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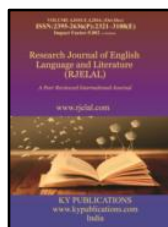
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## GIRLS' EDUCATION IN A PATRIARCHAL WAR-PERIOD SOCIETY; AN ANALYSIS OF *THE BOOK OF NOT* BY TSITSI DANGAREMBGA

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### ABSTRACT

Women's education and emancipation are at the core of most gender debates all over the world. If their importance is widely acknowledged, the ways of conducting this process vary from one country to another, from one continent to another. While some advanced societies give women the same education opportunities like men, in some patriarchal African societies, it is not the case. The matter is made more complicated when it occurs during a liberation war period. All in all, we assist to repressed identity doubled with emotional violence and frustration which finally lead to an unfulfilled quest in the light of Tambu's.

**Key words:** education, patriarchal society, war-identity, emotional violence, quest.

### Résumé

L'éducation et l'émancipation de la femme sont au centre de la plupart des débats sur le genre dans le monde entier. Si leur importance est largement reconnue, la manière de conduire ce processus varie d'un pays à un autre, d'un continent à un autre. Alors que certaines sociétés développées accordent à la femme les mêmes chances que les hommes, ce n'est pas le cas dans certaines sociétés patriarcales Africaines. Le problème se complique davantage quand l'opération a lieu dans une période de guerre de libération. En tout de cause, l'on assiste à une répression identitaire doublée de violence émotionnelle et de frustration qui conduisent en définitive à une quête inachevée comme celle de Tambu.

**Mots clés :** Education, société patriarcale, guerre, identité, violence émotionnelle, quête.

### INTRODUCTION

The existence of social stratification or social inequalities can be said to be as old as human existence itself. As such, it will be wrong to assert that the societies referred to as egalitarian are complete equal systems. We found our assertion on the postulate that the human being himself has established formal organizations to create the conditions of power, prestige and social status. But it cannot be otherwise for inequality and authority have themselves a divine source. Addressing Eve in

the Eden Garden after their sin, the Lord told her: "I will increase the suffering of your pregnancies ... you will turn your desires toward your husband, but he will have a dominant power over you" (J'augmenterai la souffrance de tes grossesses ... tes désirs se porteront sur ton mari, mais il dominera sur toi) (Our translation) (*Genesis* 3: 16). This biblical reference served as a pretext for men to establish their domination over women worldwide and especially in the African societies through the microcosm of the shona society of Zimbabwe. The

idea helped them to forge an ideology for their people. Yet we know that ideology is nothing but “a belief system; and all belief systems are products of cultural conditioning” (Tyson 56). Men, therefore have thus succeeded to invent the sexist ideology claiming for substance that “it’s natural for men to hold leadership positions because their biological superiority renders them more physically, intellectually and emotionally capable than women” (Tyson 56). As a matter of fact, this ideology prompted the patriarchal shona society to give the woman secondary roles: cooking, taking care of the home and the children, serving the husband in every aspect or sector of life, in short, being a caring housewife. This kind of ideology led some African female writers namely Tsitsi Dangaremba and Buchi Emecheta to react in their literary productions.

*The Book of Not* (henceforth *BON*), the novel under probe is a sequel to Tsitsi’s first novel, *Nervous Conditions* (henceforth *NC*). It relates the story of Tambu in her ceaseless quest to redefine her personhood, but equally the political, historical and cultural forces that impact the fabric of her community. The book is about her high school years at the Young Ladies’ School of the Sacred Heart during the war of liberation, a period of a new experience of life, of selfishness and repressed identity, of uncertainty and frustration. In a word, the novel is as the title reveals the story of Tambu’s ‘unbecoming’. It is clear for the interpreter-reader then to decode the reasons for this unbecoming for it is quite impossible to achieve something good in an insecure environment.

Commenting on meaning, Peter Barry argues that “meaning is not in the essence of things, but outside” (39). By essence, he means the belief that we must see things in the context of larger structures. By outside, he means that “meanings are attributed to the things by the human mind, not contained within them” (39). If this is the case, then the meaning of Tambu’s unbecoming is certainly outside the issue of gender inequality alone. As a matter of fact, the present essay seeks to show the way war, racial identity, life experience and ideology can badly impact an individual’s personhood and

bring him/her to unfulfilled expectations despite a strong will.

