

العلمي والبحث العالي التعليم وزارة  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
ⵎⵓⵎⵓⵔ ⵎⵎⵎⵎⵔ ⵓⵏ ⵜⵉⵣⵉ ⵓⵣⵣⵓ  
ⵕⵓⵏⵓⵔ ⵎⵎⵎⵎⵔ ⵓⵏ ⵜⵉⵣⵉ ⵓⵣⵣⵓ  
ⵕⵓⵏⵓⵔ ⵎⵎⵎⵎⵔ ⵓⵏ ⵜⵉⵣⵉ ⵓⵣⵣⵓ

MOULOUD MAMMERI UNIVERSITY OF TIZI-OUZOU  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND LANGUAGES  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



جامعة مولود معمري-تيزي وزو  
كلية الآداب واللغات  
قسم الإنجليزية

Numéro d'article : .....  
Numéro de série : .....

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for  
Master's Degree in English**

**Domain:** Letters and Foreign Languages  
**Subject:** English  
**Option:** Literature and Civilization

**Oppression and Resistance in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003): A Comparative Study**

**Presented by:**

Ms. Hayat SFAIHI

**Supervised by:**

Ms. Dalila MATMER

**Board of Examiners:**

**Chair:** Ms. Fatiha BENSAFI, MAA, Mouloud MAMMERI University (T.O).

**Supervisor:** Ms. Dalila MATMER, MAA, Mouloud MAMMERI University (T.O).

**Examiner:** Ms. Fariza BADJA, MAA, Mouloud MAMMERI University (T.O).

**Academic year: 2021/ 2022**

*This work is dedicated to my mother and father, whose love, prayers, and affection have allowed me to attain such accomplishment and honour.*

*My sisters, Anissa, Lila, and Sabrina, for believing in me and always being there for me.*

*My brothers, Rahim, Rachid, Rezki, and Farid, for their unwavering support and encouragement.*

*For my nephews and nieces: Moumouh, Curtiss, Yanis, Melina, Samy, Anais, Eliane, Lehna,*

*Ailan, Assirem, R'Bouh, Massyl, Juba, Lhiva, to whom I wish all the best of the world.*

*For Vanessa, Hamida, and Hayat, my sisters-in-law, for their moral support.*

*A special thank to Lamia, Ferial and Tinhinan.*

*To all my friends and family, from the west coast to the east coast.*

## **Acknowledgments**

I thank God for providing me with health, strength, and patience to do this humble work.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Ms. Matmer Dalila, for her practical feedback and continual assistance. She has always been ready to devote time to reading and correcting the drafts. Without her invaluable experience, encouragement, and continuous guidance, advice, and criticism, this work would not have been achieved.

I wish to express my most precious thanks to the board of examiners, Ms. Bensafi and Ms. Badja, for having accepted to read and examine this modest work. Special thanks to all the teachers of the department of English who were faithful in their job.

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	i
Acknowledgments.....	ii
Contents.....	iii
Abstract.....	v
<b>I. General Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
a. Review of the Literature.....	2
b. Issue and Working Hypothesis.....	4
c. Methodological Outline.....	5
Endnotes.....	6
<b>II. Methods and Materials</b>	
<b>A. Method</b>	
a. Bell hooks’s <i>Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center</i> (1984).....	7
<b>B. Materials</b>	
1. Synopsis of <i>Nervous Conditions</i> (1988).....	10
2. Synopsis of <i>Purple Hibiscus</i> (2003).....	11
Endnotes.....	12
<b>III. Results.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>IV. Discussion</b>	
<b>Chapter one: Forms of Oppression in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s <i>Nervous Conditions</i> (1988) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s <i>Purple Hibiscus</i> (2003).....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1. Patriarchal Oppression.....</b>	<b>15</b>
a) Babamukuru as the Patriarch in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s <i>Nervous Conditions</i> (1988).....	15
b) Eugene as the Patriarch in Chimamanda Adichie’s <i>Purple Hibiscus</i> (2003).....	18
<b>2. Sexist Oppression.....</b>	<b>21</b>
a. Sexist Oppression in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s <i>Nervous Conditions</i> (1988).....	22

b. Sexist Oppression in Chimamanda Adichie’s <i>Purple Hibiscus</i> (2003).....	26
<b>3. Psychological Oppression.....</b>	<b>29</b>
a- Psychological Oppression in Dangarembga’s <i>Nervous Conditions</i> (1988).....	30
b- Psychological Oppression in Adichie’s <i>Purple Hibiscus</i> (2003).....	33
Endnotes.....	37
<b>Chapter two: Forms of Resistance in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s <i>Nervous Conditions</i> (1988) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s <i>Purple Hibiscus</i> (2003).....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>1. Education as an Instrument for Empowering Women.....</b>	<b>40</b>
a) Education in Dangarembga’s <i>Nervous Conditions</i> (1988).....	40
b) Education in Adichie’s <i>Purple Hibiscus</i> (2003).....	45
Aunt Ifeoma as an Educated Woman.....	46
<b>2. Women’s Solidarity as a Significant Tool for Women’s Emancipation.....</b>	<b>49</b>
a. Women’s Solidarity in Dangarembga’s <i>Nervous Conditions</i> (1988).....	49
b. Women’s Solidarity in Adichie’s <i>Purple Hibiscus</i> (2003).....	54
Endnotes.....	61
<b>V. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>VI. Bibliography.....</b>	<b>66</b>

## **Abstract**

*This present dissertation is a comparative study of Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions (1988) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's Purple Hibiscus (2003). It aims to show the different forms of oppression that African women encounter in both Rhodesia and Nigeria. It also aims to reveal the diverse forms of resistance these women develop to fight back their obstacles in both novels. In order to attain this goal, we have relied on the theory of Bell hooks' Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre (1984). The discussion section is divided into two parts. The first part shows the diverse forms of oppression: patriarchal, sexist, and psychological, found in the novel, as serious obstacles to both Rhodesian and Nigerian women's emancipation. In the second part, the research examines education and women's solidarity as two significant tools for women to resist oppression in both novels. Through the analysis of Tsitsi Dangarembga's and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works, the study concludes with similarities between the two novels. It has been demonstrated that in both Nervous Conditions (1988) and Purple Hibiscus (2003), women live under patriarchal systems that eliminate their chances to be valued and that they are subject to psychological and sexist oppression. Moreover, this research shows that African women are able to struggle and resist all forms of oppression using education and women's solidarity as two important weapons.*

**Key words:** Oppression, Patriarchy, Sexist oppression, Psychological oppression, Resistance, Education, Women's solidarity.

## I. General Introduction

Throughout history, women have been subject to different forms of discrimination and subjugation and have been reduced to inferior positions. They are stereotyped, for example, as weak and emotional, and are subject to various other prejudices. The situation of black African women in particular is far worse; they are marginalised, discriminated and not given any importance. Their true circumstances have been buried for many years. Actually, African male authors, such as Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, do not portray their true pains in their writings. As a result, African female authors felt compelled to speak for themselves and convey the true picture of African women. They decided not to let others paint a false picture of them, but instead choose to speak and make their voices heard; in short, they want to represent themselves. In this regard, Nnameka Obiora in *Bringing African Women into Classroom: Rethinking Pedagogy and Epistemology*, declares:

The arrogance that declares African women 'problems' objectifies us and undercuts the agency necessary for forging true global sisterhood. African women are not problems to be solved. Like women everywhere, African women have problems. More important, they have provided solutions to these problems.<sup>1</sup>

As shown in the above assertion, African female writers were dissatisfied with the clichés and faulty representation that they always faced. As a consequence, they decided to take their pens and write with the aim of defending themselves. Accordingly, their literature is primarily focused on depicting the real suffering of African women. To achieve this purpose, in their novels, they recounted African women's suffering through the eyes of their female characters that live in similar circumstances. Besides, these authors also aim to address the incorrect portrayal and stereotypical pictures of African women provided by male authors and western feminists. Through their writing, they provide an image of strong and brave women who are aware of their victimisation and fight bravely against various forms of discrimination.

One of these African women writers who took the initiative to reveal African women's

true circumstances and their daily struggle to obtain emancipation are Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. To begin with, Dangarembga is a Zimbabwean writer and black women's rights activist who belongs to the second generation of African authors. She is one of the female authors who decided to take the initiative to disclose the harsh situation of African women and fight the injustices they endure. Second, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian woman who is said to be one of the third generation of African writers, addresses African women's obstacles in a male-dominated society. She also investigates women's oppression in patriarchal Igbo culture, as well as women's resistance to overcome stereotypes and oppression in general. These two authors are well-known for their challenging novels that defend African woman's rights and oppose injustice and oppression in African societies.

Despite belonging to different backgrounds and generations, both authors deal with the same issues; they reveal the harsh situation of African women and their everyday battles to surmount their obstacles. *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) are two examples of Tsitsi Dangarembga's and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's challenging novels. Both works depict the suffering of African women and the diverse forms of oppression they encounter. Besides, they show how Zimbabwe and Nigerian women are able to overcome hardships and emancipate themselves.

### **a. Review of the Literature**

Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are examples of African feminist writers who explore audacious and challenging issues in their writings. Their novels have been the subject of many critics. Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) have been studied from a multitude of perspectives.

*Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions*, is one of the important criticism by Paulina Ada Uwakweh. *Nervous Conditions* (1988) according to Pauline Ada Uwakweh, represents the reality of many African

women who have been subjected to the combined oppression of patriarchy and colonialism. She argues that the artwork tackles not just the women's causes of silence, but also their buried dual-weight struggles. She further adds that patriarchy is responsible for the psychological condition that affects female characters to varying degrees. For Pauline Ada Uwakweh, Dangarembga illustrates the African kinship system by tackling patriarchy in African households. She declares: "Her work could rightly be seen as a microcosm of patriarchal dynamics in Africa as a whole."<sup>2</sup> The same critic argues that the characters are doubly oppressed and dominated. First, by the imperial forces which economically and culturally dominate them, and then by the masculine domination of African males over females.

Another critic, Lindsay Pentolfe Aegerter in an article entitled *A Dialectic of Autonomy and Community: Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions*, asserts that Dangarembga's work portrays the lives of African women through the perspective of its female protagonist. She presents them as heroines, rather than victims of African women's silence and marginalisation. As a result, the female characters in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) act rather than react.<sup>3</sup> She goes on to claim that Dangarembga's novel allows her female character to protest the suffering of African women. According to Lindsay Pentolfe Aegerter, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) provide traditional and Western gendered discrimination.

Like *Nervous Conditions* (1988), *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) has also received a huge number of criticism. In an article entitled *Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*, Ogaga Okuyade provides some critic on Adichie's novel. The essay explains how Adichie's work revolves around Jaja and Kambili's psychological growth in the presence of their abusive patriarchal father. The essay also looks at Eugene's patriarchal viewpoint. It demonstrates how, while working so hard to create a wonderful life for his children, his harsh domination transformed the spacious house

they lived in into a suffocating one. Furthermore, he is mechanistic in all aspects of life and desires a dehumanising education for his children.

Beside, Michael Oshindoro, in an article entitled *Solidarity between Women in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*, puts remarkable reviews on the novel. According to the article, Adichie creates her female characters to reflect and portray the many characteristics of Igbo women in postcolonial Nigeria. She goes on to say that Adichie discusses Beatrice and Ifeoma as two significant characters that symbolise two powerful Igbo women despite being polar opposites.<sup>4</sup> In his assessment, Oshindoro focuses on the complexity of power and the strength of Igbo and Nigerian women in regard to their origins.

### **b. Issue and Working Hypothesis**

Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) have both been panned by critics. As shown above, the two works have been analysed and compared from several perspectives. However, as far as we know, these analyses paid little attention to oppression and resistance and their diverse forms. This research will thus be a comparative study from a feminist standpoint with the goal of investigating the numerous ways in which African women are oppressed and the various barriers they confront in their journey towards emancipation. The second issue of this study is to investigate the strong efforts of Rhodesian and Nigerian women to reject oppression and the resistance strategies they have devised to free themselves.

Overall, the main purpose of this dissertation is to display how the female characters in both novels are subject to patriarchal, sexist, and psychological oppression. African women use education and sisterhood as two significant weapons; they use them to resist all kinds of tyranny. To attain this purpose, this study will draw on Bell hook's *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Centre* (1984).

### ***c. Methodological Outline***

This piece of research reveals the different forms of oppression that African women encounter. It reveals also the different ways African women adopt to fight back and resist the oppression they survive. The two issues are analysed in both Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). This dissertation examines the way women were treated in Africa and the struggles they face in two different generations.

The dissertation will employ the IMRAD technique in its methodology. It begins with an introduction which consists of an overview of the issue. Then followed the review of several works published on Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). The target of this investigation is then stated in the issue and working hypothesis section.

The method section will consist of a summary of Bell hooks' theory, *From Margin to Center* (1984). After that, a materials section will include on summaries of the two novels. In the results the research's findings will be exposed. The discussion section will consist two chapters. In the first one, forms of oppression including patriarchal, sexist, and psychological oppression will be analysed. The study will attempt to demonstrate how they are barriers to African women's advancement. In the second part, the investigation will highlight forms of resistance. It is going to examine education and women's solidarity as solutions used by the female characters to withstand all the forms of oppression they go through.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Nnameka Obiora, “Bringing African Women into Classroom: Rethinking Pedagogy and Epistemology,” in *African Gender Studies A Reader* ed. Oyèrónké O (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 57.
- <sup>2</sup> Paulina Ada Uwakweh, “*Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s ‘Nervous Conditions,’*” *Research in African Literature* 26, no. 1 (1995): 83, accessed June 05, 2022, [Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's "Nervous Conditions" on JSTOR \(arn.dz\)](#)
- <sup>3</sup> Lindsay Pentolfe Aegerter, “A Dialectic of Autonomy and Community: Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 15, no. 2 (1996): 231. [A Dialectic of Autonomy and Community: Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions on JSTOR \(arn.dz\)](#)
- <sup>4</sup> Michael Oshindoro, ‘Solidarity between Women in Chimamanda Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus’ (2019), 13. Accessed June 05, 2022. Online available from: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/>.

## II. Methods and Materials

### A. Method

This section will illustrate the theoretical foundations of this research. For the sake of relevance to the topic at hand, the research will employ the theoretical framework from *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), published by the African American theorist and author Gloria Jean Watkins, better known as Bell hooks. Her writings deal with gender, race, class, sexual identity, oppression, and women's resistance. It is divided into twelve chapters in which hooks focuses on various themes and facets of the feminist movement in order to analyse the experiences of black women.

