. Her traditional self is unwilling to bear the mantle of resistance, while she is, simultaneously, envious of her brother and sister-in-law, who have greater social and economic mobility due to their education. Ma' Shingayi along with Maiguru, wife of Babamukuru, is the "entrapped" woman in the classification made by Tambu at the beginning of the narrative. Maiguru, like Tambu's mother, after having witnessed a relatively freer life in the West, has subscribed to restrictive gender roles and raised a family at the cost of her own individual subjectivity. Maiguru bemoans the fact that no one seems to understand the sacrifices she has made. "... When I was in England," she says with a tone of deep regret "I glimpsed for a little while the things I could have been, the things I could have done if things were different. But there was Babawa Chido and the children and the family. And does anyone realise, does anyone appreciate, what sacrifices were made? As for me, no one even thinks of the things I gave up" (101). She realises that her life has been reduced to a domestic routine and drudgery, without any dignity and recognition. She decides to leave but finally returns to her husband's household. Both Maiguru and Ma' Shingayi have realised the uselessness of resistance against the prevailing forces of dominating phallogocentric economy, and insist on the younger generation women to passively acquiesce in to the roles

assigned to them. This encouragement to play a subservient role is not without an internal conflict. Both Maiguru and Ma'Shingayni aspire to be what they have not succeeded in doing or becoming, like Shingayni's brother and sister in law, or the freer women of the West, whose life and condition is experienced by Maiguru during her stay there with her husband and two children. The aspiration and subservience cohabit in the existence of these two women, representing a model of female life in which, finally, the needs and desires of the male order triumph over that women. Having seen and lived the dangerous consequences of the regimes of control and organisation, Tambu decided to assert herself and record for posterity the struggle of life she and other women had to go through and "...quietly, unobtrusively and extremely fitfully, something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed, bringing me to this time when I can set down this story. It was a long and painful process for me, that process of expansion" (204). The reader is hailed into a narrative that touches off with an emotional rebellion. In a social order in which feminine joy and sorrow is channelled through masculine systems of thought, Tambu registers the first note of dissent when she announces the absence of regret at the death of her brother Nhamo. The rebellious tone is justified, for Nhamo represents everything that she has been denied. His education was fed and encouraged by the domestic service of Tambudzai at home. Only when he is dead, does she have access to social mobility and moves out of the grinding routine of her house. Nyasha, cousin sister of Tambu, and daughter of the enigmatic but authoritarian Babamukuru, is an embodiment of rebellion. She straddles two worlds, England and Africa. Nyasha challenges the notions inscribed in the Zimbabwean culture of her father in which not only were restraint and containment encouraged but uncontrolled female sexuality was considered a threat to the family prestige and integrity. Her opinion is that "integrity is vested in a well-developed conscience and in an individual's ability to negotiate right and wrong" (Shaw 12).

### **Perils of Education**

The subjugation of women in the two novels is reified in terms of pursuit of education. The education is perhaps the only instruments of advancement for women in a society prejudicial to their empowerment. The school provided a space away from the conventional roles of domestic duty, child rearing and farming, however, this space was denied, for the educated women were not considered "decent" (181). The protagonist enters the forbidden space by a quirk of fate. (Tambu enters the formal mode of education after the death of her brother). Tambu has a heightened sense of injustice perpetrated on women in a social structure privileging the masculine desires. Her mother is contemptuous of English hegemony, both linguistic and cultural. She blames the Englishness for destroying her son, and asks others to be cautious. Tambu's visceral hate of her family members is rooted in the negation of her desire of self-empowerment through the classic meritocratic ladder of education:

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

In those days I felt the injustice of my situation every time I thought about it, which I could not help but do often since children are always talking about their age. Thinking about it, feeling the injustice of it, this is how I came to dislike my brother, and not only my brother: my father, my mother--in fact, everybody. (12)

