REPRESENTING THE PARADOX OF TRANSFORMATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATION OF THE FEMALE "SELF" AND THE COLLECTIVE IN *THE BOOK OF NOT* (2006) AND *COCONUT* (2007)

BY

KEDUMETSE EUDITH MOTLHANKANE

(22046216)

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I declare that **REPRESENTING THE PARADOX OF TRANSFORMATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATION OF THE FEMALE "SELF" AND COLLECTIVE IN *COCONUT* (2007) *AND THE BOOK OF NOT* (2006)** is my own work and that all the sources that have been used or cited have been correctly acknowledged by means of complete and proper referencing.

15/09/14

Signature

Date

Kedumetse E. Motlhankane

Student no. 22046216

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Dedication

To *mama*, Mmamotwisaneng Motlhankane:

It is never the impact of the fall, but the determination of the rise that counts.

ABSTRACT

This research analyses the representation of the paradox of education and transformation of the female self and the collective in Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006) and Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007). The argument raised in this study is that the education of the young women in both novels informs the transformative state of the position of women in society. The thesis foregrounds the various ways in which African female writers represent and examine the ways in which women in Africa continuously negotiate multiple identities that are often complex, contradictory and ambiguous. Tsitsi Dangarembga and Kopano Matlwa's novels represent access and acquisition of education for young girls in Zimbabwe and South Africa respectively. The novels are about young girls on their quest to womanhood. This research particularly focuses on how education shapes that journey. The paradox lies in the fact that education is both a tool for empowerment, and a source of alienation for women who have access to it. This study bases its argument on the thesis that inasmuch as education is a tool for empowerment, it has transformational implications on the female self as well as the collective.

The researcher draws on aspects of Africana womanist literary theory; as this theory enables one to analyse gender roles in the African society not as separate but complementary roles. Africana womanism as a gender theory allows one to analyse social, historical, political and economic issues in African communities without distorting the cultural relevance of these concepts. The researcher also argues that the roles of African women in their societies are changing and highlights how their exposure to education plays a role in this shift. Afrocentricism was used as a supplementary theory as it brings to the core the concept of cultural dignity and nationalism in Africa.

CONTENT

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Education has brought about many controversial issues in Africa, and the debate does not only centre on whether western education is good for African children, but also on issues of accessibility and gender disparity between the boy child and girl child. Additionally, there are issues of how education impacts on the 'self' and the collective in African societies. In the light of the many challenges that are brought about by education in Africa, this study examines how education impacts on women in two Southern African novels; -Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006). That is, the study explores how education and its accessibility impacts on female characters in the selected novels. In the study, the researcher argues that inasmuch as education is a tool for empowerment, it has transformational implications on the female self as well as the collective. Hence it is important to explore how African women are affected by education. In this chapter, the researcher will begin by providing a background statement on education in Africa, then go on to present a problem statement, aims and methodology of the study. Lastly a review of literature is provided. Following is a brief background on issues pertaining to the education of women in Africa.

Background to the Study

Most novels in Africa tend to pursue themes of identity, colonialism, gender equality as well as education. However, very few texts present the paradox of transformation that lies within the concept of the educated female in post-independent Africa. Tsitsi Dangarembga and Kopano Matlwa are amongst the few that have attempted to address this concern. In Dangarembga's *Book of Not* (2006) and Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007), the theme of identity exists in the aftermath of apartheid and colonialism, and the wake of multiculturalism and access to education. That is, both novels deal with the concept of transformation of the individual (hereafter referred to as the "self") and the society (referred to as the collective) in postcolonial Africa. The books present characters that undergo a journey of personal evaluation in order to define the self in a new cosmopolitan world that values education. These aspects are important in the

emancipation of women in Africa; hence this study explores the role education plays in the definition of women in society.

Whilst Matlwa and Dangarembga bring a divergent perspective on the impact of education on women, it is important to note that in Africa, most writers presented and continue to present women in a stereotypical manner within marriage, motherhood and wifehood arenas. Outside these domains, her identity is crippled. Many scholars have argued that the stereotypical roles of women have a negative impact on the way the female views herself in relation to society, hence the need to change the way women are presented in literature. The problems that women face with regards to their identity are deeply entrenched in African and European patriarchy. However, with the introduction of education and the liberation of African countries, a shift took place in the definition of women in the public and private spheres, in turn creating a dilemma, as to what the roles of women are in modern society. This dilemma is presented in Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006) and Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007), where we see a struggle by African women to define themselves and find space in both the public and private spheres. Within this struggle, education seems to contribute greatly towards the journey of discovering the self.

Inasmuch as education plays a major role in shaping most women's identity, in postcolonial Africa, it must be noted that (in pre-colonial Africa) access to education was selective. Formal education was viewed as a masculine territory thus the boy child in African was usually given first preference and access to education over and above the girl child. The exclusion of African women in education is decipherable in this quote:

> When school age is reached, the mother's role grows in importance. The first few months in school are crucial for the child. Whether he settles down quickly in school depends on how he is handled at this initial stage. His parents, especially his mother, must take an interest in his problems of adjustment. (Taiwo, 1986: 10)

Taiwo (1986) wrote these lines not as an explanation of the absence of girls in African schools, but the role of mothers in the education of their children. Taiwo presents women as important in channelling, advising and ensuring that a child goes to school and that the child succeeds in school. Their role was and continues to be supportive in nature. What Taiwo highlights is the way in which gendered narratives

inform the education of children in African literature. Women in the past played supportive roles to young boys who were afforded the opportunity to go to school and nothing is said about young girls going to school and being afforded the same opportunities. This then limits the term 'child' to only mean the male child. The pre-colonial system thus created a problem of economically independent educated men and economically dependent uneducated women. As a result, women became vulnerable to oppression. However, in the late twentieth century, there was a socio-political and economic shift in Southern Africa which resulted in women having more access to education. That is, the liberation of Zimbabwe and South Africa brought about more opportunities for women. It is crucial to note that the introduction of women to education was not without difficulties and problems.

Access to education presented a paradox of transformation for women. Firstly, the education system was embedded with complexities, by virtue of it being a Eurocentric concept set to operate in an African context. In South Africa and Zimbabwe for example, the colonial education system was wrought with problems of inequality in terms of race, class and gender, and these manifested themselves in the education system as well. Regarding the Zimbabwean colonial education system, Hlogwane (2009: 149) elaborates:

> The opportunity for equality in education in colonial Rhodesia has a long and dubious history. In the mid-1890s the American Board Missionaries "experimented with multi-racial education when American, Dutch and African pupils were admitted into their school at Mount Selinda. Before long, however, the experiment failed, due to the Dutch parents' withdrawal of their children from the school" (Kuster 47–48). Even the Native Education Inquiry Committee set up in 1951, designed to improve the dismal state of the limited black education offered in Rhodesia at the time, actually functioned as the government's watchdog and colluded in stifling resistance in black schools.

Rungano J. Zvobgo, in Hlongwane (2009: 149) adds that "there was [...] no thought of equating standards in African education to those in European schools". This confirms that education in Zimbabwe has always been riddled with controversy and inequalities. The complexities did not only lie in the policies that were put in place, but the attitudes that people had regarding the education of their children.

African writers (both male and female) reacted to the education problem by documenting the many incongruities that characterised the education of children in Africa, and the revelations seem to bear testimony to the many challenges and injustices that black children have had to contend with to obtain education. Additionally, in many African novels, the introduction of education is presented as sexist and education is shown as having a negative impact on its recipients. Novels such as *The Joys of Motherhood* (Buchi Emecheta, 1979), *No Longer at ease* and *Things Fall Apart* (Chinua Achebe, 1960 and 1958) and *Mema* (Daniel Mengara, 2003) focus on the education of the boy child over that of the girl child. In *Zenzele: Letters to my child* (1996), Nozipho Maraire presents a mother who is aware of the effect that education alone can have on a child and she writes letters to her daughter to teach her of things that she cannot be taught in school but are important to her development as a young Zimbabwean woman.

Female novelists such as Tsitsi Dangarembga, and Emecheta, in their different offerings expound on the problem of the exclusion of young women from attaining education. Mariama Bâ (1978) and Ousmane Sembene (1975) are amongst the few African writers who have delved into the challenges that face educated African women. As a result of the socio-economic realities of the time, some female writers did not view education as positive and powerful in the lives of African women. Bâ (1978) shows how unrewarding education can be for an African woman. The writer reveals that education cannot teach women courage. This is said in light of the fact that most feminists present education as the only gateway for emancipation of women, thus the writers reveal that on its own education is not a fulfilling tool, since it has its own complexities as an institution.

In light of this background, the researcher critically analyses Matlwa and Dangarembga's representation of women in relation to education in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Area of investigation

This research makes a critical analysis of Kopano Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006). The research investigates the

representation of the paradox of transformation by analysing the effects of formal education on the female self and the collective. The researcher also evaluates the representation of colonialism and apartheid, independence, gender and racial identities.

The selected novels have generated a lot of interest amongst scholars and these include; Gugu Hlongwane (2009), Robert Muponde (2008), Rosanne Kennedy (2008) Sam Raditlhalo (2010), Lynda Spencer (2009) and Rine Dine (2010) who have published works based on the two novels. Additionally, a lot of literature has been written on the concept of emancipation and identity on the two novels under study. However, not much research has been done on how education of the women challenges the role and place of women in African societies. This study therefore investigates how the writers represent the effects of education on their protagonists and their representation of the concept of African womanhood in contemporary society. This research views the introduction of education in the novels as posing a threat to the foundations of the representations of the role of African womanhood as traditional and rural to a more conventional one in the public sphere. This representation of a conventional woman precipitates and traces the progress of African women and their liberation. Education for African women becomes, therefore, a central axis of transformation.

This study positions the problem of education for African women as a social challenge in their everyday lives. Therefore, when one speaks of African womanhood, it is with a clear understanding that roles of African women in society have changed. The research discusses womanhood within the context of a democratic South Africa that captures in its laws precisely the status of women in society as free individuals, equal in stature to men. Therefore, it is necessary for the study to discuss womanhood within the social, political, historical as well as economical contexts.

Problem statement

The concept of educating the female child in Africa brings with it many promises of emancipation, liberation of self as well as the collective and alleviation of poverty for many. Most writers portray this concept very well and sell the idea of formal education as a gateway to freedom. However, very few writers identify the challenges faced by individuals after the attainment of formal education. The problem arises when individuals are faced with the paradox of transformation, that is, the sudden realization that economic freedom is attained at the expense of mental freedom which results in alienation from their communities. Identity, be it gender or racial is a concept that is intertwined with the ideology of formal education. In the light of the arguments presented above, the questions posited by this study are:

1. How does education influence identity construction for women in Matlwa and Dangarembga's novels?
2. How does education contribute to the transformation of women in contemporary society?

Hypothesis

This study is based on the hypothesis that formal education in Africa does not fulfill the expectations it creates in the girl child. Instead, it causes complications, alienation and an identity crisis in the female self as well as the collective. It is in light of the history of education for both girls and boys in the African continent with boys exceeding girls when it comes to access, that the hypothesis is formulated. Most female writers fail to give solutions to the complexities brought about by the impact of formal education. Therefore, it is in light of this hypothesis that this research illustrates that both traditional and school education are vital for the development and growth of an African child; and that failure to embrace the two brings about devastating repercussions in the life of an African child.

In the study, education that is acquired outside of school will be referred to as informal and/or non-formal education and education encountered in a school setting will be referred to as formal education and/or education. Therefore, when this

research talks of the education of an African woman, it refers to the education obtained within a school setting which is often called formal education.

Aim and objectives

The aims and objectives of this research are as follows:

- To critically analyse the representation of the paradox of transformation as presented by Dangarembga and Matlwa in *The Book of Not* and *Coconut* respectively. This is done in the context of culture and traditions, where Western and African education are at loggerheads and a fight for an audience ensues.
- To evaluate the re-presentation of the education of the female 'self' in the novels under study, and how education contributes to the transformation of women in contemporary society.
- To investigate how education influences identity construction for women in Matlwa and Dangarembga's novels.

Justification

A lot of literature has been written on the concept of education as a challenging process for the educated in African societies. Much literature has focused on the education of boys as a motivated ideology in African society but, very few writers and critics have analysed the impact of education on the girl child. It is therefore in light of this existing lacuna in literature that the researcher seeks to investigate the effect and impact of education on the female self and the collective as represented by Dangarembga and Matlwa in their novels. This research differs from other works like Raditlhalo, Rine and Hlongwane that focused on Matlwa's *Coconut* (2007) and Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006), because it not only analyses the representation of womanhood but goes a step further to evaluate the role of education as a tool for transformation by both writers.

Education plays a vital role in the shaping of the emerging female perspective. As such, the researcher selected the two novels because they expose the challenges girls encounter in the education sector in the postcolonial dispensation. Moreover, the two writers centre their narratives on old and young, schooled and unschooled

African women. Although a number of scholars have analysed these books, none has done so using the Africana Womanist framework which this research adopts. The Africana Womanist framework was adopted because it allows the researcher to re-evaluate these novels from an African point of view. The study also contributes to a better understanding of the challenging roles of women in society, in light of education.

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the framework and research methods that were used in the study. The research uses the qualitative desk research method, which means that the researcher uses research that has been published already to carry out their own research. The researcher does this by reading secondary books that addresses most of the ideas and concepts in this research. This study is guided by Africana womanism and Afrocentricity, and the two will be used in a complementary manner to achieve the objectives.

Theoretical Framework

Africana Womanism is a theory that was propounded by Clenora Hudson-Weems (1983) and was later adopted and adapted by other writers and critics such as Chikwenye Ogunyemi (1985), Nah Dove (1998) and Zulu Sofola (1998). It is a theory that is grounded on the idea that African women's lives should be understood and analysed using the concepts of their particular culture and identity. It is informed by the idea that African women's identities are affected by a tripartite angle that is, sex, race and class; but that these are intertwined with culture and tradition. African Womanism thus places at its core, the struggles of African women in Africa and the Diaspora in the context of their traditions and cultures. At the core of its tenets, African Womanism upholds the emancipation of women within the family, communal and cultural framework. In this, it contradicts feminism as shall be shown in the subsequent section.

In the study, it is important to explain that Africana Womanism came about as a reaction to feminism. Due to the fact that Africana Womanism came about as a

rejection of feminism, it is imperative that the researcher give a brief analysis of feminism as a literary theory. This is done is the subsequent section.

Feminism

The term feminism is linked to concerns about inequalities between men and women and to the efforts to advance the social role of women (Siziba, 2012: 40). The distinction between men and women as well as male and female continues to cause quite a stir and debates all over the world. For a long time, there have been heated debates on things such as the differences between the two sexes, the oppression of one by the other, the positions of both sexes in society as well as the misrepresentation of one by the other, among many other concerns. The interpretation of sex and gender relations from as far back as the eighteenth century, feeds into the dichotomies of feminist critique. It is in the power relations of the passive, docile and silent woman versus the phallocentric, powerful and dominant man that the feminist theory draws its argumentative strength. Additionally, the division in spheres of society between the public and the private sphere, with women mainly participating and inhabiting the private, is what sparks the tension between sexes and debates that exist about gender. This is what caused the rise of feminism from as early as the eighteen hundreds and this continues to be a poignant issue in contemporary debates.

According to Ebunoluwa (2009: 227) "feminism has its origins in the struggle for women's rights. It began in the late eighteenth century". This movement by women began at a time when women objected to being side-lined in their societies by their male counterparts. Emphatically, hooks (2000: viii) says the answer to the question "what is feminism?" is that feminism wants sexism and sexist behaviours ended. Feminism thus calls for a just and fair treatment of women. hooks (2000: 1) further elaborates that it is a "movement" which "is not about being anti-male...and is clear that the problem is sexism". hooks (2000: 1) insists in her definition, that she attempts to show that although feminism addresses sexist behaviours, it does not mean that men are the problem but that sexist attitudes and behaviour are the problem. This is because many agree that addressing patriarchy alongside sexism and sexist behaviour is what has given rise to feminism as a school of thought. The

fact that feminism is a world-wide phenomenon proves that patriarchy and sexism are problems encountered by women in different parts of the world.

Feminism is often classified into waves to show the changes that have taken place in the struggles for women's liberation. The first wave of feminisms took place between the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Women in the beginning of the movement demanded at the fore, the basic right to vote which can be called suffrage. Van Wingerden (1999: 1) writes that the suffrage movement (which is known to have fuelled feminism as a movement) took place in Britain around 1866 and that it ended in 1928. She further states that there are often a lot of contradictions when it comes to the origins of the movement. Chukuma (2006: 1) states that feminism came about as a "reaction" to the inequality that women were experiencing at the time. She further argues that "Feminism is a reaction; it is an assertion of being, rights and status" (2006: 1). This is because before the first wave of feminism in the 1800s in Europe and America, women decided to rebel against the system that deprived them of the rights to own land, to vote or even to participate in the public sphere. They were denied basic rights like the right to attend school or obtain education at a higher level while men enjoyed most of those rights and benefits. This heralded what is known as the first wave of feminism whereby women took to marching, writing petitions and mobilizing strikes in a bid to change what they saw as a "man's world". And, the first wave of feminism in Britain heralded the best achievement ever in the history of women when on "Saturday December 14, 1919, some seven million women made their way to the polls to cast their first vote ever in a parliament election" (van Wingerden, 1991: 1).

Even though the early suffrage movement and feminism started off as a mainly white affair, it does not mean that black women did not participate in the rights for women. As a matter of fact, Steward (1803-1879), a black American woman was the first black political female writer and she wrote a lot of books in which she raised the concern of black women living in America and the challenges they encountered as women. Similarly, the most celebrated African American woman, Sojounor Truth (1797-1883)'s prose 'Ain't I a Woman' which was published in 1885 speaks of the rights of Black American women and how they were treated as non-women because of slavery. Truth was an abolitionist (against slavery) and a pioneer in the feminist

movement, and according to Krolloke (2005: 4) there are other black women like her who contributed to the formation of feminism in the early years and these include Harper (1825–1911). It was the basic rights that were partly achieved during the first wave that prompted the movement to continue even into the second wave and present day in what O'Connor (1996: 658) in her account of the suffrage movement in America, accounts as:

> Even at the turn of the century, the law still firmly enshrined the separate-spheres theory of gender relationships. Women generally could not serve on a jury, as a justice of the peace, or as a notary public. In many states, they could not hold elected office or practice law. A married woman could not enter contracts, hold or convey property, retain her own earnings, bring legal actions, or acquire a passport based on her own nationality. In the words of the English poet, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, a wife stood in relation to her husband as something just "better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

Masuku (2005: 3) agrees that "Feminism came into being as a result of the patriarchal system that prevails in most societies in the world". For example, when the Second World War ended, and men were returning to their countries, they wanted to return to the jobs that they had previously been entitled to but left behind when they went to war. This was problematic because women who were left behind had filled in those positions, resulting in the dilemma of what the roles of women were. This brought about the second wave of feminism.

The second wave continued to strive for the equality of women in society, however, the approaches of how that equality should be achieved is what often caused the controversy that surrounded the second wave. The most controversial albeit influential and forefront movements in the second wave feminism phase were radical feminism and liberal feminism. These two influenced a lot of changes and went on further to engage and ignite other thoughts that gave rise to other feminisms. Nevertheless, it is extremely important to acknowledge that the book by de Beauvoir (1953) entitled *Second Sex* is what propelled and influenced the second wave enormously. Krolloke (2005: 6) states that it was not just de Beauvoir's book that changed the politics of gender of the time, but Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) as well.

In simpler words, the feminist movement began with radical feminists. Radical feminism's main concern has always been that women need not be judged or

oppressed because of their sex. Krepps' (1972) definition of radical feminism is that it is mostly concerned with ending oppression of women *as women*. Radical feminism came as a reaction of women in the society, that is, they argued that women should not be oppressed merely because they have been born with attributes that make them women or with a certain sex organ (vagina) which earlier writings rendered incapable, fickle, neurotic and envious of the male organ (the penis/phallus). Krepps (1972: 49) states that:

> Radical feminism is called "radical" because it is struggling to bring about really fundamental changes in our society. We in this segment of the movement do not believe that the oppression of women will be ended by giving them a bigger piece of the pie, as Betty Friedman would have it. We believe that the pie itself is rotten. We do not believe that women should be integrated into a male world to be "just as good". We believe that the male world as it now exists is based on this very notion of "maleness vs. femaleness," that the oppression of women is based on this very notion and its attendant institutions.

Radical feminism therefore became one of the most influential movements of its time alongside liberal feminism as it began to challenge society and mobilise women on gender issues.

Liberal feminism came as a reaction to radical feminism. This is because liberal feminism drew its strength from the need for equality amongst both men and women especially in the government. Unlike radical feminism, liberal feminism believes that incorporating women in the structures of society that they had long been excluded from would speed up the intended change in society. Liberalism is more concerned with action whereby:

> Liberal feminism has been the dominant discourse in pressing for law and policy reforms. By drawing on a rhetoric of equality and entitlement, liberal feminists have lobbied successfully for changes in education, employment, and reproductive rights. At the same time, liberal feminists often have presumed that women will marry and have children, so that the central dilemma to be addressed is how to reconcile work and family responsibilities (Rachel F. Moran, 2004).