Although Bell hooks theory is basically critical to the 1970's feminist movement, also known as the women's liberation movement, it explores interesting points concerning oppression and resistance. This theory documents the realities of marginalized women while emphasizing fundamentally oppressive practices. It has also provided black women some relevant alternatives to consider in their quest for emancipation. Furthermore, hooks urges women to always fight for their freedom and never accept being someone else's slave. For this reason, this theory seems to be relevant to our study and it seems to apply perfectly on both *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003).

#### a. Bell hooks' *Feminist Theory: From Margin To Center* (1984)

Bell hooks starts her theory with a chapter entitled *Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory*. hooks claims in this chapter that feminism in the United States does not serve the interests of what she calls "The silent majority,"<sup>1</sup> or marginalised women who are powerless to change their circumstances. This movement, she believes, serves solely the interests of wealthy white women. Furthermore, she criticised the concept of "Common oppression"<sup>2</sup> because not all women face the same challenges. She concludes her chapter by emphasising that her theory is intended to enrich rather than weaken the feminist quest.

hooks argues in the second chapter, *Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression*, that because there is no basic or meaningful definition of feminism, liberal feminists promote materialistic and patriarchal principles rather than emancipating women. As a result, she saw the necessity of providing a real and relevant definition of feminism. In this chapter, hooks asserts that: “Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression.”<sup>3</sup> This definition permits women to struggle for their rights.

hook’s third chapter, *The Importance Of Feminist Movement*, is critical in this dissertation because she explains the basis of all oppressions. In this chapter, she contends that sexism is the root of all oppression. She continues by stating that all types of oppression are related because they are sustained by identical institutional and social frameworks. For her, all types of tyranny begin in the household.

In her fourth chapter, entitled, *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women*, which is also an important chapter for this study, hooks emphasises the importance of women’s togetherness in the feminist movement. In this section, she explains that the idea of sisterhood used by women’s liberationists is meaningless since it is based on the erroneous shared oppression that she has already described. Furthermore, she has demonstrated that male supremacist ideology drives women to feel that their worth is determined by males and that women, can never be in a position of solidarity. She also assumes that women do not need to share the same victimisation to unite, but rather, women “Can be sisters united by shared interests and beliefs, united in our appreciation for diversity, united in our struggle to end sexist oppression, united in political solidarity.”<sup>4</sup>

In the fifth chapter, *Men: Comrades In Struggle*, She argues that feminism is for everyone, not just women. It is a movement in which anybody and everyone is welcomed to join and participate equally. She goes on to say that women’s liberationists who paint all men as misogynists are erroneous since there are men who fight for women’s emancipation, whom

she refers to as comrades.

One more point of interest for our discussion is hooks' assumption in her sixth chapter entitled, *Changing Perspectives on Power* in which She describes how both sexes are taught from birth that dominating and controlling others is the fundamental display of power. Furthermore, she feels that feminist philosophy should demonstrate women's strength so that they may employ it in their resistance.

In *Re-Thinking the Nature of Work*, bell hooks acknowledges that bourgeois feminists who assume that work liberates women are mistaken because there are a lot of women who are already employed in low-wage jobs. It does not provide them with economic independence or freedom from male rule. Thus, hooks goes on to emphasise that, in order to stop women's economic exploitation, feminism should examine the interests of all women, taking into account the economic status of women of all classes.

Another chapter of hooks theory is *Educating Women: A Feminist Agenda*. In this part of her work, hooks thinks that feminist activists should have an agenda of educating illiterate women of all classes, especially those who lack basic skills and the ability to translate. For her, the best solution for them to attend feminist conferences is door-to-door contact.

The ninth chapter, *Feminist Movement To End Violence*, is also another critical chapter to my dissertation. In this section, hooks claims that because males lost control in pre-capitalist cultures, they employed domestic dominance to assert their power. This chapter is crucial to our memoir because hooks claims that teaching women patriarchal ideals facilitates the task of dominance. She has associated violence with the media. She feels that the media is a major cause of violence since it promotes it.

In the tenth chapter, *Revolutionary Parenting*, hooks states that black women, unlike women's liberation, do not consider motherhood a barrier to their emancipation. However, hooks considers it to have both negative and positive implications for the feminist movement.

She claims that by accepting motherhood, women who choose to have children will no longer be fearful of being rejected from the movement. While the disadvantage is that the movement will support the same stereotype as sexist ideology, it will promote the idea that women are innately life-affirming nurturers. She adds that both sexes must share and accept equal parenting duties.

Another chapter entitled *Ending Female Sexual Oppression*. In this part, hooks contends that feminist thinkers believed that emphasising the primary of sexuality would be a liberating gesture, implying that women should be sexually liberated. For her, in order to develop sexual freedom, the feminist movement should keep focusing on ending sexist oppression in order to build a new social system.

Bell hooks, concludes her work with a chapter entitled *Feminist Revolution: Development through Struggle*, which summarises her whole theory. She refers to a feminist revolution as a battle to reform society and build a new society in order to overcome sexist oppression. She claims that instead of supporting and sustaining male supremacy, feminists should focus on reforms through teaching masses of women and men about the feminist movement, working for equality, and improving women's social standing.

## **B. Materials**

### **1. Synopsis of *Nervous Conditions* (1988)**

*Nervous Conditions* is an autobiographical novel written in 1988 by Tsitsi Dangarembga. It takes place in rural Rhodesia in the late 1960s, it tells the journey of five oppressed female characters (Tambudzai, Nyasha, Maiguru, Ma'Shingayi, and Lucia) towards emancipation.

The story is seen through the eyes of Tambudzai, or Tambu, in short, an adolescent girl who dreams of attending school. Because she is raised in a patriarchal family, Tambu is not given this chance. Her parents, Jeremiah and Ma'Shingayi, have placed their aspirations

on Nhamo, her brother, to save them from poverty. Therefore, Babamukuru, their wealthy uncle, decides to take him to the mission school. Unfortunately, Nhamo died some years later without accomplishing his parents' dream of taking charge of them. His death affected his mother; she became sensitive and no longer able to accept her sufferings. His death is also the turning point in Tambu's life, since she is given the chance to study at the school mission under her uncle's supervision.

Upon arriving at the mission, Tambu learned important life lessons. She has formed a deep bond with Babamukuru's rebellious daughter, Nyasha, who often questions her father's patriarchal dominance and refuses to be obedient, and taught Tambu to think objectively and critically. As the story goes on, Tambu realises that her uncle Babamukuru is not the hero she thought he was because he is highly dictatorial and uses violence on his daughter to keep her at his mercy. Furthermore, Babamukuru's wife, Maiguru, who is always willing to help her, is vulnerable to tyranny. On the other hand, Tambu's aunt, Lucia, a strong and determined lady, taught her that no matter what happens, a woman should never surrender.

At the end of the novel, Tambu succeeds in attending a prestigious private school. Nyasha ends up suffering from a serious eating disorder and mental illness. Maiguru no longer tolerates her husband's patriarchal oppression and resolves to voice her pain and let him feel her suffering. Lucia finds a job and succeeds in being a strong, independent woman. With her sister's, Lucia's, assistance, Ma'Shingayi succeeds in overcoming her inner oppression.

## **2. Synopsis of *Purple Hibiscus* (2003)**

*Purple Hibiscus* is written by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in 2003. It is her debut novel and is widely regarded as one of her best. The work is classified as post-colonial novel since it shows the Nigerian regime following independence. The story is narrated by Kambili, a 15-year-old girl who strives to achieve a sense of peace in an unstable family.

The novel depicts the Achike family who lives in Enugu, Nigeria, with the parents Eugene and Beatrice, an elder brother, Jaja, and the main protagonist, Kambili. Eugene is deeply committed to Catholicism and owns a newspaper that criticises the Nigerian regime. Outside his home, he is a man of titles. However, inside his home, he is an abusive husband and a violent father who uses his authority to oppress his family members. He terrorises and pushes his family to adhere to his own interpretation and structure of Catholicism.

As the novel progresses, we witness that all of the main characters become mute, docile, and fully subservient as a result of Eugene's brutal control. However, everything changes when they meet their aunt, Ifeoma, and her three children, Amaka, Obiora, and Chima. Their aunt is presented as a strong, self-sufficient woman. She resists her brother's ideals and appears to be liberated. Due to the instability in Nigeria, Kambili and Jaja are transferred to reside with Ifeoma. This transition gives Kambili and Jaja a fresh outlook on life. They start freeing themselves by waking up their brains.

At the end of the novel, Beatrice makes a significant step in emancipating herself and her children. She poisoned Eugene and eventually has succeeded in killing him. Jaja confesses to the crime and is arrested. The novel, however, concludes with the optimism that Jaja will be liberated. Ifeoma and her children moved to the United States. Kambili gets hope and confidence for a bright future.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), 01.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 05.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

### III. Results

This comparative study of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) reached interesting findings. Research has shown that both writing, despite their differences, involve the same study of women's oppression and resistance. In many respects, Dangarembga and Adichie believed it was their duty to expose the plight of silent and marginalised African women, as well as their everyday struggle for emancipation. In order to attain the objective of this study, comparing the two works from a feminist perspective, Bell hooks' theory, *From Margin to Centre* (1984), seems to be the most convenient to carry on the investigation since it includes the core aspects of African women's oppression and resistance.

The first major finding of this study is that Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Adichie both show the patriarchal system as a hegemonic system that oppresses African women in Rhodesia and Nigeria. The patriarchs in both works exploit women and prohibit them from enjoying a balanced existence. They also misuse their status to gain control over them. Furthermore, both Dangarembga and Adichie show African women as victims of sexist oppression in their works. Because of their gender, the female characters are mistreated, stereotyped, and most importantly oppressed. They have also demonstrated in their works that African women are exposed to much more than patriarchal or sexist oppression, since sexist ideology aims to psychologically oppress them in order for these women to surrender and never consider resistance.

The second noteworthy point is that both authors have portrayed their female characters in a favourable way. Both Dangarembga and Adichie employ education to empower women. They have demonstrated that education helps women to experience life in new ways and that African women struggle to acquire a considerable degree of knowledge in order to see different angles of life. Moreover, they have both stressed the importance of a

strong women's bond in the resistance struggle towards the emancipation of African women. In their novels, Dangarembga and Adichie have depicted women's relationships in a good light. They have depicted them as supportive and loving without conditions towards each other.

In general, despite coming from two different backgrounds and generations, both Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have emphasised the same issues. The first one is that both Rhodesian and Nigerian women are subject to patriarchal, sexist, and psychological oppression. Secondly, women in both novels, from different generations, struggled and resisted all kinds of tyranny, using education and sisterhood as relevant tools. Finally, in the two novels, the female characters succeeded in emancipating themselves and found a way to escape their circumstances.

## **IV. Discussion**

### **Chapter One: Forms of Oppression in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003)**

This chapter will examine the different types of oppression faced by African women, notably in Rhodesia and Nigeria, as depicted in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). In both pieces, the two authors highlight the true challenges that African women confront. Both have identified patriarchal, sexist, and psychological oppression as hurdles to women's freedom.

#### ***1. Patriarchal Oppression***

Patriarchy can be considered as one of the critical challenges that African women face on a daily basis. Through recounting the life experiences of their female characters, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reveal that patriarchy as a ruling system oppresses women and limits their aspirations in life. In her journal article entitled, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Sylvia Walby, a British sociologist, defines patriarchy as: "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women."<sup>1</sup> Effectively, the following section investigates patriarchy as a primary source of women's misery in both Rhodesia and Nigeria.

##### **a) Babamukuru as the Patriarch in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988)**

According to the patriarchal system, each family should have a head. In the novel Babamukuru is the head or the patriarch of his family. In fact, he is described as the wealthy headmaster and the only educated man in his family. In his tribe, he is well respected for the high education he gained and for his position as the headmaster of a mission school. Throughout the narrative, he is depicted as powerful, authoritative, and the only provider for his extended family. Tambu, the story's primary heroine, illustrates his power:

When Babamukuru speechified, which as head of the family he had to do often, he had a way of doing it that was calm and mild and so sensible that while you listened you couldn't help being overwhelmed by the good sense of his words and resolving to do exactly as he suggested, whatever that happened to be. Babamukuru was inspiring. He inspired confidence and obedience. He carried with him an aura from which emanated wisdom and foresight. There was sighing in acknowledgment of the family's difficulties, murmurs of agreement with Babamukuru's analysis.<sup>2</sup>

As the leader of his people, Babamukuru is compelled to bear the responsibility of improving each branch of his extended family from the burden of poverty; however, he does it out of duty rather than love. This idea is demonstrated when everyone is grateful for taking charge of Nhamo, Tambu's brother, Babamukuru says: "there is nothing surprising here. When there is a duty to do, it has to be done, that is all."<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, After Nhamo's death, Babamukuru takes Tambu to the school mission. Despite the ideology that considers women as merely housewives and do not require an education, he offers Tambu the chance to pursue her education in order to assume his leadership duty. This conduct is strengthened by Bell hooks opinion which she explains in her third chapter, *The Significance of Feminist Movement*, she says: "Even as we are loved and cared for in families, we are simultaneously taught that this love is not as important as having power to dominate others."<sup>4</sup> Rather than expressing his emotions, Babamukuru seeks to demonstrate his dominance to reinforce his status as the patriarch. It is brilliantly illustrated when he discloses: "I will not feel that I have done my duty if I neglect the family for this reason. Er- this girl- heyo, Tambudzai must be given the opportunity to do what she can for the family."<sup>5</sup>

In the novel, mothers are charged of teaching children about the patriarchal framework, as well as preparing girls to be submissive to their men and accept being controlled. This is effectively demonstrated in Tambu and Nhamo, who are, repeatedly, taught that they do not have similar grades and that Nhamo is superior to Tambu because he is a boy. Bell hooks in her third chapter, explains that: "Patriarchal state relies on the family to indoctrinate its members with values supportive of hierarchical control and coercive

authority.”<sup>6</sup> For example, Nhamo is educated from an early age that he will inherit the patriarchal authority from his uncle, Babamukuru, and as a result, he is expected to achieve higher academic performance. As it is depicted in the following lines:

He knew that when he grew up he was going to study for many degrees like Babamukuru and become a headmaster like Babamukuru. He knew that it would be up to him to make sure that his younger sisters were educated, or look after us if we were not, just as Babamukuru had done and was doing for his own brothers and sisters.<sup>7</sup>

Women are never completely free in African societies. Actually, even if some women can afford to be educated, they are still limited by various barriers because they are deemed inferior to men. In other words, regardless of what they accomplish, they should always be submissive to man’s power. In this regard, hooks in her first chapter, *Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory*, approves that: “under capitalism, patriarchy is structured so that sexism restricts women’s behaviour in some realms even as freedom from limitation is allowed in other spheres.”<sup>8</sup> This is marvellously depicted in the narrative since Babamukuru encourages the education of Nyasha, his daughter, and Tambu, yet with several limitations. He wants his niece to realise that even if she is authorised to be educated, she must remain obedient and submissive and never think of breaking these limits. This is illustrated in the novel when Tambu first arrives at the mission and she interprets his instructions:

I was an intelligent girl but I had also to develop into a good woman, he said, stressing both qualities equally and not seeing any contradiction in this [...] ‘To be good, to listen to what we, your parents, tell you to do, to study your books diligently and not let your mind be distracted by other things.’<sup>9</sup>

In patriarchal societies, being a woman is difficult, and being a daughter is much more difficult since fathers have complete authority over their daughters. They are regarded as their fathers’ property, and they are not permitted to consider disobeying their demands. In *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Nyasha, Babamukuru’s daughter, suffers from her father’s nature of governing the family and issuing instructions that should never be questioned but only obeyed. As a daughter of a patriarch, she is expected to blindly obey her father and tolerate being controlled. In this aspect, he tells her: “You must respect me. I am your father.”<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, Babamukuru interferes in all matters of Nyasha's life, for instance, he wants to control her mind by limiting her reading. This is shown when Maiguru tells him that Nyasha is reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, he takes the book away from her, and illustrates: "No daughter of mine is going to read such books."<sup>11</sup>

Babamukuru, being a strict patriarch, believes that one of his most important jobs is to raise his daughter and niece so that they would be portrayed as good ladies. He is concerned about raising Nyasha and Tambu right since there is a widespread perception in African countries that women must be continually regulated or they would become disgraceful. He declares: "Children must be obedient. If they are not, then they must be taught. So that they develop good habits. You know this is very important, especially in the case of girls."<sup>12</sup> This unshakable belief enables him to intrude in all aspects of their life and even use violence to fulfil his mission. To illustrate, during the school Christmas party, he assumes that Nyasha's dress is indecent and that she does not appear to be a nice daughter. He even blames his wife, Maiguru, for spoiling her because the dress she offers does not project the image of a good girl. Again, when discovering her dancing with a boy after the party, he abuses her once more, teaching her that a girl should always pay attention to her attitude and behaviour.

