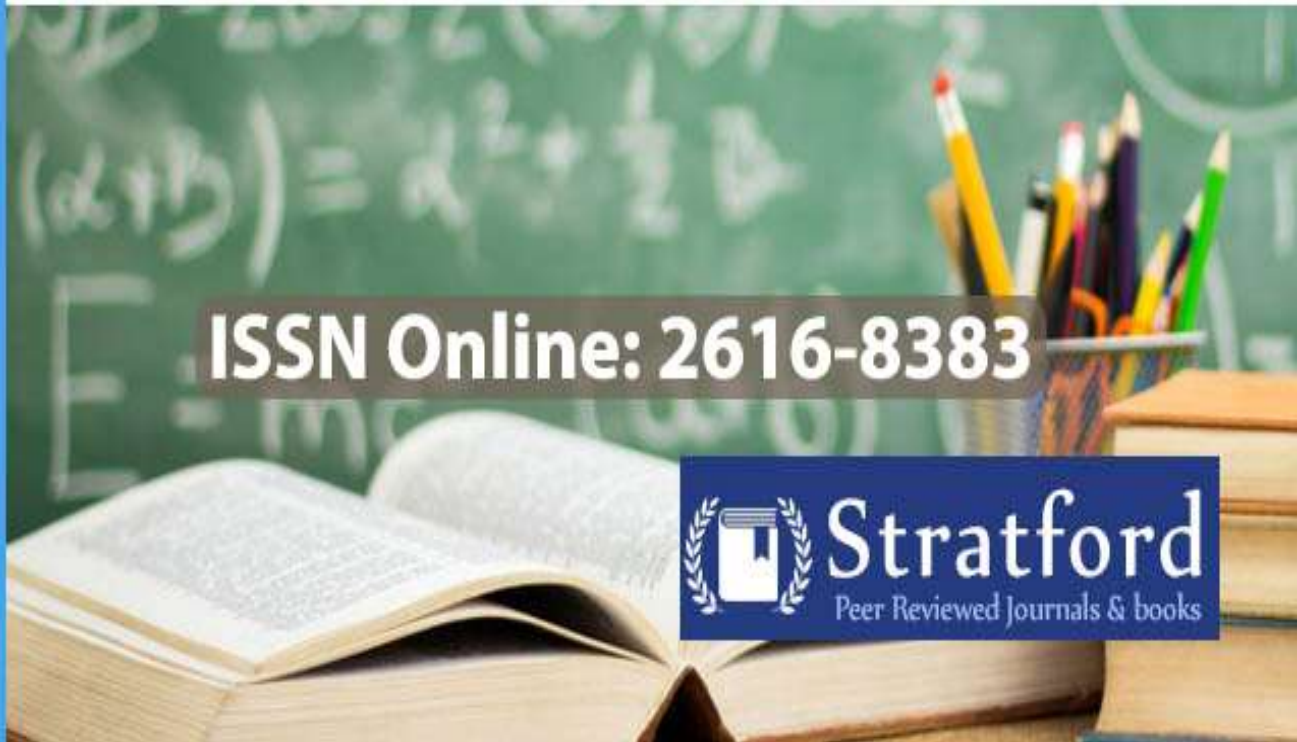


# Journal of Education



**ISSN Online: 2616-8383**



**Stratford**  
Peer Reviewed Journals & books

## **The Portrayal of Educated Women in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* and *This Mournable Body***

**Victorine Ntimansiemi Mansanga, Sr. Lucy Nabukonde (PhD) & Lina Akaka**

**ISSN: 2616-8383**

# The Portrayal of Educated Women in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not and This Mournable Body*

\*<sup>1</sup>Victorine Ntimansiemi Mansanga, <sup>2</sup>Sr. Lucy Nabukonde (PhD) & <sup>3</sup>Lina Akaka

<sup>1</sup>Master's Candidate, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa.

P.O. Box 62157 – 00200 Nairobi, Kenya

[Mansangavicky@gmail.com](mailto:Mansangavicky@gmail.com).

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa.

P.O. Box 62157 – 00200 Nairobi, Kenya

[lnabukonde@cuea.edu](mailto:lnabukonde@cuea.edu)

<sup>3</sup>PhD Candidate, The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, P.O. Box 62157–00200 Nairobi, Kenya

*How to cite this article:* Mansanga, V. N., Nabukonde, L. & Akaka, L. (2020). The Portrayal of Educated Women in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not and This Mournable Body*. *Journal of Education*, 3(7), 1-13.