Williams (1984) agrees that radical feminism has its focus and priorities on the fight "against pervasive resistance, that male-female relations were indeed a valid political issue, and to begin de- scribing, analyzing and challenging those relations".

Liberal feminism bases its argument on the contention that women can achieve as much as their male counterparts if given equal opportunities. It challenges sexist job prescription that insists that certain jobs are for men only. Liberal feminism mostly insists that a woman should have the right to choose who and what she wants to be without society or laws forbidding her to do so and without certain laws imposed on her to act like a woman.

Marxist feminism which came at a later stage in turn challenged the capital world and its use of women as a means of production and reproduction. After Marxist feminism, queer feminism emerged because they addressed the rights of homosexual people which they believed had been neglected by their predecessors. Black women who also had grievances with feminism in its present state, developed their own framework to represent their needs. This type of feminism is explained below.

Feminism and the African Context

Black African women felt excluded from feminism because it did not address the concerns of women of colour. They argued that feminism in its broadness failed to capture, incorporate and articulate clearly the concerns of African women. Feminism advocated the empowerment of women and the dismantling of male power. This automatically secluded the African American woman as she viewed herself in a different context. Her major struggle was first and foremost racism before class and gender. Thus in order for the African American woman to win the struggle, she needed solidarity with the black man, hence the birth of Black Feminism; which is often classified as a third wave movement.

Amos and Parmar (1984: 3) cite in their article how the problems of racism in the feminist movement are articulated clearly in hook's (1982) argument that:

> From a Black female perspective if white women are denying the existence of Black women, writing' feminist' scholarship as if Black women are not part of the Collective group of American women, or discriminating against Black women, Then it matters less that North America was colonised by white patriarchal men who institutionalised a

> radically imperialistic social order, than that white women who purport to be feminists support and actively perpetuate anti-Black racism.

The above statement shows that within the feminist movement there appears to be a struggle for a voice by black women that seems marred by that of white women. Hence, Collins (1989: 747) proclaims that black women have a different standpoint than other women and can therefore not just be called feminists but black feminists. She says it is because their oppression through politics and the economy provide them with a different material reality than other feminists and their reality inspires a different yet distinct consciousness. Collins also (1986:18) insists on the name black feminism because it allows the women in question to self-name and self-evaluate themselves. She further identifies two main reasons why self-naming and self-evaluation are critical, saying that it will allow black women to define themselves (or have a standpoint) as opposed to being defined by someone else. This she cautions is because the definer and the defined's relationship is always tilted towards the wielding power of the definer. Additionally, Baldwin, (1980) elaborates that black women need to "reject internalized, psychological oppression" stating that naming oneself will give the black women authority and power to overcome their oppressors. Collins further argues that feminism as a white women's prerogative has the tendencies to other, silence and overlook black women and their problems and that black feminism can embrace black women's lives and their stories.

As a black woman, hooks (2000: 89) criticises white women in the feminist movement who overlook, want to speak on behalf of and use black women (especially poor black women) as the powerless people who need feminism to represent and defend them. She insists that feminism should embrace the power of the defined powerless women as a source of strength whereby their ability to fight and resist sexism can be named as their source of power. She notes that in as much as white women want the same power as white men, they will need to acknowledge that the same power that they seek perpetuates racism and imperialism which makes them accomplices to the oppression of black women and black men too (hooks, 2000: 90). She therefore advocates that feminism needs to recognise the struggles of African women as different and find ways of incorporating them in their struggle for all women regardless of their colour.

Although some women in Africa still associate with feminism, most African women have distanced themselves from the use of the term African feminism because of the assumed connotations that feminism means being against men. Many of these women voice out that as African women struggling to construct a reality amidst racism and class disparities, they have to do so in union with black men.

In a bid to curb the controversy surrounding black feminism, Walker coined the term Womanism as a theory (1983: x). In her arrival and choice of the word, Walker insists that Womanism is to Feminism as purple is to lavender. By this she means that the two are pretty much the same and the slight difference is in colour whereby a woman can be called one over the other. To Walker, Womanism is still feminism, but with a different shade. It is this definition that made Africana womanists distance themselves from Walker's Womanism, as Walker's theory failed to address the cultural needs of the African woman. This is because Womanism suggested lesbianism as a way out of patriarchy; it viewed financial independence as the key to female emancipation. This meant that motherhood and marriage were not the major concerns of Walker's Womanism in the fight for emancipation of women. The limitations of Womanism as a theory led to the development of an alternative theory to represent African women: Africana womanism. Africana womanism is the theory that is used to guide this study so as to illuminate issues that affect African women.

Africana womanism

Africana womanism is an Afrocentric idea that addresses the struggles of black women in Africa and the Diaspora. The term 'Africana womanism' was coined by Clenora Hudson-Weems (1987) after she proposed that African women needed a theory that could address their concerns better because feminism and womanism had failed to do so. Hudson-Weems (1998: 430) defines the term Africana womanism as:

> Neither an outgrowth nor an addendum to feminism, *Africana womanism* is *not* black feminism, African feminism, or Walker's womanism that some African women have come to embrace. Africana womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African *culture* and, therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles,

> needs, and desires of African women. It critically addresses the dynamics of the conflict between the mainstream feminist, the black feminist, the African feminist, and the Africana womanist. The conclusion is that Africana womanism and its agenda are unique and separate from both white feminism and Black feminism; moreover, to the extent of naming in particular, Africana womanism differs from African feminism.

Hudson-Weems asserts that her theory is African centered and it does away with the usual bourgeois tendency of Europe to assign names for others and that people should be allowed to name themselves. This theory insists that African women are not included under the umbrella of feminism because of its Western focus and its ignorance of the influence of race and culture for those women who are non-Westerners. The theory however, does more than just name what it sees as an appropriate theory for an African centered critique; it also opens up another debate that gender studies are more complex than they appear to be. Masuku (2005: 19) lends her voice to this debate by stating that womanism has adopted an Afrocentric mode in so much as it recognises that:

> African women, as women of colour; are distinct from other women because of the common African cultures they believe in. This implies that womanism is culturally coded as it acknowledges the cultural and spiritual experience of women. It also reflects on the traditional background of women.

Masuku (2010) emphasises that culture is at the centre of the struggle for liberation by African women and it cannot be easily dismissed. This is an important aspect because in Africa women are strongly linked to their families and communities and these are founded on cultural codes. Furthermore, Africana womanism has at the centre of its struggle, issues of race and class which are more oppressing factors for African women.

Aldridge in Mangena (2013) deduces that Hudson-Weems's "Africana womanist is lucidly characterized as a self-namer and self-definer who is also family centered with a strong grounding in sisterhood and an unyielding belief in positive male – female relationships as foundations for the survival of African people and humankind". Garth (1994: 11) sums up the characteristics of Africana womanism as:

> [Africana] women name and define themselves; are family centered; believe in sisterhood; encourage male presence and participation in their struggle; possess and demonstrate great strength; desire positive male companionship; have flexible roles as homemakers; demand respect and recognition in the search for wholeness and

> authenticity; are extremely spiritual; respect and appreciate elders and encourage their young to do the same; demand no separate space for nourishing their individual needs and goals; and are ambitious, but committed to mothering and nurturing their families, in particular and society in general.

These main points are characteristics of the theory through which Hudson-Weems (2000: 2) beckons the Africana woman to work with the Africana man because the oppression of race is experienced by both sexes. This is one of the critical characteristics that Hudson-Weems points out because as she says an African woman "is oppressed not simply because of her sex but ostensibly because of her race and, for the majority, essentially because of their class".

Of immense importance in the two novels under analysis, which is also outlined as a characteristic of Africana womanism, is the belief in sisterhood. This is relevant in this research because it helps analyse the relationship of women in the two novels through "genuine sisterhood" as it looks at the relationships between women in the two novels. According to Alexander-Floyd and Simien (2006) the idea of "genuine sisterhood" is one that Hudson-Weems says should characterise the relationships of women in African societies. Again the importance of family and community is of utmost importance in Hudson-Weems' theory because of the importance of collective struggle of African people which she argues white women do not have to contend with. Hudson-Weems stresses that she arrived at the coinage of the theory Africana womanism to give Africana women of the Diaspora and the continent of Africa a name that best suits their struggle.

After Hudson Weems, scholars in Africa adopted Africana womanism as a working theory. Ogunyemi, Emecheta and Leslie used tenets of Africana womanism in most of their art. However, it must be noted that each scholar uses tenets that best suit her context and environment. As a result, most people might be inclined to think that these scholars stray from African womanism. Ogunyemi emphasises on the concept of motherism whereas Emecheta emphasises the concept of sisterhood. Ogunyemi explains:

> African womanism is a philosophy that celebrates African roots, the ideals of African life, while giving a balanced presentation of African womandom. It concerns itself as much with the African sexual power tussle as with the world power structure that subjugates Africans. Its ideal is for African unity where every African person has a modicum

> of power and so can be a "brother" or a "sister" or a "father" or a "mother" to the other. (1985: 72).

It shows that women are advocating for their emancipation as well as their families or communities.

Although Africana womanism has been received with positivity in Africa, there are still concerns that it does not have enough muscle to liberate women from oppressive traditions that besiege many African societies. That is, women can be oppressed in the name of culture. Even though it advises that African women's lives should be understood within their cultures and identity; it does not set parameters of investigating identity. So as to meet the shortfall of this theory, Afrocentricity will be applied as a sub-theory in the research as it is a theory which centres on African identities. The Afrocentric theory will be explained in detail in the following section. This study aligns itself with Africana Womanism for the reasons outlined above.

Afrocentricity

Afrocentricity is a theory that was propounded by Asante (1980). According to Mazama (2001) Asante's books (1980, 1987 and, 1990), introduced fundamental referential changes in the African community. Afrocentricity is an idea that is grounded in the fact that the lives of Africans should be analysed through their own understanding and experiences of life so that they cannot be decentered because of adopting theories that are not applicable or pertinent to their lives. Asante (1991: 171) explains that:

> Afrocentricity is a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. The Afrocentric approach seeks in every situation the appropriate centrality of the African person (Asante, 1987). In education this means that teachers provide students the opportunity to study the world and its people, concepts, and history from an African world view.

Afrocentricity is a theory that acknowledges Africans in the grand scheme of things. This is because most Africans especially scholars have argued that often they find it difficult to apply theories that are available to them when analysing African lives.

Afrocentricity is relevant to the current study as its concerns are to celebrate the idea of being an African and analyse one's situation within the relevant context. It is mostly concerned with the cultural and historical relevance of Africa for an understanding of an African self. Afrocentricity therefore will be combined with Africana womanism to reflect the view that although African womanhood in postcolonial Africa is supposed to link us to gender equality, recognition and emancipation for African women, the power of and the language used renders this transition problematic. The researcher is of the opinion that Afrocentricity can help African children in understanding their realties better if it is applied in a schooling environment where learning is encountered.

In a nutshell, this study is guided by Africana womanism and Afrocentrism because both theories have an afrocentric perspective which is the most applicable concept for analysing Dangarembga and Matlwa's novels as these novels are set in Africa about African women and written by African women.

Literature review

This section reviews literature on education, feminism, and identity. The research uses critical and creative writings as a basis for the study, thus the researcher will review both critical as well as literary texts in this section. Most literature that dwells on the education of an African child shows that there are challenges of identity and belonging among the educated. That is, education always produces certain changes on the educated person became assimilation into the new culture and moving away from one's own. Because of such a negotiation, hybridisation (Bhabha, 1994: 2) occurs in which a new culture emerges that is neither the old nor the new culture. In novels; *No Longer at Ease* (Achebe, 1960), *Double Yoke* (Emecheta, 1982), *Mema* (Mengarana, 2003) and *Nervous Conditions* (Dangarembga, 1988), the education of African children is depicted as resulting in culture conflict between traditional and Western ideologies. Fanon (1961) the chapter on "National Culture" in The Wretched of the Earth warns of the native intellectual's inability to cope with the

expectations of the colonial world of which his/her education serves, as well as the wrath of his/her African traditional world where the two appear to be at loggerheads.

Literature on Identity and Culture

African literature has had central to its debate questions like who speaks, who it speaks for and who is its audience, for quite some time. It has attempted to answer such questions as its position in literature and what the literature should be called. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (1989: 23) say that one of the biggest problems of literature in Africa has been the question of what to call itself. They state that different names like 'Commonwealth literature', 'Postcolonial literature' as well as 'Third World literature'; emerged as a naming strategy, but that such names tend to position the literature from Africa in opposition to the rest of the world; particularly Europe. Postcolonial literature has become the most used name "because it points a way towards a possible study of the effects of colonialism" (Bill Ashcroft, et al., 1989: 24) not only in Africa, but all other places that underwent colonialism and its atrocities. The literature by Matlwa and Dangarembga also shares the same history and effects of colonialism on the African subject because of what Zimbabwe and South Africa went through during colonialism.

Similarly, Chidi Amuta (1989: 1) agrees that African literature in its bid to appropriate itself in the literary scene, has lost track, and is embroiled in the "crisis of consciousness and confidence". Amuta stresses that African literature in its bid to be identified and acknowledged forgot the importance of the linguistic diversity and ethnic difference of the continent and focused on the fixation that the West has of Africa as a continent. He urges for a more rigorous robust analysis of life through African literature and a birth of theories that are pertinent to the struggles of the continent. He admonishes African literary critics for adopting Eurocentric theories and forcing them to work in a literature that is alien to the theory as explained:

> Literary studies as one of the disciplines devoted to the specialized understanding of the different aspects of human society needs a rigorous theoretical thrust if it is to be taken as seriously as the other disciplines from which it differs only in terms of the ontological peculiarity of its object of study (Amuta. 1989: 5).

Homi K Bhabha's (1994,) moves from the premise that monolithic constructions of identities are not reflective of postcolonial African identities today. Bhabha (1994) provides grounds for the need to accept new postcolonial identities that introduce a blend of those that were previously pure and separate. Bhabha (1994) is of relevance to this study as he reveals the condition of an educated African woman in an entanglement of sorts, and advocates that people need "to think beyond narratives of original and initial subjectives to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (Bhabha 1994: 2).

John U. Ogbu (2004) addresses the concept that African people have always had to deal with the complexities of 'acting white'. He states that this has always been problematic in a country where one would be punished as a slave for acting white. In America, often a person would be shunned by the African American community for acting white and thereby be excluded and discriminated against. He gives a clear grounding of how in America, from as early as slavery, post slavery, emancipation and even now; people of African decendance have always found it complex to reconcile their culture and the white culture that they have become acquainted with. He outlines different coping strategies that people adopt in order to function in that society like becoming "assimilationists, accommodators without assimilation, ambivalents, resisters and the encapsulated" (2004: 28). He elaborates that African American people act white for different reasons such as getting promoted, fitting in within professional stakes and others.

Ogbu (2004) also maintains that for African American people it has become easy to act white when needed and still maintain their African roots especially when they go back to their communities. He writes that sometimes in contemporary America, African American students in schools, because of peer pressure, would rather choose to act against being white in order to fit in with their African peers. His study is relevant to the analysis of the two novels because it tackles head on the issue of

choice to assimilate or not. This is precisely the problem that faces many African educated people because of their inability to distinguish between learning for school purposes, and learning in order to be white.

Assimilation is also one of the most widely written about phenomena that affects Africans who obtain an education. Fanon (2005) speaks of a native intellectual as an educated person who obtains an education from the colonising system and tirelessly grapples with how it can be incorporated into his everyday life. He talks of "lost contact" by the intellectual with his people and culture. He speaks of the native intellect's sudden realisation of a gigantic loss and a need to transcribe their own identity that they had previously not cared much about. Western education is presented as "the colonial mother [who] protects her child from itself, from its ego and from its physiology, its biology and its own unhappiness which is its very essence" (Fanon, 2005: 201). This is relevant to this study because it reveals the challenges faced by the educated elites in Africa. The very same challenges are highlighted in the novels under review.

Culture can be thought of as a platform of belonging for individuals. It fosters a participation in certain activities amongst a group of people and it prompts a sense of collective identity. Brewer and Gardner (1996) see the collective identity as "social extensions of the self". They see it as personal beginning with self; interpersonal between the self and others; as well as collective identities sharing a sense of belonging. It is important that this research aligns itself with all three stages of the identity to allow the three protagonists to first recognise who they are, what they stand for so as to recognise it in other women.

Literature on Education and Women

Dlamini (2001) sentimentally captures the importance of an African woman's education. She says that she attempts to answer a question that she is usually confronted with as an African woman educator "How did you make it" (2001: 79). She talks of her mother's role in her 'making it' as an educated African woman. Dlamini's article reflects educated African women's perspective on the concept of

education. Dlamini speaks of how she came to understand education and literacy at a young age as "power that enables women to enter zones previously not intended for them" (2001: 81). Education for women has been perceived as an enabling factor in their social and professional lives. It was with the view that education would enhance their quest for justice and equality that education was encouraged. Dlamini's article is relevant to this thesis because it will help the reader ascertain how education impacted the women's lives in both the colonial and postcolonial societies that they existed in.

Jackson (2006) distinguishes between the equation of education to material connections "with physical comfort and monetary gain" and education as a route to "personal development and fulfilment". Education is presented as a ticket to a better life and most importantly, in the two novels under study; education is a means towards personal development for the young women. With the use of Jackson (2006) and Dlamini (2009), this research looks at the possibilities that education promises in the lives of young women. It also looks at whether those possibilities are achievable and realistic. This study differs from Jacksons' research in that while Jackson focuses on the material gains that come with education, this study focuses on the impact formal education has on individuals.

Babagbeto (2003) speaks of education as beneficial for women in their quest for a voice in African literature. The article traces the introduction of education in Africa through the novels *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958) and *Le Mandat* (Sembene: 1966). In the two novels, Babagbeto shows how women are disempowered and silenced by patriarchy. For instance, Babagbeto shows the conditions of pre-colonial and colonial Africa through Achebe's novel. Here, women have no voice at all and men decide on the most crucial matters of the family. Sembène's *Le Mandat* and *Xala*, also reveal the changing conditions of women in colonial African settings. In these novels, women are able to make some decisions; no matter how insignificant they are, heralding a change in times. Babagbeto uses Mariama Bä's *So Long a Letter* to show how the education of women in the novel changes their roles in society and gives them a voice to stand against patriarchy. This article is relevant to the study because it examines the changing roles of women in society as influenced by their education. This research differs from Babagbeto's because it looks at the

education presented in two novels set in postcolonial settings as opposed to Babagbeto's analysis of education presented in a colonial setting.

Chennels (1996) in contrast indicates that the establishment of such a voice brings with it its fair share of challenges within communities. The development of a voice in which women speak is a huge problem to different generations of women, because of the time lag experienced. When this concept is applied to the novels under analysis, the greatest challenge is between women who have gone to school and those who have never been to school. This shows how the education of African women changes the perceptions of African womanhood.

Randell and Gergel (2009) traces the efforts made by different stakeholders in trying to ensure that African girls receive the same education in the same numbers as boys. They agree that a lot of ground has been covered in terms of access to education by African girls. The need to educate girls (mostly African) was also stressed in the "Beijing Conference in 1995, the Dakar World Educational Forum and UN Millennium Summit in 2000" (2009: 9). Although these scholars and agencies show that progress has been made in terms of access to education for girls, Randell and Gergel (2009) allude to the fact that enough success when it comes to access to education by girls will be achieved if all stakeholders including families work together to achieve it. They still insist that in African societies today, the glorification of institutions of motherhood and marriage still hinder access to education by African girls. Although this happens to a lesser extent now than it did in previous years, the two institutions that have been argued as subjugating African women are still at the fore when it comes to hampering African woman's liberation today.

Tlhalo Raditlhalo (2010) critiques the circumstances of multiracialism in a South Africa that is undemocratically characterised by its lack of acceptance. *Be-ing* in Raditlhalo (2010) encompasses the dilemma of growing up, especially for young women, in a multiracial environment where the issues of race and class are highlighted. It proves to be a daunting task for growth in an environment whose principle promises more than it gives, where multiracialism for young women, yanked into a schooling environment fails to deal with how a vernacular language "Sepedi is an encumbrance rather than an advantage" (Raditlhalo, 2010: 29). This research

also focuses on how education does not only affect the recipients of that education; but other women in society, challenging the uniform idea of womanhood.

Lynda Spencer (2009) also rigorously deals with the problem of identity construction for the two young women - Fikile and Ofilwe in *Coconut.* Her article looks at the growing voice of young South African female writers, expressing the once muffled female voice on the South Africa literary scene. Spencer critically analyses how Matlwa is able to ascertain the new South African woman's identity in a post-apartheid dispensation which is a complex one, propagated by identity constructs such as aesthetics of beauty, cultural rituals and language issues (2009: 76, 72 & 69). Spencer explains the *Coconut* metaphor in the novel to mean that the identity of the two young women in the novel exists in "perpetual ambivalence, suspended between two worlds, belonging nowhere" (2009: 77).