**b) Eugene as the Patriarch in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003)**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, like Dangarembga, portrays African communities, particularly Igbo ones, as innately patriarchal. The patriarchal system empowers men to dominate and prevent women from being self-sufficient. Adichie's patriarch in *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) is Eugene Achike, the father of Kambili, the primary protagonist. Eugene is generally referred to as Papa, and he is devout Catholic and a successful businessman who owns *The Standard*, a well-known newspaper.

In the novel, Eugene is portrayed as being an abusive and rigid patriarch. In fact, he uses his power negatively since he frequently tortures his own children and wife. Throughout

the narrative, his family seems to have no control or decision-making. This is seen repeatedly in the way he makes orders to never question but only obey. For instance, he made a schedule for his children at home, implying that he had absolute ownership over them. In other words, they do not have the right to rule their own existence. The following quotation vividly shows his patriarchal authority over his children, Kambili asserts:

Papa liked order. It showed even in the schedules themselves, the way his meticulously drawn lines, in black ink, cut across each day, separating study from siesta, siesta from family time, family time from eating from prayer, prayer from sleep. He revised them often.<sup>13</sup>

Adichie portrays Eugene as a devout and successful businessman who is revered among his community. In an article entitled, *Dethroning the Infallible Father: Religion, Patriarchy and Politics in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 'Purple Hibiscus,'* Stobie Cheryl argues that: “The bodily power of Eugene reaches into the community; he is enriched as his western-style products are brought, and at the same time his capitalist values are imbibed by the community.”<sup>14</sup> Despite being an abusive husband and a violent father, Eugene’s social life is entirely different. He is kind and generous, thus he is well-liked and respected throughout his tribe. In fact, because he helps people and owns Nigeria’s sole newspaper that reveals the truth, everyone believes that he is a man of justice. For this reason, he is respected and considered as a hero among his people. Kambili reveals:

We were always prepared to feed the whole village at Christmas, always prepared so that none of the people who came in would leave without eating and drinking to what Papa called a reasonable level of satisfaction. Papa’s title was *omelora*, after all, The One Who Does for the Community.<sup>15</sup>

Eugene’s religious convictions, as a devout Catholic, oppress his family members. He forces his wife and children to embrace his religious beliefs because he believes Catholicism is the only road to salvation. However, instead of gently persuading them, he resorts to torture and violence. Eugene does not only force them to be Catholic, but he also plays the role of God and punishes them whenever they do something with which he disagrees. To illustrate, he forbids them from spending time with their grandfather, Papa-Nnukwu, whom he believes

is a heathen. He only allows them to visit him on rare occasions and for a very limited period of time. When he finds that Kambili and her brother, Jaja, slept in the same house as him, he becomes enraged and decides to punish them. Kambili reveals: “He poured the hot water on my feet, slowly as if he were conducting an experiment and wanted to see what would happen.”<sup>16</sup>

In Igbo society, a lot of men who hold patriarchal positions are willing to use violence to further their objectives. In the novel, though Eugene is granted a high status in his tribe, he uses violence to discipline his children. For example, He becomes enraged when he realises Kambili has a photo of Papa-Nnukwu and physically assaults her till she is hospitalised. Despite his physical dominance over his children, he always finds a way to justify his behaviour, saying things like: “Everything I do for you, I do for your own good.”<sup>17</sup> As the preceding sentence indicates, Eugene is teaching his children that violence may occasionally express empathy. In this respect, hooks in her ninth chapter, argues that some parents justify their violence as a sign of love and care.<sup>18</sup> Onyemaechi Udumukwo depicts that *Purple Hibiscus* is “A paradigm for demystifying forms of patriarchal violence.”<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, in Igbo culture, patriarchs commit violence to maintain power. They have complete authority over their family members’ lives. Because they are the head of their families, they are granted with the power to shape everyone’s destiny. To do so they rely on their physical power. In this regard, Bell hooks in her ninth chapter entitled *Feminist Movement to End Violence*, assumes: “Men rely more on the use of violence to establish and maintain a sex role hierarchy in which they are in a dominant position.”<sup>20</sup> In *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), Eugene is unfair to his immediate family and exercises patriarchal dominance over them. His overwhelming dominance may be seen in how he handles his obedient wife, Beatrice. For instance, on their visit to Father Benedict, Beatrice does not feel well and suggests staying in the car, but he obliges her to accompany them. He not only forces her to

attend him; he then punishes her after she returns home and causes her to miscarry. Kambili says:

I heard the sounds. Swift, heavy thuds on my parents' hand-carved bed-room [...] I stepped out of my room just as Jaja came out of his. We stood at the landing and watched Papa descend. Mama was slung over his shoulder like the jute sack of rice his factory workers bought in bulk at the Seme Border [...] we cleaned up the trickle of blood, which trailed away as if someone had carried a leaking jar of red watercolour all the way downstairs.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, Eugene is the only decision-maker in *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). His position as the patriarch entitles him to draw conclusions on matters concerning his children beyond their approval. In *Feminism: Silence and Voicelessness as Tools of Patriarchy in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*, Ifechelobi, J. N. reveals that: "The members of Eugene Achike's household do not have a mind of their own instead they live at his mercy and according to his dictates."<sup>22</sup> Effectively, this is shown in the routine he devised for both Kambili and Jaja, transforming them into robots that solely carry out his commands. Besides, they lack the right to dream or plan for their own future; he is the only one who would. This is depicted when Kambili is astonished when her cousin, Amaka, is talking about her future plans. She says: "I had never thought about the university, where I would go or what I would study. When the time came, Papa would decide."<sup>23</sup> The last remark demonstrates his extreme control, which extended to the extent that his children do not control anything about their existence.

## **2. Sexist Oppression**

Due to sexism, women have always been deemed inferior and worthless in comparison to men. In the African context, sexist oppression is seen as another barrier to women's emancipation. In her book, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, Kate Manne defines it as follows: "Sexism is taken to be the branch of patriarchal ideology that justifies and rationalizes a patriarchal social order."<sup>24</sup> While Bell hooks argues that "Sexist oppression is of primary importance not because it is the basis of all other oppression,

but because it is the practice of domination most people experience.”<sup>25</sup> For this reason, many African feminist writers use their texts to reveal the impact of sexism on African women. *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) by Dangarembga and Adichie are perfect examples of these texts that explore the issue of sexism in both Igbo and Shona cultures. The following part will shed light on sexist oppression in both novels.

**a. Sexist Oppression in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* (1988)**

Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* (1988) addresses several forms of oppression that are viewed as significant barriers to women’s freedom. Sexist oppression is one of the major issues tackled in the novel. Dangarembga exhibits the sexist oppression that Shona women are subject to by showing the life experiences of her victimized female characters, Tambu, Lucia, Nyasha, Maiguru, and Ma’Shingayi.

Like all forms of oppression, sexist oppression begins within the family boundaries. Children are socialized from their early ages about the inferiority of women as compared to men. This viewpoint is perfectly demonstrated in *Nervous Conditions* (1988), where girls are introduced into their gender roles at a young age. For example, when Tambu tells her father that she aspires to attend school, he advises her not to give much importance to school because she would end up a housewife. He declares: “Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables.”<sup>26</sup> In the above quotation, Jeremiah, Tambu’s father, explains to his daughter that as a woman, she has obligations that are more important than her education. In this respect, in her article entitled, *Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in the Feminist Tradition*, Moyana Rosemary declares: “What the father is doing here then. Is to socialize Tambudzai into her gender role using the ideology he knows best to oppress her.”<sup>27</sup>

Generally, African men consider women weak, powerless, and unable to accomplish anything without a man. For this reason, they are always under the protection of their father,

brother, or husband, since a man is always strong and capable. In this regard, Bell hooks indicates in her ninth chapter that feminists argue that being male is synonymous with strength and domination, while being female is associated with weakness and passivity.<sup>28</sup> In the novel, this belief is demonstrated repeatedly. For instance, Tambu's family underestimates women's capacity to be independent from men. When Tambu asks her father for some seeds to be able to pay her own school expenses, he mistakenly assumes she is joking for the reason that she is unable. Tambu reveals:

He annoyed me tremendously by laughing and laughing in an unpleasantly adult way. 'Just enough for the fees! Can you see her there?' he chuckled to my mother. 'Such a little shrub, but already making rip plans!'"<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, Shona society regards that women are ban to serve men and are supposed to make sacrifices, since they are considered less important. For this reason, all that is good is reserved for men, whereas women are not meant to have something good. In other words, where there is a sacrifice to be made, a woman is the one who is supposed to make it in order to make her man happy and satisfied. Girls are indoctrinated from early years with this notion, so that they will accept their reality. This is superbly illustrated in the narrative, as women are the only ones to surrender. This view is depicted in the novel in various ways; for example, in Tambu's mother, Ma'Shingayi's, advice to Tambu. She counsels her: "When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them."<sup>30</sup> Tambu is being taught her gender role responsibilities once more. Another example, after Babamukuru's departure to England, Tambu is forced to forego her desire to be educated because her family can only send Nhamo. She denounces:

I begun school. Although we harvested enough maize to keep us from starving, there was nothing left over to sell. This meant there was no money in the house. No money meant no school fees. No school fees meant no school.<sup>31</sup>

In Shona tradition, women are chosen to be caretaker and natural nurturer, thus marriage is regarded as their ultimate goal. In the novel, even Babamukuru, who has a high level of education, believes that a good woman is the one who follows the path of all women

in her tribe. He implies she should be a lady who does not value education and would rather marry and have children at a young age. It is exemplified in his words to Tambu when she is given the opportunity to study in the convent school. Babamukuru says: “In time you will be earning money. You will be in a position to be married by a decent man and set up a decent home. In all that we are doing for you, we are preparing you for this future life of yours.”<sup>32</sup> As it is mentioned above, for Babamukuru women are merely future wives and education will serve only to grant a good husband. Rosemary Moyana, shares the same point of view in her article entitled, *Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in the Feminist Tradition*, she asserts: “Even the education she (Tambu) gets is seen in terms of preparing her for marriage.”<sup>33</sup>

Additionally, a decent woman must follow the traditions blindly. She should not dress or think differently than others; she should always follow the rules. The woman who does the contrary is not accepted and considered an outsider. The following quote depicts Babamukuru forcing Nyasha to accept the norms. Babamukuru says: “No decent girl would stay out alone, with a boy, at that time of the night.”<sup>34</sup> In fact, because Nyasha is different she is called a whore by her father. In her book, *Politics of the Female Body* (2006) Ketu II. Katrak asserts: “Nyasha, when named ‘a whore’ is rendered an outsider to her culture; she is not behaving as a ‘proper daughter.’”<sup>35</sup> Tambu realizes, as a result of this incident that women, no matter what, are always victims of their gender. Bell hooks, highlights this idea on her fourth chapter and argues that females are the gender most affected by sexism.<sup>36</sup> In this regard, Tambu reveals:

The victimisation, I saw, was universal. It didn’t depend on poverty, on lack of education or on tradition. It didn’t depend on any of the things I had thought it depended on. Men took it everywhere with them. Even heroes like Babamukuru did it... But what I didn’t like was the way all the conflicts came back to this question of femaleness. Femaleness as opposed and inferior to maleness.<sup>37</sup>

Rhodesian society established a set of expectations about what a woman should be like, as well as justifiable gender-based responsibilities. Men and women have different tasks

based on their biological determinism. This means that all that is housework is designed for women, whereas men are expected to work outside their homes because they are breadwinners. In the novel, Tambu explains that some tasks are particularly designed for women; for instance, laundry is demonstrated in the novel as being a specific female task. Tambu reveals: “Where the women washed the river was shallow, seldom reaching above my knees [...] The women liked their spot because it was sensibly architecture for doing the laundry.”<sup>38</sup> The accompanying assertion reveals that women’s river spot is good for doing laundry not for swimming. Effectively, not only laundry but all house works are designed exclusively for women.

Moreover, education is reserved for boys, while women are expected to learn how to be good wives. Implying that, they should stay at home and learn how to fulfil their gender based responsibilities. In *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Tambu suffered as a result of her society’s preference for boys over girls. For instance, the opportunity of education is given to her only after her brother’s death, she declares in the beginning of the novel: “The events that put me in a position to write this account. For though the event of my brother’s passing and the events of my story cannot be separated.”<sup>39</sup> One may deduce from this assertion that the existence of a boy in her family, Nhamo, has diminished her chances of being valued, and that his death paved the way for her education. Moreover, Tambu’s future is jeopardized even with the arrival of the second newborn boy. It is depicted when Tambu is given the opportunity to study at the convent school; her uncle thought that it would be preferable to keep the money for her brother’s future. Babamukuru believes that Tambu has already received the education she needs to start a family, he declares:

But I feel that even that little money could be better used. For one thing, there is now the small boy at home [...] As you know, he is the only boy in your family, so he must be provided for. As for you, we think we are providing for you quite well.<sup>40</sup>

### **b. Sexist Oppression in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003)**

Along with patriarchy, sexist oppression can be considered as another kind of tyranny in Adichie's novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). Adichie portrays the reality of the sexist oppression that Igbo women are subjected to through her female characters, Kambili, Ifeoma, and Beatrice.