In the framework of this research, we will nourish our analysis with a combination of Marxist theory and Intertextuality. Marxism to name it will help us understand how the original class conflict bourgeoisie/proletariat transforms itself into a sexist ideology men/women and reproduced in the literary field by Tsitsi Dangaremba as a master discourse according to which the shona society is organized following male’s principles. As for Intertextuality, it refers to the totality of texts echoed by a work and from which it refers. In *The Book of Not*, some references or fragments of texts will help us understand the intertextual elements in relation with literature (language, religion ...) and shona and Igbo societies’ ideologies as regard women’s education for example. Our argumentation properly said will successively concern girls’ education in the patriarchal shona society, the education at the Young Ladies’ School of the Sacred Heart; adolescence rivalry in a context of repressed identity and the impact of events on Tambu’s quest.

#### **I- Girls’ Education in Patriarchal Shona Society**

Education, be it formal or informal, heads for the individual’s realization and integration as a full member of a given society. In the African societies under the yoke of colonization, formal education was a key to happiness and emancipation. It allowed entire families or communities to get into touch with the modernizing world, a world mainly dominated by western influence. Thus, to have somebody educated in the western way becomes a new source of power and prestige exactly as large families and physical force represented in the old days. The social milieu surrounding the individual undergoes a transformation, making the colonizer’s language, the dominant language. This is the reason for which we are of John Balland’s view when he asserts that: “the domination of a people’s language by the language of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized” (3). Just like the Igbo society of Nigeria, the shona society of Zimbabwe has thus understood the necessity to give formal education, a leading place in the process of children’s education.

Unfortunately, tribal and ideological assumptions rooted in patriarchy make little room for the girl child to benefit by that education. Here, people prefer a male child who surely will perpetuate the family's name through the offspring rather than a girl who is supposed to perpetuate another family's name.

In the context of the present work, it is quite impossible to make an argumentation without regarding the events which happened in *Nervous Conditions*, to which *The Book of Not* is a mere sequel.

Present Zimbabwe known as Rhodesia before its independence offered through mission school, a better formal education to children. As such, Tambu's brother Nhamo went to one of these schools to her detriment. The reason was quite simple. Baba, Tambu's father did not believe that a girl's education was important, neither did her uncle Babamukuru. The text reads: "I had ceased playing in that way many years ago ... at the time ... that my uncle came to the village and singled out my brother rather me for an education" (BON, 82). The choice here is telling on the preference of boys to girls' education in shona community. The following sentence extracted from the opening pages of the novel tells the reader the degree of the frustration and hatred felt by Tambu as well as many other native girls who were denied formal education at that time: "I was not sorry when my brother died" (NC, 1). The interpretation of this statement reveals the reader that Tambu's brother's death represented the only golden opportunity offered to her to attend school given that the family had no other male child apart from Nhamo.

To come back to the context of education, we must confess that the shona society as portrayed by Dagarembga in *Nervous Conditions* and *The Book of Not* is a highly patriarchal society in which males ruled over women almost in a dictatorial way. Maiguru, Babamukuru's wife, despite her education abroad is a housewife, extremely watchful over her husband's mood daily for fear he might get angry. The passage reads: "All three of us (Maiguru, Tambu and Nyasha his daughter) as he disappeared in the shadow of the fir trees along the drive, to decipher how he was feeling" (BON, 85). This attitude

observed in Babamukuru's household testifies his tyrannical ruling over his matrimonial home despite his high level of education acquired in the United Kingdom. In short, the shona woman was prepared simply to become a good wife and even her education, be it formal or informal, must serve that purpose. We then understand why Tambu's mother was against her being sent to school. Anyway shona society's expectations for women were rather in conformity with their ideology rooted in the principle that women should be subdued to men and play secondary roles.

Maurice Delcroix and Fernand Hallyn argue that "literature, while telling us one thing, reveals another" (our translation) (la literature, en nous disant une chose, nous en dit une autre) (126). We perfectly share this viewpoint as in the narrative, we perceive the hidden motive of Baba's behaviour through his niece Tambu. Commenting upon her term report paper, he says: "well, you are at that school which, truly, I did not want to pay for" (BON, 89). To sin is human as goes the popular saying. But here, Tambu's misconduct at school has allowed Babamukuru to let the reader know that it was by accident and by compensation that he had decided to pay for his niece's education after Nhamo's sudden death, not by conviction.