Spencer looks at various concepts that lead to identity crisis embedded in the Coconut metaphor. This article is of relevance to this study as it gives valuable analysis on factors that leads to a loss of identity. While Spencer looks at how language influences the derogatory term Coconut; this research focuses mainly on the impact that education has on the female self in *Coconut.* The current research further problematises the issue of language not only in the protagonists' homes; but also at school. The researcher's argument emanates from the assumption that the impact and effect of formal education is universal in Southern Africa.

Hlongwane (2009), examines the issue of identity for young Tambu who resumes life in the plushest school. In this article Hlongwane illustrates Tambu's loss of self as she aspires to fit into the white culture in her school, only to wake up and realise that she has lost herself in the process. She also focuses on the difficulty of coping after Tambu attends a multiracial school and how much her schooling causes her a loss so insurmountable that her identity is described as a bit of this and that- *pieces of a person*. She shows how education brings her to a place of incompleteness.

Hlongwane (2010) also articulates the traumatic experiences of war in Rhodesia as relayed in *The Book of Not*. By *pieces of a person*, she also looks at how the effects of war were as potent as ever to the people who lost their loved ones in the war.

Hlongwane critiques how Dangarembga uses the hopping Netsai who lost a limb as a traumatic experience that affects Tambu at school. Hlongwane's article is relevant and insightful to this research as it talks of the experience of war and family, as issues that were primary influencing Tambu's education.

Dissertation overview

Chapter one discusses the background of the study, the literature review, problem statement as well as the method of research and the theoretical framework of the study. It also gives the area of investigation, the objectives of the study, hypothesis and the justification for the thesis. Chapter two of the study critically analyses *The Book of Not* and its representation of education for women and the paradox thereof. Chapter three evaluates the representation of education and identity construction in *Coconut*. Chapter four presents a comparative analysis of *The Book of Not* and *Coconut*. Chapter five concludes the entire thesis by drawing on the findings of the thesis, giving a summary of the whole thesis, as well as explaining the limitation of the study.

Summary

The chapter introduced the study by providing a background, problem statement, justification, aims and research methods used to guide the study. In the background, the researcher showcased the complexity of access to education in Africa as presented in literature. The researcher argued that inasmuch as education is a tool for empowerment, it has transformational implications on the female self as well as the collective. Hence it is important to explore how African women are affected by education. The researcher selected Africana womanism and Afrocentrism as frameworks that will be used to analyse the selected novels: *The Book of Not* and *Coconut*.

CHAPTER 2

AN ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE NOVEL: THE BOOK OF NOT

Introduction

This chapter discusses Tsitsi Dangarembga's *The Book of Not* (2006), a sequel to *Nervous Conditions* (1988). The aim of this chapter is to analyse the paradox of transformation represented through the education of the female self and the collective in *The Book of Not.* The female self and the collective in this context refer to the women who undergo education in the novel, those that are affected by the education of the recipients as well as society at large.

Author's background

Tsitsi Dangarembga was born in the village of Mutoko in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) in 1959. She spent her formative childhood years in England where her parents had travelled for their higher education. When her family returned in 1965, Tsitsi was enrolled in a mission school in Mutare after which she completed her schooling at an American convent school in the area. Dangarembga was the first Zimbabwean writer to "write a full length novel in English in Zimbabwe, which deliberately foregrounds gender relations in a patriarchal and colonised society of then Rhodesia." (Zhuwarara, 2001: 235). It was overwhelming to reveal characters that defied patriarchy in an African society; never an easy thing to do. Her first novel *Nervous Conditions* was published in 1988 and she speaks of how difficult it was to get it published in an environment where "men are the publishers" (George, Scott and Dangarembga, 1993: 311). The novel won the prestigious African section of the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 1989.

In all of her works, Dangarembga's depiction of women in the African society, particularly in the Shona culture of Zimbabwe; has been praised for how it gives voices to women in the African context. In an interview with Pailey (2006) she explains that her depiction of African women in her works comes through

poignantly because she is "a woman and experiences first-hand the oppressive consequences of gender discrimination". She elaborates that "I spend a lot of my considerable energy fighting that, and I think, why do I have to waste so much on this fight?" Dangarembga's contribution to the African woman's experience has been hailed as huge as the identity of women in African societies still remains complex in the face of post colonialism and shifting gender roles.

This research focuses on Dangarembga's presentation of female characters in *The Book of Not;* however, because *The Book of Not* is a sequel to *Nervous Conditions*, it is also important to give a brief summary of the novel as it foregrounds matters in the novel under study. Set in a rural village in Zimbabwe, the novel *Nervous Conditions* vacillates between the rural and the urban as well as the between the poor and rich people living in the country. It can be argued that during the time of her next offering a lot of things had changed as the first one was written in 1988 and the next one in 2006. A lot had changed in terms of the politics of the country, the condition of women in society as well as the condition of writing, reading and reception in society. In both novels, Tambu the protagonist goes to school but how her schooling affects her own development and the rest of the women in the novel is what is of prime interest to the current study. The following critical review is relevant to the undertaking of the argument here:

> Whereas in *Nervous Conditions* Dangarembga highlights the life of her protagonist, Tambu, as well as the lives of four other women in her family, *The Book of Not* is more introspective in that Tambu is concerned with herself and "what [she] would become" (11). It is perhaps appropriate that Tambu at the novel's conclusion remains in this process of becoming since the third volume of the trilogy has not yet been published. (Hlongwane, 2010: 449).

The Book of Not always had the trouble of too much expectation to fulfil after the much acclaimed *Nervous Condition*. Dana, (2011: 33) proclaims that so far there has been a "minimal scholarship focused on *The Book of Not*". This novel carries the same theme of the development of Tambu which a lot of people have attributed to the *bildungsroman* of character development in literature. It carries the mood of Tambu's zealous and careful attempt to liberation through education. Dangarembga portrays a general ideal for a young woman in a rural society who has to worry about

fetching water from the river, washing everyone's clothes, cooking and taking care of her siblings at a tender age of eight and ten. However, she mirrors it with the beauty of such a rural place whereby her most interesting pastime is playing in the river and enjoying her youth. This theme runs through the sequel novel *The Book of Not.* In *The Book of Not,* the author develops the powerful and engaging storyline of a young woman's quest to redefine the personal and political forces that threaten to engulf her and this is explained in the next section.

Brief synopsis of the novel

From the beginning of *The Book of Not*, the writer takes the reader into a fast paced mood and evokes a feeling of rhythm that does not fall short of the madness of war, of liberation songs and curfews, of beating ups and invasions as well as accusations, betrayal and ultimately death. In comparison to the subtlety of the opening lines of its predecessor, *The Book of Not* opens with an invitation to chaotic situations and disturbed peace. In the introduction, the reader gets a vivid picture of the leg of a girl that goes "Up, up up" going "hoopla hoopla" and represents "a piece of a person" (2006: 1). This reflects and contextualises the very vital need of the interpretation of the armed struggle that happened in Zimbabwe between the years 1972-1980 and brought the country to its present situation as a liberated country.

The context of war makes *The Book of Not* a very important read, as it exposes the horrors and the importance of colonial rebuke in Zimbabwe. The war in this country may have been different from wars fought in other African countries but still it carries the symbolism of the abolishment of colonialism in Africa. The transformation from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe was never an easy one and Dangarembga does well to depict this. As a lesson, *The Book of Not* shows how war disturbs the process of learning, including in the convent school that the protagonist attends. Tambu struggles to concentrate in school after witnessing the near death beating of her uncle and the explosion of a mine bomb that cripples her sister Netsai. Dangarembga clearly shows that the consequences of war could not have been easy for any Zimbabwean child who experienced it. Many were left crippled, wounded and some dead.

While Tambu draws a beautiful picture of her school that stands proudly and pompously beneath a mountain, that same beautiful picturesque scenery becomes soiled by the image of a woman who comes hopping down that mountain in her consciousness; evoking the trauma of war for a Zimbabwean child. The woman's image metaphorically represents Tambu's sister Netsai, a woman soldier who lost her leg during the war. This image goes on to continuously haunt Tambu in school when she is trying to learn and even when she leaves school. Through this perfect representation that later disturbs and humiliates Tambu, the author shows the ramification of war for a young girl who lives within the shadow, between cultures. It shows her inability to cope with her one legged sister. It is because as Tambu puts it:

> Those thoughts crept up on you just like that, even when you weren't thinking them. You just couldn't flee far enough; they always insinuated (2006: 39).

Dangarembga insists that the liberation war in Zimbabwe that now affords all Zimbabwean children the right to attend school came at a costly price. Because the image of the woman that comes hopping down the mountain, Tambu weaves through school because of her experience. However, young Tambu plays it down to the colour of her skin and this forces her to feel more ashamed at being born African. The author reminds the readers that for long Africans were made to feel inferior because of the things that went bad around them and because of the colour of their skins. Such a memory is not one that can be easily forgotten or erased as it has for long played on the emotions and the psyche of the colonised. The 'barbarity' that Mbembe (2001) reproaches Western education for instilling on African people in *The Book of Not* happens at a young age of schooling, and this breaks Tambu down as she now feels terrible and "has trouble" (2006: 28) with coping at school because she has witnessed and knew first-hand the beating of her uncle and the loosing of a limb of her sister. She wants to "fall into that self [she] couldn't be" (2006: 64) and erase all that she knew about the war, but the memory, the trauma and the knowledge of what happens to people during war is something that she understands way too well and cannot rid herself of. Dangarembga's account of the liberation of Zimbabwe is quick to show what Achebe crystalises as a "baptism of fire" (1990: 85) revealing the easily broken promise of liberation for African people.

The Book of Not presents the life of a young girl Tambudzai Sigauke, who goes through a schooling system that discriminates against her on the basis of her skin colour and a society that discriminates against her on the basis of her gender. Tambu is first introduced in *Nervous Conditions* (1988) as adamant to go to school and make a mark for herself. Similar to its predecessor, *The Book of Not* is narrated in the first person by Tambu who is now grown up and enters the last stages of high school at the prestigious Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart. Tambu attends a white school where she is one of the few Africans pupils. The school is a single sex catholic convent school run by nuns and she accounts for a small portion of the population of African girls who attend there. She finds herself a little older than her peers in the prestigious school and her journey towards womanhood is travelled through the lines of school education. The introduction of formal education to Tambu in the two novels by Dangarembga is an exciting feature that promises a new turn in this young woman's life. She is more interested in the prospects that her education promises.

The Book of Not also reflects the transitional period between colonial Rhodesia and postcolonial Zimbabwe. It captures clearly the war of liberation with issues ranging from curfews, betrayal, bloodshed as well as allegiances. The novel focuses on the racism, the ramifications of war, the bloodshed as well as the impact of war on Zimbabwe as a nation. The novel presents the theme of identity and education as intricately intertwined. In order for the reader to fully understand the matters under discussion, in is important to present a brief background of the education system of Zimbabwe and this is done in the subsequent section.

The history of the Education system in Zimbabwe

The formal education system of Zimbabwe has its history intertwined with colonialism. This is not to say that Zimbabwe did not have an existing education system. Like all other cultures, the Zimbabwean society had processes of education and socialisation of their children in order to fit them for productive roles as adults. However, the use of schools as institutions for educating young people began during colonialism. Kanyongo (2005) elaborates that the education system of in Zimbabwe

was influenced by the arrival of missionaries in the country around the years 1890. According to Kanyongo (2005: 65) "mission schools [became] the source of education for Africans, with the government providing education primarily to white children." He further explains that the colonial system in Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia was biased and censored education.

Kanyongo (2005: 65) explains that even though Africans in the country were allowed education from missionaries, the type of education that they received was censored by the government to ensure that missionaries did not overeducate the Africans. This was because within the colonial structure that controlled the country, blacks were only expected to work certain jobs that required a limited level of education. This type of education was education for conversation and not emancipation. Nhundu (1992: 79) also writes that it was a deliberate and an intentional plan by the then colonial government to control the number of Africans who received education in the country. Nhundu (1992: 79) cites (Hansard, 1973) that a spokesperson for former colonial prime minister Ian Smith's ruling Rho-desia Front Party Andre Sheen once said "...we in Rhodesia are determined to control the rate of African political advancement till time and education makes it a safe possibility. We also wish to have the power to retard it". Access to education in Zimbabawe during colonialism was always riddled with controversy; but young black girls were more disadvantaged than boys.

Novels such as *Nervous Conditions* (1989) and *Waiting for the Rain* (Charles Mungoshi: 1975), show that during colonial times, access to education in Zimbabwe was not equally divided amongst different races and genders. Kambarami (2006:1) in writing about patriarchy points at how boys in the Shona culture in Zimbabwe were afforded opportunities to go to school by their families because of the way in which boys were considered superior to girls. The reason rendered for this was that "eventually [a girl] marries out and joins another family whilst the male child ensures the survival of the family name through bringing additional members into the family" (Kambararni 2006: 1).

In 1984, an account of the education of African children by Siedmand a scholar in Zimbabwe also shows that there were several reasons that accounted for the

disproportionate numbers of boys to girls in schools whereby well over 60 percent of the nation's 3 million illiterates were women. Siedmand (1984: 423) at the time emphasized that:

> Perhaps the clearest example of how colonial administrators imposed their own vision of women's proper role on Zimbabwean society comes from the ways in which colonial educational programs differed for girls and boys. Although no Africans had easy access to schools, girls were far less likely to receive formal education than boys. Girls who did find places in schools, moreover, were channelled into subjects that fitted Western gender ideologies. Girls were far more likely to learn domestic science than agricultural techniques; Western visions of women as homemakers dominated curricula, and educators ignored the important role Zimbabwean women play in agriculture. Girls who managed to complete their education tended overwhelmingly to go into nursing or teaching, fields traditionally reserved for women in the West. Colonial educational administrators insisted that girls who became pregnant had to leave school, a policy that Zimbabwe has retained. Today, girls drop out of post-elementary school at six or seven times the rate that boys leave school, often because of pregnancy. Education, through which Africans in "Rhodesia" could gain skills needed for their rapidly changing world, channeled girls and boys into different and unequal areas--and the direction of the channeling reflected European ideas.

This statement reveals how girls did not receive equal opportunities as boys. In most instances the girls were excluded on the basis of gender; and whenever they were included, the education they received was often biased.

Scholars argue that such a subjection of women to unequal schooling opportunities shows that indeed "the educational process both in the traditional pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras in Africa all bear traces to the subjugation of the female gender" (Fonchingong, 2006: 146). Fonchingong uses the representation of unequal access through Gathoni in Ngugi Wa Thiong's *I will Marry When I Want* (1980) and Njoroge in James Ngugi's *Weep Not Child* (1964) to show how Gathoni becomes "frustrated at her inability to go to school because she has to pick tea for her brother to be educated, while Njoroge on the other hand is thrilled with excitement in a "waking dream" that sends him to school".

Walter Rodney (1972: 276) also shows how colonial education failed to afford educated women equal opportunities in the labour force during colonialism, when he says:

> It was wishful thinking to imagine that colonial education would take any serious interest in African women... nowhere did the cash-crop economy or the exports of basic ores make provision for educated women. As in the capitalist metropoles, it was assumed that the civil service was for men.

This reveals that even the few African women who were educated, did not receive equal work opportunities. Most jobs were classified as men's work and this made it difficult for women to tap into the work force. This aspect of life may have discouraged women from pursuing education as it was clear that there were few opportunities for them in the labour force. This could have been just one of the many reasons why women were discouraged to obtain an education. Whilst colonial Zimbabwe is characterised by limited access to education by women, in post-colonial Zimbabwe things changed and more and more women had access to education. It is against this background that *The Book of Not* is written and will be understood.

Access to education and its implications

This section explores whether women in the novel have access to education or not and what this access means to them as individuals and as a collective. Before analysing how education impacts women, the researcher will first of all explain what the title of the novel means, as it guides the events in the novel. The title of the novel *The Book of Not* attests to unfulfilled promises of many characters in the text. Tambu reaches a state of emptiness in the climax of the novel in terms of her educational achievements and ultimately fails to function in society because of the mediocre education she receives. She fails to excel in the new academic environment she finds herself in. This is reflected in the mediocre performance in the O-Level exams. As a result Tambu finds herself with unfulfilled dreams and expectations but everything seems to amount to nothing, hence, *The Book of Not.* Dangarembga reveals that most of the unfulfilled expectations are not necessarily a result of the character's weaknesses but are related to racial, social, historical as well as economic issues in the then Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. All the themes in the novel circulate around the concept of education of the female and a journey towards self-realisation. Through the title of the novel, Dangarembga prepares the reader for

disappointment that is to come as a result of unfulfilled dreams and promises of the characters.

With regards to access to education, Dangarembga presents a society where education is governed by race and gender through Tambu and other characters.
In *The Book of Not,* the girls (Tambu, Ntombi, Patience and others) are clamped into a dormitory room meant to house only four students. They are infuriated at the school system that invites them only to ridicule and strip them bare of their dignity. The school is a single sex catholic convent school run by nuns and she accounts for a small portion of the population of African girls who attend there. Actually, Tambu is one of the six black students who go to this exclusive school in Zimbabwe and being part of the minority, she encounters racism from the school system itself that is segregated and from white students who look down upon her because she is black. They have toilets that are meant only for them, are not allowed to use the ones used by the white girls and their toilet is not provided with anything in which they can dispose of their sanitary towels. This causes the embarrassing scene when the headmistress reproves them because they clogged the toilet with their sanitary towels and the headmistress attributes that to the fact that the girls from the African dormitory "may not be cognizant of the reasons" why they should not throw their towels in the toilet. She further tells them that they are there to "polish" their backward ways (2006: 63). Where they supposed to throw them is a mystery because they are not provided anything to throw them in. The girls are dehumanised and ridiculed through the teaching styles practices at school. They are stripped bare of their dignity and forced to conceive of their blackness as barbarity; something to hate and want to correct.

Tambu and the rest of the black girls at Sacred Heart learn in a very difficult environment where they are discriminated against. No one could be expected to function well in an environment where they are deprived of the most basic right like freedom of speech and sanitation. They even control themselves to avoid embarrassment because they knew well that:

> if she was ahead of you, a white girl could pitch peremptorily further forward, when you stood close, prompting the classmate before her to

> do the same, and the next one too, until you were a lonely figure afloat on a sea of scorn as matter of fact as the clouds above. And even if she remained stationary, there was agony in not knowing whether she would move from your presence or not, whether you had judged the distance correctly or not, for there was an imperative, broken only by Sister Cathrine only to reinforce it in all of us: your skin and theirs should not come in contact (2006: 49-50)

This scenario makes true the statement made by Africana womanists that the concerns of black women are different from those of white women, because they do not only have to contend with gender issues, but race issues as well. Through Tambu and her fellow students, Dangarembga illustrates that education was a priviledge for white men and women and a selected few. According to Walter Rodney (1972: 265), it was stated by the then Rhodesian government that, "Africans could not expect to get education and other services" equal in measure to Europeans. This was argued on the basis that Africans, who formed a huge percentage of the workforce behind the country's wealth; were not paying taxes equal to that paid by Europeans. Rodney writes that according to government, black and white people were not expected to require services of equal value; with the Europeans receiving the best that government had to offer. This form of discrimination is apparent in *The Book of Not*, where students do not have equal access to resources and opportunities on the basis of colour. Tambu, who comes from a village school and is accepted in one of the "multiracial schools" in the country, is happy of her achievement, only to realise that no matter how well educated she is, she will never be seen as an equal in the eyes of whites in the then Rhodesia and the same applies for her fellow students and fellow Africans.

As stated earlier, Tambu does not only suffer from racial discrimination, but also from gender discrimination simply because she is a woman. In *The Book of Not* and *Nervous Conditions*, Tambu is a girl who comes from a background of extreme poverty. Poverty curtails her dreams of getting educated, which is something she desires strongly. Then her gender stands in the way of her dreams, when Babamukuru who is presented as a saviour, selects Nhamo, Tambu's brother for an opportunity to get educated. This incident angers Tambu because she believes she is also deserving of a chance to be educated. As such, when we are introduced to Tambu in *Nervous Conditions,* we meet a young girl with a cynical mind who

celebrates her brother's death because it affords her an opportunity to get educated. Tambu's access to education therefore is nothing but a result of pure luck or fate. and not as a result of her academic achievement. Through this scenario, we glimpse into a world where access to education is determined firstly by race and secondly by gender and unfortunately Tambu is handicapped by both. Additionally, Dangaremgba illustrates the deep patriarchal attitudes of the Zimbabwean society that discriminated against women on the basis of gender. As shown in the previous section, women were denied education because they would get married and benefit their husbands' families. In other words, it was better not to educate girls because their families could not benefit and their roles as mothers and wives were viewed as 'enough' for them thus putting women in a box. Through these events, it is apparent that during the colonial era in Zimbabwe, black women were seen as wives and mothers and nothing more, yet white women were given the privilege of education. It is because of these discrepancies in life experiences that Africana womanists believe that Feminism is not able to represent black women.