Like in Shona, in Igbo culture, sexism begins in the family setting. This means that families, particularly mothers, are tasked with teaching their children about sexist norms. They teach them that men have more value than women. In the novel, it is depicted that children are taught about the superiority of men compared to women, and this is demonstrated repeatedly. Bell hooks in *The Significance of feminist Movement*, asserts that: "most people witness and / or experience the practice of sexist domination in family setting."<sup>41</sup> For instance, despite the fact that both Kambili and her brother Jaja are both oppressed, Jaja has more importance than Kambili. A perfect example of this is that when Eugene orders his children to take what he calls the "love sip," Jaja is meant to go first, followed by his sister, as Kambili illustrates: "Jaja would go first. Then I would hold the cup with both hands and raise it to my lips."<sup>42</sup> The above comment illustrates that, by ordering Jaja to drink first, the family is exposing Kambili to her inadequacy in relation to her brother.

Furthermore, men and women are treated differently; people consider women as inferior or the inferior sex and men as the superior or the dominator. These stereotypical images of women as being inferior creatures are marvellously demonstrated in this novel. This is depicted for instance when the family renders visit to their homestead. All the inhabitants prioritised Jaja since he is a man, whereas Kambili is overlooked. Kambili illustrates: "Nekene, see the boy that will inherit his father's riches!" one woman said, hooting even more loudly, her mouth shaped like a narrow tunnel."<sup>43</sup> The accompanying statement implies that these women presume Jaja will follow in his father's success because

he is a male.

In Igbo society, marriage is seen as the ultimate objective for women since they have no worth outside of their married status. Besides, as it is already mentioned above, society considers women weak and disabled, so they should be bound with men to gain some value. This judgment is perfectly illustrated in the novel, in Beatrice's words: "A husband crowns a woman's life, Ifeoma. It is what they want."<sup>44</sup> This assertion depicts that their society instils in woman that they are the property of their husband and that their value come only from the person they are bound with. In this regard Bell hooks in her fourth chapter, *Sisterhood Political Solidarity Between Women*, asserts that: "Male supremacist ideology encourages women to believe we are valueless and obtain value only by relating to or bonding with men."<sup>45</sup> It is illustrated again by the student of Kambili's aunt, Ifeoma's, when she came to invite her to her marriage. Kambili depicts the scene: "She did not call him by his name, she called him 'dim,' 'my husband,' with the proud tone of someone who had won a prize."<sup>46</sup> The girl seems to be content since she believes that her marriage would increase her worth.

In Igbo culture, there are a set of rules that organize the feminine compartments and a collection of norms and decent behaviour for women to follow. That is to say, a woman must follow certain tight criteria in order to be recognized as a decent woman in a male-dominated society. This is brilliantly illustrated in *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), for example, as Kambili frequently suggests, a lady must attach more importance to her looks and appearance. She says: "A woman's hair must be covered in the house of God, and a woman must not wear a man's clothes, especially in the house of God."<sup>47</sup> It implies that even religion encourages the regulation of women's personal conduct. In this regard, Bell hooks in her third chapter, *The Significance of Feminist Movement*, argues that: "All forms of oppression are linked in our society because they are supported by similar institutional and social structures."<sup>48</sup> Additionally, Kambili illustrates that even the Daughters' of the Immaculate Heart Secondary

School is surrounded with high walls to protect the girls as her father explains. She says: “Papa said the walls had swayed his decision when I finished elementary school. Discipline was very important he said.”<sup>49</sup> The implication is that a woman is never free to do whatever she wants with her body. Instead, she should always accept the enforced custom, standard, or religion.

Another important point to mention in Igbo society is that everything good is reserved for men, while women are only entitled to the leftovers. Throughout the novel, men take advantage of any opportunity to demonstrate that they are more valuable than women, and they consider them inferior creatures that deserve nothing but trash. Kambili depicts: “The wives of the *umunna* took the leftover food, even the cooked rice and beans that Mama said were spoiled.”<sup>50</sup> From Kambili’s words, one ought to notice that women are not valued and are ranked very low in society.

Women are always placed in inferior positions and receive no attention regardless of how well they treat their partners. The novel depicts Beatrice doing everything to please her authoritative husband, but she is given no importance. For example, she never has the power to draw conclusions since her spouse forbids her from doing so. Actually, even in situations unrelated to her husband, he makes the ultimate judgment. Kambili illustrates: “Kevin brought samples for Mama to look at, and she picked some and showed Papa, so he could make the final decision.”<sup>51</sup> Eugene’s authority extends beyond barring his wife from drawing conclusions. His sexist attitude, in fact, reached the level where he abused her and led her to miscarry twice. She says: “You know that small table where we keep the family Bible, *nne*? Your father broke it on my belly [...] my blood finished on that floor even before he took me to St. Agnes. My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it.”<sup>52</sup> The preceding sentences show Eugene’s sexual brutality against his wife, Beatrice, despite all that she does for him.

The female characters are mistreated and abused in their houses, which is supposed to be a safe haven for them. These ladies are never at peace of mind since they live in a violent environment. Kambili declares: “Fear. I was familiar with fear, yet each time I felt it, it was never the same as the other times, as though it came in different flavors and colors.”<sup>53</sup> In this respect, Bell hooks in her chapter entitled *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women*, denounces that: “Women are the group most victimized by sexist oppression.”<sup>54</sup> As a result of this male-favouring culture, men are permitted not only to exercise authority over women and treat them as property, but also seek psychological domination over them.

### **3. Psychological Oppression**

Psychological oppression, in addition to patriarchal and sexist oppression, is a major type of tyranny experienced by African women. The writings of Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie might be viewed as reflections of the genuine sufferings of Rhodesian and Nigerian women. This section looks at how women are psychologically oppressed in both Shona and Igbo societies.

In a book entitled *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (1990), Sandra Lee Bartky argues that: “To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your mind; it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self-esteem.”<sup>55</sup> From this definition one can assume that psychologically oppressed people are mentally dominated. In fact, in both novels, psychological oppression is perpetuated by sexist ideology. In an article entitled, *What Is a Sexist Ideology? Or: Why Grace Didn't Leave*, Hilkje Charlotte Hänel defines sexist ideology as: “A social structure, constituted by ritualized social practices, and rationalized by a coherent cultural framework that organizes social agents into binary gender relations of domination and subordination.”<sup>56</sup>

### **a- Psychological Oppression in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988)**

Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) highlights the truth that African women are subject to psychological oppression that deprives them of their mental liberation. In fact, it is noticeable throughout the novel that women are denied their mental independence. The next section focuses mainly on examining how both Maiguru and Ma'Shingayi are psychologically oppressed.

Tambu's mother, Ma'Shingayi, is represented as a submissive, hardworking wife of a lazy husband, Jeremiah, who brainwashes her to absorb all forms of oppression, Tambu explains: "She had been listening too devoutly to my father."<sup>57</sup> She is persuaded to accept her dreadful circumstances and consider them the feminine responsibility. In this regard Bell hooks in her first chapter entitled *Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory* clarifies that, women who are mentally oppressed may be aware that they are being victimized because of their gender, but they do not consider this to be oppression.<sup>58</sup> Ma'Shingayi discloses: "This business of womanhood is a heavy burden."<sup>59</sup> She considers the oppression under which she lives as a woman's burden. Ironically, her hardships are linked to her femininity, and she is supposed to carry them without protest.

In most marriages, a husband owns his wife, which means he has authority over her and her thoughts. He persuades her to act in ways that are consistent with his patriarchal views. In the novel, Babamukuru's wife, Maiguru, is portrayed as a passive woman who, despite being educated, she is psychologically oppressed because she is married. Because of her society, Maiguru feels obliged to be submissive to Babamukuru. In a book entitled, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (2003), Toril Moi argues that: "Throughout history, women have been reduced to objects for men: 'woman' has been constructed as man's Other, denied the right to her own subjectivity and to responsibility for her own actions."<sup>60</sup> It is the

case of Maiguru who is persuaded to believe that a woman is the property of her husband which leads her to act in accordance with sexist ideology. Tambu professes:

[Maiguru] Had been prevented by marriage from doing the things she wanted to do. But it was not so simple, because she had been married by my Babamukuru, which defined her situation as good. If it was necessary to efface yourself, as Maiguru did so well that you couldn't be sure that she didn't enjoy it, if it was necessary to efface yourself in order to preserve his sense of identity and value, then, I was sure, Maiguru had taken the correct decision.<sup>61</sup>

Women who are persuaded by sexist ideology to accept the established system teach their daughters to tolerate being oppressed. That is, they urge their daughters to become like them; to psychologically embrace the norms without question. In *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Ma'Shingayi instils in Tambu the belief that a good woman is the one who accepts her destiny without fuss. hooks justifies that her conduct demonstrates her acceptance of sexist ideology, she reveals: "Acceptance of sexist ideology is indicated when women teach their children that there are only two possible behaviour patterns: the role of dominant or submissive being."<sup>62</sup> Effectively accepting sexist oppression mean being psychologically oppressed. To illustrate, when Tambu is deprived the opportunity of education her mother tells her: "What will help you my child is to carry your burdens with strength."<sup>63</sup> Similarly, when Tambu's maize is taken, her mother explains to her that no woman could alter her fate. This suggests that she is psychologically persuading her to cope with oppression and accept that, as a woman, she can never improve her life.

Many women in several African communities regard various types of discrimination as normal because they have grown accustomed to them. They tolerate it also because other women do, making it seem normal and as generational continuity. In this regard Bell hooks in her chapter entitled *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women*, asserts that victims of psychological oppression, perpetuate sexism just like institutional and cultural frameworks does.<sup>64</sup> Taking the instance of Ma'Shingayi in the novel, when Lucia, her sister, approaches her for assistance, Ma'Shingayi declares:

Do you really think I wanted the child for whom I made the journey to die only five years after it left the womb? Or my son to be taken from me? So what difference does it make whether I have a wedding or whether I go? It is the same. what I have endured for nineteen years I can endure for another nineteen, and nineteen more if need be. Now leave me! Leave me to rest.<sup>65</sup>

The accompanying statement shows Ma'Shingayi's definitive opinion that no matter what she tries, her circumstances will not change, and hence it is best not to try. In her thesis entitled, *Gender Oppression and Possibilities Of Empowerment: Images Of Women In African Literature With Specific Reference To Mariama Bâ's So Long A Letter, Buchi Emecheta's The Joys Of Motherhood And Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions*, Nyanhongo Mazvita Mollin shares the same point of view, he says: "Mainini is of the opinion that women should submit passively to their sufferings, as though there is no way they can overcome them."<sup>66</sup>

Maiguru as well, as she is raised in a sexist society that views women primarily as housewives and mothers, finds herself forced to abandon several opportunities to fit in her society. She reveals to Tambu that in England, she sacrificed her own interests and prioritized her immediate family's needs in order to meet their requirements and fit in this prejudicing community. Which implies that for married women, satisfying family and society is more important than profession, she professes:

When I was in England I glimpsed for a little while the things I could have been, the things I could have done if – if – 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 about the things I gave up...but that's how it goes, Sisi Tambu! And when you have a good man and lovely children, it makes it all worth while.<sup>67</sup>

A lot of Shona women are unable to make judgments because sexist ideology has misled them into believing that their point of view is meaningless. To keep them from criticizing the existing quo, they convince them that their viewpoint is meaningless and that their analysis is always incorrect. In *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Ma'Shingayi is convinced

that her voice would never be heard because she is a woman; hence, she feels that making a choice is unnecessary. This shown when she is not able to make a firm decision concerning her marriage with Jeremiah, she tells her sister: “Does it matter what I want? Since when has it mattered what I want?”<sup>68</sup> According to Tambu, her mother is incapable of making a determination because she does not own her mind, she illustrates: “For most of her life my mother’s mind, belonging first to her father and then to her husband, had not been hers to make up, she was finding it difficult to come to a decision.”<sup>69</sup>

To prevent a cohesive battle of women against the patriarchal system and sexist ideology, society teaches women that they are each other’s threat. Ma’Shingayi, for example, does not trust Maiguru and accuses her of taking her children. She blames Maiguru for her unfortunate circumstances. She believes she is the source of her sorrow and is terrified of her for no apparent reason. This notion is highlighted by hooks in her fourth chapter entitled *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women*, where she affirms that: “It is sexism that leads women to feel threatened by one another without cause.”<sup>70</sup> Ma’Shingayi declares: “Maiguru is not decent because first she killed my son and now she has taken Tambudzai away from me.”<sup>71</sup> This declaration depicts how terrified she is and blames her for her son’s death.

#### **b- Psychological Oppression in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2003)**

Similarly, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie treats in her novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), several forms of oppression that women in Igbo society face. She reveals their obstacles and their impact on women’s psyches through her female characters. The following part is an analysis of Kambili and Beatrice as psychologically oppressed subjects.

The novel revolves around the life of Kambili, a bright but quiet and introverted girl who lives under her father’s strict tyranny. This young lady, despite being brilliant in school, her father is never pleased with her performance. She says: “Sister Clara had written ‘Kambili

is intelligent beyond her years, quiet and responsible.’ The principle, Mother Lucy, wrote, ‘A brilliant, obedient student and a daughter to be proud of.’ But I knew Papa would not be Proud.”<sup>72</sup> The above argument illustrates that Eugene continually wants perfection from his daughter, meaning that he makes her feel undeserving of appreciation.