To sum up this section, we may assert that Tambu as well as many other adolescent girls were both victims of Rhodesia's colonial system and shona's patriarchal society creating thus in them 'nervous conditions'. Jeremiah, Tambu's father in *Nervous Conditions* just wanted her daughter not to worry about the fact that she had been chosen to attend school. In his words: "she cannot cook books and feed them to her husband". Rather she has to "stay home with her mother, learn to cook, clean and grow vegetables" (NC, 15). Under these circumstances, the only solution left to Tambu was her determination to achieve by herself. It is in this perspective, in a context of guerilla war against the white government that she will fight to obtain a scholarship to enter the Young Ladies College of the Sacred Heart. Our analysis now will consist in bringing forth the kind of education given in this convent in a period when the war of liberation for Zimbabwe's independence was raging.

**II- The Education at the Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart**

Formal education in colonial Africa went hand in hand with Christian education. It was part of Europe civilizing mission in the colonies. A literary review on this reality demonstrates that many novels dealing with the clash between African and European culture at that time give a large account of these schools founded by the early Christian priests or nuns. Siriana mission school in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *The River Between* (1965) and the Methodist Girls' school in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* (1974) are but some concrete examples.

Pierre Macherey, referring to intertextuality writes: "a work is always determined by the existence of other works" (100). This assertion is all the more true as the interpreter-reader establishes easily a parallel between these colonial schools and their objectives on the one hand and the similarities between Adah's schooling as it is reported in *Second Class Citizen* and Tambu's in both Igbo and Shona societies where male domination prevails on the other hand. These schools, of course had a clear objective. Through the teaching of his culture, the colonizer meant to dominate over the colonized by destroying what constitutes the spirit of the latter's culture; his language. Linguistic domination according to Ngugi is "seen as serving a material aim, the control of the colonized through the destruction of indigenous... modes of production and consequently of the real life in which the linguistic consciousness was rooted" (qtd. in Bolland 4). The Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart, while conforming to this colonial assumption meant to give the young girls whatever their social class a better education for their future social insertion. We will take into account some of the characteristics of that convent for which, Tambu, the narrator and actor in *The Book of Not* battled so hard to be among the boarders.

**II-1- Spatial Presentation and Description of the School**

The space in which the college is built determines the conditions of its successful results and renown. Located between the town and the

eastern border, its outskirts are composed of the Mission, the general hospital, the government schools and the post-office. This strategic position offers little opportunity for boarders to take walks as in Tambu's words "there was not much to have on the way to school ... nothing in the way of ambitious girl's lessons" (BON, 23).

The college buildings, according to the narrator, are luminous and white. The college grounds were idyllically beautiful. The text reads: "I now cannot conceive that human beings created such beauty" (BON, 22) and further "how beautiful the aesthetic of my secondary school was, demonstrating beyond any doubt I could muster, how languor was related to lethargy as elegance was to squalor" (BON, 22). The description of the car park, the fence, the iron gate, the swimming pool, the accommodation block, the dormitory buildings and the gardens convince the reader of the beauty and elegance of that convent especially conceived to welcome young adolescent girls in need of a perfect education in a context of guerilla war and white dominance over the natives in the then Rhodesia. The décor is thus well set to give Tambu a real chance to succeed in her pursuit of self-achievement. In addition to this suitable environment, a team of experienced nuns constitute the governing board.

**II-2 The Administration of the College**

The Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart is a Christian school. As such, there is no better way than entrusting its administration to religious people. As goes the saying, there is no smoke without fire. Consequently nuns control this school given that it consists of adolescent girls only. It is assumed that adolescence is a period of biological transformation which leads very often to behaviour troubles. Without an appropriate education, a single error can lead to a failure at any level.

The pyramidal structure of the school's administration is made up of Sister Emmanuel acting as the Headmistress, Sister Catherine, the Latin teacher, Miss Plato, the matron and the board of teachers. A team of the different dormitories' prefects are in charge of watching over their mates and reporting any misbehaviour to the matron.

Every indisdisciplinary act is thus reported to the Headmistress who automatically instructs Miss Plato to give the appropriate sentence before the case is widely explained at the morning assembly before the prayers. A bad mark is given to the tortfeasor and stuck on the notice board for everyone to see and serve as a pretext for deterrence. That was the case when Tambu misbehaved toward Miss Plato (*BON*, 104). These predispositions were welcome at a period when susceptibilities and racial issues were so prevalent between the white Rhodesians and the Natives. But how about the ethics set up by this institution?