## Abstract

The study sought the portrayal of educated women in the context of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not and This Mournable Body*. The study set the following Objective: to examine how Dangarembga depicts the image of educated women in the aforementioned texts. The study employed a qualitative research design to collect and analyse non- numerical data. The researcher set off the process by critically reading the primary texts before analysing the portrayal of educated women in Dangarembga's texts. Primary data was enhanced by relevant secondary data collected through the application of textual analysis from appropriate literary journals. The study deployed the rich tenets of womanism and psychoanalytic literary theories to investigate the portrayal of educated women in the aforementioned literary texts by Dangarembga. The study found out that Dangarembga seems to portray educated women as clever, strong, ambitious, audacious, and hard workers. Dangarembga argues however, that since obstacles are unavoidable evils, educated women tend to fail to retain their prosperous identity. Therefore, Dangarembga also portrays educated women as jobless, houseless, hopeless, traumatized, disappointed and disillusioned. Upon which the study concluded that educated women's effort to progress and empowerment is highly inhibited by disaster. Educated women are still segregated on the basis of gender and colour. Consequently, education does not always guarantee women social and economic security. Therefore, the study

recommends that educated women dream of a better life in society should be protected to avoid struggling, misery and poverty. The research also recommends that since this study focused on the portrayal of educated women in the context of Dangarembga's *The Book of Not and This Mournable Body*, further study should concentrate on the roles of women in society in the context of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *This Mournable Body*.

**Keywords:** *women education, portrayal of educated women, disillusionment, obstacles, disaster.*

## 1.0 Introduction

Literature is the mirror of society; it plays an important role in reproducing literary works and in different contexts according to what happens in the world. Therefore, feminist literary authors started to re write their story in the way they wanted it to be. Their writing basically aimed at correcting the former image, stereotypes and identity imposed on women by patriarchal societies. In writing educated women recreated their narrative and identity according to their own vision. Showalter argues that the feminists challenged many of the restrictions on women's self-expressions, denounced the gospel of self-sacrifice, attacked patriarchal religion and constructed a theoretical model of female oppression. Therefore, women demanded changes in the social and political system that would grant them those privileges that had been reserved for males only (Showalter, 1977, pp. 29-.33).

Feminist writing has been concentrating on giving a place and a voice to women and this is what accumulates to women Literature. The most important trend in this feminist writing is that in contrast to the patriarchal world, literary feminist authors attach value to women. In their writing, feminist writers portray female characters that have significant value in society in contrast to some male literary authors who had portrayed women as the beasts of burden.

Women new orientation makes them deal with serious issues such as women's education, women's empowerment, and women's risks at work. Many texts such as those of Dangarembga (1998), and Ogola (1995), illustrate women resistance to patriarchy. Others such as Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* (1983), and Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (ibid), portray female characters talking back to patriarchs. In her *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga depicts a courageous girl speaking up and fighting her father who is as an important and respectable patriarch of the family and clan. Indeed the girl's reaction enrages her father who becomes astonished about his daughter's behaviour.

The literary trend concerning women's shift in roles in the contemporary society is clearly represented by the portrayal of educated women. Literary scholars observe that while the traditional women were portrayed as respectful, reserved, inexperienced, passive recipients of hand-outs, hand workers and non- educated folks, the educated womenfolk are depicted as courageous, fierce, hard workers and prolific fighters for the recognition of their potentialities in the society. This paper explores and analyses the portrayal of educated women in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not and This Mournable Body*

## 2.0 Literature Review

Richarson & Willis (2001), studied the portrayal of the New Woman Between 1883 and 1900 in their *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin – de – Siècle Feminisms* a period in which women started to challenge their inferior status (2001.p.1). These scholars observe that the aforementioned period was quite paramount in the lives of women folks as it saw the birth of a vibrant New Woman in fiction. This was the phase in which new literary woman novelists

portrayed a different image of women from that which tradition had attached to her earlier on. The scholars wished the behaviour of the new woman would be skewed towards sexual and social change (p.10-26). Therefore, authors created female characters in New Woman fiction in such a way that they would advocate for free love and independent lived human life. This was tagged as bicycling new woman and abounding 'her' in fiction and fact. Scholars also portrayed women as 'the woman smoker or the sexual threat' in that women's new conduct was considered a threat for male sexual gratification.

Willis (ibid), in his '*Heaven Defend me from Political or Highly Educated Women*' (an article published in the same book) argues that the packaging of the New Woman for mass consumption fiction needed to portray beings that were 'attractive, independent, highly intelligent and confident women prepared to enter the rage of profession before falling in love (p. 53). Besides, Willis stresses that the female cyclist was used as a prototype of the new woman. This was done by showing that in case a character made her first appearance on a bicycle it was almost inevitable that they would turn out to be single and well-educated, holding strong views on women's rights (p. 53). By portraying female characters in fiction as activists of social change, scholars illustrated the relationship between literature and society. The way women were portrayed during the New Woman period differed from author to author, text to text and from context to context.

Nabukonde (2017) studied '*The Impact of the Negative Portrayal of Women in Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Ngugi wa Thiongo's The River Between. On Female Socio-Cultural Empowerment*' Nabukonde (2017) argues that in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), women are diminished except a few if not 'one and only' Enzima. She observes that Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* provides the reader with an intense representation of traditional women caught up in their traditional roles of wives and mothers in a patriarchal society. For instance patriarch Okonkwo is a husband of three of wives who had accepted to settle for less (Nabukonde, 2017 pp.101-105.). Petersen in his article 'First Things First: problems of a Feminist approach to African Literature' underscores women in the traditional society as depicted in *Things Fall Apart* are happy. Petersen discovers that these women enjoy a peaceful life in the community although they are voiceless in decision-making and are often beaten by their patriarchal husband who was adamantly recline from acknowledging their contribution in family decision-making. Petersen argues that women's behaviour reveals the traditional wisdom that is, to behave like an inferior being (1984, p.38). It can be assumed that by letting Okonkwo beat his wives, Achebe wants to show that beating of the wives was part of the husband's role as a superiority of the house and as a true African man. Consequently, no one in the village cares that Okonkwo beats his wives. Petersen argues that, 'Okonkwo is punished not for beating his wife, but for beating her during the week of peace' (ibid). According to Petersen, the traditional position of women weakened during the colonial period whereby 'women lost their vital economic role as food producers, and their strict adherence to ascribed roles in a family hierarchy' (Petersen, p. 39). This change is more explicit in women's fiction.