Kambili’s father controls and oppresses her inner state. He convinces her that all of his punishments and mistreatments were her fault. He also convinces her that he is right and she is always wrong. Therefore Kambili is willing to go to any length to please her father. She has been misled into believing that success equals pleasing Papa. Pleasing Papa becomes Kambili’s life goal. This overwhelming desire transforms her mind into a machine that works on Eugene’s behalf. To put it another way, she attributes everything she undertakes to her father. As a result, Kambili finds herself imprisoned in a universe over which she has no authority. The following declaration is evidence that he succeeded since everything she does is dedicated to him. She asserts:

I wanted to make Papa proud, to do as well as he had done. I needed him to touch the back of my neck and tell me that I was fulfilling God’s purpose. I needed him to hug me close and say that to whom much is given, much is also expected. I needed him to smile at me, in that way that lit up his face, that warmed something inside me.<sup>73</sup>

Eugene has a huge influence on Kambili; she sees him from a different perspective. Meaning that, despite his brutality toward her, she idolises him and regards him as a saint. Kambili sees in her father only the things she wants to see, as though she wishes to conceal the reality about his cruelty. The fact that she admires him facilitates his process of oppressing her. In other words, because she invariably believes he is always correct and a hero, she is easily manipulated, controlled and psychologically oppressed. In her book entitled, *Femininity and Dominance* (1999), Sandra Lee Bartky explains: “it [psychological oppression] serves to make the work of domination easier by breaking the spirit of the dominated and by rendering them incapable of understanding the nature of those agencies responsible for their subjugation.”<sup>74</sup> This is depicted frequently, for instance in the way she describes and talks

about him, she says:

Most of what Papa said sounded important. He liked to lean back and look upwards when he talked, as though he were searching for something in the air. I would focus on his lips, the movement, and sometimes I forgot myself, sometimes I wanted to stay like that forever, listening to his voice, to the important things he said. It was the same way I felt when he smiled, his face breaking open like a coconut with the brilliant white meat inside.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, Kambili is isolated from the outer world as a result of her psychological tyranny. Eugene's control of Kambili's mind resulted in her performing precisely what he desires. For instance, He wishes from her to have a life which revolves around school and church and she is denied from going beyond these boundaries. Even in his absence, Kambili is unable to openly communicate with her colleagues, she reveals: "I wanted to tell the girl that it was all my hair, that there were no attachments, but the words would not come [...] I wanted to talk with them [...] but my lips held stubbornly together."<sup>76</sup> In this respect, in an article entitled, *Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Issues of Ideology in the Constitution of the Nigerian Novel*, Onyemaechi Udumukwu depicts: "Papa is not physically present. But he is present ideologically because he is the dominant subject."<sup>77</sup>

Kambili is also unable to convey her feelings because she is unable to speak. Her narrating style reveals that she is sensitive and pays special attention to the slightest details. She describes everything so well that the reader can sense her psychological condition. However, she demonstrates that she finds it challenging to communicate with others. This is possibly owing to her father's tortures, since he caused her to lose confidence. This is seen by her refusal to respond to her cousin, Amaka, when she bothers her. It is also evident in her inability to laugh and express her happiness. She even says: "I was not sure I had ever heard myself laugh."<sup>78</sup>

Similarly, Beatrice, who is referred to as Mama, is psychologically oppressed by her husband, Eugene. Adichie presents her as a submissive lady who is constantly dedicated to her husband no matter what happens. At the beginning of the novel, Beatrice, like Kambili, is

sure that Eugene is good and all he does is for the interest of his family, so leaving him is wrong. She says to Ifeoma: “Do you know that Eugene pays the school fees of up to a hundred of our people? Do you know how many people are alive because of your brother?”<sup>79</sup> Perhaps she has kept repeating that to convince herself that, despite his flaws, her husband is a great man.

Moreover, for Mama, there is no other solution than to stay obedient and subservient to Eugene. She cannot even consider leaving him since she is financially dependent on him. In this regard, hooks in her fifth chapter entitled *Men: Comrades in Struggle*, asserts that: “Most women do not have the freedom to separate from men because of economic interdependence.”<sup>80</sup> Beatrice is brainwashed into believing that as a woman she can never build a new life away from her husband. She reveals to Ifeoma: “Where would I go if I leave Eugene’s house? Tell me, where would I go?”<sup>81</sup> She further assumes: “A woman with children and no husband, what is that [...] How can a woman live like that?”<sup>82</sup>

At the start of the plot, Mama Beatrice is imprisoned in a universe where her husband is the single authority figure. She is persuaded to believe that the suffering of divorce is more painful than her husband’s abuse. Therefore, she cannot step outside Eugene’s prison. Instead, she is continuously focused on his positive attributes. For example, she feels grateful that he has not married another woman. She also makes efforts to satisfy him and never complains no matter what he does. Kambili claims that her mother is unconcerned about everything and anything. she reveals: “Mama did not mind; there was so much that she did not mind.”<sup>83</sup> Bell hooks in her chapter entitled, *Feminist Movement to End Violence*, asserts that: “Many black women feel they must confront a degree of abuse wherever they turn in this society.”<sup>84</sup> hooks’ logic holds that the reason Beatrice allows her husband to mistreat her at the beginning of the novel is her solid belief that she cannot sustain a new form of pain. In other words, she would rather endure the sadness of her relationship than confront the suffering of divorce.

To conclude, both Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie examine in their novels the different kinds of oppression that African women encounter. The two authors show that in Rhodesia and Nigeria, oppression overshadows women's inner and outer lives. The female characters of both *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) are subject to Patriarchal, Sexist and psychological oppression.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Sylvia Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," *Sociology* 23, no. 2 (1989): 214, accessed April 04, 2022,

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42853921>.

<sup>2</sup> Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (London: Women's Press, 1988), 44.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 47

<sup>4</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 36.

<sup>5</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 56.

<sup>6</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 38.

<sup>7</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 89.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-174.

<sup>13</sup> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), 24.

<sup>14</sup> Cheryl Stobie, "DETHRONING THE INFALLIBLE FATHER: RELIGION, PATRIARCHY AND POLITICS IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S 'PURPLE HIBISCUS,'" *Literature and Theology* 24, no. 4 (2010): 424.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43664418>.

<sup>15</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 56.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>18</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 122.

<sup>19</sup> Onyemaechi Udumukwu, "Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Issues of Ideology in the Constitution of the Nigerian Novel." *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde* 48, no. 1 (2011): 184, Accessed May 23, 2022,

[Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and issues of ideology in the constitution of the Nigerian novel | Tydskrif vir letterkunde \(ajol.info\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Centre*, 121.

<sup>21</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 32- 33.

<sup>22</sup> Ifechelobi, J. N, "Feminism: Silence and Voicelessness as Tools of Patriarchy in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*," *An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia* 8(4), no. 35 (2014): 21. Accessed May 25, 2022

[Feminism: Silence and Voicelessness as Tools of Patriarchy in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus | African Research Review \(ajol.info\)](#)

<sup>23</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 130

- <sup>24</sup> Kate, Mane. *Down Girl: The logic of Misogyny: Discriminating Sexism* (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017) accessed April 4, 2022.  
[Discriminating Sexism - Oxford Scholarship \(universitypressscholarship.com\)](https://www.oxfordjournals.org/doi/full/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198802222/chapter-1)
- <sup>25</sup> hooks, *From Margin To center*, 122
- <sup>26</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 15.
- <sup>27</sup> Rosemary Moyana, “*Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in The Feminist Tradition*,” The African e-Journals Project, no.1 (1994): 29, accessed march 27, 2022.  
[Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in the Feminist Tradition \(uz.ac.zw\)](https://www.uz.ac.zw/~ajournals/1994/1/29)
- <sup>28</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 126.
- <sup>29</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 17.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 16.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., 13.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., 183.
- <sup>33</sup> Rosemary Moyana, “*Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in The Feminist Tradition*,” The African e-Journals Project, no.1 (1994): 30, accessed march 27, 2022.  
[Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in the Feminist Tradition \(uz.ac.zw\)](https://www.uz.ac.zw/~ajournals/1994/1/30).
- <sup>34</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 115.
- <sup>35</sup> Ketu II . Katrak, *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey, London 2006), 9.
- <sup>36</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 43.
- <sup>37</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 118.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 3.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., 1.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 183.
- <sup>41</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center* , 36.
- <sup>42</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 08.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., 91.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., 75.
- <sup>45</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 43.
- <sup>46</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 234.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., 240.
- <sup>48</sup> hooks, *From Margin To center*, 135.
- <sup>49</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 45.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., 103
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., 192.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., 148.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., 196.
- <sup>54</sup> hooks, *From Margin To Center*, 43
- <sup>55</sup> Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Dominance: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990) accessed April 10, 2022.  
[Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression - Sandra Lee Bartky - Google Livres.](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Femininity_and_Domination/Stu5tAAcAAcC)
- <sup>56</sup> Hilkje Charlotte Hänel, “*What Is a Sexist Ideology? Or: Why Grace Didn’t Leave*,” *Ergo* 5, no. 34 (2018): 900, accessed April 09, 2022,  
[what-is-a-sexist-ideology-or-why-grace-didnt-leave.pdf \(umich.edu\)](https://www.umich.edu/~ergo/5.34/900-hanel.pdf)
- <sup>57</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 20.
- <sup>58</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 5.
- <sup>59</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 16.

<sup>60</sup> Toril Moi, *Sexual/ Textual Politics Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2003), 90.

[Sexual/textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory - Toril Moi, Professor of Literature and Romance Studies Toril Moi - Google Books](#)

<sup>61</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 103.

<sup>62</sup> hooks, *From Margin To center*, 47.

<sup>63</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 16.

<sup>64</sup> hooks, *From Margin To centre*, 43.

<sup>65</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 155.

<sup>66</sup> Mazvita Mollin Nyanhongo, "Gender Oppression and Possibilities Of Empowerment: Images Of Women In African Literature With Specific Reference To Mariama Bâ's *So Long A Letter*, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys Of Motherhood* And Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*" (Phd thesis, University of Fort Hare, 2011), 115.

<sup>67</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 103.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 47.

<sup>71</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 143.

<sup>72</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 38-39.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>74</sup> Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Dominance: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990) accessed April10, 2022

[Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression - Sandra Lee Bartky - Google Livres.](#)

<sup>75</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 25.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>77</sup> Udumukwu Onyemaechi, "Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Issues of Ideology in the Constitution of the Nigerian Novel," *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde* 48, no. 1 (2011): 195. Accessed May 25, 2022.

[Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and issues of ideology in the constitution of the Nigerian novel | Tydskrif vir letterkunde \(ajol.info\)](#)

<sup>78</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 179.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>80</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 77.

<sup>81</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 250.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>84</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 124.

## **Chapter two: Forms of Resistance in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) by Tsitsi Dangarembga and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

This chapter will shed light on the diverse techniques that African women rely on to resist oppression, as illustrated in both Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). Through their works, the two authors demonstrate that African women are aware of the difficult situations under which they live and are ready to alter them. As a result, they have portrayed their female characters as powerful and constantly ready to combat injustice and oppression. Both Dangarembga and Adichie describe education and women's solidarity as two significant elements in women's empowerment.

### **1. Education as an Instrument for Empowering Women**

Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie use their female characters to illustrate that, despite their anxious situations African women develop various tactics to escape their sufferings. In both novels, education is regarded as the most powerful instrument for empowering women to overcome traditional obstacles that prevent them from reaching their full potential.

#### **a) Education in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988)**

Dangarembga utilizes *Nervous Conditions* (1988) to show that African women are not apathetic about their situations, but rather powerful enough to struggle and overcome them. Tambu, the main protagonist and tale orator, considers education as a method of obtaining independence and emancipation from poverty and masculine dominance. Actually, not only did Tambu employ education as a weapon against oppression, but Maiguru, Lucia, and Nyasha too, assume that education would help them to escape the tyrannical influence of their society.

In the novel, the question of education is raised to show that African girls are determined to change their futures. For instance, at the beginning of the novel, despite the fact that Tambu is prevented from attending school, she is capable of figuring the reason. She

reveals: “I understand that there was not enough money for my fees. Yes, I did understand why I could not go back to school, but I loved going to school and I was good at it.”<sup>1</sup> This realization drives her to seek a solution for returning to school. She vows to earn her own by cultivating her own maize. She declares to her father: “I will earn the fees.”<sup>2</sup> In an article entitled, *Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in The Feminist Tradition*, Moyana Rosmery, in this respect, argues: “That self-dependence and determination are what enable her [Tambu] to escape from the throttling patriarchal sexism and catapults her into a different world where she achieves her liberation, a liberation marked by the demise of her brother.”<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the novel, Tambu hints that it is about resistance, she declares: “My story is not after all about death, but about my escape and Lucia’s; about my mother’s and Maiguru’s entrapment; and about Nyasha’s rebellion.”<sup>4</sup> This quote implies that Lucia and Tambu free themselves from poverty and the repressive patriarchal system to pursue a sense of independent individual identity, whereas Maiguru, Nyasha, and Mainini remain trapped.

Despite the difficult conditions under which they live, African women are aware that they are oppressed, which is a vital step toward resistance. For instance, despite the fact that Tambu’s resistance does not start at the beginning of the novel, she is able to acknowledge that she is being oppressed and that is unfair. She professes: “In those days I felt the injustice of my situation every time I thought about it [...] Thinking about it, felling the injustice of it, this is how I came to dislike my brother, and not only my brother...In fact everybody.”<sup>5</sup> Carol Hay, in her article entitled, *The Obligation to Resist Oppression (2011)*, explains that: “In some cases, there might be nothing an oppressed person can do to resist her oppression other than simply recognizing that something is wrong with her situation. This is, in a profound sense, better than nothing.”<sup>6</sup>

Tambu believes that education is her only way out of the homestead, and that it would solve all of her difficulties, therefore she is ready to tackle all of her challenges. For example, when her parents decide that she should stay at home since there is not enough money for her tuition, she refuses to surrender and she raises the matter of her education once more. She announces to her parents: “I shall go to school again [...] If you will give me some seed, I will clear my own maize. Not much. Just enough for the fees.”<sup>7</sup> This quote suggests that Tambu, does not surrender to the obstacles. She has devised a strategy to return to school and is prepared to go to any extent to achieve her objective.

Despite his flaws, Babamukuru is a significant factor to Tambu’s education. Although he supplied Tambu with this chance to express his dominance, one cannot doubt that without his assistance, Tambu would never have progressed from an impoverished African girl to intellectually capable elite. She says: “I was triumphant. Babamukuru had approved of my direction. I was vindicated!”<sup>8</sup> She further explains:

When I stepped into Babamukuru’s car I was a peasant...This was the person I was leaving behind. At Babamukuru’s I expected to find another self, a clean, well-groomed, genteel self who could not have been bred, could not have survived, on the homestead.<sup>9</sup>

The assertion above alludes to the opportunity that Babamukuru provides Tambu to significantly alter her life and become the polar antithesis of the person she was at the homestead. This might be seen as a vital argument because, despite his patriarchal control and the harsh oppression he exercises, Babamukuru is the key to Tambu’s education.