### **II-3 The College Ethics**

Every human organization conceives for itself and its members, standards principles or ethics, in a word morals which govern it. It is true that "the reader's interest in a work of literature lies in aesthetic qualities" (Posner 267). But before analyzing the aesthetic qualities of Dangarembga's narrative, it will be better to consider the ethics of the College which contribute to that narrative's aesthetic. We will group them into three categories: discipline and order, repression and celebration of the merit.

#### **II-3-1 Discipline and Order**

Discipline and order are highly valued virtues in the human society. They contribute to a society's building, its advancement following the ideology conceived and practiced by its members to create unity and cohesion among themselves. It is the same thing for any organization or enterprise longing for success. Dealing with the relation between law and literature Richard A. Posner writes: "literature deals with the permanent and general aspects of human nature and institutions ... and law is one of those aspects" (15). Here, the College of the Sacred Heart is an institution and as such it functions according to a set of rules which of course stand for laws. Discipline and order are part of this body of texts of law that govern the institution. The College's ethics or standards represent a sort of contract passed between the administration and the students for which the breach constitute an infringement to be repaired by the wrongdoer. Thus, the narrator reveals that every morning on school days, there is an assembly. The place of the

assembly is occupied according to seniority from the six formers down to the one formers (*BON*, 48-9). Announcements in connection with general information and misconducts are made during these assemblies which are always preceded and followed by prayers. It could not be otherwise for one of the objectives of girls' education at the Sacred Heart was to make these young girls become full citizens who respect(ed) the religious principles of integrity, sisterhood and purity. In that period of war, prayers served as means of protection from the divine. As for the dormitories, they were arranged according to race, the last, belonging to the few African girls admitted in the convent (*BON*, 51). The disposition we may guess, was to avoid race conflict in that sensible period. But even in the dormitories, a prefect is in charge of advising the juniors (*BON*, 53). Miss Plato is the responsible in charge of order and discipline in those dormitories. Her duty consists in ringing the bell to make the girls stand up and get ready for the day, but equally controlling the order and neatness in their respective cupboards especially on week-ends (*BON*, 65; 132). The school's regulations also required that girls made their beds before leaving the dormitories. In short, the regulations meant to give the girls a Christian behaviour, for a complete being is a mixture of a holy soul in a holy body. It comes then as no surprise when we are informed that the College is the best among all the schools of the period. The passage reads:

The Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart delivered a formidable education and its standards were set kilometers before the school gate was arrived at. This is one reason why apart from the classical subjects that were taught, the school owned a library, a guitar club, a swimming pool and other sport activities meant to create the adequation body and mind for successful results (*BON*, 22).

Nonetheless, an institution which claims itself to be exemplary as the Sacred Heart needs to safeguard its ethical values. Therefore, some predispositions were taken to reinforce the respect of discipline and order; they include the repressive methods.

**II-3-2 The Repression**

Institutions, they say, are sources of morality. They act as watchdogs over the conducts of the individuals. This is the reason for which the Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart has decided to make repression, a means of deterrence. When persuasion or sensitization has failed to produce the expected results, institutions have recourse to repressive methods. Choosing to attend the girls' College simply means accept to comply with its regulations. It is a contract. But as every contract, "has an obligatory force; the contracting persons are obliged to respect their engagements" (a une force obligatoire, les personnes qui contractent sont tenues de respecter leurs engagements) (Terré et al 30). How does the repression manifest itself in that College?

First, in case of misconduct the concerned individual(s) or student(s) is (are) summoned before the Headmistress for explanation (*BON*, 72). They are also targeted during morning assemblies and blamed. The hidden objective is to discourage them from behaving that way. The case of the African dormitory where girls behaved wrongly by throwing their used feminine hygiene pads in their toilet is telling on this aspect (*BON*, 63). The second repressive method is linked to a report on misconduct stuck to the term's report and addressed to the parents for information. Tambu got such a report which angered her uncle passionately (*BON*, 89). The third consists in striking the name of the tortfeasor, but equally his/her misconduct mark on a special board leading both to the dining-room and the library for everyone to see (*BON*, 67). The last and more serious repressive method is the complete dismissal from the College. This concerns delicate and serious matters in connection with public morality and community welfare such as drug smoking. The young ladies who had been caught by the matron smoking drug have been all expelled from the convent: "Caroline, Nicolls, Susan Winter field, Janice Fraser, Alice Walters and Paulette Hudson" (*BON*, 121). In clear, repression just like religion in Onyeidu's words "acts as incentive to good conduct and a deterrent against aberrant behaviour" (133).