Another important young woman who attends school and is crucial to the development of the protagonist is Nyasha, Tambus' cousin who in *Nervous Conditions* is diagnosed with an eating disorder; bulimia. Nyasha who is a recovering bulimia sufferer, is more advanced than Tambu. She is a child who grows up in the comforts of a mission house and has been exposed to the modern world far more than Tambu. But this has complicated her life in that her exposure to the European world has damaged and disorientated her life, especially her relationship with her father. However, her relationship with her father is more damaged by the fact that she is a strong willed young woman who refuses to bend to or yields to patriarchy. So, her state as a recovering bulimic is a very fragile one. However, she remains critical to the development of Tambu. Tambu uses Nyasha to measure her intelligence because she knows that her cousin is more intelligent than she is.

Dangarembga presents Nyasha as a deviant who does not conform to the requirements of culture and patriarchy resulting in depression and bulimia. Nyasha's condition is blamed on her exposure to European lifestyle which is presented as destructive to Africans because its teachings are at loggerheads with African aesthetics. Having access to education does not help her cause because it widens

the gap between her and her fellow students. Although it is easy to blame Nyasha's alienation from her culture, it is important to note that her worldview is shaped by the society she grew up in, Europe; and it is not easy to conform to something that you do not know and believe in. Her parents should have played a more active role in assimilating her to Shona culture instead of expecting it to happen naturally. Their failure to acclimatise her leads to her psychosis. In *The Book of Not,* Tambu cares a lot about Nyasha who she describes as her first love relationship (1988), but her state frightens Tambu. Tambu's love is a result of her infatuation with what Nyasha represents; civilisation and emancipation.

As a result of Nyasha's boldness and ability to defy the patriarchal system, Tambu finds courage to rebel against her school when she uses a toilet that is reserved for white students only. This causes the headmistress to write a letter to Babamukuru explaining that Tambu thinks she is above convent laws (2006: 89). Although she gets reprimanded for it, she demonstrates the courage to defy the system that oppresses her and brands her inferior. This moment could have easily marked a moment of triumph for her except that she is punished for defying laws and systems even though they discriminate against her. There are many other instances in the novel that show how resistance does not benefit Tambu but instead gets her into trouble. Although she is young, she still finds a voice to disapprove of the things that society imposes on her; however, she does that with reservation and hesitation.

In *The Book of Not,* Dangarembga reveals that whilst women have access to education, the colonial and patriarchal systems do not expect them to have a voice. Instead, they have to conform to culture and the colonial laws even if they do not agree with them, as in the case of Maiguru who fails to make a mark as an educated woman. The education they receive therefore does not bring about the expected liberation they so desire.

Tambu as a result lives an apologetic life. When Tambu defies the system at school, she later feels apologetic about it because it might have caused Nyasha to relapse. She admonishes herself thus:

> If Nyasha did not wake up, kept on sleeping with her eyes staring like that, what was I going to say to everybody! Wouldn't it be clear to all that I had shocked her when I shouldn't! She kept staring at the wall,

> but not seeing it, as though not a part of her was moved (2006: 91-92).

Tambu feels responsible for her cousin's behaviour as she feels that it is because of what she does at school and what is reflected on her report that Nyasha acts strangely. She says that it probably shocked her cousin that she could behave like that; doing what was forbidden by the school. Tambu is scared and embarrassed at herself for having gone into a toilet that is forbidden for her to use because it shocks people when she acts a certain way. She understands that being the person that she is, she is expected to act and carry herself in a certain way. The system under which Tambu functions makes her a conflicted and inflicted person. On one hand she hates the system that inhibits her voice, on the other hand she lives in fear of the system, guilty of her actions and disappointed for failing to live up to the expectations of people who support her, Sister Emmanuel and Babamukuru. However, she later sees the temper towards herself as unjust when she begins to question things saying:

> Wasn't I meant to have freedom myself? Is that why I had to hand the letter to Sister Emmanuel? Was it, the lack of bondage meant to come when I was of an age like Babamukuru's and able to appreciate it? Or we were talking about different, relative kinds of freedoms? This seemed more acceptable (2006: 95).

Tambu showcases that education during the colonial era, came at a great price; losing oneself and one's freedom, thus, the paradox of transformation.

However, Tambu's passivity did not spring up in a day. It starts small and later escalates into something big that causes her to lose her career. When Tambu achieves the highest honour in school by passing her O-levels as the top learner in the whole school, she is not awarded the award and is stripped of what is hers. Instead, the award is given to Tracey, a co-learner who came second in the results and this can merely be attributed to the fact that the school was not yet ready to put a black name on their honours roll. She is cheated of the one thing that she wanted and worked hard for. On paper she is the best, but the powers that be render her inadequate. Regrettably, this moment cripples her essence forever and in as much

as she tries, she loses the will to fight. From this moment in the novel, Tambu changes into a shadow of what she used to be as she longer fights and let things be.

Consequently, years after she has finished school and works as a copywriter, she is again robbed of the honour that she deserves after producing the best advert copy but the copy is given to her white male colleague to present. She works in a white firm and learns that even after independence the structure of control in Zimbabwe still belonged to white people just like it was in school. So she sees that freedom attained meant that not much has changed as she still experiences racism, oppression and silencing as an African woman in her society. She thus, chooses as she had done to "to do nothing else but what I should" (2006: 16). She does nothing about her colleague taking credit for what is hers. One might argue that Tambu is denied the right to be the best that she can, which is all that she wanted in life through education. She is denied the right to exist in her own terms when Mrs May keeps calling her Isabel, (2006: 206) a name that is not hers. In that moment, she does not correct the white woman and accepts the name wishing that she could speak back and tell her that:

> I am Tambu. This is what you should know!' I said this to myself, noticing how oddly the voice was stronger, as if someone were actually speaking. I ignored this development and instead smiled once more, this time at the ridiculousness of the necessity of it-of me telling myself who I was (2006: 208).

Tambu realises that she cannot be herself if she wants to live in harmony with people around her. She is denied the right to self-define and self-name. She allows other people to take her identity away from her.

Another woman who plays an important role in Tambu's journey towards 'being a complete woman" through education is Tambu's mother, who is simply refered to as Mai. Mai is an uneducated woman who has had no access to education. Tambu sees her as bitter, backward and unpleasant and as she grows up, she wants nothing to do with her. When she compares her mother to other women in the society, she sees her mother as not fit to be a role model and not fit enough to call her a daughter. Through Tambu, Dangarembga showcases that some women use men as role models as in the case of Tambu who despises her own mother and

pities her aunt Maiguru in favour of her uncle Babamukhuru who represents civilisation and financial freedom.

Tambu's description of her mother demonstrates how confused she is of who she is and where she comes from. As a result of her education, she believes that she is better than other women who are uneducated, in this case her mother. She says this of her mother, that she sulked "when she paired Babamukuru's name with the mention of a fence …from which she clawed about for gleanings from other women's husbands," (2006: 9). This makes her decide that this is not the kind of woman she wants to be in society. This makes her pity her mother who cannot afford to buy her own fence because of her and her husband's impoverished life, and it makes her wonder how different her mother would have been if she had her own job and could buy herself things that she wanted. This makes Tambu more determined to succeed through education in order for her to afford a lifestyle of her own, because she see education as a tool to emancipation.

As a result of her exposure to education, Tambu wishes that she was not her mother's daughter. She does not object when her aunt addresses her as "daughter" because even though her aunt is a passive woman subjected to marriage too, she is educated and befitting to be called a mother. Therefore, for Tambu's mother, education not only changes her daughter into this "aloof white person" (Hlongwane, 2009: 458), but it also takes away her daughter from her. Consequently, the two women (Tambu and her mother) are always fighting each other with the daughter avoiding her mother and that mother constantly reminding her daughter "out of whose stomach a person came that makes one woman to another a mother or daughter" (2006: 11).

Tambu's feelings towards her mother throughout the novel are very crude and intentionally hurtful. She also says this of her own mother:

> Yes, it was difficult to know what to do with Mai, how to conceive her. I thought I hated her fawning, but what I see I hated is the degree of it. If she was fawning, she was not fawning enough. She diluted it with her spitefulness, the hopeless clawing of a small cornered spirit towards what was beyond it. And if she had spirit, it was not great enough, being shrunk by the bitterness of her temper (2006: 11).

Tambu sees her mother as an acrimonious woman whose influence on a person could never be a good influence. Tambu therefore sees nothing wrong in "the contradiction of being astonished at being oneself so plenipotentiary and begging God to make you not like your mother" (2006: 11). Muponde (2008: 11) sees Mai (Tambu's mother)'s aggression and extortion as a way of trying to affirm her power and dignity and not letting Babamukuru and Maiguru undermine her authority and take away her daughter. She is unaware that by trying to maintain a stronghold on her family, she ends up pushing Tambu away so much that when Tambu gets in the car to leave for the mission; her mother's loss is decipherable in the words "Go…to those people who are killing your sister!" (2006: 17). Tambu does not realise that Mai's bitterness is because of the powerlessness she feels for continuously losing her children if not to the preying claws of modernity and education, then to the uncompromising political state of war in her country.

Tambu, nonetheless, believes that her mother is weak and is thereby terrified by the weakness and vulnerability of the women around her and this fuels her to want to achieve more at school. What she does not realise is that her mother is a hardworking woman who does not let her children go to bed hungry as she ploughs and plants because she cannot afford to buy at the market. This shows the determination of this woman in life as she even yields an even better crop and sells some of her tomatoes to make profit. She is industrious and very influential in the development of the novel. It might appear that the character of Mai is a bitter woman who is out to hurt others but acknowledging that she herself is hurting is important in order to understand her character. Throughout the novel she is presented as very bitter and crude that Tambu even has nightmares about her.

Through Tambu's relationship with her mother, Dangarembga showcases that education has the capacity to be divisive in society. Tambu represents educated women who despise and undermine uneducated women in society, whilst Mai represents women at the grassroots who are reservoirs of cultures in Africa and supporters of educated women in their journey towards attaining an education. Generally in African societies, children are sent to school for the good of the collective, however in many cases the educated after attaining their education fail to fit into their families and communities resulting in alienation.

Through Mai, the writer challenges the glorified institution of marriage. This woman is married but continues to suffer because even though a husband in the African society is supposed to provide for his family; hers is unable to do. Jeremiah (Tambu's father) cannot provide for his family and this causes a lot of rift with his in-laws because of this man's impotence. Although Mai's poverty makes her wish for the things that other husbands do for their wives, she is more discouraged because of her husband's inability to provide for her. Mai's life then is described as nothing by her daughter. Tambu says:

> I could not tell her what was difficult...It was her. It was the awful covetous emptiness in her eyes... It was the nothingness upon which she stood as upon the summit of her life, from which she clawed about for gleanings from other women's husbands, such as Babamukuru. What could make a woman so avaricious and hollow? Oh, how to become more of a person! (2006: 9)

But, the reality is that her mother is not as weak as she makes her out to be. If anything, her mother is very influential and detrimental in Tambu's development. To begin with, her mother has quite a huge influence in the events that transpires at the beginning of the novel as she sets things up so that Babamukuru, who she and a lot others believe is a traitor for taking Tambu to a fancy school while other children do not afford the opportunity; be taught a lesson. At the gathering, Babamukuru is beaten up for being a traitor and Tambu who adores him is made to witness all of the beating. At the very same gathering where liberation songs are sung, Tambu's sister Netsai sadly loses a limb.

Maiguru also plays an important role in the development of Tambu's characters. Maiguru is a woman who has access to education and even has a Master of Arts in English degree which according to Tambu amounts to nothing as she fails to make an impact as a woman with an education. Similarly Nyasha says that her mother's education in the school environment does not count for much just as it does not at home. She says that because she is a woman, though educated; her mother is disregarded by her colleagues in terms of input and contribution because "that is the way they (men) are conceiving of women!" (2006: 118) This makes her feel her mother's inferiority among her male counterparts regardless of her education.

Dangarembga depicts that, during the colonial era, patriarchy played a major role in the way women were viewed in society. Maiguru is not respected in the workplace because she is a woman and this resonates strongly with colonial Zimbabwean laws that paid women half salaries simply because they were women. The colonial system therefore contributed to the subjugation of African women. Unfortunately Maiguru's case was not improved at home, where her life was governed by culture, thus losing respect in the eyes of Nyasha and Tambu who expected more from her. Maiguru thus is not a valid role model for the young girls who see education as a tool for total emancipation.

In *The Book of Not* most women of the older generation had little access to education as in the case of Mai. Those who were lucky to attain education like Maiguru did not have a voice in the public sphere as well as in the private. The colonial government set up laws that curtailed the voice and advancement of women and patriarchy played a major role in silencing women. Hence it is safe to conclude that the place of a black woman in colonial Zimbabwe was in the kitchen. The new generation, which is represented by Nyasha and Tambu is defiant of this labelling and boxing of women. They view women as equals to men, with same capabilities. However, the colonial system and government curtails their voice leading to psychological complexes as in the case of Nyasha who suffers a mental psychosis and Tambu who withdraws from society.

Additionally, the whole purpose of modelling and exemplars for young women is defeated when they feel that their mothers fail at being such. Tambu sees Maiguru as better than her own mother. But for a young woman with a complex like Nyasha, one who is knowledgeable than Tambu; Maiguru is not as empowered as she ought to be. The girl expects more from her as an educated woman, but she fails to live up to her expectations. Rather, she succumbs to patriarchal and sexist rules that surround her. Armed with a degree, a woman of her calibre is unable to fight the patriarchy that surrounds not only her but all the other women around her. The harmony of working together between African men and women that Hudson-Weems (1998) credits Africana womanism as capable of doing, does not seem to exist. From the above analysis, it is clear that education has deep ramifications for women and these will be explored further in the next section.

Language, race, identity and transformation

This section examines how issues of race and language impact on the identity of female characters in their quest for education. In the novel, Tambu who goes to a multiracial school encounters racism not only from the system, but also from other students as shown above. Tambu, because of her experiences at school, questions "was I a Rhodesian, if I could not sit on Rhodesian seats, read formulae from Rhodesian blackboard and press down upon Rhodesian desks? (2006: 153). She questions the subject of equality in a country where people were treated differently on the basis of their race primarily and their gender and cultures too. Through Tambu, Dangarembga in *The Book of Not* raises fundamental questions about the effects and impact of colonialism on the African psyche and the picture does not look good. Contrary to popular belief that education is an opportunity for emancipation and liberation, Dangarembga shows that education has many negative effects on the self and the collective, some of which have been outlined above.

In this study, it is shown that the education of African women first challenges the issue of equal access before it attempts to challenge 'formal education' itself on an African child. The education of African women therefore represents a paradox because it comes into being "as a consequence of a historical evolution" (Said, 1983: 194) taking unassumingly the burden of the patriarchal and racist world in which it has to operate. Therefore, there is no absurdity in that at Sacred Heart the African girls have to share the dormitory and it be named the African dormitory. Those are just the burdens of being an African brought about by racism, colonialism and imperialism. They are reduced to mere objects of fascination for the white girls they attend school with and this renders problematic their education in such a close neat school setting. This focus deliberately becomes an enquiry into the societal expectations of women who undergo the school system in African societies today, with challenges regarding culture, tradition and the politics of gender at the fore. The challenges that African women who become educated face as well as the impact their education has on the broader society consciously questions the exclusion and *othering* of such women by the idea of African womanhood in African societies.

The experience of education for the individual in the novel is one of dislocation. The term dislocation in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2008) has two meanings. Firstly it refers to a displacement of a bone from its proper position in a joint, while the other meaning is to disrupt something. The study will base its argument on the latter definition. The dislocation through education occurs at different levels that shape the individual's life. Tambu's life dislocates physically, emotionally, intellectually and culturally whereby accumulation of an education becomes a move away from what she previously knew and believed in. By physical dislocation, the research refers to the instances whereby the girl leaves her family to go to school. The instances of going to boarding school and leaving home every morning to go to school only to return in the afternoon are moments of physical dislocation in the life of this young woman as she is forced to deal with different and new encounters during such times. Because of Tambu's physical dislocation of moving into school, she finds that when she returns home to her parents' house, there is nothing that she can relate to anymore. By virtue of this, she then:

> spent the holidays at the mission, using as an excuse the intensifying of war, when in reality [she] did not have the heart to return three times a year to fetching water from the river, the juddering paraffin lamp light and sadza with only one extremely small, portion of relish (2006: 7).

These are the things she grew up doing in the homestead which now disinterest her because of where she is in life. Moreover, in *Nervous Conditions*, Tambu chastised her brother Nhamo for choosing to stay at the mission during holidays instead of coming to help them at the homestead with heavy chores. Similarly, she is doing the same thing she hated in her brother; finding excuses to stay away from home. Tambu leaves behind her people and her origins and clings to other people's cultures because she sees them as better than what she has. Tambu detaches from her community in this way. She is no longer a part of the collective because she is a person who undergoes change and refuses to acknowledge that her new found self is a direct product of where she comes from. She is of an idea that she can just shed the burdens of her past and the memories of her young self.

Dangarembaga presents a system of human behaviour. This is because most school assumed that gender was the only problem faced in African societies. That is, most women would excel if and when placed in single sex schools, and sisterhood amongst African females was a universal concept. However, like most colonial assumptions, this was not true. Tambu says "People took for granted that [they] would love each other and prefer to do things together" (2006: 34) in relation to her interaction with her schoolmates. Tambu is aware that there will never be a real relationship between black girls and white girls in the school because of their skin colours. Tambu fails to form the expected bonds with the other black children at her school because they are her competitors. This is because African students in the convent school have been selected through an education performance quota system. Thus, only the top six African students from disadvantaged schools made it to the convent. This situation automatically ruled out the concept of sisterhood amongst the African students, thereby weakening their chance for emancipation and liberation from the system. Hudson-Weems (2005) argues that in order for African women to win the struggle against race, class and gender; "there needs to exist genuine sisterhood".

Another factor that contributes to Tambu's alienation is her choice of language. . Tambu chooses English, a foreign language at the expense of her own language Shona and this alienates her even from other black students at school who choose to speak Shona. The African girls "by speaking Shona were inviting a mark for refusing to accept which language was allowed and which was not" (2006: 169). By so doing, they aligned themselves to their culture and people, thus preserving their sense of self. Tambu, on the other hand, chooses to speak English which she views as a language of advancement to her detriment. Tambu's decision to "not identify with a group that spoke in the only language, out of all the ones that were known at the school, which was forbidden" (2006: 169) is in the interest of her education and performance at school. It can be argued that Tambu chooses to speak English only because it is stipulated that she does so, however her obsession with the language is not part of her curriculum but a matter of choice thus her alienation. Tambu cannot simply do away with her language because through it her people's past, dreams and aspirations are presented. In other words, language and culture are intertwined hence Ngugi Wa Thiong, (2007: 289-291) states:

> In my view language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation... language [is] not a mere string of words. It [has] a suggestive power, well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning...the language, through images and symbols, gave us a view of the world, but it had a beauty of its own... Language, any language, has a duel character; it is both a means of communication and a carrier of culture.

When Tambu rejects the use of her mother tongue, she disrupts the harmony of the soul and the language referred to by Ngugi. This could be one of the major contributing factors towards Tambu's alienation. From a different perspective, Tambu may have lost her sense of self, but she in turn gained a new perspective of the world. That is, a new view of herself, because the English language brought with it a new culture, a culture she willingly seemed to embrace.

Tambu's choice to embrace a new identity presents her as a gullible individual. This is because she only makes the choice after it has been forced upon her, thereby allowing the colonizer the power to define her. Hudson-Weems (2004:18) argues that definitions belong to the definers and not the defined. Self-namer and self-definer are two of the eighteen tenets of any Africana woman; they are seminal descriptors that delineate the first step in establishing an authentic paradigm relative to the true level of struggle of women of African descent. This means that Tambu fails to embrace the power of defining herself. As a woman in Africa and from an Africana womanist perspective, one would argue that she gives the power of defining to the colonizer. Therefore, she fulfills the title of the novel. Braham (2000) adds that if the "student is being taught that he himself is inferior, and that the only way to better himself is to become more like his English teachers and colonizers, then his existence and awareness becomes that of the hybrid". This means that for Dangarembga's characters brought up in a system which perpetuated oppression and encouraged assimilation; the most plausible result would be alienation.

Tambu begins her narrative looking forward to the prospects of living and exhibiting "a grey matter that was grey enough, white matter that was white enough, in fact

greyer and whiter than [white people's own] (2006: 113). Her desire to be white if not whiter is of a reticent kind where the people who are closest to her are able to notice it. Consequently, in *The Book of Not,* Ntombi urges Tambu to "jump into a pot of hot oil! Or just water! Just jump in! Then you will be what you want. It will make you look like them, all pink like a European!" (2006: 140). She sees the desire in Tambu to not only speak like white people, but to also look like them. Through Tambu, the writer is emphasising the brutal effects of cultural colonialism as well as racial discrimination. Therefore, it seems only natural that Tambu does not mind detaching herself from what she has been taught and known in order to achieve her metamorphosis. Consequentially, language becomes her first priority in her quest to change.