Dangarembga (1988), portrays a patriarchal society where women education is not considered by showing how a girl, Tambu, is fighting to be educated. The role of the woman is clearly underlined in the answer that Tambu's father gives kitchen roles to her daughter who insists on becoming educated. 'Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother, Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables (p.15). Scholars argue that Tambu's father sends her daughter to the kitchen to learn tradition roles from her mother. This means that women's role remains at the Kitchen. This role is emphasised in the portrayal of an educated woman character, Maiguru whose role in the family and in the clan is not different



from that of other women who did not study. Dangarembga shows how an educated woman is sitting in the mist of all the other women in the kitchen while all male characters are debating a woman's problem in the sitting room. The educated woman portrayed as sitting in the kitchen among uneducated women makes other women wonder why even Maiguru, the educated woman, does not have the right to participate in the meeting. This reflection implies that an educated woman is supposed to have new status after her studies and that; things have to change in society. In fact, just after this reflection, Dangarembga depicts another woman, Lucia, who introduces herself in the meeting room and starts talking to a group of men to explain her problem. All these examples demonstrate that there is a difference in the way of portraying female characters in fiction in that they are always labelled at the base. While Ogola's *The River and the Source* liberate educated women to show that women's education provides social, economic and psychological freedom, Dangarembga's *Nervous conditions* entrapped educated women to show that education does not always guarantee women freedom from societal and patriarchal stereotypes.

The above review on the portrayal of educated female characters in fiction shows that women are portrayed both in their traditional roles of mothers, wives, and house managers and in their fight as educated women to change the patriarchal societal structures. However, there is not sufficient literature on the portrayal of educated women in fiction and their disastrous situation. This study contributes to women's literature by filling the gap that is missing in literature by showing that educated women are no longer portrayed as housewives, but as ambitious, hardworking educated women despite the disaster that challenges them and hampers their efforts in the context of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* and *This Mournable Body*.

### 3.0 Methodology

This study of the portrayal of educated women in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* and *This Mournable Body* required a thorough analysis and criticism of the two texts to single out the way Dangarembga depicts educated women and the obstacles surrounding them. The study employed a qualitative research design which constituted a method of non-numerical collection of data. It adopted the textual analysis methods whereby the researcher embarked on the critical reading of the primary texts by Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* and *This Mournable Body*. She also scrutinised the electronic materials, journals and any other sources related to this study. Psychoanalytic and womanism were harmonised one on one with the methodology to provide theoretical lenses or a frame work for a qualitative research that was required in the study. To ensure validity the researcher sought the assistance of the research experts who are experienced in graduate work and these were the University supervisors assigned to guide, discuss and suggest repetitive necessary corrections of the thesis work.

### 4.0 The Study Findings

Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006) and *This Mournable Body* (2018) portray an image of strong, ambitious, courageous, and war fighter educated women living in an oppressed and patriarchal African society, represented by Zimbabwe at the end of the colonial period and at the beginning of the independent Zimbabwe. Dangarembga argues that even if many dreams of these icons have colluded with some disaster practices the educated female folks never give up hope. In representing an image of new women, Dangarembga seeks to empower women and therefore, destroy the old African stereotypes that considered woman as weak and inferior human beings, whose life depends on men and whose place was restricted to household chores. In elucidating woman enablement, Dangarembga features clever and active women pursuing their studies in the mist of oppression in their own countries and in Europe. Dangarembga also

depicts powerful ex-combatant women who fought alongside men in the liberation war of the country to show that there should be no difference in work when it comes to gender. However, according to the intent of this study, Dangarembga describes, desperate, disappointed, and depressed educated women whose fighting effort for development is weakened by an unpredictable disaster.

Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006) portrays young courageous and ambitious educated women characters full of hope for their future. The protagonist, Tambu, is described as determined, bright, clever and original type. Tambu is first introduced to the reader as a student at the Young Ladies' College of Sacred Heart (YLCSH) hence fourth, then as a teacher and a copywriter. As a student Tambu is imagined in a duo way. First as a determined woman who arrives at the boarding school with a high sense of vigour for devouring books. From the very beginning of school Tambu swears to learn more knowledge than any girl since she believes that it was only the power of education which was going to provide her with the better future and with everything else she did have in life due to her poverty stricken disposition. 'I was going to learn until I had more learning than anyone about me,' (p. 21). Dangarembga paints her as a good, eager, outstanding, hopeful, and a hard working resolute student who was determined to prepare her future through education. Dangarembga shows that Tambu's longing to having more learning is synonym with longing for better future life:

The form one classroom was on the ground floor, and I sat proudly in front when I arrived in the young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart. It was a large classroom... In this great space, I selected each time a place up close to the teacher, in order to be a good student (P. 21).