Tambu eventually succeeds in leaving the poverty of the homestead after overcoming various obstacles. She is resolved to make most of the chance given to her by Babamukuru to better her life. This determination has helped her not only to take the convent school attendance exam, but to succeed in it. She affirms: “The latest opportunity was this one of going to the convent. I would go. I was sure of myself.”<sup>10</sup> This quote demonstrates Tambu’s strong desire to enhance her academic performance and better her conditions. She considers

acceding to the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart the cure for all her problems. She declares: “Going to the convent was a chance to lighten those burdens by entering a world where burdens were light. I would take the chance. I would lighten my burdens. I would go.”<sup>11</sup>

Toward the end of the novel, Tambu realises her ambition and escapes from poverty and patriarchal rule. She declares: “Excitement. Anticipation. Elation and exultation [...] Everything was coming together. All the things that I wanted were tying themselves up into a neat package which presented itself to me with a flourish.”<sup>12</sup> Tambu’s admission to a prestigious school far away from the homestead reveals that her resistance proved successful. Furthermore, her capacity to write about her experiences and express herself openly may be interpreted as a sign of her personal growth. At the end of her story, she declares: “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.”<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, Dangarembga illustrates via Nyasha that some resistance might result in catastrophic failure. Nyasha, likewise, adopted education as a means of emancipation; However, unlike Tambu, Nyasha’s battle for freedom, ended in a terrible defeat. As it is implied in the following quote: “Nyasha, far minded and isolated, my uncle’s daughter, whose rebellion may not in the end have been successful.”<sup>14</sup> In an article entitled, *(When) Do Victims Have Duties to Resist Oppression*, Teralzo Rosa urges victims against engaging in extremely costly acts of resistance since the costs to the resisting victims are larger than the damages avoided, she further adds: “Victims like anyone else, can permissibly engage in self-sacrifice. But self-sacrifice of this type is generally supererogatory rather than required.”<sup>15</sup> Nyasha effectively selected an extreme form of resistance; therefore, she paid a hefty price, the bad consequences of her resistance outweigh the advantages.

Nyasha, in order to escape her father's harsh authority, resorted to study for several hours a day. She chose education as a refuge from her father's patriarchal dominance. Throughout the narrative, Nyasha strives to merge two opposing cultures, having been raised in England and now returning to her homeland. She developed a double identity that does not belong in either western culture or her native one. She asserts: "I'm not one of them but I'm not one of you."<sup>16</sup> She wishes to pursue a western education while being true to her Shona origins. Therefore, she decides to read extensively in an attempt to broaden her horizons because, according to her: "You had to know the facts if you were ever going to find the solution."<sup>17</sup>

Tambu states that Nyasha's reading focuses on worldwide battles and tragedies of ordinary people. Her unreasonable thirst for knowledge leads her to uncover terrible and unpleasant realities, it permits her to perceive reality and oppose oppression. Therefore, the more she reads, the more rebellious she becomes. Besides, her double identity makes it difficult for her to deal with traditional practises that put obstacles in the way of women's progress, as well as sexist ideology that views women as the inferior gender. Therefore, she results to rebel and refuses to let anyone control her. She declares: "I'm convinced I don't want to be anyone's underdog. It's not right for anyone to be that."<sup>18</sup> This notion compelled her to challenge her father's patriarchal authority whenever he sought to impose dominion over her. To illustrate, her most recent attempt to defy her father's control has been to vomit everything he forces her to consume. Ketu II Katrak in her book, *Politics of the Female Body* (2006), argues that Nyasha while vomiting the food she is forced to eat she is also throwing back the aspects of the English and Shona culture that oppress her as a woman.<sup>19</sup> Nyasha's rebellious nature drove her to lose control of her body and suffer from anorexia nervosa.

At the end of the novel, while Tambu succeeded in fleeing poverty and male dominance, Nyasha finds herself suffering from anorexia nervosa and confined to a mental

institution. Tambu explains that: “Nyasha was put into a clinic, where she stayed for several weeks.”<sup>20</sup> Although her struggle resulted in devastating failure, her tragedy serves as a warning lesson for Tambu. She says: “For I was beginning to have a suspicion, no more than the seed of a suspicion, that I had been too eager to leave the homestead and embrace the ‘Englishness’ of the mission.”<sup>21</sup> Sizemore Christine in Tuzyline Jita Allan’s edited book, *Women’s Studies Quarterly* (1997), argues that Nyasha and Tambu, are “A pair of girls, one of whom manages to establish a sense of self and find a space between damaging ideologies of gender and colonialism and one of whom succumbs to mental illness.”<sup>22</sup>

Maiguru and Lucia, too, chose education as a path of release. First, Lucia has always desired to be educated and have an independent existence free of man’s domination. To illustrate, when her tribe are expecting her to marry Takesure, she declares: “Whatever he can do for me, I can do better for myself.”<sup>23</sup> As a result, she requests that Babamukuru supply her with a job so that she may be financially independent. Effectively, after providing her with the job, Lucia became more independent and powerful. Tambu says that “She could already feel her mind beginning to think more efficiently.”<sup>24</sup> Maiguru as well, after many years of being submissive to Babamukuru, at the end of the novel, she can no longer tolerate it and resolves to voice her pain and never accept to be submissive. She also resolves to leave him for a few days.

#### **b) Education in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2003)**

Through her works, Adichie strives to develop strategies to resist oppression. She also seeks to break the silence imposed on women for a long time by showing that women’s oppression can be terminated. She believes that education is a weapon that enables women to overcome the social and traditional restrictions that prevent them from enjoying their rights. For this reason, her female characters in *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) are oriented toward education as a key to their freedom and liberation from social and male oppression.

### **Aunt Ifeoma as an Educated Woman:**

In Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), Aunt Ifeoma is portrayed as a completely different sort of woman. Her educational background and position as a teacher at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka distinguished her. Since then, she has been a brave, assertive, and strong-willed independent woman. In a thesis entitled, *Behaviorism versus Intercultural Education in the Novel Purple Hibiscus*, Seidi Tuomaala argues: "Aunt Ifeoma is a symbol for intercultural education in the novel."<sup>25</sup> Kambili asserts that aunt Ifeoma believes in herself and is ready to handle all of her challenges. She reveals:

Aunty Ifeoma was tall as Papa, with a well-proportioned body. She walked fast, like one who knew just where she was going and what she was going to do there. And she spoke the way she walked, as if to get as many words out of her mouth as she could in the shortest time.<sup>26</sup>

Education empowers women to think for themselves and refuse to tolerate oppression and man's dominance. Aunt Ifeoma in the story is able to evaluate things objectively. Furthermore, she is willing to oppose oppression and injustice within her own family or in the country as a whole because of her educational background. At work, Ifeoma is fearless and never hesitant to speak the truth or to confront injustice. Michael Oshindoro in an article entitled '*Solidarity between Women in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*' argues that: "It is Aunty Ifeoma's education that makes her unconstrained by convention, making her an enlightened, bold, and a strong woman other women should aspire to become."<sup>27</sup> This is depicted in her words to one of her colleagues, she says: "When do we speak out eh? When soldiers are appointed lecturers and students attend lectures with guns to their heads? When do we speak out?"<sup>28</sup> The above proclamation demonstrates Ifeoma's confidence and fortitude, as well as her willingness to reveal the truth at whatever cost.

Furthermore, Ifeoma rejects the patriarchal system's repressive dominance over women. This is demonstrated by her belief that her brother, Eugene, does not have the right to wield authority and domination over his family. She declares: "Eugene has to stop doing

God's job. God is big enough to do his own job."<sup>29</sup> Despite her Catholic faith and commitment to her traditions, she has always been opposed to the patriarchal system. Moreover, although women are not permitted to express themselves, Ifeoma is not afraid to say whatever comes to her mind without hesitation. In these patriarchal societies, silence symbolises respect, thus women are not allowed to address patriarchs. However, ifeoma does not respect this law and is ready to spontaneously express herself to her patriarchal brother. For example, when she requests that Kambili and Jaja accompany her to *Aokpe*, she says: "A week, Eugene, they will stay a week. I do not have monsters that eat human heads in my house!"<sup>30</sup> Ifeoma's statement demonstrates her boldness and self-assurance, which allow her to resist patriarchal domination.

Ifeoma sees the world differently than her culture does; she does not distinguish between the two sexes. Implying that she does not consider men to be superior to women, as seen by the way she speaks to her brother and the way she raises her boy and girl children. A great example of this is when she divides household responsibilities, as each of her children, boys and girls equally, is allocated a task. Also, while no one can contradict Eugene, her patriarchal brother, she is not afraid to express herself since she perceives no difference between them. Kambili reveals:

Every time Aunty Ifeoma spoke to Papa, my heart stopped, then started again in a hurry. It was the flippant tone; she did not seem to recognize that it was Papa, that he was different, special. I wanted to reach out and press her lips and shut and get some of that shiny bronze lipstick on my fingers.<sup>31</sup>

These above lines reflect that Ifeoma is not like other women who are submissive to men, and she rejects the notion that women should always be subject to men's power. This alludes to hooks explanation of resistance. In her sixth chapter, *Changing Perspectives On Power*, she argues making reference to Elizabeth Janeway's *Power of the Weak* that the ability of women to reject the dominant definition of their reality is an act of resistance and fortitude.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, Ifeoma believes that a woman does not require the assistance of a man and may achieve success on her own. After her husband's death, she is driven by this strong belief to forge an autonomous identity free of her brother's patriarchal influence. Her greater education allows her to not consider herself weak, but rather capable of standing alone without the assistance of others. She reveals to Beatrice:

I want a new car, *nwunye m*, and I want to use my gas cooker again and I want a new freezer and I want money so that I will not have to unravel the seams of Chima's trousers when he outgrows them. But I will not ask my brother to bend over so that I can lick his buttocks to get these things.<sup>33</sup>

This passage shows that no matter what, Ifeoma is not going to surrender and is willing to face all of her life obstacles without her brother's assistance. Despite her society's stereotypical images about widowed women, Ifeoma does not listen and she focuses on her life and children and does not give much attention to these restrictions. Her high education is what permits her to be different and self-reliant. As it is confirmed in an a thesis entitled, *Patriarchal Structures and Female Empowerment in Nigerian and Taiwanese Novels: A Study of Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Li Ang's The Butcher's Wife*, where Abiodun Adeniji affirms:

With increasing exposure of females to formal education, they will no longer be ignorant of their rights under the law and will be able to enforce those rights. This is demonstrated in *Purple Hibiscus* by Ifeoma, a doctorate degree holder who is empowered to assert her rights and defend her children against patriarchal intrusions.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, education empowers women to rise a new generation of children who are neither psychologically oppressed nor indoctrinated to believe in sexist ideologies. Ifeoma's greater education allows her to provide her children with the life that every child deserves. A life where they can laugh and express themselves freely, where they can build their own personality away from patriarchal influence. As a result of her strong belief that everyone should have the opportunity to build a personality and be mentally independent, she allows her children to express their opinions and have their own perception of life. This is evident when she informs her daughter Amaka that while she has the right to believe anything she

wants about Kambili, she must respect her. In the following lines, Kambili depicts also how, because of Ifeoma's education, her cousins grew courageous and self-confident. She reveals:

I was just observing a table where you could say anything at any time to anyone, where the air was free for you to breathe as you wished [...] She looked like a football coach who had done a good job with her team and was satisfied to stand next to the eighteen-yard box and watch.<sup>35</sup>

*Purple Hibiscus* (2003) takes place in Nigeria during the postcolonial period, when corruption and political instability reign. People, especially women, are not allowed to resist the government during this time period. They are denied the opportunity to speak. However, because of her rebellious temperament, Ifeoma is unable to remain oblivious to injustice and is always compelled to reject corruption. She reveals: "Being defiant can be a good thing sometimes [...] It is not a bad thing when it is used right."<sup>36</sup> She suffered various challenges over her life career as a result of her rebellious personality, which led to her leaving Nigeria and migrating to America. However, this does not imply that her struggle is futile since she will live the life she deserves in the United States and she is happy to leave.

## **2. Women's Solidarity as a Significant Tool for Women's Liberation**

The next section will discuss female solidarity in both *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie recognised African women's unity as a tool of emancipation in both Rhodesian and Nigerian communities. In the concept of women's bonding, the two authors focus on the lives of African women and their battle to resist different types of oppression.

### **a. Women's Solidarity in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988)**

In the novel, Tsitsi Dangarembga calls attention to female solidarity as another crucial weapon that African women utilise to combat their anxious situations and better their lives alongside one another. She promotes women's togetherness by stressing the positive outcomes of solidarity. Throughout the story, the female characters, despite the inconvenient circumstances they endure; invariably assist one another in resisting tyranny and achieving

freedom.

In the novel the notion that African women assist one another to achieve their dreams is emphasized. Nyasha's support to Tambu during her educational journey is a perfect example of this. Upon arriving at the mission Tambu has formed a strong bond with Nyasha. It is perfectly exemplified in the aforementioned lines which imply that Nyasha is the one who eventually taught Tambu to think critically. Tambu declares:

The conversation that followed was a long, involved conversation, full of guileless opening up and intricate lettings out and letting in. It was the sort of conversation that young girls have with their best friends, that lovers have under the influence of the novelty and uniqueness of their love, the kind of conversation that cousins have when they realise that they like each other in spite of not wanting to. You could say that my relationship with Nyasha was my first love-affaire.<sup>37</sup>

At the beginning of the novel, Tambu is clueless of modern lifestyle as a result of her upbringing in an impoverished family and a poor environment. Therefore, Nyasha has familiarized her to the contemporary life she will lead in the mission. Nyasha, for example, taught Tambu how to switch on and off the lights, as well as how to use tampons to remain clean throughout her menstrual period. Nyasha's assistance helped Tambu in her transformation from a destitute African child to a privileged independent girl.

Moreover, Nyasha has a huge influence on Tambu's intellectual growth. She encourages her to struggle for education, Tambu says: "Nyasha gave me the impression of moving, always moving and striving towards some state that she had seen and accepted a long time ago."<sup>38</sup> She also encouraged her to read from her books in order to assist her in improving her academic performance. This implies that Nyasha has a big impact on Tambu's English progress. In this account, Bell hooks, in the fourth chapter entitled *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women*, affirms that women are enriched when they are linked with one another,<sup>39</sup> which is proved through the two represented characters.