Education in the novel presents a dislocation of a person's character in many ways. Keeping in mind that school is an environment that is governed by its own rules that are different from those of the outside society, another problem that is faced by the girls is of dealing with different structures of control. Home is an environment where parents are in charge and their rules are to be obeyed for harmonious living. On the other hand, at school, there are other rules to be observed too and these rules may or may not impinge on other facets of life.

For Tambu in Dangarembga's novel, the problem of identity becomes apparent when she starts to realise her surroundings at school and at home and she begins to question her existence. This is what Hlongwane (2009: 453) identified as having to assert oneself for these young women, which becomes a constant theme in the novel where the young women engulfed by education find it difficult to fit in the world around them. The young girls leave their comfort zones to go and learn. They go to learn in school, but they previously have been taught things in the comfort of their homes, their communities and through their cultures. The young girls are therefore forced to find a balance between the new found world of education and the previously owned world of existence. Moreover, in the spaces between school and home, more learning is encountered. They learn other things that are just as important for their development. Therefore, the struggle for the young women to reconcile all the knowledge encountered in their lives becomes problematic. Tambu relates that in that space between home and school, they learnt some more and "...so unlike the lessons in school, there was no test for the lessons learnt in transit"

(2006: 24). Learning for young women is a constant journey that includes commuting between school and home, thereby forcing them to see a need for a compromise.

The experience of education is not a good one for Tambu as it isolates her from her people and her community. She trudges through school carrying with her the burden of being born black and the weight of her community or society on her back. But it is in the cutting off of the self from the rest of the other African community that the problem arises. Tambudzai expresses the confusion that schooling brought to her and other African girls in the convent school. She points out that "for each one of us had learnt in infancy how to respect, but we all, since that early teaching, discovered white people expect you to look straight at their eyes when you communicated" (2006: 73). Two different forms of education find themselves in a fight for an audience and thus undermining each other in the process. Consequently, confusion develops in the minds of those trying to gain education and an intellectual dislocation is apparent. The girls find themselves forced to leave behind or ignore that which they learnt at home, in order to comply with the demands of obtaining an education. Willey (2002: 66) analyses the alienation of the educated self in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, as "a result of the shift in African cultural system towards "modernity"". This alienation of African women who are educated fosters a repudiation whereby they can neither be accepted by their African societies nor by their affluent educational contacts.

At the end of the novel, Tambu whirls because her education does not bring forth the promises that her education made. She is defeated because she realises that education robbed her of the very thing it promised, emancipation. While others might argue that it is not the education that robs her but the nuns, it is important to take cognisance of the fact that they are able to rob her through the system; the school system. Furthermore, they are able to do so and get away with it because she is black and has no rights in the school she attends. This shows how racism and the school system have long worked together to silence and rob Africans children of their future. The same nuns that picked her from a thousand African girls, that made her friendship with her primary school friends break up (1988: 76), those that promised her a better life; are the same ones to snatch her dreams from her. This leaves her

dejected and resigned from the world because of having dared to dream and nurtured a spark that was soon put off right in front of her eyes.

Dangarembga presents the concept of assimilation in Africans as a coping measure. Assimilation seems to be the easiest solution to dealing with the wounds of cultural colonialism. Although many educated Africans can be blamed for adopting the assimilation strategy, it is important to note that this was an expected outcome from the colonial structure. Rodney (1972: 264) states "colonial schooling was education for subordination, exploitation, and the creation of mental confusion and the development of underdevelopment". This means that the education system set out to create the most alienated individual in society. Hence, Tambu's assimilation was an effect of the system.

The irony of the education system in Africa is still evident decades and centuries after colonisation has been eradicated from the societies. Education seems to come at a costly price, the acceptance of the emancipation for women and the loss of sense of belonging. It is a welcome development in terms of economic status and identity. However, status and class are an effect of capitalism. This automatically creates social stratification and enhances the concept of alienation. This is evidenced in Dangarembga's two novels, where colonial education which Tambu was exposed to from the onset in *Nervous Conditions* right through post independent Zimbabwe has similar effects on her; that is the alienation of the self. One would expect the post-colonial education syllabus to have a different impact on the individual. However, the two seem to be inseparable towers.

The impact of being educated and becoming woman are a journey of self-discovery in the lives of the young girls. In the very beginning, they decide on the way towards their education as a means to achieving their objectives in life, but later realise how their education becomes a self-construction of their identities in life. They realise that in the process of self-actualisation, they lose the concept and the idea of the self. Therein lies the paradox of transformation.

In *The Book of Not*, although Tambu chooses to detach and to dislocate completely form the past she does not want to be associated with the events that take place in

her life and around her, lead her back to her home teachings. Later she realises that she needs more than education to mature into a well groomed African woman. hence she journeys back to her culture. She remembers:

> Unhu, that profound knowledge of being, quietly and not flamboyantly; the grasp of life and how to preserve and accentuate life's eternal interweavings that southern Africans are famed for, what others call Ubuntu, that I be well so that others could be well also (2006: 102-103).

Through Tambu, Dangarembga emphasises the important of embracing school teachings as well as cultural teachings in order to remain grounded. It is only when Tambu goes back to her past that her life starts making sense. In her transformation, Tambu learns that the teachings of Uhnu are what define her. Murray (2009: 4) concurs that "the concept of Ubuntu plays a crucial part in the constitution of the human subject" in African societies. In such societies, it is maintained that a person is a person because of other people; hence Tambu's need for reciprocity for an increase in her quota of unhu. During her return to a place where she can find the things she lost, Tambu discovers that unhu required practice, repetition and reciprocation, a "philosophy of humaneness and interpersonal generosity" (Murray, 2009: 4) which she had not been exhibiting towards other people in her life. Rine (2011: 46) in her analysis of lack of unhu and communion in *The Book of Not* argues that:

> *Nervous Conditions* displays several examples of female solidarity among black Zimbabwean women, but that support system is less evident in *The Book of Not*, which features more of a struggle between Tambu and her roommates, namely Ntombi. Instead of finding an ally or even the kind of sisterhood in each other that Nyasha and Tambu valued in *Nervous Conditions*, these two young ladies perceive one another as enemies in most instances; Tambu fears creating connections with the non-white reflections of herself. Ngugi explains that this kind of fear emanates from the negative image of African people, an attitude perpetuated at Sacred Heart, and infects the colonized person's rapport (18), evident in the dynamic between Tambu and Ntombi.

The black girls undergo a lot of things together as students in the 'African Dormitory' in a predominantly white place. It is an expected outcome that more so than others, Ntombi and Tambu would have a strong bond between the two of them considering how Tambu herself explains how the two of them "in spite of [their] differences were

alike in proudly being top of the O-Level class at Sacred Heart, the most intelligent gathering of young women since the college's founding" (2006: 152). Instead of uniting because of this uniqueness the two are constantly at war with one another This is despite the fact they share the good and the bad experiences together because they attend one class. Even at the dining hall, the waitresses who are black, embarrass them and hate serving them as Tambu explains that the black waitresses did not treat them equally to white girls because they threw food at them, spilled it and did not smile at them (2006: 46). Because they are more often together than the other four girls, they undergo and experience similar prejudices based on the colour of their skins. They share a similar identity that sets them apart from the rest of the white girls in class but because of what Myeni (2006) says is the fight amongst African people for the title "the only African at a dinner party" (2006; 52-54), Tambu and Ntombi ultimately hate one another. Myeni writes on how fights ensue amongst African people who want to look good to whites and be the only ones of their race who do so. This shows no sense of sisterhood amongst Tambu and other African learners in her school as they take no pride in being African.This system perpetuates the 'bring her down syndrome' amongst women. Instead of women rallying together to fight one common enemy, they tend to compete against one another. This is witnessed between Tambu and other black girls in the African dormitory.

In a nutshell, the search for emancipation through education is a difficult journey for the African girls at Sacred Heart. In their exposure to education at a very young age, they are unaware of the effects that education will have in their development in the long run; and the impact it will have in their definition and conception of their individuality. Eventually however they learn that without a proper support system in the form of good home teachings, education can be an enemy that eats your soul. Education does not only affect the identity of the characters, but also their conception of womanhood as shown below.

The concept of womanhood

Dangarembga's novel presents a complex situation between society and the colonial education system. The writer portrays the unfulfilled promises created by the system. Education is always intertwined with identity in the novel. It is not surprising that Tambu is embroiled in an identity crisis at the end of the novel. But how that crisis

comes about in the novel is a complication between the need for individuality and collectiveness that Tambu undergoes. There are too many expectations from her going to school, that it will not only benefit her but also her whole family. However, it is to the contradiction in the way Tambu sees education as a possibility to enhance herself; in juxtaposition with the weight that her education is expected to enhance the whole family, (rephrase) that Jomo Kenyatta (1965: 117) attributes western education's biggest downfall in Africa and its irrelevance. Western education therefore becomes incapable because it cannot comprehend that while character formation and individuality is at its core; the character or individual still has to go back and function in a community. This therefore makes the individual and community, intricately intertwined. This is in line with Africana womanism which insists that the individual and the community in Africa are intertwined. The theory advocates for personal development but that development is rendered void in the face of two most powerful institutions in the development of a person in Africa; the community and education.

Tambu's education takes place during one of the most turbulent times in the history of Zimbabwe; during the liberation struggle. Her education at a time of change from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe is riddled by controversy. The research describes her experience of school as 'a trying time' for an African child assimilated and alienated, whose experiences are coupled with trying to study child at a time of war. At the Young Ladies' College of the Sacred Heart, what Tambu first anticipates to be a good school turns out to be a nightmare of an experience. It is in the pitting of her education against her Shona culture, the barbarity to which she and other black girls are reduced to because of their skin colour and the belittling of her capabilities, being cheated of her achievement and being denied room to grow that the battle grounds are drawn. When she enters the school, she has faith in its system to make a name for herself. She dreams and therefore sets her mind on achieving the honours roll and winning the silver plate that is given to the most achieving student in the school. However, all this comes to nothing when the race card is used to deny her recognition for her efforts.

With regards to issues concerning womanhood in Africa, Aidoo (1998) states that the idea of an African woman that has been circulating in the western world is that of a

poor woman who cannot take care of herself and her offspring as in the case of Mai. She is mostly depicted as a person who depends on others for her survival, especially her husband (Aidoo, 1992). Esherick (2005) insists that the painted picture of an African woman out there is seldom of a working woman who takes care of herself, but it is of a woman sitting next to a fly infested area with her hungry child on her lap. The idea of a strong African woman who can fend for herself and her children is seldom the picture. This is further depicted through the huge numbers of uneducated African women who live in Africa as opposed to the rest of the world. These are women often needing some help or the other. Esherick (2005: 29 & 31) puts it interestingly:

> No typical African woman exists. Some live in rural settings and some in urban developments. Some pursue higher education, others cannot read. Some work in professions, some stay home. Some marry, some fight to remain single. Some bear children, others remain childless...many more will grow up, marry, raise children and die without anyone but a few close relatives knowing their names.

In other words, there are a lot of different women all over the world and they are as diverse as they can be, and African women are no exception to the diversity, difference and even commonality of being women. The women in Africa seem to be defined within domesticated roles. Thus because of this depiction, the young women in the novel under study develop a sheer determination to change their lives. This makes them strive to perform better at school. By performing better and achieving, the young women understand that they will be able to make something of themselves.

A lot of African women writers disagree with the representation of African women as fickle, helpless and utterly vulnerable human beings. They believe this image is a result of the fact that for a long time African women were not given the platform to speak or permitted to use their voices to say who they are, what they want and what they are about. Dangarembga depicts women characters like Netsai, Nyasha, Ntombi and Tambu amongst others as young girls who are definitely not sitting at home waiting for their parents to come feed them; but as young girls who are grabbing for a dream. In juxtaposition, she draws a picture of Mai; Tambu's mother, without a job, education or any of the western inclination of freedom; but still with a

mind to plant, sell her produce and feed her family. Fonchingong (2006: 140) in writing about the need to unbend the canon in African literature states that:

> Male writers like in their literary mass are accused of condoning patriarchy, are deeply entrenched in a macho conviviality and a one dimensional and minimalised presentation of women who are demoted and assume peripheral roles. Their penchant to portray an androcentric narrative is at variance with the female gender that are trivialized through practices like patriarchy, tradition, culture, gender socialization process, marriage and domestic enslavement.

Most African male writers have been accused of their perpetual presentation of the picture of an African woman who is docile, content with being restrained within the apron figure and not interested in the career world. One such example is the renowned novel by Achebe (1958), *Things Fall Apart* which has been scrutinised on its presentation of female characters. This concept of female representation seems to be adopted from early Eurocentric writers and has been misplaced in most societies. This Euro-centric concept of African women has dominated literature since the early 1980s, and hence created "reaction" literature with most African female writers protesting against African male writers who depict them in ways that show lack of commitment to the struggle and survival of the African race. Nwapa (1998: 97) says that African women should not feel afraid or ashamed to "create characters that are fulfilled and not weighed down by the shackles of marriage and motherhood". In this instance, focus is on the distinctive call by Nwapa (1998: 96) to African women writers "to break new ground" by producing women characters that face problems that are different from the usual barrenness, polygamy and economic problems that most write about.

Through this, she argues that it is highly recommended that African women's lives be looked at from a point of view of both racism and patriarchy as equally influential in the construction of womanhood. Patriarchy has for long influenced the depiction and representation of women in African societies. Maiguru, an educated woman with a London university degree is not the only womanin African literature and society, is subjected to patriarchy. A lot of women writers like Bȁ, Nwapa, Magona, Head and many others have for long written on how education does not free women from the yoke of patriarchy. This prompted Nwapa (1998) in her presentation at a conference on "Women and Creative Writing in Africa" like many others before her, to stress on

the importance for both African men and especially African women to write down stories that reflect an African woman positively.

Aidoo (1998:48) reiterated Nwapa's statement at the same conference. Sofola (1998: 53) also insisted that it was up to African women to re-write all that has been negatively portrayed about her and writing her own story that was true as well as empowering. Aidoo, Sofola and Nwapa agree that the picture of African women that is presented in most writings is not reflective of African women who live in the contemporary society. They believe that African women writers need to produce a different picture that reflects truly on the situations that they live in as Sofola calls it the *dewomanisation* of the African woman (1998). Thus they call for an identity of a "new African woman" (Bell, 1990). According to Bell (1990), this new 'woman' perceives a career as a vital component of life alongside family life. This new woman would be able to break into new grounds that she was previously unwelcome in.

In *The Book of Not*, Muponde (2008: 4) sees Tambu's education which is encouraged by her 'Big Father' Babamukuru, as a gift that has the potential to advance not only Tambu as an individual; but her whole homestead too. Therefore, even though it may seem unclear to young Tambu, Babamukuru encourages her to attend school and do well so that she can take care of her parents and her siblings. Dangarembga presents this as the double edged yoke of success in Africa for not only the women but also society as a whole. She presents the concept of collectivism as an engraved concept in most societies in Africa. This is not to say that cultures in Africa are a homogeneous entity. However, they seem to share similar traits of collectivism. Mbiti (1989) emphasises this when he states that in Africa, individualism was not an option. People lived on one philosophy which meant that "I am because we are, therefore if we are, I am". This means that everyone is dependent on each other for survival. This explains Maiguru's expectation of Tambu. Tambu's success meant that her whole family would be catered for financially. This concept of communion is articulated clearly by Dangarembga's use of the concept unhu.

Unhu requires participation between self and others. In an instance where Tambu finds herself not speaking to the other black girls in her dormitory and in the whole

school, she expresses that it did not bother her so much that she was not speaking to them, but she was more concerned with how that affected her quota of unhu (2006: 144). Rine (2011: 42) goes on to point that "Tambu misunderstands in the concept of unhu's reliance on the interconnectedness of human beings: merely sharing the same physical space of a dorm-room at Sacred Heart does not ensure unhu". Tambu loses sight the concept of unhu, as well as the fact that unhu requires that one be cognisant of where they come from. Unhu entails that a person is also a person because of where they come from and Mbembe (2000) cements this by arguing that one can never know where they are going if they do not know whence they come from. Fortunately, Tambu finds her way home as shown in the previous section.

Another element that comes to the fore in the novel is that African women are not yet fully emancipated. It does so with the recognition that perceptions and mind-sets on what an African woman ought to be leave little room for aspirations in postcolonial Africa. The introduction of education in African women's lives brings about great possibility of financial independence which is a necessary key towards emancipation as the woman would be able to complement her partner in society. However, this emancipation comes at a great cost of the self. Africana womanism attests that women and men need to work together and complement one another if they are to win the fight against sexism, racism and classism in Africa.

In Dangarembga's novel, the loss of identity for African girls with an educational aspiration shakes the foundations that govern African womanhood. African girls, in their quest for education lose and forget their African roots and cultural duties as women in society. Some deliberately choose not to conform to African aesthetics of family and marriage and this leaves them rejected by society. The identity of an African educated woman in society requires that it be accommodated by society not as a deviation but as an empowerment. Because Africana womanism has at its core the institutions of marriage and mothering; the education of women in the novels begs to be accommodated and be recognised too as Africana womanism ideology, the difference being the choice to be who and what one wants to be. Most postcolonial/ post-apartheid doctrines have embedded in them principles that define and those that govern and these have been there for quite some time, even before colonialism was dismantled. Now that African conditions continue to undergo

changes that are pertinent to today's ways of living, some principles need to be adjusted, fashioned and changed to become more relevant to today's society.

In the novel, Tambu believes in the prospects of marriage and children that govern the idea of African womanhood but this has to be paralleled with her career aspirations. Even though she feels so untoward her mother and sees her aunt as a pacified weakling, she also does believe in the sacred union of wife and husband and the purposeful life of raising children. In a quest to encourage her cousin Nyasha who seems has resigned from life Tambu edges her by reminding her that there is still the prospect of "getting married and raising children" to look forward to (2006: 92). She reminds her of all these things that they can look forward to in life alongside pursuing careers and finishing school. The pairing of the two opposite fields - maintaining a home and public participation - shows in Tambu's speech that the two are attainable if one believes as much. This can extend Genz's (2010) term of the independent woman's idea of "having it all" to include those like Tambu who believe in maintaining both marriage and a career.

In African societies today, although the roles of women are slowly changing; the place of woman is still regarded to be in her home with her husband and children. Women's roles in African societies are mainly focused on raising their children by setting good examples of motherhood especially for young girls. Women worry themselves about raising their children right and providing them with the best opportunities in life, even those opportunities that they never got. There are also other women in the society like grandmothers, aunts and cousins who contribute in terms of support in the raising and building of a young woman into adulthood.

Other women like friends, neighbours and ordinary women in the society also contribute tothe growth of a young girl into womanhood. They come in 'active roles' as Tambudzai understands it (2006: 122). This is because of their presence that they impose on a daily basis, where encounters are made between different women in societies at different points in time.rephrase Be it in schools, at work, family gatherings, on the road to somewhere or at any other place. It has been alluded elsewhere how hard the preparation a girl encounters as part of her preparation for life is, "is one long preparation for the useful role she is expected to play in society"

(Taiwo: 1986: 2). Therefore, older women are expected to guide young girls on their journey of growing up and becoming women.

This study shows how arduous the education of an African woman is, not simply because of her sudden inclusion in a field where she had been excluded; but because it also brings evidence of "the *Non-Dit* in fiction" (Le Roux, 2005) that questions the primacy and legitimacy of terms that have been given by societies. By this term, Le Roux wants to make room for the excluded, the silent and often omitted voices in fiction, particularly that of women. Similarly, the need to recognise the once omitted, silenced, excluded women is what Butler (1990: 40) calls an important one because after all "women's lives were either misinterpreted or not presented at all". Therefore, this "recognise[s] that women's lives differ even under the same or similar conditions" (Le Roux, 2005: 18). It also embraces Dangarembga's account of 'the postcolony' and representation of characters of women interlocked and entangled in the process of becoming. It critiques the idea of African women in society.

Through the character of Netsai, the writer presents the shifting gender roles in society. Women participated in the liberation struggle alongside the men thus broadening not only their roles but also their perspectives. However, this change is not embraced by every woman. There are different reactions towards the shift in gender roles. Tambu is shocked by her sister who participates in the Zimbabwean liberation war. She is angered more than anything by her sister's participation saying "Oh Netsai, how I-wish-you-were-not my sister, who informed you a woman's business, is aiming rifles at people...!" (2006: 31). In her stereotypical mind, Tambu has an idea of what an ideal woman should be and how they should act like in society. In the course of her freedom fighting, Netsai loses a limb and that haunts Tambu for the rest of her life. Sure enough, Tambu is haunted by the idea of having to explain a sister who hobbles around and fails to understand that not everyone can be afforded the chance to go to school and make a difference. Individuals are given strengths in different capacities. Netsai has the strength to join the liberation struggle and fight an oppressive system; thus opening opportunities for other women in that arena. Tambu's uncle's constant reminder of how expensive her education is should show her that not everyone can afford to go to school. Incidents like these in the two

novels indicate how younger women who have been to school conceive the idea of womanhood in society differently.