Dangarembga argues that Tambu's behaviour in the classroom is that of keenness relating her focused aim of learning. It is a better conduct that to learn well in the classroom, a student had to be focused. Tambu's choose of a place near the teacher indicates her attention to concentrate and to avoid any disturbance. 'Being an outstanding student, I was obliged to and contentedly maintained a tight focus' (p.21). Tambu's desire to remain concentrated in the classroom indicates that she had great interest in learning. Dangarembga portrays Tambu as a young woman who knows how to plan her activities in line with her objectives. Therefore, Tambu features as a woman of strategy. That is, she knows how to make a plan to reach her objectives: 'I would put in what was required to reach the peak I aspired (p. 25). In characterising Tambu, Dangarembga shows how Tambu sets up a plan with several strategies for obtaining more knowledge at a distinction level. 'I had to be one of the best. Average simply did not apply. I had to be outstanding or nothing.' Dangarembga therefore depicts Tambu as a focussed consistent student who was determined to work harder in her new than she had done in the previous schools. Dangarembga says Tambu even decided that she was going to avoid giggling and writing notes to boyfriends while in class. Dangarembga stresses that Tambu declined even any little form of distraction in class as it would make a difference in her marks. Therefore, Dangarembga represents Tambu as a skilful student who devises well calculated exercises and strategies to become 'good at paying attention, at remembering every word from the teacher's mouth...' (p.25). Dangarembga, explains how seeing that she had not yet succeeded at being on top of the class, Tambu decided to revise her strategies and to set up additional goal to beat Tracey Stevenson, the white girl, who had come third in front of her (p.26). In portraying Tambu as a strategic young woman who revises her aims all the time to reach the final aim, Dangarembga contradicts that people's good plans do not always work according to their vision. Given that Tambu met disaster on her road to success Dangarembga argues that

educated women may find themselves in front of many obstacles in their search for empowerment; but they ought not to take it as a reason of weakness.

Despite being portrayed as ambitious, hopeful, courageous, determined and good willed person, Dangarembga also portrays Tambu as a desperate, discouraged, traumatised, and a depressed young woman. When faced with serial failures and contradiction after contradiction Tambu encounters serious emotional disaster. Dangarembga demonstrates that by the time Tambu learns a lesson that there was more to life than mere formal education, Tambu had suffered beyond compare. 'I was depressed at my inability to excel, to do what was clearly possible as other human beings managed it,' (p. 27).

Dangarembga argues that failure to receive the award affected Tambu so much to the extent of becoming depressed to a point of death. Removing an honour from Tambu to top her class was removing honour from the first African student who would have brought honour roll to the entire continent. Therefore, Dangarembga portrays Tambu as one who is unhonourable. Tambu is portrayed as one who is dejected in every sense of the world. Tambu also features as a denied human being who cannot earn her lawfully entitled human and educational rights. Dangarembga exposes Tambu as a victim of racial divide. She suggests that the issue of racial rift imposes disaster onto Tambu, despite the fact that she has done everything in life to prevent her dream from ruins. Dangarembga argues that racial prejudice compels the white nuns to overturn Tambu's academic victory thereby rendering her disappointment and depression. Tambu had employed so much energy and talent to earn her award but now unpredicted disaster transpires and prevents her from hitting the long sort target. Dangarembga portrays the white nuns as hypocrites who decide to give away Tambu's precious academic ward to a non-deserving character who wears their skin colour. Dangarembga also portrays Tambu as a disillusioned woman whose effort at school seems to add to nothing. The disillusionment surrounding Tambu could never be less than a high level form of disaster:

I had dreamed so often of seeing my name inscribed. Emptiness opened up a hole in my stomach (p 162). I scarcely knew any more who or where I was. I saw I would never find the route back to the place I had aimed at, yet I could not see where I had taken a wrong turning. For surely sacred heart could not be wrong. This was the place where every ambitious young woman wanted to be educated, the college to which all good and caring parents wished to send their daughters (p.163).

It is evident that Dangarembga portrays Tambu as a woman marked by major failure emanating not from her personhood but from somewhere else; from a disaster based society. Precisely Tambu is portrayed as a catastrophe. No wonder, Dangarembga says that Tambu has become a sheer disgrace to her family contrary to what her uncle had said of her: 'Tambudzai ...You have made us proud, my daughter! Yes, parents become very proud when they have such a daughter as you are! (P.175). 'You are a wonderful daughter' (p 176). Dangarembga argues that Babamukuru's excitement without knowing Tambu's failure would never be understood by her family. This is another intense disaster. Dangarembga remarks that after the irony of Tambu's praises Maiguru, Babamukuru's wife, can only see disaster that has suddenly landed and disrupted everything people used to know of: 'something might have happened for Tambu to fail ...she is a good student. Dangarembga captures Maiguru's comment in such a way that she thinks Tambu must have encountered unpredictable disaster. Anxious to know whether something happened to Tambu at school she inquires; 'Tell us, Tambudzai...It must have been something. What happened?' (p.185). Nyasa, her daughter is inspired to answer her, she exclaims: 'Life!' 'If you're interested, Mum, life happened. It's been happening to Tambu

a lot, you know Just like it happened to me’... But since a lot of people live in mission and not in the real world, they probably wouldn’t understand that (p.185).