We, then, clearly deduce from the above methods that the main objective for the school was to remain in the top list of the schools, not to say the best. Accordingly, just like wrongdoing constitute an infringement to the code of morality and calls for reparation or sentence on the part of the tortfeasor, welldoing or personal effort or success calls for reward. The College of the Sacred Heart has so well understood this simple natural law that the staff has instituted the ceremony of the annual Prize giving.

**II-3-3 The Celebration of the Merit**

Every human action meant to contribute to society's advancement or create emulation within the community deserves a reward. The ethical values at the Young Ladies' College prescribe this in golden letters and comprise this disposition. Here, they labelled it Annual Prize giving ceremony. The criteria for selection include hard work and discipline. To encourage hard work, the foyer's cabinet welcomes all the trophies of the best workers among the students. Michaela Hammon, now at the University of Cape Coast is a concrete example (*BON*, 155). Thus, Tracey Stevenson was awarded the O' level trophy for, she represented, in the words of the Headmistress "a well rounded human being" as she was "both a hard worker and a champion swimmer" (*BON*, 155). It is in the same perspective of encouraging effort that the African dormitory girls were granted individual rooms after their good results in term exams. The narrator reveals: "How elated we were! Yes, marvelously elated with our industrious efforts ... with our progress combined with the absence of marks against our names on the notice board" (*BON*, 154).

Reading nonetheless across the lines of the annual prizing ceremony as reported by the narrator, the reader feels quite frustrated as the narrator herself did. She was the best O' level student and yet she had not been selected. It is precisely here that the interpreter-reader will seek to understand the real motives of such "a betrayal". Trying to understand these motives leads us to consider the impact of events which prompted young Tambu to achieve partially her quest of forging a new identity for herself in a Rhodesia at war on the eve of independence and in the first days of independent Zimbabwe.

**III- Impact of Events on Tambu's Quest**

No quest can be achieved without the implication of the person himself/herself in the process. Tambu's quest to redefine or construct a personhood for herself won't be totally achieved owing to events out of her own control but equally because of her own shortcomings. Those events as a whole impact consciously or unconsciously her mind and give birth to prejudicial behaviours. We perceive those events and their aftermaths both at external and internal levels. We mean by external level, events occurring in the general context of Rhodesia outside the Young Ladies' College. By internal level we want to describe all the attitudes or behaviours resulting from Tambu's personal reaction that we group under the vocable of flaws.

**III-1- External and Internal Factors**

This section is concerned with happenings going around in the country but also the gravities linked to the functioning of patriarchal societies and equally events going inside the Young Ladies College and Tambu's reaction to these events.

**III-1-1 The Liberation War**

One of the interests of Marxist literature is to explore society and situate the sources of oppression. A historical recall and a deep analysis of *The Book of Not* allows us to assert that Tambu's entrance to the Ladies' College coincides with the raging war of liberation opposing the native shona people to the occupying block, the white Rhodesians. The native have decided to proceed by guerilla war to chase the white out of their occupied lands. The text reads: "we hate oppression ... Bhunu rowa musoro rigom hanja! The white man, hit it on the head and make it run" (BON, 14). The use of pronoun 'it' to qualify the white tells us the degree of hatred those natives showed for them at that period. Night meetings, punctuated by atrocities and other acts of violence cannot but have a negative influence on an adolescent child like Tambu. She unfortunately witnesses the beating of her uncle Babamukuru accused of treason, and her sister Netsai's bleeding after her leg has been blown off by a hidden mine we may guess (BON, 15). As she stated herself: "so all changed after the meeting I went to ... after this morari where fear paralyzed the heart" (BON, 27). In short, the film of the morari, her

sister now going on one leg are having a negative impact on her results after that effort to keep herself on the top list like the previous year. She said: "I suffered secretly a sense of inferiority that came from having been at the primitive scene" (BON, 28). Such a declaration leads us to wonder from which side does Tambu really belong? Was she a primitive or a modern person? This situation of uncertainty implicitly impacted her mind which in turn impacted her school results. So it comes with no surprise as she was not able to concentrate herself during the Latin class (BON, 29-30).