Aidoo (1998) elaborates how African women have long played a big role in society as soldiers who championed their nations mostly against colonialism and other forces that threatened the harmonious dwelling of their societies. She writes of women like Ya Asantewa, Nzingha, Cleopatra, Mbuya Nehanda Nyakasikana, General Muthoni, the Igbo women of Eastern Nigeria who fought British colonisation and the South African women's 1952 march against carrying passes to demonstrate that African women have always fought for their society. However, Tambu who is educated through books and a westernised system is oblivious to this fact. Nevertheless, her oblivion is to be expected because she undergoes a schooling system where she is brainwashed about her history, her past and the past of people like her; but is made to consume that of Europeans. She is deprived of knowledge that speaks to her kind and of her kind. Therefore, it is not surprising that she has never heard of women fighting and is shocked of her sister's involvement in the war. She criticises her harshly for it, wishing to disown her. Dangarembga shows through her young female characters that some characteristics in women are embraced while others are shunned in the name of womanhood in society.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed the concept of education in *The Book of Not* and how it affects women in society as individuals and as a collective. The chapter began by looking at the writer Tsitsi Dangarembga especially the kind of literature (specifically novels) that she has produced: this allowed for *The Book of Not* which is the focus of this research has been juxtaposed with its predecessor *Nervous Conditions*. The chapter also outlined the history of education in Zimbabwe with the aim of pointing at the inequalities of the education system especially for girls in the country. The history of education in the country proved that previously women did not receive the same chances for education as men in the country for various reasons among them patriarchy.

In analyzing education in *The Book of Not*, the research points out that the education that the protagonists received throughout the novel was education meant

to cause Africans to conceive of themselves as inferior. The school is a white institution that accommodates only six African girls who throughout their studies and their encounters with people at the school are reminded of their inferiority. Tambu becomes determined to elevate her status in the school by assimilating, but she fails because of the racism in the school as well as the effects of the war going on in her country. Tambu fails at school and this makes her question her existence as an African woman in society. The research has also shown how the education that Tambu receives impacts her concept of womanhood in society. It has looked at how she relates to other women in the novel and shown that the education that she receives has a bearing on her identity as a woman.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE NOVEL *COCONUT*

Introduction

This chapter discusses the South African society as depicted in Kopano Matlwa's novel entitled *Coconut* (2007), and focuses is particularly on how education impacts women and the society at large. In the chapter, the researcher elaborates how education is a paradox of transformation among women, that is, education is like a double-edged sword that develops women on one side and destroys them on the other depending on how it is perceived by the individual. In Chapter one, the researcher showcased that in the past women encountered problems of access to education, however, this scenario has changed in South Africa as shown by Matlwa in *Coconut*. Women now have free access to education as a result of the new government's policies founded on the principle of equality. In the past, lack of access to education was viewed as one of the barriers to the liberation of women, now that women have access to education, the question is; how does education impact women in modern society? Has it brought the anticipated liberation for women? The researcher will answer these questions in this chapter in relation to the novel *Coconut*. This discussion will be carried out in light of the current South African situation that is characterised by multilingualism and multiracialism. The researcher will also take into consideration the limitations of this system that upholds the supremacy of the English language in the education system. In order to provide a clearer picture of matters under study, the researcher will begin by providing brief notes on the author's background, a summary of the novel and a brief overview of the schooling system of post-apartheid South Africa.

Author's background

Kopano Matlwa is a young South African female writer whose first novel *Coconut* captured the attention of readers because of her depiction of South Africa. Her

second novel is *Spilt Milk* (2010). *Coconut* ushered the author Matlwa into literary prominence as it won her EU Literary Award. After the novel was published, Matlwa became a force to be reckoned with in the literary scene of South Africa as she was hailed as part of the emerging breed of South African literary writers. A recent biography of of Kopano Matlwa reads as follows:

> Kopano Matlwa is an inspirational figure who is already a critically acclaimed author and doctor – and she's only in her 20s. Author of *Coconut* and Spilt Milk, she won the EU Literary Award and is a founding member and chairperson of Waiting Room Education by Medical Students (Wrems), a non-profit organisation run by students. She's among the Rhodes Scholar class of 2010 and won the Goldman Sachs Global Leaders Award in 2005. (Nyakudya, 2011).

Matlwa's novel interrogates the idea of identity in the new South Africa by depicting young female characters who undergo a journey of self-identity and actualisation. The researcher selected this novel to interrogate how education impacts on women as individuals and as a collective in society.

A Brief synopsis of the novel

Coconut (2007) looks at the lives of two young women, Ofilwe Tlou and Fikile Twala and their survival and development in a postcolonial society characterised by multiculturalism. The term coconut is generally used to refer to black people who assume a white identity. According to McKinney and Rudwick (as cited Ndlagamandla (2010: 64) "young black people describe a coconut as a black person 'who is white inside', and who 'acts and behaves white'". Coconuts are often also referred to as *Oreos* in the South African society. The similarity between *Coconuts* and *Oreos* is that while a Coconut fruit has a brown outer layer and a white edible inside, an Oreo is a biscuit that is black with a white creamy centre. These terms are also used to describe black people who are unable to comprehend and speak their mother tongue while, fluently speaking the English language as is the case with Ofilwe. The title *Coconut* is aptly used to capture an existing problem in South Africa. people who have been exposed to western education or money lose their identity in search of acceptance by white people. Being 'coconut' is a status symbol for some

black people, a symbol of education and wealth as shall be shown later on in the discussion.

Kopano Matlwa's novel is narrated in two halves by the witty voices of Ofilwe and Fikile. Matlwa centres her novel in suburban and township contexts. In the first part of the book, Matlwa tells the story of a young girl, Ofilwe, who grows up in a black upper class family with privileges like learning in a multiracial school. Ofilwe's struggles seem to be exacerbated by her privileges. She finds herself questioning her place in an environment where money determines a lot of things. She has questions about the house she and her family live in, the church they attend, the kind of places she and her family hang around as well as the school she attends. Her exposure to modern life leaves her with a paradox as she undergoes transformation not only through learning at school but also by growing up as a woman in a society that has its set ways. Ofilwe's mother, Gemina, is a housewife whilst her brother, Tshepo, works at a restaurant and is considering studying African Languages at University.

The second part of the novel focuses on Fikile, a young girl who lives in a township and shares a one bedroomed house with her uncle. The uncle works as a security guard in a white owned firm and sometimes she gets to act as though she is part of the firm as a front for BBBEE (Broad Based Black Economic empowerment). Fikile's life in a downtrodden location is full of pain and sadness. Unlike Ofilwe, Fikile is faced with the challenge of attending a school in the downtrodden location, where the school system is not as functional as the one in the suburbs. The school in the location is a remnant of the Bantu education and it is a 'blacks only' school. Compared to multiracial schools, the location school is not well equipped. This symbolises the inequalities that continues to exist in the education system of South Africa. Fikile is a determined young girl who works hard at school so as to attain a better life. However, the conditions at school and at home force her to drop out of school because she sees it as unbeneficial for her development. Without an education, she finds herself working as a waitress serving rich people in order to stay alive.

Both Fikile and Ofilwe undergo traumatic experiences when they are confronted by outright sexism, classism, prejudice and racial discrimination in their lives and these

are discussed in detail in the chapter. Both girls have trouble finding an identity in this post-colonialism dispensation, hence the research's title hints at the 'paradox of transformation' because the girls set out to liberate themselves through education only to struggle with identity issues. Since this novel focuses on the impact of education on women in South Africa, it is important to provide a brief history of the education system of South Africa and this will illuminate the issues under discussion.

The History of Education in South Africa

As stated in Chapter one, the education system of Africa has always been riddled with controversy stemming from which type of education, to how it was and still is imparted and who receives it. Inequality in the education system is one element that remains critically debatable when evaluating the system in general. Most countries in Africa have systems that bear testimony to inequality issues in education. The system of education in South Africa is no exception. Throughout literature on African education; western education has been implicated as having worked hand in glove with colonialism. With regards to South Africa, Dube (1985: 89-92) elaborates that there was a time in history, where both black and white children in South Africa attended schools together; but that soon changed once education became influenced by racism that instilled problems of superiority and inferiority amongst people.

The system of separation in South Africa is known as apartheid. This system of governance impacted on all aspects of life in the country, and its tenet was that races should never interact. Through this system, black people in the country underwent 'Bantu education' which was inferior to the education received by whites.

During the apartheid era, the term Bantu was used to separate African people from whites. Bantu education thus was the system that was used to put the "predominantly Negroid people" to borrow Clark's (1952:56) words, in their place. This type of education meant that African children were forbidden to attend schools in towns and suburbs that were reserved for whites only. Commenting on 'Bantu education', Dube (1985:93) explains that "Native Education," around the year 1920 was introduced "to handicap African children with the introduction of an inferior syllabus, coupled with inadequate learning conditions and poorly educated

teachers...intended to make both African and white children believe that they, by nature, have different destinies." Dube (1985: 94) insists that "Native Education" was achieved with covert racism, that the Bantu education did an even bigger damage; the overt racism that characterised "Bantu education" crippled the African child even more. Dube (1985: 95) cites (Harrison, 1981: 100) on Bantu education that:

> Its aims were clearly stated by its architect, Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, then minister of Native Affairs under which the Department of Bantu Education was to be administered. When Verwoerd introduced the Bantu Education Bill before the all-white parliament in 1953, he opened the debate with an attack on missionary education, which he accused of teaching African children false expectations and directing them to "green pastures they would never be allowed to graze." African education, according to Verwoerd, must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities, mindful of the sphere in which they live. Furthermore, education must have its root entirely in the Native areas, Native environment, and in the Native community. The African, he thought, must be guided to serve his own community in all respects; there was no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour.

The inequality in the education system of South Africa served as a rallying point in the historical turnaround not only of the schooling system; but also of the political and social landscape of the country. That is, the hatred that black people had of the Bantu system of education brought about what is still celebrated as the Soweto uprising. The Soweto uprising was started by young black South Africans who took to the streets *toyi-toying* and lost their lives in the process. The South African youth at that time were protesting against being taught in Afrikaans which was a huge part of Bantu education.

Although many children died during the Soweto uprising to bring about change in the education system, it is unfortunate that some things remained the same. That is, although there is broader access to education today in post-apartheid South Africa, the inequality that existed during apartheid in terms of type of education one attains persists after independence. In post-apartheid South Africa, the type of education one gets is still determined by financial capabilities, with the rich taking their children to previously 'white only' schools that offer better opportunities and the poor taking their children to public schools that have limited facilities. This aspect of the

education system is resonant in *Coconut* that is set in a democratic country where discriminating according to race is an offence but is still much alive. E. Lemmer (1996: 20) agrees that indeed the system of education in South Africa has been embroiled in racial tensions as "racial issues in the struggle for equal opportunities" have been more prominent in the education system than any other issues.

Additionally, Lemmer, (1996: 20) reveals that during the time [of apartheid]; very little attention was paid to the education of women in particular. This means that during apartheid, there was unequal gender access to education in the country. Lemmer clarifies that by 1996 statistics released by the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) in South Africa, a country where statistically there are more girls than boys; boys edged girls in primary and secondary education enrolments (Lemmer, 1996: 22). He even goes further to reveal that the situation worsened at institutions of higher education where lesser and lesser women enrolled at technikons, colleges and universities. Although this was the case in pre-independent South Africa, the new constitution of the country opened doors for female participation not only in the education sector but also in business, governance, law and many other sectors. Matlwa's novel is set during this time when changes in terms of access to education were already in full force as shown in the next section.

Access to education and its implications

The novel *Coconut* revolves around the theme of education, that is; the type of education one receives, where it is received, when and its impact on the characters. Matlwa chooses to reflect on the impact of suburban multiracialism and township schooling for young women, a reflection that posits the previous exclusion and sudden inclusion of black students as disappointing. The way in which this novelist characterises women highlights African gender relations and postcolonial racial tensions. In so doing, *Coconut* (2007) projects at best the progress of African women in their quest for a voice and space, thus questioning the delimitation of such monolithic idealised constructs such as African womanhood.

In the novel, the author presents education for both Ofilwe and Fikile as more accessible than it was for Charmin, (Fikiles mother) who was overlooked by white

people in favour of her brother, Silas Nyoni, during the apartheid regime. Charmin in *Coconut* represents many African women who could not access education during the apartheid era due to the patriarchal tendencies of the apartheid system supported by culture. During the apartheid era, a woman's place was in the kitchen or the private domain where she took care of the kids and the household. In actual fact, laws were enacted to keep women out of the public sphere. Nevertheless, some women braved the storm and sought employment outside the private sphere, though they were limited to nurturing jobs such as maids, child minders, nurses and teachers among others. The apartheid era thus, promoted the subordination of women, making true the statement made by African womanists that black women suffer a double bondage, of racism in the hands of whites and gender victimisation in the hands of their husbands, fathers and brothers.

The statement by African womanists is also true of Gemina, Ofilwe's mother. The writer through the character of Gemina (Ofilwe's mother) and Koko (Ofilwe's Grandmother) problematises poignantly the education of women in African societies, the decisions they are forced to make in life in relation to education and its impact on them. In the novel, Gemina, a housewife who did not finish school is constantly reminded that she never finished high school; as such she is viewed as a failure by her husband. Ofilwe sees her mother's helplessness daily, and often hears words such as "You could not even finish high school Gemina" (2007: 81) from her father. Gemina in the novel is belittled by her husband for not finishing high school, yet he is the person who barred her from working as Ofilwe reveals: "when daddy decided two or three years ago, that nursing was too demanding for his apparently overworked wife, they agreed he would give her a weekly allowance to cover her daily expenses (Matlwa, 2007:50). Through Gemina's character, Matlwa showcases how contradictory African societies are when it comes to who and what women are and should be. On one side patriarchy expects women to stay at home and be homemakers and this is seen as a mark of good womanhood. On the other side, when women stay at home and fail to contribute to the financial well-being of the family, they are ridiculed as in the case of Gemina who is made to feel inferior simply because she did not finish school. This leads to confusion, which is depicted in Ofilwe's introspection after overhearing a conversation between her grandmother and her mother. She questions:

> Nothing. Such a strong word. Nothing. I wondered about many things after Koko put down the phone...Would I have turned out to be nothing if Mama had not married Daddy? Would I have turned out to be nothing if Mama had never made it out of the dreaded location? What would I be nothing now? Nothing? (2007: 13)

The word 'nothing' carries a huge weight in the fight for female suffrage which is witnessed in the helplessness of a woman who is made to believe in her incapacity as a person to succeed without a man. The linguistic wickedness of this refrain 'nothing' intrigues young Ofilwe who is now alerted to an idea of a non-being, a demotion by society of a woman in an attempt to make her realise that she cannot exist without her husband. Although young Ofilwe intends to do without this idea of African womanhood's obsession with marriage, she is in that time disconcerted by her mother's cry, for her mother was willing to jump and leave the marriage.

Gemina's dilemma in her marriage does not end with her husband belittling her, but he also takes on 'lady friends' without care for her feelings. Gemina thus is truly an ill-treated woman. John Tlou is able to do as he pleases because he is the sole breadwinner of the family. However, Gemina cannot leave her marriage because (1) she cannot stand on her own financially, (2) she feels bound by her duties of motherhood, thus she cannot leave her children. (3) She cannot leave because of the vows she made when she married her husband and lastly her mother prohibits her from leaving because divorce is taboo.

Koko, Gemina's mother plays a pivotal role in Gemina's staying in an abusive relationship. Koko is an old fashioned traditional woman who has different views on what the role of a woman is she tells her daughter that if she left her husband and quit her marriage she would be 'nothing' (2007: 12). She believes that a husband and a family are what make a woman in society. To Koko this is highly important because a woman or a mother ought to ask herself, "What kind of children am I raising?" (Matlwa, 2007: 21), and what kind of family do I have. Koko, in the novel, represents many African women of her generation and some women in modern society who believe that the worth of a woman is in having a husband and children. The importance of marriage is also highlighted by Gaidzanwa (2003:7):

> Marriages of African women have inadvertently contributed to attempts to lock African women into restricted domestic roles in colonial and post-colonial Africa, and this specific construction of African women attempts to lock them into domesticity as if this is an uncomplicated, liberating and problem-free construction of African womanhood. The canonization of motherhood and wifehood pervades literature, the arts, social policy and practice and creates many problems for African women because of the one-dimensional construction of African womanhood.

Through socialisation, older women like Koko contribute to the subjugation of younger women and African womanism takes into cognisance the role played by women to subjugate others in the name of culture. Although Womanism as a movement values and upholds the family institution, it however does not condone the abuse of women as in the case of Gemina who suffers oppression not only from her husband but also from cultural practices that encourage women to persevere in abusive marriages.

Whilst women of the older generation persevere for the sake of their families, in *Coconut,* they are seen by the younger ones as failures and cowards. One such person is Ofilwe who fights hard not to be like her mother: oppressed and dependent. Ofilwe believes that her mother participated in her abuse by agreeing to leave her career. She sees this as a platform for her father's ill-treatment of her mother, like having affairs and belittling her when he speaks to her. She also sees it as her mother surrendering her independence to her husband. In young Ofilwe's eyes, this shows that African women sometimes allow men in their lives to ill-treat them, thus perpetuating patriarchy and sexism.

As a result of her experiences at home, where her mother is minimised to 'nothing' Ofilwe thrives to attain an education so that she can be financially independent. In this regard, she is like Fikile the second protagonist in the novel who also views education as a gateway to a better life. Through Ofilwe and Fikile the writer portrays a shift in perspective of what the roles of women are. This shift is facilitated by better access to education in post-apartheid South Africa for both girls and boys. In the novel, both Ofilwe and Fikile have access to education, albeit in different locations. Ofilwe, a young girl from a middle class background, attends a multiracial school in

one of the suburbs whilst Fikile attends a township school. Both characters represent the emerging voices of young women who believe that women should not be defined by their roles as mothers and wives, but should be defined by their achievements and contributions to society. In other words, young women in Matlwa's novel negotiate spaces between home and school/work, the modern and the traditional, where they have to mediate ideas of growing up, getting married, raising kids and assuming careers. This is contradictory to Ofilwe's parents' resolve that a woman cannot raise a family and hold down a career all at once.

In the novel, although both Ofilwe and Fikile view education as a tool for emancipation and economic freedom, the education they aspire to attain does not serve them as well as they imagined. Both go through a journey of transformation in their desire for education through experiences of racism, sexism and patriarchy. Through the two characters, Matlwa depicts that there is more to education than its accessibility. Other factors play a role in shaping the identity of an individual as shown in the subsequent section.

Class, race and identity

In *Coconut*, Matlwa presents two main characters that come from two contrasting backgrounds with a similar aim, attaining education for liberation as women. Although the two characters Ofilwe and Fikile share a similar vision, their destinies are different because of their socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. These factors determine where they live, who they associate with, what they eat and how they dress and behave. In other words, class plays a role in who they become (identity). Through Ofilwe and Fikile, Matlwa illustrates that inequalities still exist in the education system of South Africa. The nature of education one receives is determined by one's financial capabilities, as in the case of Ofilwe and Fikile.

The significance of the settings by this author is enormous in that it also helps to show the economic and class struggle of South Africa. Matlwa cunningly depicts these unbalanced lives of by pointing at the education that they receive as well as the education that they prefer or can afford for their children. The depiction is through

the glorification of multiracial schools in South Africa. These schools remain white populated and are seen as non-racial as they work towards "redress*ing* of the wrongs of the past" (Frye, Farred & Nojekwa, 2009: 257) by incorporating a few black students. Raditlhalo, (2010: 23) explains that multiracial schooling "is a corrective to a past filled with assertions of superiority and inferiority- it is not a given". Booyse et al (2011: 281) elaborates that the idea of a multiracial schooling environment remains just an ideal as students do not seem to experience the multiculturalism that is assumed. Through the depiction of middle class children in white schools, Matlwa is able to expose how equal opportunities are still a myth in the South African education system today.

Ofilwe is the daughter of John Tlou, a qualified technician who has a respectable job that affords him the luxury of a life in the leafy suburbs of the country. He can afford to send his children to exclusive schools where money is the power that opens gates to school premises. His family can afford a ceremonial outing at Silver Spoon, a fancy restaurant every Sunday and socialising/mingling with other people of the same class in society; even though the restaurant mostly if not entirely caters for a white upper class clientele. His family is what Fikile, a waitress in the same restaurant calls "new money" (Matlwa 2007:119) as he represents South Africa's emerging South African middle class. Compared to other black people in his country, John Tlou is a well off man and is a respected member of society because of his education. Whilst the Tlous are the poster family of black achievement, their relations at home leave a lot to be desired. As shown above, John Tlou is a man who ill-treats his wife because she is not as educated as he is. He not only belittles her, but has a league of 'lady friends' to entertain him. The relationship between Tlou and his wife shows that money and status can be a thorn in a relationship in. One would expect that an educated man like John would know better and treat his wife better, but still patriarchy rears its ugly head again.

As stated before, Ofilwe's experience of her mother's diminishment gives birth to a strong desire to be independent like her father. In the novel we see a shift of modelling whereby Ofilwe sees her father as a role model and not her mother. Independence to Ofilwe is represented by education, a good career, material possessions and money just like in her father's case. Nevertheless, her love for

education does not protect her from the harsh realities of life leaving her with an identity crisis as shown below.