The educational marginalisation in *NC* is replicated in *GST*. John Ipe or Pappachi, the patriarch of the Ipe Family, who was appointed as an Imperial Entomologist by the colonial administrators, and later became the Joint Director of Entomology, enforces the same authority on his family members as Babamukuru in the Sigauke Family. Pappachi smashes the violin when his wife Mammachi is praised by the violin master. He beats his wife every night with the flower vase and feels really bad when his wife is



praised by people after she takes charge of the factory Paradise Pickles and Preserves, a work which, initially, her husband had to take, but he refuses considering the work to be below his dignity. It is Pappachi's firm opinion that it was unnecessary to spend money on the education of women. So Ammu, his daughter, had it better if she stayed home and waited for a good marriage proposal. Her elder brother, Chacko, gets Rhodes Scholarship and leaves for Oxford, while his sister, like Tambu, has to stay behind and take care of family responsibilities. So if it was not "decent" for women to obtain education in the *NC*, the same is considered "unnecessary" *GSL*. The education acquired by women in *GSL*, like in *NC*, is by accident and not by deliberation. Rahel leaves for Delhi and then the USA, where she regains her "autonomous self" (Ahmad) removed from the constraints of a caste-ridden provincial Indian life, only after her mother has brought insult and humiliation to the family by crossing the caste lines. Even Baby Kochamma, Navomi Ipe, aunt of the twins Rahel and Estha, stays at home until she falls in love with the Irish Father Mullighan. To win him over she goes after him to Madras, where she converts to Catholicism. However, she is not happy in the convent, and writes agonising letters to her father in coded language. That is precisely when the star of education begins to shine on her narrow horizon. Her father knowing well that his reputation is at stake decides to send her out of India for education. She joins the University of Rochester in New York and gets a degree in Ornamental Gardening. The danger to family reputation is put off by sending away women for education.

While the denial of education and even the imparting of education become mechanisms of disciplining the female subject and establishing the masculine writ in the two narratives, the process of education does not end without dissent and resentment. Rahel and Estha are required to master English, a sign of Anglophilia, which Chacko makes them understand, runs in the family. (He asks them to check Anglophilia in the dictionary). They are asked to read the classics of English literature like Shakespeare's plays and not Indian languages or literature. In this linguistic Anglicisation the Reader's Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary was a must read to check the meanings of English words. Baby Kochamma made sure the twins learnt English and distanced themselves from the native Malayalam:

That whole week Baby Kochamma eavesdropped relentlessly on the twins' private conversations, and whenever she caught them speaking in Malayalam, she levied a small fine which was deducted at source. From their pocket money. She made them write lines "impositions" she called them I will always speak in English, I will always speak in English. A hundred times each. (18)

For Baby Kochamma everything British is inherently superior. However, in their respective ways, the twins combat such educational regimentation, showing their opposition in symbolic ways, for example, when they write the spelling of Satan as "natas" (29). They read things backwards ("nataSniriehtseye") as well as hear words incorrectly ("gnickers" rather than "knickers"). The children "enjoy making up words and breaking the rules of Grammar, and they cherish the sound of the words without even knowing their meaning" (Clarke *in* Tickell 135). The children deconstruct the regular, mechanical and standard form of the coloniser's language, lending a greater flexibility and mobility of their linguistic existence, inviting the epithet of "female Rushdie" (Olsson 3) for Arundhati Roy, and "establishing . . . the cultural striking back of the once-peripheral" (Boehmer 165). Similarly, Tambu and her immediate relatives are expected to learn English at the cost of the Shona language. Tambu feels unsettled to note her brother showing contempt for the native moorings after he is admitted in the Mission School. His estrangement from the homestead had increased. Tambu felt that something in the Mission School had "turned his mind to thinking our homestead no longer had any claim upon him, so that when he did come home for his vacations, it was as if he had not: he was not very sociable..."(7).

Having found that the female protagonists rebel with their speech and action in their respective patriarchal zones, it is significant to note the end of them all, including their "corporeal resistance" (Chasen

31). Rahel returns to Ayemenem, as her mother is banished from Ayemenem, “defeated at every turn” (Mangrulkar 256) and dies in a hotel, abandoned by her close relatives like Mary Turner in *The Grass is Singing* who is murdered by her servant Moses, an act which is portrayed by some critics as a kind of a sacrifice at the white guilt (Wang). Tambu grows melancholic and Nyasha becomes anorexic. Despite their apparent defeats characters like Nyasha, Ammu, Tambu and Rahe did manage to cleave the hard structures of male authority, and charted a path for the rest to follow in order to discover the female voice and selfhood, untainted by male-dominated socio-cultural determinants. While Tambu's voice and actions involved "retrieval, [a] rediscovery and reinvention" (Bryce 620), hysteria of Nyasha does manage, if not a total triumph, at least the destabilisation of masculine regimes of seeing and practice.