The same feeling of fear came upon Tambu during the instauration of the curfew and the regular patrols conducted by the Rhodesian army. Mistaking one night a vehicle for one of the army, the narrator reveals: "it was not the Rhodesian soldiers come to shine their headlights into our bedrooms all night. Strangely, they had started to do this after Babamukuru was beaten" (BON, 93). Thus it was a habit for these soldiers to come about and shine lights in Tambu's bedroom. As it were, this situation engendered panic and fear in the adolescent girl. Fear we know affects the psyche and cannot thus make room for suitable and sound reflection or appropriate apprenticeship. Even listening to the radio "the voice of Zimbabwe frightened her, as the government soldiers could surprise them and create them trouble, she and the whole household" (BON, 94).

Another striking feature in relation with the war was the closing of the schools. Not only were teachers leaving the country because of the mortar attacks, the shortage of fuel ... Tambu was also impeached to keep on with her courses because only government schoolboys were to be driven to Umtali Boys' school to complete their education in scientific studies (BON, 153). Tambu, unfortunately was not one of these students. So her dream of obtaining a good degree in pharmacy, medicine or engineering was cut short. Aside the raging war, another factor affected Tambu in the pursuit of her objective; that was her uncle Babamukuru's ceaseless rebukes.

**III-1-2 Babamukuru**

According to Richard A. Posner "some works of fiction are didactic and convey a meaning,

political or religious or ethical that the author desperately wants the reader to accept" (319). This assertion fits so well the shona society painted by Dagaremba here as *The Book of Not* teaches the reader what it means to be a woman in that society and part of its ethics; the woman as object of constant rebukes.

In fact, it is one thing to accept the patronage of an adolescent girl by paying for her school fees, and it is another to remind her all the time that failing to work hard can bring her to stop her education. As every man in the shona patriarchal society, Babamukuru rules over his family like a tyrant and the same rules are applied to his niece. Be it a misconduct at school or else an unsatisfactory mark on her term report, he would always remind Tambu the amount of money he has so far spent for her education or the contract that links them (BON, 88;185). He even went far to show her, on account of anger, the scar of the wound caused to him by the villagers at the Morari when he was believed to have betrayed his people. That was the consequence of Tambu's mother's betrayal as she "sold him to the villagers" (BON, 189). Rebukes and scenes of that kind can lead an adolescent to either confusion or excessive work which can turn into depression or overwork or simply failure mainly when some internal factors are added to the aforementioned.

### **III-1-3 Adolescence rivalry and Repressed Identity**

We group under this vocable all the happenings in the relationships between the boarders of the College on the one hand and racial issues that impacted more or less Tambu's behaviour and work on the other hand.

#### **III-1-3-1 Adolescence Rivalry**

The entrance at the girls' school was highly selective and was granted to African girls according to government quotas. It goes without saying in a context when the white Rhodesian government was on rule that the least fault could lead the boarder to be transferred or dismissed. This is the reason for which the girls, especially the black girls including Tambu managed hard not to fail both their parents and the school leaders. This competition to excel or come first needs to be industrious and when the objective has not been achieved, it can lead to

depression. The narrator reveals: "I measured myself against my classmates ... I did not succeed in coming first in either the first year or the second". Further, she declares: "I was depressed at my inability to excel, to do what was clearly possible as other human beings managed it" (BON, 26).

Literature, to speak like Pierre Macherey, "is both a work of art and a work of language" (137). Considering the narrator's speech, we can but come to the conclusion that she was showing signs of underestimation in a hybrid environment made of white and black young girls. This can lead her not to fulfil her own expectations. Aside this, there is also the question of racial identity in a context of liberation.

### **III-3-2 The Question of Repressed Identity**

At the Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart, white girls dominated the total member of the boarders under the Rhodesian government rule. But, whereas the same chance should be given to the girls for their education, we notice here a sort of segregation mixed with a racist attitude. The dormitory allocated to the black girls was, in the narrator's words, "the final dormitory which was the only one to have its own ablution section" (BON, 51). We can clearly understand why it has been given the name 'African dormitory'. The narrator explains that their matron did not like them. We easily guess it was so because of their skin colour. She explains: "Miss Plato did not like us, the girls in the final dormitory of St Ignatius" (BON, 51). The matron regularly visited that dormitory and did not take any trouble to report the single event or incident to the Headmistress. It was the case of the used feminine hygiene pads in the toilets (BON, 63). The same racist attitude occurred when, despite her effort to come first in the O' level examination and knit for the government troops, she was denied the O' level trophy to the benefit of Tracey Stevenson, a white girl (BON, 155). The reason given by the Headmistress that the school wanted to form well-rounded human beings is a simple pretext to express the hidden motive of racial prejudice toward a black girl. Tambu strongly felt the same repressed identity when the white government did not allow her to attend Umtali boys' school (a government school) after the closing of the girls' College. That was the