The bond between Nyasha and Tambu exemplifies the genuine definition of sisterhood. Tambu describes their relationship as: "More than a friendship that developed

between Nyasha and myself.”<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Nyasha supports Tambu in grasping a multitude of things as their link has grown substantially stronger. Tambu declares:

I did not like to spend too long without talking to her about the things that worried me because she would, I knew, pluck out the heart of the problem with her multidirectional mind and present it to me in ways that made sense, but not only that, in ways that implied also that problems existed not to be worried over but to extend us in our search for solutions.<sup>41</sup>

This claim implies that the two girls have become dependent on one another. Their relationship grew to the point that they were, metaphorically, like one soul in two distinct bodies, unable to exist apart from one another. To illustrate, Nyasha’s mental state worsens once Tambu leaves for the convent school. Nyasha reveals in her letter to Tambu: “In many ways you are very essential to me in bridging some of the gaps in my life, and now that you are away, I fell them again.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, when Nyasha is sent to a mental facility, Tambu discloses that her condition is affected because she is so connected to her cousin, as she acknowledges: “Nyasha’s progress was still in the balance, and so, as a result was mine.”<sup>43</sup>

Tambu’s bond with her sisters is another example of female solidarity. Despite the fact that they have minimal interaction throughout the story, it is evident that she does not want them to grow up submissive and persuaded to support sexist ideology. She wants to teach them a moral despite the fact that they are still young. It is depicted in the following lines:

They were watching me climb into Babamukuru’s car to be whisked away to limitless horizons. It was up to them to learn the important lesson that circumstances were not immutable, no burden so binding that it could not be dropped. The honour for teaching them this emancipating lesson was mine. I claimed it all, for here I was, living proof of the moral. There was no doubt in my mind that this was the case.<sup>44</sup>

The above lines are Tambu’s words when she is given the chance to realise her dream and start a new life away from the burdens of the homestead. She seemed to enjoy assisting her sisters in recognising that not all women are intended to follow the same path. She is also excited to demonstrate to them that resistance is their only escape from oppression. Opportunities exist and should not be overlooked, giving them a grain of hope to always struggle for their future.

Moreover, Tambu's desire to pursue her education at the Yong Ladies College of the Sacred Heart would have been next to impossible without Maiguru's support. In reality, when Tambu wins the convent school's admission test Babamukuru, refuses to send her. He argues that she has already acquired the requisite education and that sending her will cause her to develop into an immoral lady. However Maiguru intervenes and convince her husband to send her, she declares:

All I know is that if our daughter Tambudzai is not a decent person now, she never will be, no matter where she goes to school. And if she is decent, then this convent should not change her. As for money, you have said yourself that she has a full scholarship. It is possible that you have other reasons why she should not go there, Babawa Chido, but these – the question of decency and the question of money – are the ones I have heard and so these are the ones I have talked of.<sup>45</sup>

As demonstrated by the previous quotation, Maiguru is striving to persuade Babamukuru that Tambu would not become a bad woman as a result of her schooling. Thanks to her words Babamukuru changes his mind and decides to give a chance to Tambu to lighten her burdens. For this reason, hooks in the fourth chapter, maintains that: "Women must take the initiative and demonstrate the power of solidarity."<sup>46</sup>

Despite the existence of the patriarchal system, African women consistently support one another. Nyasha, Lucia, and Maiguru, for example, have all volunteered to defend Tambu when she receives a harsh punishment from her uncle, Babamukuru. First and foremost, Nyasha, who has always stood by Tambu's side, refuses to accept this injustice and decides to do something for her. Tambu illustrates: "She was terribly angry about the severity of my punishment and was all for asking Babamukuru whether he intended to educate me or kill me."<sup>47</sup> Despite Tambu's misgivings, Nyasha's rebellious personality drives her to intervene and support her cousin. Nyasha's close affinity with Tambu motivates her to do anything she might for her cousin "in spite of the fact that help had been forbidden."<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, upon witnessing this wrongdoing, Lucia becomes enraged and resolves to take action. In fact, Lucia is also shown in the text as a powerful woman who refuses to

tolerate women's oppression. Babamukuru says that: "She is like a man herself."<sup>49</sup> This assertion depicts Lucia's bravery and desire to stand up against all forms of women victimization. After finding Tambu doing laundry Lucia pledges to act immediately and decides to talk with Babamukuru. Lucia says:

Did you ask her what was on her mind? [...] Did you ask my sister whether she wished her daughter was present? Even the wedding. Did you ask my sister if she wanted that wedding? I do not see that the child did you so much wrong by preferring not to be there.<sup>50</sup>

As illustrated in these lines, Lucia advocates for her sister and niece's right to make their own decisions and have authority over their own bodies. Lucia's actions support hooks' assertion in *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women*, in which she states: "A central issue for feminist activists has been the struggle to obtain for women the right to control their bodies."<sup>51</sup>

Additionally, despite being so submissive to her husband, Maiguru does not support Babamukuru when he punishes Tambu and, for the first time, she opposes him. She remains silent at first because she is afraid of her spouse's response and keeps her thoughts to herself. However, when the punishment that Tambu has received is deemed severe, Maiguru recognises that she has to do something to halt it. She declares: "Do you forget, Baba [...] that her brother died in this house? What will her parents think when she tells them how she was punished. Truly, this punishment is too much for the child."<sup>52</sup> As evidenced by this assertion, in order to stand with Tambu and stop this mistreatment, Maiguru rebelliously expresses her concerns and, for the first time, makes Babamukuru aware of her opinion.

Throughout the narrative, African women are shown as strong and supportive of one another in challenging conditions. This is particularly illustrated in Lucia's help to Ma'Shingayi upon her difficult situation. In fact, because Ma'Shingayi is submissive and obedient she is subject to several forms of oppression which she does not support during her post-pregnancy period. During this time Lucia has never let her sister alone and has supported

her until she is completely cured. Tambu says: “She went straight into a regime of what I can only call a sort of shock treatment.”<sup>53</sup> She further adds: “Lucia stayed two more days to see my mother well on her way to recovery before she returned to the mission.”<sup>54</sup> Lucia, as pictured above, is a fantastic example of an African woman who is always willing to help when it is needed. Paulina Ada Uwakweh in her journal article, *Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s “Nervous Conditions.”* asserts:

By helping her pathologically sick sister [Tambu’s mother] toward recovery and in her effort to achieve independence Lucia demonstrates a firm understanding of the necessity for female-bonding and self help.<sup>55</sup>

Despite their challenging circumstances, the female characters refuse to accept the assumption that they cannot work together and are always seeking for ways to collaborate. Lucia, Maiguru, and Nyasha all refuse to be indoctrinated into disliking one another. Tambu finishes her novel by these words:

It was a long and painful process for me, that process of expansion. It was a process whose events stretched over many years and would fill another volume, but the story I have told here, is my own story, the story of four women whom I loved, and our men, this story is how it all began.<sup>56</sup>

This conclusion leads one to understand how these women suffered to resist and change things. They have demonstrated that solidarity between women can exist and gives amazing impacts. In this view, Bell hooks in her *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women*, stresses that: “Solidarity strengthens resistance struggle.”<sup>57</sup>

#### **b. Women’s Solidarity in Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2003)**

Through *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, demonstrates that one of the potent weapons that African women adopt to resist oppression is solidarity. She also emphasises through her novel the necessity of a strong women’s bond for the empowerment and liberation of African women.

Aunt Ifeoma is depicted as a wise, intellectual, and independent woman who refuses to tolerate her brother’s domineering behaviour toward his wife and children. She is constantly

eager to eliminate sexism and prejudice against women. Ifeoma is an authentic Igbo lady who appreciates the value of sisterhood. The prayer she adds to Eugene's one is a perfect example that she believes in the power of unity, she says: "And to us, and to the spirit of family."<sup>58</sup> For this reason, she maintains a close relationship with both Kambili and Beatrice, aiding them in overcoming the various obstacles they encounter.

Adichie presents a deep friendship between Ifeoma and Beatrice in order to dispel the ideology that women are natural enemies. Despite their differences and the fact that they are not blood relatives, the two women keep supporting one another and tolerate the differences. One of the notable differences between them is that Ifeoma is educated while Beatrice is not, yet this does not jeopardise their togetherness. They are both ready to help one another in their times of need. In this regard Bell hooks in her fourth chapter entitled *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women* argues that one is not able to prove that unity can exist until it is shown that obstacles dividing women can be removed.<sup>59</sup> For instance, when the family-in-law asks Eugene to get another wife, Ifeoma stands by Beatrice's side, as depicted in the following assertion: "Did your own *umunna* not tell Eugene to take another wife because a man of his stature cannot have just two children? If people like you had not been on my side then."<sup>60</sup> Despite their differences, the two women created a solid bond, indicating that women can come together in any situation and overcome any obstacles.

Ifeoma's commitment to Beatrice is initially demonstrated when she refuses to accept her brother's abuse and encourages her to leave him. At the beginning of the novel, Beatrice is depicted as being extremely devoted to her husband and tolerating all of his mistreatments without complaint. She considers her suffering a normal part of life. However, Ifeoma interferes and explains to her that Eugene has no right to do so. She eventually encourages Beatrice to abandon him and explains to her that she can have a happy life away from his aggression. She declares: "Sometimes life begins when marriage ends."<sup>61</sup> Ifeoma's decision to

support her sister-in-law over her brother illustrates her devotion to female solidarity. In an article entitled, *Solidarity between Women in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus*, Michael Oshindoro, a critic, asserts:

Adichie reads a different meaning to women supporting other women; that solidarity may come from other sources apart from a woman's immediate family, a point Adichie might be making since she leaves out detailed reference to Beatrice's family background.<sup>62</sup>

Adichie in *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) reveals that, despite sexist ideologies that present women as adversaries, African women are extremely supportive of one another. No matter what happens, these women cannot ignore one another's needs. For example, when Eugene breaks a table at Beatrice's pregnant belly, Ifeoma receives her and provides her with protection and psychological support. Kambili states:

Aunty Ifeoma came hurrying out to the verendah, drying her hands in front of her shorts. She hugged Mama and then led her into the living room, supporting her as one would support a cripple.<sup>63</sup>

The previous lines show how Ifeoma provides Beatrice with security and psychological support after she leaves Eugene. It exemplifies also that Igbo women are always there for one another in tough times. In fact, throughout the novel, Ifeoma affords Beatrice safety and protection. As a result, Beatrice selected her house as a refuge from her abusive spouse.

Furthermore, Ifeoma's support for Beatrice motivates her to take an important step toward her freedom. She ultimately made a brave decision that changed her life forever. At the end of the novel, Beatrice resolves to take action and stop her misery; she then puts poison in little adjustments in her husband's meals. She reveals after his death to her children: "I started putting the poison in his tea before I came to Nsukka."<sup>64</sup> This statement might be construed to suggest that Beatrice finally heeded Ifeoma's advice: "When the house is on fire, you run out before the roof collapses on your head."<sup>65</sup> In this regard, Bell hooks argues in her first chapter entitled *Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory*, that while patriarchy remains, black women and others who live in repressive circumstances on a daily basis invent

resistance techniques.<sup>66</sup> Effectively, Beatrice feels compelled by Ifeoma's words to oppose her husband's oppression. She discovers a shocking solution to end her pain and exact vengeance for the years of abuse and brutality she endured with her children.

The bond between Kambili and Ifeoma might be seen as another manifestation of sisterhood in *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). Adichie's work is centred on Kambili's private existence in the world around her. She lives in a family where affection is completely absent. Her father is an abusive man, and her mother absorbs all he does without complaint. As a result, Kambili has never been in a position of solidarity until she met her aunt Ifeoma, who provided her with love and support. Kambili depicts their first meeting by saying: "She did not give me the usual brief side hug. She clasped me in her arms and held me tightly against the softness of her body."<sup>67</sup> Michael Oshindoro in an article entitled *Solidarity between Women in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus* argues that: "Adichie carefully constructs her female characters to reflect the variegated personalities-forced or self-willed that define an Igbo woman in post-colonial Nigeria."<sup>68</sup>

Adichie introduces Ifeoma as the first model of guidance that inspires Kambili. She encourages Kambili with her independent views, which instil a strong feeling of independence for bigger prospects in life. That means, when Kambili sees Ifeoma as unique and leading an autonomous life, she realises that a woman may be more than what society has predetermined for her. Upon witnessing her, Kambili has started to notice the difference between her and other women in their tribe. She reveals:

I watched every movement she made; I could not tear my ears away. It was the fearlessness about her, about the way she gestured as she spoke, the way she smiled to show that wide gap.<sup>69</sup>

The aforementioned statement reveals Kambili's admiration of every aspect of her aunt, and her unconscious desire to become like her. From the way she describes and talks about her, one can deduce that Ifeoma is the first inspiration figure for Kambili. In other words, Ifeoma

symbolises a relevant picture of a self-sufficient woman, which Kambili regarded as her sole rescue.

In the narrative, Adichie emphasises that Igbo women are not apathetic to patriarchal domination but actively reject it. They refuse to accept the system and instead attempt to destroy it or free themselves with the support of one another. Ifeoma is aware of her brother's patriarchal control over his children, therefore she resolves to help them in whatever way she can. For instance, she decides to take them away for a few days to give them some peace. Despite her brother's patriarchal authority, she asks him to let the children accompany her. She declares: "I plan to go on pilgrimage there with the children [...] Maybe Kambili and Jaja can go with us."<sup>70</sup> In reality, Ifeoma recognises that her brother does not provide his children with any freedom, so she determines to provide it on her own. Teralzo Rosa, a critic, argues that: "The primary reason for concerning ourselves with duties to resist oppression is the urgent need to end or mitigate the oppressive harms that victims experience."<sup>71</sup> As a result, when they arrive at her house, she states: "You are on holiday here and it is my house, so you follow my own rules."<sup>72</sup> This declaration reflects Ifeoma's wishes to offer her niece and nephew some freedom and to keep them away from the patriarchal influence of their father.

Moreover, in the novel, Adichie shows Igbo women as contributing to the psychological liberation of other women. They assist other women in perceiving reality and help them to refuse sexist and patriarchal ideologies. To illustrate, Ifeoma intends to emancipate Kambili's mind, which she begins to accomplish upon her arrival at her house. She initially attempts to offer Kambili independence by removing her schedule so that she may make her own decisions about what to do. She also aims to demonstrate to her how to express herself and not remain mute in the face of her cousin's mocking. Ifeoma, for example, encourages Kambili to reply and express herself when Amaka criticises her about her inability to perform the *orah* leaves. As a result, and for the first time in Kambili's defence, she says:

“You don’t have to shout, Amaka [...] I don’t know how to do the *orah* leaves, but you can show me.”<sup>73</sup> These are the positive outcomes of Ifeoma’s assistance, which has enabled Kambili to express her thoughts and feelings to her cousin, Amaka.

Adichie in her novel emphasises the notion that Igbo women support one another to stop sexist violence. African women will not tolerate sexist oppression or violence towards other women. As a result, they constantly try their hardest to put an end to this injustice. From the beginning of the story, Ifeoma appears to be opposed to Eugene’s behaviour with his children. She has, however, never explicitly reacted to his maltreatments. She exclusively stays by their sides, particularly Kambili’s. Hence when he abused Kambili until she is hospitalized, Ifeoma goes furious and decides to take the children with her in order to protect them. In this respect, Bell hooks in her *Sisterhood: Political Solidarity Between Women* maintains that women should get together for one reason: the fight to eradicate sexism.<sup>74</sup> It is depicted in the following assertion, where Ifeoma declares to Beatrice: “Kambili will come to Nsukka when she leaves the hospital [...] I want Kambili and Jaja to stay with us, at least until Easter.”<sup>75</sup> This revelation is a perfect illustration of Ifeoma’s strong sense of sisterhood. Her strong desire to save her niece always manifests when she is in danger. She wants to protect her, even from her own father.