### **Crisis of the Post-Colonial Hybrid Subject**

Sophie Mol, "Hatted, bell-bottomed, and Loved from the Beginning" (65), daughter of Chacko and Margaret, visits Ayemenem along with her mother at the invitation of Chacko. Margaret's second husband has died in an accident prompting her first spouse Chacko to revive his old romance and invite them to his house in Kerala. The eager wait for their arrival is over and the young twins meet their cousin sister. Soon afterwards, as the tragic events unfold in the Ipe family, the twins and Sophie Mol take a boat to cross the river to the History House. In the river a log hits the boat and the boat capsizes, drowning Sophie Mol. The death of Sophie marks the end of potential hybrid cohabitation. Similarly, Nyasha in *NC*, is on the brink of collapse following her altercation with her dictatorial father, and her growing unpopularity in the Mission School where her father was the headmaster. She is an intellectual hybrid who defies the inherited political indifference of the colonised, for she belongs to the native Shona culture, though upbringing occurred in the English culture, to the extent that she has to relearn Shona language from her cousin sister, Tambu. The hate for native language and culture has been inculcated in her by Babamukuru, who wants English taste to be nurtured in all affairs of life as signs of progress and advancement. Sophie Mol is both a biological and intellectual hybrid. Her father, Chacko, is from India, while her mother is English. Though their parents have separated before her arrival in Ayemenem, yet she like Nyasha, straddles two worlds, the West and the East. In their death (violent in the case of Sophie Mol) and isolation (disease and self-mutilation in the case of Nyasha) does the textual vision give emphasis to the impossibility of hybrid consciousness?

The reason for the failure of the hybrid experiment, an experiment rife with the potential to subvert the boundaries (Bhaba), in the textual vision, appears to be inhered in the scene where Nyasha, out of deep rage, “against the one-sided colonial representations” (Aegerter 232), tears apart the history textbook:

Nyasha was beside herself with fury. She rampaged, shredding her history book between her teeth ('Their history! Fucking liars. Their bloody lies.), breaking mirrors, her clay pots, anything she could lay her hands on and jabbing the fragments viciously into her flesh, stripping the bedclothes, tearing her clothes from the wardrobe and trampling them underfoot. 'They've trapped us. They've trapped us. But I won't be trapped. I'm not a good girl. I won't be trapped.'...

The next morning she was calm, but she assured me it was an illusion, the eye of a storm. 'There's a whole lot more,' she said. 'I've tried to keep it in but it's powerful. It ought to be. There's nearly a century of it,' she added with her wry grin. 'But I am afraid,' she told me apologetically. 'It upsets people.' (201)

Who are these forces which have ensnared “us”? Nyasha is referring to the colonising forces, the tiny white elite, who are still controlling the cultural dimension of Zimbabwe, with whose policies and procedures, many blacks, like her father Babamukuru, have become accomplices. It is values of these colonising forces which have descended into textbooks, which are eventually, drilled into the impressionable brains of the Shona culture. She literally uses her body to challenge such slanted

relationship between the West and the East, favouring the cultural values of the West while humiliating and degrading the existing native apparatus. Upon suggestion from Babamukuru that the marriage ritual of Tambu's parents must be redone in line with the Christian practice, Nyasha opposes such a move. Although Tambu, initially, resisted such a thought for it constituted a “ridiculous travesty” (Gorle 184), later she feels the practice might be right, until Nyasha changes her mind, awakening to the idea that western, Christian values are not superior to those of the native Shona. When Tambu, exposed to the culture outside her homestead, speaks of the greater culture of the whites, Nyasha reprimands her for giving home to such thinking. Nyasha became quite annoyed and delivered a lecture on the dangers of assuming that Christian ways were progressive ways. “It's bad enough,' she said severely, 'when a country gets colonized, but when the people do as well! That's the end, really, that's the end.” Nyasha becomes a surrogate for the postcolonial aspiration to dismiss the skewed relationship between the homestead and the abroad. A hybridity which she is threatens to sustain and become the model of and which replicates flawed internal social structure of Zimbabwe, is thwarted by Nyasha. Her western self cannot exist at the cost of the native values of life and society. Her disease and self-mutilation reflect the female body's reluctance to admit of the imbalanced hybridity.