Since learning entails vacillating between school and home, Ofilwe is torn between the friends she makes at school and her home life. At school she meets white friends and in the process learns a lot in visiting their homes over weekends. This results in a serious case of identity crisis as she begins to question who she is and her environment. Her lack of strong female models at home results in her modelling womanhood on white culture, in turn finding her own mother and grandmother lacking in feminine qualities according to white standards. Her mother and grandmother are different from her friends. therefore, Ofilwe grows tired of "explaining why Mama does not shave…excuse why Daddy refuses to go fishing with the rest of the dads, and why Koko won't help out at the tuck-shop like everybody else's grandmother does" (2007: 48). Because of her desire to fit into a world where things are done a certain way, she finally resolves that:

> I didn't feel bad. Mama didn't go to high school, so what was the point of telling her about the parents' evenings… Mama would not understand any of that. I care about her, that is why I didn't want to put her through all of that. Besides, Mama's English is ghastly" (2007: 51).

Ofilwe blames her mother's faults like her poor English on her never finishing high school and not being exposed to the same multiracial schooling opportunity that Ofilwe has been exposed to. She fails to realise the generational gap that exists between her and her mother. Gemina's education as an older woman is that of the Bantu education system which was limited because of issues like unqualified teachers. Her command of the English language is poor because of this fact. Through Ofilwe's interactions with white people, Matlwa exposes not only the problems of racism that continue to afflict South Africa but also the debilitating effect education has on some people like Ofilwe.

In the novel, Ofilwe is perpetually scared of how other people will perceive her mother. When confronted with the reality of it all - when her white friends visit her to sleep over, Ofilwe is terrified by the embarrassment that her mother causes her in front of her white friends. Finally the embarrassment she has been avoiding catches

up with her in the comfort of her home and her mother's inconformity infuriates her. She says:

> So embarrassed…What if Karen and Lisa tell the other girls? Can you believe Mama? The next day Mama ran baths for the girls. Did she not know that white people only bathe at night? I am so embarrassed. Mama is dumb" (2007: 53).

Her mother does not know anything about white people and how they live because she does not have white friends. However, she does everything in her power to make them feel welcome as she is delighted to meet her daughter's friends. But, all her efforts are in vain as Ofilwe concludes that her mother is "dumb" (2007: 53) for not knowing how white people carry on with their daily lives. She does not realise that she is expecting a lot from her mother who has never had encounters with white people at such a personal level, and that she cannot change her mother and what she is. She fails to embrace and accept her mother for who she is as she expects her to be someone that she is not. Ofilwe's state of mind is a result of her confusion of who she is and where she belongs, as she chooses another's culture over her own.

Coconuts are black people with a deep complex of self–loathing because of the colour of their skin. They have a strong desire to be white; as such they act white, speak white, dress white and eat like white people. Consequently they despise anything black as shown by Matlwa through Ofilwe who despises even her own mother. They are what Fanon (1952) refers to as "black skins in white masks". Generally, coconuts are criticised by other black people for being 'fake' and denying their languages and cultures. Ndlagamandla (2010) elaborates that coconuts are often frowned upon because of their eagerness to immerse themselves in the English language and forget their own. There is a lot of literature that has been written on the state of inhabiting more than a single culture, the liminality and in-betweeness that can be described as:

> The Coconut metaphor'. The "Coconuttiness", occurs when one betrays one's African culture by gravitating towards the social expectations of a hegemonic westernized culture (Spencer, 2009: 68).

In Spencer's words, *Coconut* reflects an African person who chooses to run towards westernised culture while abandoning their own. Gravitation implies being pulled

towards something whereby one has no control over themselves so much that they go involuntarily (assuming that there is an African culture, homogeneous and in antithesis to western or white culture). In Matlwa's novel, the coconut metaphor is relatively reflected in the use of the English language by Ofilwe and Fikile who refuse to speak their mother tongues. In contrast, Bhabha (1994:2) encourages the *Coconut* and *Oreo* metaphors because they "realign the customary boundaries between the public and the private, and challenge normative expectations of development and progress".

Although Ofilwe has access to the education she holds in high esteem, her quest for education exposes her to some hard truths about race and belonging. The race issues are brought to the fore through an incident between her and Stuart where her father's integrity is called into question simply because he is black. In the novel Stuart insinuates that her father's car must have been stolen (2007:15-16) even though her father is a successful man who earned the car through his affluent education and job. This scene portrays deep-seated stereotypes that exist about black people. There is need in South Africa to demystify myths black people have about white people and vice versa if South Africa is to build a true rainbow nation characterised by tolerance, multilingualism and multiculturalism. This incident nevertheless leaves Ofilwe with a broken psyche. If Stuart could say that of a proud successful African man; it gnaws Ofilwe what would be said of her mother who is ordinary, uneducated and African. Ofilwe thus lives in deep fear of being found out as a 'fake' because her mother is not as sophisticated as her friends' mothers.

Ofilwe's denigration as a black person does not end with her run in with Stuart. During a night out with her school friends she is shocked into a state of disbelief when her friends describe her lips as 'too dark', "No ways her lips are too dark"!; not believing that they were spoken words; live word; words that had been followed by an explosion of general laughter" (2007: 45), she is in a state of disbelief. This event serves as a wake-up call for Ofilwe as she realizes how pretentious her friends are. This event sparks memories of another incident that is embedded in her consciousness where she was also forced to contend with her inadequacy as a black woman in the eyes of a boy she liked. At a very young age in grade seven, a time of first crushes and innocent love, Ofilwe wrote a love letter to Junior P Mokoena, a boy

she liked and he replied by saying "I only date white girls" (Matlwa, 2007: 24). When this incident took place, Ofilwe explains that "I did not feel sad but rage instead" (2007:24). Ofilwe's rage as she explains was not towards Junior who humiliated her, but was instead towards herself because she had been foolish enough to write that letter. Junior placed the letter on his table for everyone to see, and this humiliation is what psychologically affected Ofilwe who is forced to deal with her inadequacy as a young black woman. This is merely because she never stood a chance with Junior because she is non-white, a preference Junior clearly articulates.

Through these incidences, Matlwa depicts how coconuts are rejected not only by their own people but also by the culture they thrive to adopt, leaving them in a state of "in-betweeness" that is not belonging anywhere. The novel thus teaches strong lessons about identity and self-respect. Furthermore, in the novel a certain level of sadness permeates when one sees young boys like Junior already disconnected from their culture. By despising Ofilwe and denigrating her in front of the class, Junior exposes a level of insecurity that is already buried in him as a young black man who views dating white women as an achievement. Through Junior, Matlwa demonstrates that identity problems are not only predisposed to women but also to men. The type of education one is exposed to can be detrimental to both men and women in South Africa.

When Ofilwe is rejected by her friends, she suffers a deep sense of disconnection; not only from her friends but also from her people as she realises she belongs nowhere. She begins to live her life in isolation and walk around like a zombie. At this stage she realizes that her education made her acquaint with people who want her for what she is not, thereby forcing her to speak, laugh and act a certain way (2007: 31, 45 & 61). Ofilwe's education empowered her and gave her status around her cousins. She was seen as the intelligent one, but this education also disempowers her as she loses touch with her people. She no longer wants anything to do with her white friends. At the end, she is forced to form relations with other people of the same skin colour as hers. And during this time too, Ofilwe learns a lot about herself, what Raditlhalo (2010: 33) sees as growth and experience even though it brings about pain in her life. Consequently, a new form of transformation takes place and this will be discussed in the next section. Presently, it is important to

demonstrate how Fikile is also influenced by her socio-economic background to become the woman she is; who makes the choices she makes.

Like Ofilwe, Fikile's journey to liberation is not an easy one as she has to deal with issues of poverty, sexism, race which challenge who she is and who she becomes in society. In the novel, Fikile is a girl who lives in a one-bedroomed apartment with her Uncle Silas and attends a township school. However she aspires for the kind of education provided in multiracial schools. Her uncle, Silas Nyoni received such an education and she wishes that she could be given the same opportunity that her uncle received. Her uncle is a university dropout who was given a chance that young Fikile can only dream of by the Kinsleys, a family her uncle's mother used to work for. He is well versed in the English language and can recite Shakespeare, and that Fikile attributes to the kind of education he received. However, because he is a university dropout; he works as a security guard. His education does not advance him financially because he cannot secure a decent job. However, Fikile wishes that she had the same opportunity to study as did his uncle.

Fikile envies her uncle's unfinished education as she wishes that given the same opportunity, she would have made the most of it. She even feels sorry for the Kinsleys who sent her uncle to school only to have him drop out, "If only they had invested that money on me instead of Uncle" (2007: 124), she would have made that opportunity count. Fikile's strong desire to be educated in a white school has two implications. On one hand she is justified to desire a better education because white schools continue to offer better opportunities, on the other side, her desire reflects a broken psyche that desires "all things white".

In the novel, Fikile never shies away from her real desire and she speaks it openly that she wants nothing but to be white. For example, when asked what she would like to be when she grows up, she replies by saying that she wants to be "White, Teacher Zola. I want to be white" (2007: 136). This is a voice of a primary school learner of about nine years who believes in the idea that education can turn a person into anything she wants to be. Her inability to realise the limits of her education makes her believe that she can adopt more than just Western culture, but a white skin too. She sees herself as capable of being "white, rich and happy, rather than

African, dirty and poor" (2007: 118) and that her mastery of English can help her achieve such. To Fikile, whiteness means an upward mobility from what she sees as her downtrodden, poverty stricken life. That is, like many black people, Fikile associates success with the colour white and she thrives to be identified with white people to feel complete and successful. As a result of this obsession with whiteness, Fanon (ref correctly) comments that African people who gain education have a problem of tending to "throw themselves greedily upon Western culture" and trying to make it their own (2005: 205).Through Fikile, Matlwa illustrates that the negative effects of colonialism still linger in African minds, of perceiving white as the superior colour.

Fikile's journey is a heart-breaking one because she does not only contend with poverty, but also with sexual abuse from her Uncle Silas. During her schooling days, Fikile believes that she can convince her uncle to stop molesting her and as she says she "thus spent [her] afternoons once school was out reading the words... hoping to impress him" (2007: 115). She takes the power of her education to gain freedom from her uncle. However, she later realises that no matter how learned she becomes, if she does not stand up for herself, her uncle will never stop. She realises that even if she learns as much as she can, her education has no potential of saving her from her predicament.

Fikile represents many young girls in Africa who are abused sexually and at times physically and emotionally by the people they look up to for protection. Sexual abuse is a barrier to the liberation of women as it destroys women not only physically but also emotionally. It generates scars that are difficult to heal leading to some women cursing their femininity. Women in Africa thus are not only fighting for equal to opportunities but also the right to their womanhood, whereby they are protected from such abuses in the private and public spheres. There is need for platforms where children like Fikile can report such crimes without fear of victimisation and the government of South Africa needs to deal with these issues with the urgency they deserve.

In the novel it is sad that a girl like Fikile with big dreams is forced to drop out of school because of wrong perceptions and ends up waitressing to survive. Even though Fikile ceases to go to school, the thorns of self-denigration are already buried deep in her soul. Just like Ofilwe, she suffers an identity crisis which leads her to revolt and disavow her own black family in order to be acceptable. Fikile creates a make believe family life in order to fit in with the kind of life she aspires to in the coffee shop. She has lost both her mother and grandmother at a young age, but is content with creating a family and a new identity for herself. This creation allows her to fit perfectly into the rich and famous life of the coffee shop; which is the only thing she has going in her life. But it causes her to suppress the feelings about her family, especially her mother as she says:

> I have never been able to relate to other blacks, that is the honest to God truth. Gogo with her endless praying, Uncle and his laziness, the dirty kids at school, I understood none of that... I never had a father and Mama was a drunkard and a coward who ran out on life, leaving me alone, drenched in her wretched blood. So really if anybody is allowed to create make believe parents, it's me. (2007:147).

Sadly, Fikile's story is a true reflection of most South African family lives, whereby the number of child-headed households is alarming. She is robbed of her innocence at a young age because her mother killed herself in front of her as shown in the above quote. Because of her mother and grandmother's death, she has no one to raise her. She is left with an uncle who takes advantage of her vulnerability. This forces her to grow up way quicker than she is supposed to and robs her of innocence. She is forced to fend for herself and from this experience learns what it is like not to have motherly love. Motherly love which is often essential to the growth of children eludes, thus she perceives her mother as a coward and her grandmother as irrelevant. Again, lack of modelling for a young woman from girlhood to womanhood becomes a constant theme in Matlwa's novel. Through Fikile, Matlwa shows why a young girl in post-apartheid dispensation repudiates so strongly the idea of womanhood perpetuated by society because her life is not reflective of that ideal that society aspires to. That is, through Fikile the writer shows how a character's background shapes her views of self and society.

In this analysis, it is highly important to note that not everything that the young women learnt is to be viewed as a dislocation. This is because some of the things that they learn help them in making informed choices. An example is how Fikile finds out from school that what her uncle had been doing (molesting her) was illegal by law and that she has every right as a child in South Africa to be protected against such (Matlwa, 2007: 115). Previously, she had no knowledge of how to protect herself from such a monstrous man, but after she heard the illegality of his uncle's actions', she found a way to deal with her problem. The education that the young girls encounter in school is somewhat grounding although it deviates at times from what they are taught in homes. However, the one thing that remains intact is how the young girls take much heed of their school education than they do their home education.

Hudson-Weems' coining of the term Africana womanism clearly seeks to address such a predicament in a society where Ofilwe and Fikile have to contend with the racism that occurs in society, especially in their schools. This is because Africana womanism according to Hudson-Weems takes into account the double bondage that women face in the African society, that is, racism and victimisation before gender victimisation. The women in the two novels first have to fight the system that oppresses them on racial grounds as a collective before they can even fight the society that side-lines them on gender grounds. They not only have to find ways in which to fight patriarchy and sexism at home, but go on to fight racism too. In their prestigious schools (Little Valley Primary and Vulamehlo Secondary), the issue of race remains an aptly deterministic one, while at home sexist behaviours keep them fighting once more. As many female writers put it, the double subjugation by both race and patriarchy for African women becomes difficult for the young girls headed for womanhood in this novel to grapple with. Through an Africana womanism paradigm, there is a room to recognise race and male chauvinism as a two-fold sword which leaves girls in the novel baffled whether to "fight the sexual war some of the time and the racial war at other times" (Ogunyemi, 1985: 66).

Although Hudson-Weems (2000: 214) seems to agree with Ntiri that sexism "is basically a secondary problem which arises out of race, class and economic prejudices", it is disheartening to realise that in Matlwa's novel, the problem of

patriarchy seems to be the first battle step that girls encounter before race, class and gender.

In *Coconut*, the role played by education in the displacement of black children is also reflected in the language that is chosen by the system for education: English. The writer shows the power that language has in shaping mind-sets and personalities. Thus the subsequent section explores how language impacts identity leading to an individual's transformation.

Language, identity and transformation

In *Coconut*, the writer focuses on the things that the girls give up in their quest for education. She also stresses on the problems of language in South Africa and how English as a language continues to bring about problems of identity. Matlwa does this by showing how the Coconut metaphor creates dichotomies of alienation and detachment for most people in the country. She talks about the lessons that young women lose out on while embracing a European culture. These are lessons on grooming, values, norms and morals that are learnt at home and not in the formal system of education. It is these lessons that define them within their societies and identify them as Zulu or Pedi.

In the novel under discussion, the English language is shown to be a breeding ground for the change that the young girls imagine is attainable through education. Notably, through the fostering of English in their schools and because of the positives attributed to it, the girls find themselves clinging to the language dearly. They are drawn to it and are willing to lose everything in order to acquire it. They go on to experience in Margolis' (2007:579) words a "disfigurement of person", all in the bid to gain English. This is reflected through Ofilwe who develops an obsession for everything white; the way they speak, eat, dress and live. Since English is the language of instruction at school and a language of her aspirations, Ofilwe decides to master the language and speak it 'better than the white people'. However she does not understand why people shun her and her crisis is reflected in the statement below:

> It is because I am smart and speak perfect English. That is why people treat me differently. I knew from a very young age that Sepedi won't take me far. Not a chance! I observed my surroundings and noted that all those who were lawyers, doctors and accountants, all movie stars that wore beautiful dresses, all the singers that drove fancy cars, and all my friends who owned the latest clothing, did not speak the language that bounced berserkly from Koko to Tshepo to Malome Arthur to Mama and back to Koko again. I did not care if I could not catch it... I spoke the TV language; the one that spoke of sweet success...What has Sepedi ever done for me? (2007: 54)

Ofilwe depicts what it means to be a 'coconut' or *oreos*; black on the outside and white inside; shunning her language in favour of an alien one. She, like many people in South Africa, views English as the language of development, a language that can open doors for her in the future. Whilst it is easy to blame Ofilwe for her perspective on English, there is some truth in her statement in that South Africa one needs to master English to make it in the work space. Ofilwe's weakness lies in her obsession with English at the expense of her language and culture. By losing her language, she is also losing her culture because language and culture are irrevocably intertwined.

Ofilwe's brother Tshepo even warns that if she is not careful in her eagerness to adopt English, she will find herself at a place too far to return (2007: 93). This assertion by the brother points at the very idea of alienation that an educated Ofilwe will find herself confronted with. Ofilwe's failure to speak her mother tongue results in conflict not only in her family, but also her society as she cannot associate with her own people. Her desire to eradicate her language robs her of her people's past, aspirations and dreams. Ofilwe represents multitudes of educated Africans who castigate their languages in favour of foreign languages so as to feel important. Granvilleet al., (1996: 256) argue that English is a hegemonic practice in South Africa and that it is encouraged in schools and by parents on their children too which has made it achieve a hegemonic status. They further insist that "At its simplest, we would argue that any social practice that achieves a dominance that begins to appear natural or inevitable is a hegemonic practice" and that English has that status in the South African society.

In the novel, Matlwa demonstrates that the matter of adopting English as a home language is a choice made by people like Ofilwe who want to disassociate themselves from their cultures. This is because even though schools foster English as a language of teaching and learning, it is not forced to be spoken in the comfort of the learners' homes. That is why when the men who came to Ofilwe's school discover that she speaks English at home in spite of her African skin, they cannot help but believe that to be a lie. Because of her African skin, it is expected of her to speak some African language which she cannot do. She insists that she speaks English as her mother tongue (2007: 57), prompting the men who were doing statistics in language in the school to tick her under Zulu as her home language when it is not so. The men cannot believe it possible for an African girl to speak English as a home language rather than a second language. Ofilwe is denied her right to freely choose her language and this makes her realise once again that her hope of choosing who and what she wants to be in society is never as simple and easy as she thought it to be. Because of the insistence of English as a medium in schools Ofilwe is shocked to find out that:

> My own tongue escaped me completely? That cannot be. Mama and Daddy speak it all the time, although not to me nor to each other. But surely my eardrums filter in some of that?" (2007: 57).

Ofilwe depicts a dislocation at an intellectual level which forces a dislocation physically too as she can no longer communicate with her parents and her other family members. The sense of displacement raises questions about her role in relation to her family and ultimately to her society. Most importantly it questions her place as a woman in society.

Although Ofilwe chooses to alienate herself from her people through her choice of language, her brother Tshepo in contrast soaks in everything he can learn about his mother tongue, demonstrating a strong sense of self. Ofilwe's brother who also has the privilege of attending a multiracial school does not choose to assimilate. He despises his younger sister's mentality that being white is better than being true to one's culture. In an incident with Tshepo and his friend Vuyo at the Tlou house, the latter is shocked and laughs at Ofilwe who can only speak in English and represents a typical coconut (2007: 59). Tshepo goes on to further call her an aunty Germina

because she is a sell-out that embarrasses him. Evidently, Tshepo is aware of her sister's willingness to assimilate into the Englishness and in comparison to himself, Tshepo thinks that his sister is ignorant by thinking that she could adopt all things white and forget her black self.

Tshepo is the epitome of 'black pride' by his refusal to assimilate when compared to his sister because even though he is a top performer at his school, he stays true to himself. He is aware of the fact that by being carried away by all things European, one could easily lose themselves. He thus chooses to enrol for a degree in African languages at university. This move by Tshepo is vital to his preservation of culture. He is more interested in learning more about his African language that his middle class education does not foster, and is even willing to learn other African languages. The fact that a course in African Languages which in most African universities is the smallest department, is now available to be taught helps Tshepo to stay grounded in his culture and learn more as he previously was unable to. It affirms him but angers his father who believes that it is a waste of time. John Tlou believes that Africans should study more progressive degrees like science and technology to advance further in life. John Tlou is more concerned about his son's personal development and attainment of financial freedom and not his son's development as a human being. In this, he represents many parents who force their children to pursue careers at the expense of their happiness. By staying true to his dreams, Tshepo illustrates that education can be beneficial if properly used and approached with wisdom.