only left space where normally, she should have fully taken her scientific subjects by her own rather than by the intermediary of a white girl, Angela Reid (BON, 153). This racial prejudice caused a lot of frustration to the narrator who complained in these terms: "I wondered, was I a Rhodesian, if I could not sit on Rhodesian seats, read formulae from a Rhodesian blackboard and press down upon Rhodesian desks?" (BON, 153). Literature, being essentially a phenomenon of language, we understand the pain young Tambu felt because of her skin colour. Here, the space of Umtali boys' school becomes the expression of social identity and division. As goes the Marxist theory, the white Rhodesians held the means of production and education (the schools), and by this process, they oppress the black native Rhodesians. Roland Barthes affirms that "every text is an intertext" (12). This is all the more true as the same racist attitudes are described in detail in Emetcheta's *Second Class Citizen*, when Adah and Francis were refused an accommodation because of their skin colour (BON, 69; 78). The advent of independence of new Zimbabwe did not prevent the expression of racial prejudice as Tambu, even as a worker will experience this, first with Mrs May at the foyer when she kindly sacked her and at the biggest advertising agency in Harare where she was working as a copywriter. While she was jubilating for having produced something very important and for being congratulated by her hierarchy (BON, 234), the white leaders, among whom Tracy Stevenson rather preferred rewarding Mr Dick and awarding him the best copywriter's title (BON, 241-242). The truth is that Mr Dick's name had been put on the print to the detriment of Tambu, the real author of the print. From what precedes, Tambu can be one can say that Tambu is a victim of a system or situations that urge her to perform better but deny her the credit or the benefit of having done so, making her undergo a kind of emotional distress. Tambu has also suffered from shortcomings or personal flaws which have affected her quest of being totally an achieved person, an independent and emancipated woman in a Rhodesia on the eve of achieving freedom and self-rule and in the first days of an independent Zimbabwe.

### III-2 Tambu's Flaws

Following the gait of the classic hero in literature, Tambu somewhat appears as a heroin owing to the behaviour that characterizes her conduct. In effect, endowed with a strong will, the one to succeed and build a personhood for herself in that patriarchal society at war, Tambu is misunderstood by the people around her. These people include her own mother for whom a woman is made to accept the place and the role her society assigns her. Feeling alone and lonely, she will commit flaws that will impeach her full accomplishment in the new nation in construction. These flaws concern her behaviour as a boarder at the girls' College and as a worker.

Tambu as a boarder was victim of her high personal esteem that made her feel a certain elevation over the others no matter their races or skin colour. This lack of humbleness is observed in her attitude toward her mates but equally vis-à-vis her teachers and the nation. It was the case with Sister Catherine when she did not let the nun touch her, nor did she want her to take her by the arm. What the Headmistress wrote in her term report is a sufficient proof to back up our assertion: "Tambudzai has a complex. This makes it difficult for her to accept the spirit of the Young Ladies' School of the Sacred Heart. She believes she is above convent rules designed for the welfare of the pupils ... Constantly, she wears a supercilious expression" (BON, 89).

Getting up at the sound of the matron's bell was part of the school's rules. It develops in the girls the habit of being on time for their future lives. Here again, not only was Tambu late, but she also struggled with the matron over her sheet both fearless and enraged. This act of delinquency, synonym of lack of respect and an infringement to the College moral code was reported at once to the hierarchy. It is then no wonder that her term report be infested with her misbehaviour report as stated further above and her name written on the disciplinary board with a bad mark (BON, 88).

Tambu is that girl who made hers, the philosophy of Sister Catherine prevailing inside the boarding house: "your skin and theirs should not come into contact" (BON, 50). Nevertheless, she will

one more time infringe the rules by going to bathe in the white girls' bathroom, plunging thus all her black mates into the Headmistress' rebukes (*BON*, 73). Even, when the head ordered them to leave the office after the remarks, she showed the same zeal by standing there (14). We clearly understand then why she constantly fought with Ntombi as she appeared to be the trouble-maker in the dormitory.

Barbara Ischinger argues that "the loss of self-control becomes ... the symptom of a lived traumatism that can be analyzed as a psychological sickness" (*la perte de la maitrise de soi deviant ... le symptôme d'un traumatisme vécu et peut être analysé comme une maladie psychologique*) (97).