Dangarembga portrays Tambu as an abandoned human being. Despite her education Tambu was depicted as disobedient, silly and deaf (p. 191) Dangarembga emphasizes that because of emotional encounter with disaster, Tambu ‘went numb permanently after that’ (p. 192). Dangarembga portrays Tambu as one person held up by misfortunes and as one who is caught up ‘in a miserable ignominy’ (p.194).

Dangarembga represents Tambu as dispirited, traumatised, and discouraged worker of small jobs. (p.194). These small jobs make her ashamed to an extent that she renews her vow of never seeing her mother again for fear that she would continue to be mocked having wasted her time with the white education that had only landed her in a series of trivial contracts. There is no way that Tambu’s education was a rescue of from any form of disaster:

A he, Tambudzai! Spending all that time with all those Europeans only to rot in a school that doesn’t have form four! And not even youngsters who have an intellect. Just any old idiot! Vasikana Tambu, is this a truth of yours, that now you are at a craft school, where people work just with their hands, without any thinking. Ha! But never mind. No, there’s no point in worrying! Which of your ancestors leant those books (p. 195)?

In Tambu Dangarembga depicts a ‘terribly revolting’ educated woman (p.195). She argues that Tambu used to be sickly, demoralised and depressed having to listen to her mother undoing her in public. ‘So I discovered how, in spite of a degree I was only marginally better paid than the beggars’ (p. 198). By Tambu’s low salary Dangarembga portrays an unjust economic structure of the colonial system that did not change in the Independent Zimbabwe since working Africans continued to be ‘chastened’ on low paying jobs to keep them in the state of poverty despite the fact that their performance was higher than that of white men or women.

Dangarembga’s *This Mournable Body* portrays Tambu from her middle age life and follows her mental and psychological journey through different stages of her life in the three parts of the text. In the first part, named the Ebbing Tambu is pictured as a poor, miserable, isolated, fading and a metamorphosed middle age educated woman who is asked to leave the hostel because of her age. No wonder, Dangarembga paints Tambu with purplish eye sockets, a gaping mouth with dropping cheeks that frightens to look at in a reflection of mirror in her room (p.5). Precisely, Dangarembga defines Tambu as an antiquity woman whose presence in the hostel was about to oblige the city council to ‘revoke the hostel’s licence on finding antiquity women residing in there (p.6). Therefore Tambu is painted a failed educated woman whose life does not denote any sign of being educated. Tambu herself questions her own identity. As she was given and accepted a fifty-cent piece by two cooks at the bus stop, where she was lying and yet vomiting after her outing in town with Christine. Tambu ended up wondering whether she was truly the one who could be given fifty-cent piece by two cooks: ‘Am I the kind of person two cooks gives a coin to. No, I am not that person. I am. I am not. Would I know if I am that person’ (p. 82)? Dangarembga portrays Tambu as someone without personality and elitism. Dangarembga argues that Tambu is aware that her dignity has altered for worse for good. She considers this change as a ‘metamorphosis’. She is conscious that she is not the same person who had a fighting spirit in her childhood.

when you were young and in fighting spirit, growing mealie cobs in the family field and selling them to raise money for your school fees, you were not this person that you have become. When and how did it happen? When you were among the brightest, in



spite of running kilometres to school and studying beside a sooty candle? Not it couldn't have been then either. Nor was it the days that followed at middle school at your uncle's mission, where you remained focused on a better life and so continued to excel (p. 82).

In the second part of the text named *Suspended*, Dangarembga portrays Tambu as a depressed pending woman floating in the air, poised for her depressive state. Dangarembga portrays Tambu as a person whose mental sensibilities were ruined in emotional disaster. In the text Tambu underlines that she was dropped 'from far above onto a desert floor' (p.100). Tambu is portrayed as someone who is put in an unfertile land to recess and revitalise herself for a new journey. That is, she is put in a position where she can easily see her past and therefore, look ahead to see in which direction she might have to go and how to reach there. Dangarembga depicts Tambu as a confused character who wakes up at the hospital without any knowledge of who and where she was. She was captured as someone who was dropped at the hospital from the back of a hyena. Dangarembga portrayed Tambu as 'an ill-made person being unmade' (p.101). Dangarembga showed that Tambu had become a wretched person and a laughing stock of the hyenas. Therefore Dangarembga represented her as depressed, petrified, frozen, and unconscious. At this stage, she can be considered as a dead person who comes back into the world as a child. This justifies her hiding behind the door like a child who has seen a stranger or who is in front of a danger. Besides, it justifies her way of speaking like a first grade child who is learning to speak;

'What's your name'? The voice asks.

You breathe in slowly, concentrating.

'Name,' you exhale.

'Yours. You don't have too repeat. This is not grade one. I want your name.' the hyena voice cracks. It conceals the crevice.

'Answer, 'it says more gently.

'Answer,' you echo. You are proud of yourself. Once more, you have brought out your voice. Yours.

'Not that'

The voice breaks more impatiently, too much to hide.

'What are you called?' 'What do people say when they call you?'