Shona language and culture are replaced by Malyalam language and culture in *GST*. Chacko informs the twins that their family is traditionally anglophile beginning with the patriarch John Ipe, their grandfather, who was bestowed with the honor of the Imperial Entomologist by the British. Since then the family continued to cherish the values and traditions of the colonisers. The independence of India brought no change; the geographically removed coloniser became even more tempting. The consequence of this embedded Anglophilia is that the children are forcibly distanced from the nourishing roots of their mother language and alienated from the history of their forefathers. Chacko explains to the twins:

They were a whole family of Anglophiles. Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away. He explained that history was like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside. "To understand history," Chacko said, "we have to go inside and listen to what they're saying. And look at the books and the pictures on the wall. And smell the smells." (2.90-91)

In this scenario of cultivated hate for the Malyali Culture, and enhancement of the prestige of the English, the underlying textual current undercuts the possibility of a successful union between the East and West, for it rests on the foundation of imbalance and gradual assassination of the local history and voices. The Ipe Family, metaphorical of the larger family of India, has been “locked out.” The education, like it is in *NC*, has nurtured a psychological distance from the homestead of native culture and promoted the foreign voices. The native history is detested, mocked at while the history of the colonisers is glorified; what is close by becomes too far and what is distant has been put within catching distance.

"[...] because we've been locked out.” Chacko tells the twins in a memorable image. “And when we look in through the windows, all we see are shadows. And when we try and listen, all we hear is a whispering. And we cannot understand the whispering, because our minds have been invaded by a war. [...] A war that has made us adore our conquerors and despise ourselves.” (95)

Not only do the hybrids fail, but the attempts at hybridity also meet a dead end. All cross-cultural marriages do not succeed in *GSL*. The marriage between Baba (a hindu) and Ammu (upper cast Syrian Christian), while it ruptures and transgresses the red line of religion, ends up in failure. Due to the “contradictory and brutal exercises and self-divisions inside the country” (Nazari 200), the hybrid drive is pushed down the cliff. The children born of this relationship becomes the doubles of Velutha, the pariahs, who do not receive

the same treatment as given to the other members. "Baby Kochamma sits between the twins," says the narrator, "whom she dislikes. She thinks that they're 'doomed, fatherless waifs' and 'Half-Hindu Hybrids' whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry" (55). Baby Kochamma faces stiff resistance from family in her relationship with Father Mullighan. Eventually, when she does cross the line demarcated for her, her unconscious drift toward a hybrid connection does not consummate.

### Conclusion

The two Novels describe the struggle waged by the female characters against "hegemony, exclusion and stasis" (Okonkwo 53), which has incited hate and resentment and they endeavour to, if not redraw, at least push them in some places and pull them at others, in order to craft a movement away from the "smug, ordered world" (83). The protagonists are not mere surrogates for the anxious transnational intellectual attempting to reorder the postcolonial space in a just and equitable manner but voices which are self-defining and self-referential, breaking the male literary arena, which demystify the traditional idealised images of Indian or African women, and promise fresh insights into the issues of women (Uwakweh) whose enforced silences are vocalised by women like Tambu (Edson 229). At the intersection of the threatening ideologies of patriarchy, postcolonial linguistic and cultural hegemony, the female characters attempt to negotiate and find a "meaningful female identity" (Sizemore 70). The power structures of male-centric families, Mission School, neo-colonial technologies of hegemony seek to ensure that the transgressors remain vulnerable and marginalised (Liddle 1), however, between the tussle of empowerment and impoverishment, the idea which cleaves through is that of process, evolution and progress. Tambu, Rahel, Nyasha and Ammu mark those indelible footprints toward a reasonable world, which will remain an enduring homage to their creators.

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### Foot Note:

- i. For merits of comparing the texts written by women of postcolonial third world countries, see, D'Souza, Florence. "Contemporary Portrayals of Women by Women: Comparing India and Ghana." *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies* 18 (2012): 1-10. Bypassing the critique of "reverse ethnocentrism" is an important reason, not to mention the polemics of writing for western consumption, when a Third world text is compared with the First world text.
- ii. Jacqueline Bardolph comments that *Nervous Conditions* 'has a clear autobiographical grounding, since the dates framing the text correspond to the author's life: like her heroine, she was thirteen in 1968, and born and educated in Zimbabwe'; "'The Tears of Childhood' of TsitsiDangarembga", *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 13. I (Autumn 1990), 38-47, (p.