Adichie emphasises in her work that women inherently appreciate one another and that it is sexist ideology that prevents them from bonding. Women are born with a great feeling of admiration and affection for one another. To put it more simply, they have an innate desire to assist one another. This is illustrated when Kambili wishes to assist the woman she finds in need. Despite her father’s control over everything and her incapacity to aid her, she has a deep desire to assist her. She declares:

I thought about the woman lying in the dirt as we drove home. I had not seen her face, but I felt that I knew her, that I had always known her. I wished I could have gone over and helped her up, cleaned the red wrapper. I thought about her, too, on Monday, as Papa drove me to school.<sup>76</sup>

From the above declaration, one can now notice that African women are not born enemies, but rather are brainwashed into believing that they are. In this regard Bell hooks acknowledges in her chapter entitled, *Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory* that she had never known a life without women supporting, protecting, and caring for one another honestly.<sup>77</sup> Despite her oppression, Kambili wishes to assist other women and does not regard them as her adversaries.

These deep bonds that these women have formed have helped them overcome several challenges and prevail in their quest for freedom. At the end of the novel, with the help of Ifeoma, Beatrice decides to stop her husband's abuse forever. On the other hand, Kambili succeeded in developing a strong personality, which enabled her to live free of the psychological oppression. She has gained mental freedom and may now do or express herself anytime she wishes, because after her father's death and Ifeoma's assistance: "So many things seemed easy now."<sup>78</sup> She further explains:

I no longer wonder if I have a right to love Father Amadi; I simply go ahead and love him. I no longer wonder if the checks I have been writing to the Missionary Father of the Blessed Way are bribes to God; I just go ahead and write them. I no longer wonder if I chose St. Andrew's church in Enugu as my new church because the priest there is a Blessed Way Missionary Father as Father Amadi is; I just go.<sup>79</sup>

Kambili's declaration hints to the reader that she no longer lives in oppression. She has, ironically, released herself free from her prison world. This ending may suggest that Adichie's novel is about resistance and emancipation, since all her female characters find a way to liberate themselves.

To conclude, the above chapter demonstrates that in both *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), Dangarembga and Adichie show that despite their harsh circumstances, the female characters can, however, accomplish great results and make progress in their lives. One may thus infer that African women are not oblivious to their circumstances. Despite their challenging conditions, they are able to prove their existence and fulfil their goals.

Overall, these achievements are, in fact, the product of women's determination to improve their lives. In both novels, the female characters are able to fight back against their nervous circumstances and attain freedom from their enslavement because of their steadfast desire to be educated and sisterly togetherness. Dangarembga and Adichie both proved through their female protagonists that African women depend on education to perceive life outside the box. Moreover, they have both depicted how women together are strong and assist one another in escaping their misery.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Dangarembga, (London: Women's Press, 1988), 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Rosemary Moyana, "Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in The Feminist Tradition," The African e-Journals Project, no.1 (1994): 31, accessed April 10, 2022. [Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in the Feminist Tradition \(uz.ac.zw\)](http://www.uz.ac.zw)

<sup>4</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Carol Hay, "The Obligation to Resist Oppression," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 42, no. 1 (2011): 32

[The Obligation to Resist Oppression \(philarchive.org\)](http://philarchive.org)

<sup>7</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>14</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Rosa Terlazzo, "(When) Do Victims Have Duties to Resist Oppression," *Social Theory and Practise* 46, no. 2 (2020): 398, accessed April 15, 2022.

[\(\(When\) Do Victims Have Duties to Resist Oppression? on JSTOR \(arn.dz\)](https://www.jstor.org/stable/48688888)

<sup>16</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 205.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>19</sup> Ketu H. Katrak, *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World* (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey, London 2006), 122.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>22</sup> Sizemore Christine, "Negotiating Between Ideologies: The Search for Identity in Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions and Margaret Atwood's Cat's Eye" in *Women's Studies Quarterly*, ed. Tuzyline Jita Allan (New York: The Feminist Press, 1997), 68.

<sup>23</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 147.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

- <sup>25</sup> Seidi Toumala, “*Behaviorism versus Intercultural Education in the Novel Purple Hibiscus*” (Independent Project, Södertörn University, 2013), 27.  
[FULLTEXT01.pdf \(diva-portal.org\)](#)
- <sup>26</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 71.
- <sup>27</sup> Page 02
- <sup>28</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 223.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid., 95.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 99.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., 77.
- <sup>32</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 90.
- <sup>33</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 95.
- <sup>34</sup> Abiodun Adeniji, “Patriarchal Structures and Female Empowerment in Nigerian and Taiwanese Novels: A Study of Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Li Ang's *The Butcher's Wife*” (Phd thesis, University of Logos, Nigeria, 2015), 36.
- <sup>35</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 120-121.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., 144.
- <sup>37</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 79.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 154.
- <sup>39</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 45.
- <sup>40</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 79.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., 153.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., 200.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., 206.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., 58.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., 184.
- <sup>46</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 44.
- <sup>47</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 171.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., 174.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., 173.
- <sup>51</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 52.
- <sup>52</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 174.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., 188.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., 189.
- <sup>55</sup> Paulina Ada Uwakweh, “*Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's 'Nervous Conditions,'*” *Research in African Literature* 26, no. 1 (1995): 82, accessed April 16, 2022,  
[Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's "Nervous Conditions" on JSTOR \(arn.dz\)](#)
- <sup>56</sup> Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 208.
- <sup>57</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 44.
- <sup>58</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 98.
- <sup>59</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 44.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., 75.
- <sup>61</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 75.
- <sup>62</sup> Michael Oshindoro, ‘Solidarity between Women in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus*’ (2019). Accessed June 05, 2022. Online available from:  
<https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/>.
- <sup>63</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 247.
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., 290.

- <sup>65</sup> Ibid., 213.
- <sup>66</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 10.
- <sup>67</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 71.
- <sup>68</sup> Michael Oshindoro, 'Solidarity between Women in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus' (2019), 01. Accessed June 05, 2022. Online available from: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/>.
- <sup>69</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 76.
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid., 99.
- <sup>71</sup> Rosa Terlazzo, "(When) Do Victims Have Duties to Resist Oppression," *Social Theory and Practise* 46, no. 2 (2020): 391, accessed April 17, 2022. [\(When\) Do Victims Have Duties to Resist Oppression? on JSTOR \(arn.dz\)](#)
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid., 124.
- <sup>73</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 170.
- <sup>74</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 65.
- <sup>75</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 214.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid., 44.
- <sup>77</sup> hooks, *From Margin to Center*, 11.
- <sup>78</sup> Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus*, 284.
- <sup>79</sup> Ibid., 303-304.

## V. General Conclusion

This piece of research is a comparative study of the two novels: Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). It has demonstrated that both authors have dealt with the same issue. Different forms of oppression along with the diverse alternatives African women devise to resist this harsh tyranny and escape their misery. This study has relied on the theory of Bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*.

Despite the fact that Tsitsi Dangarembga and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie are from different backgrounds and generations, this investigation showed a lot of commonalities between their writings. Both authors depict the genuine suffering of African women. They do, in fact, provide the reader insight into the tragedy of black women as seen through the eyes of Rhodesian and Nigerian women. Moreover, they provide an image of a true Shona and Igbo woman who resists and rejects all sorts of oppression. The two authors have revealed that African women are not indifferent to their circumstances; instead they are agents of change.

The first chapter of this dissertation demonstrated the different forms of oppression that African women, in both novels, are subject to. It started with patriarchal oppression and depicted it as a system that exploits and oppresses women. In both *Nervous Conditions* (1988) and *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), the patriarchs use their position to oppress their female relatives. Moreover, in both Rhodesia and Nigeria, sexist oppression is another barrier to these women's emancipation. The study showed that in the two societies, women face the same gender-based discrimination. In other words, they are victims of their gender. Besides, psychological oppression is revealed as a serious kind of tyranny in both Shona and Igbo societies since sexist ideology attempts in both cultures to compel women to conform to the established order.

The second chapter demonstrated that African women are not oblivious to their circumstances; instead, they are conscious of the oppression they are living under and fight valiantly to improve their lot in life. The female characters in both novels are eager to make a difference in their lives, so they turn to education and sisterhood as a means of breaking free from their daily constraints. The research paper showed that Rhodesian and Nigerian women view education as an important tool to fight against their bad circumstances. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that in both novels, women's solidarity is also a significant weapon that women rely on to fight all kinds of oppression. The research has ended with an important conclusion, which is that Dangarembga and Adichie both used education and sisterhood to prove that African women, despite all the hardships they face, are strong enough to resist and emancipate themselves.

To conclude, this research did not cover all the issues that can be tackled in either *Nervous Conditions* (1988) or *Purple Hibiscus* (2003). This topic is still an interesting subject that needs further investigation. Both novels can be interpreted in a multitude of ways and evaluated from numerous philosophical perspectives, such as psychological, postcolonial, or traumatic.

## VI. Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Chimamanda, Adichie. *Purple Hibiscus*. London: Fourth Estate, 2003.
- Tsitsi, Dangarembga. *Nervous Conditions*. London: Women's Press, 1988.

### Secondary Sources

#### Books

- Bell, hooks. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press, 1984.
- Christine, Sizemore. "Negotiating Between Ideologies: The Search for Identity in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* and Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*" in *Women's Studies Quarterly*, edited by Tuzyline Jita Allan, 68-80. New York: The Feminist Press, 1997. [Women's Studies Quarterly \(97:3-4\): Teaching African Literatures in a Global ... - Google Books](#)
- Kate, Mane. *Down Girl: The logic of Misogyny: Discriminating Sexism*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017. Accessed April 4, 2022. [Discriminating Sexism - Oxford Scholarship \(universitypressscholarship.com\)](#).
- Ketu II, Katrak. *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World*. Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2006.
- Sandra Lee, Bartky. *Femininity and Dominance: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. New York: Routledge, 1990. Accessed April 10, 2022. [Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression - Sandra Lee Bartky - Google Livres](#).
- Toril, Moi. *Sexual/ Textual Politics Feminist Literary Theory*: London: Routledge, 2003. Accessed April 15, 2022. [Sexual/textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory - Toril Moi, Professor of Literature and Romance Studies Toril Moi - Google Books](#)

#### Articles and Journals

- Carol Hay, "The Obligation to Resist Oppression," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 42, no. 1 (2011): 21- 45. Accessed May 05, 2022. [The Obligation to Resist Oppression \(philarchive.org\)](#)
- Hilkje Charlotte, Hänel. "What Is a Sexist Ideology? Or: Why Grace Didn't Leave." *Ergo* 5, no. 34 (2018): 899-919. Accessed April 09, 2022. [what-is-a-sexist-ideology-or-why-grace-didnt-leave.pdf \(umich.edu\)](#)
- Ifechelobi, J. N. "Feminism: Silence and Voicelessness as Tools of Patriarchy in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*." *An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia* 8(4), no. 35 (2014): 17-26. Accessed May 25, 2022. [Feminism: Silence and Voicelessness as Tools of Patriarchy in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus | African Research Review \(ajol.info\)](#)

- Lindsay Pentolfe Aegerter, “A Dialectic of Autonomy and Community: Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 15, no. 2 (1996): 231.

[A Dialectic of Autonomy and Community: Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions on JSTOR \(arn.dz\)](#)

- Michael Oshindoro, ‘*Solidarity between Women in Chimamanda Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus*’ (2019). Accessed June 05, 2022.

Online available from: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/>

- Moyana, Rosemary. “*Tsitsi Dangarembga’s Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in The Feminist Tradition.*” *The African e-Journals Project* 21, no.1 (1994): 23-24. Accessed march 27, 2022.

[Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions: An Attempt in the Feminist Tradition \(uz.ac.zw\)](#)

- Nnameka, Obiora. “Bringing African Women into Classroom: Rethinking Pedagogy and Epistemology,” in *African Gender Studies A Reader* ed. Oyèrónké O Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

- Ogaga, Okuyade. “*Changing Borders and Creating Voices: Silence as Character in Chimamanda Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus.*” *English Department, College of Education Warry* 02, no. 09. 2009.

[Microsoft Word - 2.9 Changing Borders and Creating Voices \(jpanafrican.org\)](#)

- Onyemaechi, Udumukwu. “*Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Issues of Ideology in the Constitution of the Nigerian Novel.*” *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde* 48, no. 1 (2011): 184- 203, Accessed May 23, 2022.

[Adichie’s Purple Hibiscus and issues of ideology in the constitution of the Nigerian novel | Tydskrif vir letterkunde \(ajol.info\)](#)

- Rosa, Terlazzo. “*(When) Do Victims Have Duties to Resist Oppression.*” *Social Theory and Practise* 46, no. 2 (2020): 391- 400 accessed April 17, 2022.

[\(When\) Do Victims Have Duties to Resist Oppression? on JSTOR \(arn.dz\)](#)

- Seidi, Toumala. “*Behaviorism versus Intercultural Education in the Novel Purple Hibiscus.*” *Independent Project, Södertörn University*, (2013).

[FULLTEXT01.pdf \(diva-portal.org\)](#)

- Stobie, Cheryl. “*DETHRONING THE INFALLIBLE FATHER: RELIGION, PATRIARCHY AND POLITICS IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE’S ‘PURPLE HIBISCUS.’*” *Literature and Theology* 24, no. 4 (2010): 421–435.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43664418>.

- Uwakweh, Pauline Ada. “*Debunking Patriarchy: The Liberational Quality of Voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s ‘Nervous Conditions.’*” *Research in African Literatures* 26, no. 1 (1995): 75–84.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3820089>.

- Walby, Sylvia. “*THEORISING PATRIARCHY.*” *Sociology* 23, no. 2 (1989): 213–234. Accessed March 05, 2022.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42853921>.

## Theses

- Abiodun, Adeniji. “*Patriarchal Structures and Female Empowerment in Nigerian and Taiwanese Novels: A Study of Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus and Li Ang's The Butcher's Wife.*” Phd thesis, University of Logos, Nigeria, 2015.
- Mazvita Mollin, Nyanhongo. “*Gender Oppression and Possibilities Of Empowerment: Images Of Women In African Literature With Specific Reference To Mariama Bâ's So Long A Letter, Buchi Emecheta's The Joys Of Motherhood And Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nervous Conditions.*” Phd thesis, University of Fort Hare, 2011.