'What does your mother call you? And your father?'... (p. 102).

In the third and last part entitled *Arriving*; Dangarembga paints Tambu first as a courageous, hardworking, joyful, beautiful, and successful woman whose life's status is almost parallel to her dream. Dangarembga portrays Tambu with the contrast between her childhood dream of a better life and her adult life full of disaster. The beginning of the text pictures Tambu as a houseless and jobless poor and desperate middle aged woman who breaks the rule of age by living in a youth hostel. In the same third part entitled *arriving*, Dangarembga however argues that Tambu is landing at her promised land. There is no doubt that she is almost at the gate of entering a better life. She is happy to start a new job promising a better future. As usual, she has become again that hard working woman who works burns to achieve her project. By her eco-tourism job, she has become that beautiful butterfly flying from one flower to another. This job takes her back to her village where she is considered to have become someone. Unfortunately, she has landed again on the white environment whose capitalist disaster

destroys her wings and makes her fall forever until she is abetted by her aunt Lucia, the warrior woman. Tambu is portrayed as a perpetual downcast woman unable to 'reinvent' herself as a 'model teacher' (p. 87).

Nyasha is Tambu's cousin and a best friend with whom she could share out her soul. In Dangarembga's *The Book of Not*, Nyasha is portrayed as a hard working student at her father's school and at the mission. Dangarembga portrays her someone who once depressed but was now recovering from that depression. After her brilliant A-level results, she went to Europe to pursue her further studies. Dangarembga therefore portrays her as someone who is brilliant and outstanding overseas elite. In her *This Mournable Body*, Dangarembga features Nyasha's reappearance when she had come to the hospital to visit Tambu. Dangarembga portrays her as someone who is caring and motherly. Nyasha enjoys visiting her cousin Tambu during which she tells her about her studies in England, Germany and also about some other places she had visited. Nyasha is a warm welcoming woman. She accepted to welcome Tambu in her house for recovery process. While in Nyasha's house Tambu is astonished to discover that all this time during which her cousin Nyasha visited her in hospital, nothing was mentioned about returning from Europe with a German husband and two children. Therefore, Dangarembga portrays Nyasha as a secretive and precautious woman who hides her personal life and family matters from other relatives. Nyasha's European husband seems to have encouraging ideas, but he does not do any professional work. In fact Nyasha's family seems to be straining when it comes to meeting their family basic needs.

Dangarembga portrays Nyasha as unemployed educated woman. Tambu realises that despite her two degrees both earned from Europe, Nyasha is also jobless. In the perspective of her cousin Tambu it was unbelievable to come across a white man without money just like most African men. It was also astonishing for Tambu to establish that her cousin and best friend had married a poor European. In contrast to Tambu's disaster situation Nyasha's poverty, her unemployment, and that of her husband does not depress her. Nyasha had set up a (pastime activity) non-governmental organisation where she was training a group of woman on how to take responsibility over their lives.

Apart from exposing the nature and disaster surrounding African elite female characters, Dangarembga portrays a second group of female characters who are not necessarily less educated than Tambu and Nyasha but those who are also professionals. Dangarembga is interested in representing their active part in fighting for women progress and empowerment. In her *The Book of Not*, Dangarembga portrays the bravery about these might women who have taken cover in the bush fighting alongside the big brothers, the Guerillas, so as to liberate their country. They appear on the scene in *This Mournable Body* where they are portrayed as strong, courageous, hardworking, and ex-combatant women. Dangarembga brings them out as female worriers with no nonsense attitude of winning the liberation war. Dangarembga portrays these women as ex-combatant because the nature of war had really transformed and changed them into new women (during their period of fighting). After encountering Tambu, she says of them; 'women from the war are like that, a new kind of being that no one knew before, not exactly male but no longer female' (p. 68). Nevertheless, Dangarembga observes that despite their bravery recommendation, the fruit of their war effort is but a disaster. Dangarembga seems to suggest that their contest in war was naught given that the country had been liberated but women continued to experience oppression and exclusion from important positions. No wonder, Christine laments that they 'were taught not to be selfish during the war', however, they practice selfishness themselves and that despite the fact that they 'fought the war, it was full of liars' (p. 67). Consequently, women did not gain anything from the war. Dangarembga

criticizes women for joining a pointless war. She seems to say, ‘what a disaster that professional women soldiers should fight for nothing in this man’s world! Consequently, Dangarembga portrays gorilla women as failures too.