- 39).
- iii. Both Nyasha and Tambu's brother have been deracinated from their native culture by English education. This process of deracination is one of the central concerns of this Novel. It is precisely because of this pulling out of the native roots that Tambu's mother is worried about English education, for the children become "exiles of the mind", as Meenakshi Mukherjee has put it; 'without being physically away from home remain outsiders in their own country due to certain circumstances in their history, language or education' (Mukherjee 8). See Mukherjee, Meenakshi. "The Exile of the Mind." In *A Sense of the Exile in the Literature of Asia-Pacific region* ed. Bruce Bennett: Center for Studies in Australian Literature, University of Western Australia, 1988: 7-14; the exilic self is illustrated by a conversation in which Tambu is unsure whether the English or the Shona word is appropriate: Babamukuru came through the back door as we finished saying grace.  
'Good evening, Baba,' Maiguru greeted him in Shona.  
'Good evening, Daddy,' Nyasha said in English.  
'Good evening, Babamukuru,' I said, mixing the two languages because I was not sure which was most appropriate. (80)  
*Also see* Nair, Supriya. "Melancholic Women: The Intellectual Hysteric(s) in *Nervous Conditions*." *Research in African Literatures* 26.2 Flora Nwapa (Summer, 1995): 130-139.
  - iv. See Biman Basu's essay on the exposition of these three words with reference to Dangaremba's novel: Basu, Biman. "Trapped and Troping: Allegories of the Transnational Intellectual in Tsitsi Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions*." *Ariel* 28.3 (1997): 7-24.
  - v. See Bharathiraja, S. "A Study of Social Realism in the Select Indian Dalit Autobiographies." *Dissertation*. Annamalai University, 2012.
  - vi. See Alexander, M. Jacqui and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds. "Introduction: Genealogies, Legacies, Movements." *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
  - vii. Chacko is a typical instance of the "white mask" of Fanon. His room is filled with books in English, and he easily mimics the style of the British. See Fanon, F. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Trans. C Makarman. London: Pluto Press, 1982.
  - viii. See Stockdale, Emily. "Language and the Creation of Characters in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*." Thesis. University of North Carolina, Wilmington, 2008. Not just verbal language becomes central in the narrative, even silence, for example, Velutha's inability to use words for defense. His silence is as loud as the manipulation by the twins.
  - ix. From an archetypal point of view, even Ammu becomes a scapegoat at the altar of the family prestige. Her death was necessary if the Ipe family had to restore their earlier glory.
  - x. See "Rewriting the Hysteric as Anorexic in Tsitsi Dangaremba's *Nervous Conditions*" in Tamar Heller and Patricia Moran, eds., *Scenes of the Apple: Food and the Female Body in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Women's Writing* (Albany, NY: State U. of New York, 2003), 183-98. Here ingestion is equated with colonialism and the food disorders reflective of self-deterioration, where female subject is, when everything else is denied, takes control of her body.
  - xi. Please see in this context Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 1998. The indigenous people had, generally, nurtured a deep seated indifference to the barbarism of the colonisers. There is an expectation of "indifference" from the postcolonial female subject to various colonising tendencies, like the continuity in patriarchy. *Also see* Nair, Rukmini Bhaya. *Lying on the Postcolonial Couch: The Idea of Indifference*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2002. In this work, apart from other ideas, the author reveals the manner in which the colonial machine perpetuated an "indifference" toward the authority. This "indifference" continues as a psychological residue of the initial process produced in the colonial encounter. *Also note* Chu, Yu-Ru. "Recasting India: Caste, Trauma, and the Politics of Transgression in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*." Thesis. National Tsing Hua University 2006.
  - xii. See Giles, Michelle. "Postcolonial Gothic and *The God of Small Things*: The Haunting of India's Past." *Postcolonial Text* 6.1 (2011). The author identifies Gothic elements representative of haunting past of the postcolonial nation. The gothic form is suitably deployed by Roy to bring out the gaps and silences in India's history, and also the silenced, within the postcolonial India. The Ipe family, and the struggle of Rahel and Estha become metaphors of the haunted past of India. That Rahel and Estha are unable to find an adequate ground betrays India's inability to find a comfortable ground given its complexities and the traumatic relationship with the past.