

African lit

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Africa, as a land of diverse native groups presents universal views in literature where the common sentiment lies on significant political and socio-cultural changes brought about by a sea of colonizers that catapult free thinkers into regretting moods.

This is quite understandable where Africa's history is rich in suffering under the hands of colonizers. African literature wishes to impart this feeling in a classified idea of thought where most of its compositions developing after thorough contact with western culture in bulk, present the plight of African populace in the hands of a colonizing power.

The sentiments of the three writers is to live out their past experience while re-establishing national pride and meaning for the Africans post-colonial times.

This universal school of thought is heavily presented in the three presented novels below that depict the practices of the ancestral society. Although not necessarily uplifting and endorsing that the old system as the better form of culture, literature however presents the legitimate truth and the unified sentiment of the different countries in Africa.

African literature in the three popular novels we shall present is characterized by the plight of African natives in the hands of Western influence. In *Nervous Conditions*, written as a first hand narration that likely present the author's views in toto, the philosophical implication is almost similar to the second novel by Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* while written in a third person's point of view.

Both stories set with different time gaps relate to the common traditions that encountered profound changes upon the arrival of western colonizers. While *Nervous Conditions* was set during the breakaway periods of colonialism and during the dawn of a cold war; *Things Fall Apart* was written just before the turn of the 20th century amidst the timely beginnings of the British colony.

"I will when I want to Marry" was written based on the modern era but strives in earnest to portray the African traditional elements that were wracked with change. Invariably, the first two novels and the play present their feelings through a cultural conversation and encounter within their countries.

A sustained comparison can be seen within the writings with sustained discussions of African philosophy and European philosophy and between African cultures and other cultures.

The subject of "Nervous Conditions" and "Things fall Apart" is patriarchy and colonialism with a goal to stimulate readers into reflecting the very common human weakness - the love of property and comfort (Jones 1996, 6).

For Achebe, this is the effects of colonialism that threatens the very core of African tradition as enterprising individuals become opportunists. Dangarembga raises broader and more fundamental questions of restoring traditional culture by challenging popular views although she has actually criticized the traditional ways that transformed women into unassertive and recoiling persons with compassion for material comforts and fears of a penniless stature.

Nervous Conditions

In Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* missionary work was seen as a vital point that changed the culture of Zimbabwe (1988). The narrator in the novel represents the actual author who is preoccupied with the value of human existence amidst a colonial society.

Tambu as the narrator in the novel indifferently reflects on her brother Nhamo's death saying " I was not sorry when my brother died" (Dangarembga 1988: 1). Her offer of indifference without an ounce of regret while continuing to reminisce how such feelings arose revealed in shocking confession the troubled relationship between family members initially presenting a contingent sibling rivalry.

But as we one reads deeper, one encounters how culture endorses female complacency over the male firstborn child who represents the family's hopes and ambitions in the social structure of African society.

Tambu felt this principle restricting and unfair which was likewise supported by Ma'Shingayi, Tambu's mother who claimed the same fate over poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other (Dangarembga 1988: 16). Such a harsh reality was however the accepted word in the African society when the mother against the prevailing conditions that conspire to keep her convinces her daughter to passively accept tradition.

Although both women exhibit the same sentiment against the fate of women, the older one is content to accept an irregularity as law while a

younger one displays the modern attitude and probably the prevailing thought of contemporary Africa.

Nyasha as another female character goes to threaten conventional behavior and in effect received ridicule from her father Babamukuru justified on moral grounds, " What will people say of me when my daughter behaves like that?" (Dangarembga 1988, 100). Nyasha provided a willful answer, " You've taught me how I should behave.

I don't worry about what people think so there's no need for you to," which earned her some punishment (Dangarembga 1988, 114). Tradition had taught African people to submit to parental authority and moral values which the modern world sees as binding and hinged from a culture that cannot exist along with modernity which in effect is the main viewpoint of Dangarembga's novel.

Another female character, Maiguru, in the novel lament about choosing between self and security while summarizing the sacrifices she had to do for the family to comply with tradition and the woman's supportive role in the society(Dangarembga 1988, 101).

Maiguru's actions actually defines the ironic attitudes where despite moral conventions depicting feminine submission has to work hard for the family and bear the burden in silence. Maiguru's experience served as a word of wisdom for the other female characters in the novel for a choice of security over self.

Another issue raised in the novel is the effects of colonialism branded by the author as a bad phenomenon. Painted in innocence, Tambu is challenged by

perceptions where Nyasha claims that she has been influenced to colonialist ways (194).

This goes on to lament the colonialist sentiment will collide with traditional sentiments but in effect has affected the whole system. Any efforts to reject a colonial attitude faces breakdown that Nyasha has experienced as her sense of self-identity slowly disintegrating to welcome an alien culture.

Alien culture is represented through missionaries that purportedly support the indigenous people fight for independence yet perceived to be on the side of the oppressors.

While the novel set amidst the backdrop of colonial Rhodesia of the late 60's, the novel clearly emphasized how colonialism endorsed the love of property and material comforts. For Dangarembga perhaps, a dispute between moral restrictions of traditions is bad enough and the further influence of colonialism serves to trigger the worse in the society.