Having failed to achieve better life conditions and failed to yield the fruits of liberation, the ex-combatant women are thrown in a disillusioned state. Dangarembga expresses wonder why they should have gone to war at all. Dangarembga puts it very well when Lucia exclaims: ‘sometimes we wondered why we went to war when we came back and everyone was chocked and began to hate us’ (p.151). Apart from the failure of not gaining anything from the war. Dangarembga portrays Lucia and Christine as disillusioned. Lucia and Christine were disappointed having failed to get anything out of the war yet they had risked the loss of their loved ones. Lucia’s little boy whom she had left in the homestead got killed by the Rhodesian soldiers while he was running to the kraal to open the gate and to save their herds from being butchered. Christine’s boyfriend was killed while fighting at the front line. In exposing disillusioned female folks Lucia and Christine, Dangarembga suggests that after the war (disaster), Lucia and Christine started a new life with a triple wretchedness. These strong characters had met disaster situation in that they had failed to yield a better life subsequent to fighting in the war. They had lost their loved ones, and they had become hated by the people in their home village. By portraying such women as heroic losers Dangarembga seems to discourage women from fighting pointless wars since these bring unwanted disaster for the society; it, ‘brought nothing but false hope and a fresh more complete variety of discouragement’ (p. 68). In fact, the only resilience captured in the ex-combatant women is that their war some status helped them to survive amidst disastrous attitude within a racist and patriarchal society. Dangarembga however, considers these women models for other women such as especially Tambu and Nyasa. Dangarembga portrays women guerrillas in a much better green light than she portrays elites, Tambu and Nyasa. Dangarembga seems to suggest that despite disaster encounters on their way, women warriors are filled with mental strength, openness, solidarity, and creativity unlike the non-seasoned so-called educated elites Tambu and Nyasa.

Christine or Kiri is widow Manyanga’s niece sent from the village to protect her from her sons’ violence because they had threatened to kill her and to take up the house and her possessions by force. The family had asked Christine to; ‘go and see what is happening with your aunt. Those young men know what kind of a woman you are’ (P.75). Dangarembga portrays Christine as, a strong combatant and a brave protector of widows. By this portrayal she demonstrates that as a result of fighting in the war, women have become stronger enough to protect and empower themselves and more so to defend the weak. For instance, Christine is considered ‘the best to deal with what’s happening with between her aunt, widow Manyanga and her sons (p.75). In fact, Christine is portrayed as a patroness. She seeks to protect every oppressed woman especially Tambu against the bouncers who are holding her at the bar when she is following and shouting against a white woman that she confuses with Tracey her former boss. ‘Your companion plants her fists on her hips and informs the bouncers she is an independent struggle ex-combatant, Moscow trained (p. 79).

Besides, Dangarembga portrays Christine as a very understanding and friendly person. Christine has actually become Tambu’s aunt by association (p.147). Dangarembga therefore succeeds to show the importance of strong relationships required in search of empowerment. In the text, Christine tells Tambu ‘I am as good as your younger mother. I know your aunt Lucia very well. We went to war and came back from it together’ (p. 67). Later on, she says about Tambu’s aunt, ‘she is just like my own womb sibling’ (p.264). In fact, Christine behaves as a good angel for Tambu in that she arrives at widow Manyanga’s house when Tambu is in a state

of devastation, disaster in fact. Tired of isolation, Tambu finds Christine's company 'a moment of hope'; 'you want to put your head on Christine's chest and weep' (p. 66) to tell that 'I am sick of being sick of my myself' (p. 67). Dangarembga argues that Tambu has is right inside disaster territory since her personal life was longer tolerable. For instance instead of letting Tambu weep, Christine makes her run up and down. She informs her that running helped them during the war. After running to a bus stop, Christine takes Tambu to town to a dancing club where she feels happy to drink and to dance at the same time.

By portraying Christine as one whose' presence is soothing to Tambu, Dangarembga tells the whole world that solitary life is exceedingly devastating in front of one's total failure. Tambu's suffering from her failure and her perpetual poverty increases with her level of loneliness. Loneliness Dangarembga argues is a disaster.

Aunt Lucia is also called Mainini. Lucia is portrayed as an active, creative, and a strong woman. Dangarembga depicts her as someone who always succeeds where other women fail. Dangarembga also portrays her good mother for Tambu and Nyasha (her nieces); little wonder she calls them daughters. So too she behaves like a real mother according to the African concept that a child does not belong only to her biological mother but also to her sisters and brothers and even to the extended family. This is why her worries for Tambu and Nyasha are justified in Dangarembga's texts. After all Lucia has taken full responsibility for Tambu's hospital fees with only little contribution from Nyasha. Dangarembga shows how Lucia behaves like a real mother, visiting them in their houses all the time and providing them with valuable pieces of advice. As a good mother she wished them progress and not disaster. She encourages Nyasha to keep going with her workshops for women training. She advises them according to her war experience. As a good mother, Lucia recommends them to listen to Babamukuni's advice even though he is a white person. Furthermore, she encourages them about their disaster full situation cautioning that 'sometimes there is nothing you can do to change anything' (p.148). Dangarembga shows how Lucia cites her own experience to strength her daughters. Lucia tells them that they had fought for the country but had earned nothing out the liberation war. She explains to them that they were sad but yet had nothing to do about it. 'Remember Kiri and I went to war. If you see us who went to fight not trying to do anything about this country of ours, you should understand there is a reason' (p.149). By this warning Dangarembga wants to tell educated women that despite their education, they do not have to wait for the country to provide work for them since they might land in worst disaster trying to wait. They might as well become depressed by an unlimited time of waiting. Dangarembga portrays Lucia as a woman of unlimited possibilities as exhorts her nieces, daughters to become creative.