From the above quotation, we can deduce that Tambu's reactions and her loss of self-control result from both the situation of war, adolescence rivalry in a context of repressed identity and the high esteem of herself. All these affect her psyche. Humbleness they say, precedes glory. The same loss of self-control will lead Tambu to misbehave toward Mrs May, the foyer's matron who just wanted to inquire about the phone call she had received. Mistaking her for Isabel, Tambu's answer was a mixture of offense and scorn: "it's not Isabel ... I've got a name, Mrs May! Tambudzai Sigauke for your information. Why can't you learn to use it?" (*BON*, 229). This pride, synonym of self-esteem will worth her to be driven out of the foyer. It comes as no surprise then for the interpreter-reader as she wrote that notice to the Head of the Advertizing Agency to leave the enterprise. Instead, she could have told the latter the true situation that denied her the title of the best copywriter.

Concluding partially, we will say that Tambu was both victim of events out of her control but equally of her own shortcomings. In a shona society where to be a woman was already a burden together with a mother "who plotted the murder of her in-law who was her benefactor and without whom, neither she, nor her family would be anything", Tambu could not but fail to achieve entirely (*BON*, 228). Tambu's story thus gives right to Richard A. Posner who declares this: "Man is the animal that can imagine a life of triumph but cannot achieve ... that can imagine a better world but learns that the improvements, if any, will be modest in his

life-time, that can imagine a life of ease but lives a life of frustration" (67).

### CONCLUSION

Terry Eagleton, exploring Marxist theory explains that it takes into account the relationships that historical, political and social conditions have on works of literature. He sees the text as "a tissue of meanings, perceptions and responses which inhere in the first place in that imaginary production of the real which is ideology" (75). If we consider carefully this assertion, then we can say that Tsitsi Dangaremba, basing herself on political, social, historical and even cultural assumptions of her native Zimbabwe (once Rhodesia), has succeeded to make the reader perceive what it meant to be a woman in the context of both the ideology prevailing at that time in the shona society and the ideology of the Rhodesian government.

Throughout our work, we have tried to explain that the will is not sufficient in the pursuit of an objective. Some obstacles or events mixed with ideological considerations can impact a character's psyche and lead his/her quest not to be fully fulfilled (or to be partially fulfilled). That was Tambu's case. From the narrative, we can assert that Tambu has not learnt much from life experiences she underwent; experiences represented by injustice at every level. Her selfish attitude and her determination have not helped her so much the way she would have wished to. The rage inside her has been overcome by bitter events of life.

The aesthetic of Tsitsi's work resides in her capacity to create hypotexts which imply other literary genres in the vast field of literature. Thus, we have the use of many linguistic and ethnological elements referring to either shona patois or vernacular language and cultural practices. These facts tell us about her mastery of her culture and language. Intertextual elements related to religion are seen in the narrative, thus, we discover aspects of the catholic faith through the numerous prayers in the book and the presence of the nuns as well as in the name of the institution: The Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart. The kind of education and injustice experienced by Tambu bears many resemblances with Adah's in Butchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*. Be it in shona society or else in

Igbo society, women's education is meant for a socialization in which the woman represents an investment for her parents, a tool ready to serve the cause of dominant husbands.

Every literary production has always an ideological perspective. Through *The Book of Not*, Dangaremba wanted and wants us to learn that a woman, just like a man, can achieve greater things if she is given the opportunity. We may think that Tambu has unachieved in some aspect. But we are also aware that she has obtained the best O' level result in the country's most prestigious institution and that for sure, she would have obtained the best A level result without racial considerations. Her job as social science teacher and best copywriter, even if she has been denied the award demonstrate her talent and stand as the writer's anger to tell the world that women are also complete human beings urging consideration from men. *The Book of Not* is a cry of dissatisfaction to tell the reader that she has not surely totally achieved her objective, but it is a starting point. At this level of our reflection we want to conclude by stating that here, Tsitsi Dangaremba joins Flora Nwapa in the following declaration: "when I do write about women in Nigeria, in Africa, I try to paint a positive picture about women, because there are many women who are very, very positive in their thinking, who are very, very independent and very, very industrious" (Umeh in an interview with... 19). Flora Nwapa, Tsitsi Dangaremba, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ama Ata Aidoo to name just a few in our sense belong to this category of women.

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