By her creativity, Dangarembga portrays Lucia as not a kind of woman who let herself be oppressed by waiting to see and to do. Dangarembga argues that Lucia owns her own company AK security for which she is proud while all the other educated women are waiting to be employed. As a way of encouraging her nieces. Lucia, proudly says, 'Look at this...'AK Security,'...Mine...I designed it myself. Logos, uniform, everything. For my own company' (p.150). By appreciating Lucia's creativity of owning her own company and provide jobs for other women such as Christine and later on Tambu, Dangarembga invites women and specifically educated women to embrace alternative ways of surviving outside the domain of their formal education. Through the portray of Lucia Dangarembga encourages women to work together if they were to be successful in making progress. This mutual support is depicted in Lucia's question to Nyasha 'Didn't we say we will always support you? It's better to support a woman who is supporting other women, isn't it' (p. 147). Lucia and Christine's presence and



their realisation renew Tambu's hope and confidence. She believes that when her time comes, she will accomplish fine things too (p.151).

Tambu is happy for having listened and honoured her aunt as if she were real mother (p. 150). When they visit her in her house on a certain day Tambu says; 'Thank you for coming. I know that I have you, my mothers, who went to war, to protect me,' (p.265). By stressing on the family relationship between Lucia, Nyasha and Tambu, Dangarembga intends to uphold the importance of family link in Africa. Dangarembga might suggest that one of the reasons of Tambu's suffering is that she cut off all contact with her relatives and her friends. She thought that she would do better by standing alone on two feet. Tambu is disappointed that her lonely fight lengthens her suffering and lands her to disaster.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that educated women in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* and *This Mournable Body* are portrayed as women of hope and dream. They are pictured as clever, strong, ambitious, audacious, courageous, and hard working women with a fighting spirit and a strong belief in a better future that their education would provide. However, at the end of the day, they are jobless, hopeless, and disappointed by the failure of their dream. It follows that, the portrayal of educated women is characterised by the failure of educated women dream of a better life and expectations to empower themselves through their education and through their contribution to the liberation of the country. It is discovered from both texts that educated women dream of a better life is replaced by a struggling miserable life of poverty, jobless, houseless and penniless. The protagonist is oppressed by her current situation '...my current situation oppressed me as being low for someone who, during two entire years had enjoyed the distinction of being the girl who obtained the best O-levels results at the YLCSH, the country's most prestigious young women's institution (Dangarembga, 2006: 199). She wonders why she did go to a better school if she ends up by being more in need than her mother who did not study (Dangarembga, 2018: 37). Similarly the ex-combatant women wonder why they went to war 'Yes, sometimes we wonder why we went to war when we came back' (ibid: 151). Likewise, Nyasha who came from Europe with two degrees wonders why she came back 'Sometimes I think if I had known, I wouldn't have come back' (ibid: 144). This triply 'worries and why' of the three kinds of women, portrayed to represent educated women in this study, illustrate the disaster of educated women dream and expectations. Dangarembga depicts educated women who question the outcome of their education to show that education does not always guarantee women's security.

## 6.0 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the finding of the study the researcher recommends: Firstly, the general society and key policy makers should consider the plight of women and mainly of those who have toiled and are toiling to give themselves a place in society through education; and create works according to women studies and consider their potentialities. Secondly, as education does not automatically provide work, educated women should prioritise creativity according to their domain of study. Besides, educated women should collaborate with women in order to become strong in their process of empowerment. Thirdly, the literary practitioners and scholars should conduct further studies on: one, the roles of women in society in the context of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *This Mournable Body*. Two, Daughter and mother relationship in society in the context of Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* and *This Mournable Body*. Three, a feminist reading of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* and *This Mournable Body*. Four, the place of widows in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *This Mournable Body*.

## REFERENCES

- Achebe, C. (1959). *Things Fall Apart*. Ancho Books.
- Dangarembga, T. (2018). *This Mournable Body: A Novel*. Graywolf Press.
- Dangarembga, T. (2006). *The book of not: a novel* (No. 9). Ayebia Clarke Pub Limited.
- Dangarembga, T. (1988). *Nervous Conditions*. Women's Press.
- Dangarembga, T. (1983). *The Colour Purple*. Women's Press.
- NabuKonde, L. (2017). *The impact of The negative portrayal of women In Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart And Ngugi Wa Thiongo's The River Between on female socio-cultural empowerment;*in Violence Against women and Girls published by a Awsc UoN and Jamii Thabiti Kenya Nairobi.
- Ngugi, wa Thiong'o. (1965). *The River Between*. Heinemann ltd.
- Ogola, Margaret (1994). *The River and the Source*. Focus Publisher.
- Petersen, K. H. (1984). First things first: Problems of a Feminist Approach to African Literature. *Kunapipi*. 6(3). Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1554&context=kunapipi>.
- Richardson, A. & Willis, C. (Eds.). (2001). *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact: Fin – de – Siècle Feminisms*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Showalter, El. (1977). *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists from Bonté to Lessing*. Princeton University Press.
- Walker, A. (1983). *In Search of Our Mothers' Garden: Womanism Prose*. Integrated Media.
- Willis, C. (2001). 'Heaven defend me from political or highly- educated women!' Packaging the new woman for mass c. In A. Richardson. & C. Willis (Eds.), *The new women in fiction and in fact: Fin – de – siècle feminisms* (pp. 53-65). Palgrave Macmillan.