Another character who suffers an identity crisis that is reflected in her choice of language is Fikile. Fikile refuses to speak her Zulu mother tongue and chooses English instead. Just like Ofilwe, she is of the opinion that English means success and achievement and that Zulu does not. Fikile strongly believes that speaking English means that she is better than other black people and even goes through the trouble of creating a make believe story that she is not black but white. She insists that:

> Many people think that I am foreign, from the UK or somewhere there. I think it is because my accent is so refined. Yes, I have always been different. I never could relate to other black South

> Africans. We've just never clicked. So I give them their space and they generally give me mine (2007: 146).

Fikile is of the opinion that English makes her better than others and that her refined accent makes her European. She creates a project for her transformation. Project infinity (2007:171) was infinitely better than what she knew, "something immeasurable and everlasting". She creates a Utopia for herself, something to strive for and when she fails to achieve it; she is miserable. Fikile perpetuates the colonial mentality that everything white is supreme and everything black is despicable. However, her choice of language and lifestyle create a rift between her and other black people as it alienates her.

Language therefore has arguably been the most influential site of dislocation as debated by most postcolonial writers. In the book *Decolonisation* (1998: 86), Betts's agrees that indeed European languages be it "Dutch in Sumatra, French in Senegal, Portuguese in Angola, assisted the colonial act, defined it, gave it reality". Colonisation introduced foreign languages to the colonized people of the world including English to the South Africans and Zimbabweans and this language was ingrained on the minds of those who were colonized. Decades after colonisation, language still remains the one site that persistently dominates the shackled mind of the once colonized (Wa Thiong'o 1991). This is because there is huge power in language as it gives people the instrument to express themselves. Even though there is a relentless surge towards the languages that were used to dominate, Achebe (1965) in "The African Writer and the English Language" supports such a surge saying people are able to express themselves, tell their stories and write their history through the very same languages. Achebe insists that people can and should use the language that once colonized them to tell their stories today. The language issue continues to be controversial in Africa, however, according to Matlwa, it is necessary for Africans to learn to speak their languages and their languages are strongly tied to their identities.

As stated in the previous section, both girls eventually undergo a transformation when they realise how much they are disconnected from their people. This is

demonstrated by Ofilwe who tries to learn her mother language at an older age. Thus Ofilwe says:

> I use debates to collect words for my Sepedi vocabulary lists…they use a word they did not use the last time, a word I mouth repeatedly so as to master the pronunciation. I fix the words in my brain so that they can be added to my vocabulary list when I get home. I figure, if all else fails, if I achieve nothing else, at least someday I will be able to argue in Sepedi (2007: 70).

By adopting her language, Ofilwe is on her way to understanding her people and culture as language and culture are connected. Through Ofilwe, Matlwa emphasises the importance of being grounded in one's culture, as culture is the avenue through which individuals define themselves. Ofilwe begins to make some great strides in the positive direction to compensate for the past. Through her new African acquaintances that she makes at a later stage in her life, Ofilwe realizes that her friends are consciously more African than she is. Her friends did not allow themselves to be engulfed in Mazana's (2001: 387) "European decadence and madness", but chose to be loyal to their African history. They did not forget who they are while she was carried away by modernisation and development. She is startled by the way they are still able to remember their childhoods in rural South Africa, which she in her quest to better herself; decided to eliminate from her memory. This demonstrates that it is not all Africans who choose to assimilate and get carried away by their education. There are still those African children who remain firm and aware of their history while obtaining a western education. Assimilation is rendered a choice that one makes willingly, especially Ofilwe's assimilation. She has all the necessary tools that can keep her grounded like her family that speaks Sepedi around her, but she chooses to avoid them, do away with them and assimilate. In contrast to Ofilwe, other black children remain cognizant of their past, their history and where they come from. Eventually, this forms a gap between her and her friends because she cannot relate to their stories. This means that she cannot fit in with her white friends and she eliminates them, only to realize that she cannot fit in with her African ones either. She is left standing "in-between here and there" that Bhabha speaks of. She is rejected by both cultures and by this the author presents the dislocation of self and the negative impact of the system on the African woman's psyche. This dislocation is intellectually challenging as she realises that there is

more about her tradition and origins that she has lost and cannot recover. Granted, Matlwa's characters are set in a post-colonial society, however they still find themselves bound in the chains of the old system. This therefore means that in the transition of independence Africa did not transform, instead it stepped into the colonial masters' shoes and created a complex situation of neo-colonialism as viewed by Fanon (1963: 122).

Fikile also has a moment of reckoning when she visits her grandmother who works as a maid in the suburbs. During her visits, she discovers that there is more to knowledge than sitting behind a desk and being fed knowledge by teachers. This realisation comes in the form of reading outside of school when her grandmother gives her magazines to read. Fikile realises that reading magazines is more informing to her than the education she receives at school. Through this experience She discovers that there are infinite possibilities provided by different learning opportunities and she chooses a learning curve that she feels will benefit her the most. This moment of realisation makes Fikile decide to quit school because to her learning new stuff from her magazines is more informing than school ever was. From this scenario, one can argue that Fikile quits school because her comprehension of the world around her grew bigger and broader than her schooling in the township could embrace. She says:

> When I got back to school in January, Vula Mehlo Secondary School, mind all air-brushed and sweetly scented in Ridgley's new fragrance, I felt strangely out of place, detached, as if I was watching them. BoZanele, boThabo, boMeshoe seemed to be on Bop TV in black and white. They were so dull, so dirty, smelling of petroleum jelly and wearing the same old faded brown tunics, white socks (now yellow) and worn school shoes (2007: 167).

Reading outside of school changes this young woman. It opens her to bigger possibilities that the school she attends in the township fails to. However, her decision is startling because it emphasizes her European obsession. Once again, English is more centralized in her education than her mother tongue and other languages in Africa. By dropping out of school, Fikile illustrates shortcomings of education and is a rebel to the institution that promises more for African girls than what it offers. The shortcomings of education as a tool for emancipation have been

outlined by many African writers who have expressed their discontentment with how European education affects African children as shall be shown later.

In their journey through life, Ofilwe and Fikile transform from being young girls into adults who can make a meaningful contribution in life. They travel this journey with the aid of and influence of other women who contribute in shaping their idea of womanhood. Hence, the following section focuses on womanhood as presented by Matlwa in *Cononut*.

The concept of womanhood

This section looks at the question of *being* woman in a South Africa that now affords more chances of being educated than it did before. Its main focus is on the issue of identity in a society that is influenced by racial attitudes that are embedded in multiculturalism in South Africa today. It also analyses how Matlwa presents the position and role of woman in this changed society as influenced by the education of her protagonists. In the study, the researcher posits that education, by virtue of the sudden inclusion of women in its fold; carries with it the potential to negate, to propose an alternative as well as to oppose the dominant culture. By so doing, the education of women in Matlwa's novels accounts for the new voice of women, the non-dit in fiction of a category of women who in Le Roux's (2005: 18) words "slip through the cracks" and are not accounted for in the dominant culture that defines and embraces African womanhood.

Being a woman in the novel is at times exciting, but at most depressing. This is mostly because young girls have to learn from other women around them the journey of womanhood, and they are often left puzzled by the discoveries that they make regarding other women in society. Young girls in the novel find themselves in a trying situation when it comes to the idea of harmonious dwelling with men. And very often, they feel the same with regards to a harmonious living with other women in their societies too. In *Coconut*, Ofilwe is a young woman who lacks strong feminine role models in her family. Although she describes her mother as beautiful and strong, she despises her for failing to stand up to her father who diminishes her to nothingness.

As such, she paves her own path in life, based on male modelling, through her father and modelling feminine qualities through white women leading to her downfall. Through Ofilwe, Matlwa shows the importance of strong role models for young girls in society, because without strong models they get lost in their journey to womanhood.

In *Coconut*, the roles of women are defined differently by women due to differences in generations or due to the generational gap. Koko views women as mothers and wives, while Gemina views herself as a wife who can potentially have a career. Ofilwe and Fikile however perceive women as equals to men who can contribute meaningfully to society. For Ofilwe, motherhood and wifehood are a choice which is a contrast to what the older generation believes, showing that education brought with it changes in the way women are viewed.

Ofilwe is depicted as a young woman who does not ever want to get married in her life, but still, she dreams of raising children of her own. She wants to have children but as she puts it, she does not want to have to deal with the "trouble" of a husband (2006: 19). This goes to show that her mother's experiences with her father- the cheating and ill-treatment- play an important role in the development of this young girl's life thus affecting the decisions she makes as a growing woman. Listening to her grandmother talk of her grandfather as "irrelevant" (2007: 52), Ofilwe concludes that her children can grow up without fathers just as her mother did. Her grandfather was never there when her mother was young, hence the irrelevance with which he is mentioned and the undignified manner in which his manhood is regarded. Ofilwe chooses what she sees as workable for her in the society she lives in. She comes to such a decision because she sees how her father mistreats her mother, and she resolves never to allow herself to be treated the same way. Her decision as Genz (2010) puts it would be an idea of 'having it all" that is seldom expected of a woman in African societies. Because of all the norms and expectations of society that tie her to a certain notion of African womanhood, Ofilwe's decision deems her a deviationist and *others* her. The *othering* in Genz's (2010: 105) is:

> The stigmatization of working womanhood [which] is particularly castigatory and deprecatory in the case of single women who dare to

> diverge from homely femininity in search of a career. In the most one-dimensional backlash scenarios, the unattached professional woman is portrayed as a figure of evil and a neurotic psychopath, designed to deter women from seeking public success and neglecting their feminine duties. She is the epitome of Otherness and insanity, standing in the direct antithesis to the virtuous housewife and threatening the traditional family unit.

Ofilwe, by choosing to one day raise her children without a husband, defies the mainstream and represents a growing voice of young African women who prefer to raise their children in the peace of singledom than in tumultuous relationships. Another character who contradicts the African notion of womanhood and motherhood which claims that every woman is a mother is Fikile. She does this by refusing to let another woman's child sleep on her and leave her dirty. By refusing to let the other woman's child sleep on her, Fikile rests the responsibility of that child's raising up and caring for primarily on their mother's shoulders. However, her decision causes a commotion in the taxi as she is asked a question that informs this research. One lady asks her "*Kganthe*, what kind of woman are you?" (2007: 139) just because she pushed the young boy sleeping on her arm off. The author hints that clearly there is a general consensus on how a woman acts and she is defying the mainstream. This causes the women in the taxi to call her the worst of mankind, *Satane*; Satan. She is called names because she refuses to fit in the neat box of African womanhood that says a child in the village is every other woman's child. She refuses to take responsibility for other people's children as required by African womanhood and this is again a woman who falls into the cracks because of her defiance of societal expectations. What Fikile is doing is contrary to African expectations as Masemola (2010) explains "a woman is not just responsible to herself but the rest of the community she lives in". Fikile is deemed a deviationist because of her choice of detachment from the rest of the women in the taxi who all share a collective identity because of their perception of African womanhood.

Fikile's behaviour and world view can be attributed to her background. Fikile, throughout the novel, has had the responsibility of looking after herself because both her grandmother and mother died. She never had any woman in society landing a hand in her upbringing and her lack of parental protection leads her to being sexually abused by her uncle. She perceives that even the 'Childline Ousies' as she calls

them (2007:115) who came to her school to give them advice on issues like being raped and abused at home; were doing a job they got paid for. It was not because of love for her as a person. Fikile's perception of the world is shaped by individualism because that is what she knows and she has been exposed to. Through Fikile, Matlwa demonstrates that whilst it is easy to preach African communism, modern society has exposed African people to different lifestyles that inform their choices in life. Fikile, therefore, is nothing but a product of her background or as Said (1983: 94) puts it, that understanding will come from accepting that she is influenced by "mundane worldly circumstances".

The events presented above show that African womanhood is constantly being threatened by its totalitarian assumption for women. Butler (1990) in her 'Subjects of Sex/ Gender/ Desire' confirms that the idea of a normative hegemonic construction of identity such as African womanhood through its representation of women is controversial. The representation is said to be politically inclined and it can again be of a "normative function [where] language is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women" (1990: 40). While womanhood in African society signifies the 'mainstream' of what a young girl is supposedly encouraged towards, education encourages the opposite. Without question, education exposes women to new perspectives of self by challenging the dominant descriptive words such as masculine to be understood in relation to feminine, of the usual male opposition to female; in order to recognise the "incoherent" or "discontinuous" identities of people who fail as Butler (1990: 48) says to conform to the gendered norms that define people. This encourages difference within the mainstream and that difference is further asserted by Fikile's inability to cope within the mainstream. Education therefore has the ability to alienate individuals contrary to the popular belief that it is "one of the journeys, if not the journey a woman could take towards self-independence" (Dlamini, 2001:86). The statement above does not imply that education does not result in financial independence, it does, but the truth is, it usually comes at a greater cost of the self whereby individuals are in conflict with where they belong.

Another notable element in Matlwa's novel is that there are visible differences that separate the young women from the older, the modern from the traditional, and this

brings forth the need to address what education as has brought for the development of the African woman. It becomes tricky to easily grasp the idea of an educated African woman in an African society today, which is what Matlwa (2007) presents as the paradox of a transformed African woman. When the young women in the novel enter for the first time the exciting environment of education, they become catalysts in their respective families by being the first women to obtain an education or complete their schooling. This is so especially in relation to their mothers. It is through the serious rejection of their mothers that the young women in the two novels show that there is a gap between the educated and uneducated African women in society. This therefore poses the question of re-defining African womanhood. Both young women (Ofilwe and Fikile) work so tirelessly to rid themselves of the world-views of their mothers and in so doing tap into the very questions of modelling, repetition, guidance and supervision in African womanhood.

Ofilwe and Fikile's education coupled with their experiences also opens them up to more choices in society. Bell's (1990:460) analysis of African women who go all out in search of careers is that "often they are the first of their race and gender to hold a middle or upper level management position in a company. There are few, if any, role models they can emulate or turn to for support". The representation of an educated and uneducated woman in *Coconut* therefore predicates the positioning of women in the South African society as changing depending on the education they acquire. Chukwuma, (2006: 5) explains:

> By urging women to break out of subsuming norms and situations as the marriage institution, [make] them stand the enormous risk of being dubbed cultural deviationists. For the marriage institution is sacred to culture, tradition and religion. The ways our women writers liberate their women characters from the gendered yoke is to make them burst the system and be free.

Through education, women stand a chance of defying societal norms and expectations. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that marriage and motherhood are important issues even today; the two are still rendered as very important by most African communities. Marriage is regarded as sacred by most cultures across the African continent.

Through Ofilwe and Fikile, Matlwa in addition presents a liminality rejected by society that further reminds readers of the quest for African womanhood as complicated and at most treacherous. By liminality this research speaks of the state of being in-between that Bhabha (1994) and other writers on postcolonial identities have tackled in detail. This liminal space is what has been defined as the hybrid identity born of post-colonialism and modernity. It is often a place of uncertainty and chaos. This liminal space of not knowing where to belong questions the very primacy of African womanhood in society. It also questions what a lot of African female debates have qualified as African womanhood. This liminality positions the characters in the novel as disjointed in their idea of African womanhood, its principles and qualifiers.

Babagbeto (2003) explains that the challenge for educated women in African societies lies in the need for reconciliation between the education from school and that from home and the in-between spaces where learning is encountered. However, in their quest for education the young girls disregard all the non-formal education they have encountered-either by choice or default. There are hardly any recognisable relationships between the girls who go to school and the other women in society. This is not because they willingly choose not to conform, but it is because they look at the situations before them and try to choose a path that can benefit them. While Africana womanism might have its own weaknesses just like any other theory in its tendency to "homogenise" (Le Roux, 1992:18), it leaves little room for difference.

Since this study is guided by Afrocentrism and African womanism, it is important to understand the issues under discussion from within these frameworks, hence the data presented below.

An Afrocentric and African womanist perspective on education and identity

Many scholars have fervently debated the issue of the education of African people as a problematic aspect in the African society. From the Afrocentricism to colonial/post-colonial theories, decolonisation and womanist debates, the idea of the educated African person always presents a dilemma in the analysis of African lives. Pointedly, the complexity is to be found in the educated elite who have problems

functioning in the African society. The combination of being both African and educated continues to produce the educated elites who find themselves embroiled in an identity debacle. This is showcased through the main characters in Coconut. English and the formal system of education does not always bring the intended outcomes. As such, she propels the young girls to assess themselves and their long journey to becoming women, realising that in that process of becoming; they lose themselves and become something inconceivable and confront societal expectations.

Furthermore, many ardent writers on the subject of the education of the African child have expressed their discontentment with how European education affects African children. The literature on the education of Africans focuses on different aspects. Writers such as Asante (1992), Kenyatta (1965) and Rodney (1972) focus on the irrelevance of western education in African societies. Rodney stresses that Africans had education long before western education arrived in Africa. Of such literature, the debate is always on how a particular type of education - western education - totally erases if not threatens African cultural aesthetics and their survival. The introduction of colonial education to Africans has often been projected as a recipe for disaster in scholarly debates because of how it often perpetuates cultural dislocation of the self from the entirety of one's people, and causing an identity crisis for individuals who now have to mediate two different cultures; an acquired culture that education instils as well as the culture one exhibits by virtue of birth. Asante (1991: 170) uses the term Afro*centricity* to advocate that in teaching African children, societal context is vital for the child to conceptualise and better understand what is being taught. However, with the backdrop of colonisation that reduced Africa cultures and history to nothing; education finds it difficult to incorporate African cultural and social contexts. Education therefore comes through in a westernised context that decentres African learners.

This complex phenomenon has traces in Woodson's (1933) "*The Mis-Education of the Negro*". This work by Woodson evinces the notion that Africans are not taught education that is relevant to their lives. This renders their identity complex because the education they receive is teaching them things that do not build character. He

says an educated Negro is taught that he and his culture are inferior. He is also taught to 'despise' other Negro people (Woodson, 1933: 5).

West (1985) in "The Dilemma of the African Intellectual" renders problematic the way in which Africans become intellectuals. Wa Thiongo (1991) in "*Decolonising the Mind*" is also of the view that colonial education imparted to the African child was more than just irrelevant, but that it also created confusion in the minds of the African recipients. Drawing on his own experience, Wa Thiong explains that an African individual who obtains education runs the risk of an overwhelming loss because of the education they received. The syllabus does not cater for the lives they lead at home and thus any African individual who obtains such an education finds within it the complexities of loss, assimilation as well as hybridism. Matlwa shows this through the naivety of Ofilwe in adopting the English language and forgetting her Sepedi language in the process. It is also illustrated in how Fikile decides to quit her education because she believes that the education she receives is of an inferior quality and that the people in her school cannot speak English.

Many scholars argue that the main shortcoming of education in Africa is always its insistence on elevating Eurocentric ideologies over African ones, and dislocating individuals from their African societies. This is because "the language of education" is not the language of "culture" (Wa Thiong, 1991: 11), which in this case refers to an individual's culture. By attending school, Africans run the risk of dislocation from their culture through language, particularly the languages that colonised them as curricula is in those languages. They also run the risk of being subsumed to the language that they are being taught in. That distortion produces a rootless human being who can master the culture of the other but lose sight and mastery of their own.

The idea of education as a promise to a better life has been discussed but that education also threatens cultural existence and definition of Africanness poses a huge problem. As Cornel West (1985: 110) theorises "the choice of becoming an African intellectual is an act of self-imposed marginality; it assures a peripheral status in and to the African community". In West's "self-imposed marginality" exists a disconnected group of people who inhabit two different cultures and are faced with the hardships of finding a common ground on to stand.

Therefore, the people who are called coconuts should not be held responsible for their betrayal because it is one they do not have control over. Instead, society is more culpable as it overrides the individual's decision on what is good and what is not. The education of the masses is always presented as *the* goal that will ensure Africa's development and progress. Even though the majority of people have the power to make decisions for themselves, they still choose western culture over their own. Children are encouraged by families to go to school in order to be marketable in today's economy. Braham (2000) puts it concisely when she says:

> One must also consider that if English powers did not rule, then English education would not be necessary for the success of native peoples. In this way, the colonizing forces set themselves up as the solution to a problem that their presence caused in the first place.

Besides the influence that societies have on individuals, education through schooling seems to have a much bigger impact. The problem is not only about the content of the education taught but also how that education influences people. There is always the assumption that an educated person is better than other people. This instils a sense of complacency and superiority because western thought has always been viewed as much better than African thought. Booker (1990) sees in *Nervous Conditions* (1988):

> The phenomenon of cultural imperialism and the impact on African psyche of an entire range of colonial cultural practices that were designed to imbue Africans with a sense of superiority of European culture and society.

The education obtained by Ofilwe and Fikile is first an attempt at personal achievement, but later leads to identity construction, self-introspection and above all an assessment of the condition of women in African societies today. School as a public space allows young girls to come into contact with other forms of hierarchy different from the ones they know in their house. Multiracial schools in both novels are still very racist, although they disguise as accommodative. The township school presented in *Coconut* interrogates lack of trust in African run schools as a constant trope that is a legacy of apartheid.

Drawing on the education of Fikile and Ofilwe, young girls on a journey to becoming grown women, this research shows that the education encountered in school is detrimental for their growth and conception of the world in which they live. More importantly, their experiences out of school also shape their perception of women in society strongly and make them arrive at a description of woman that best suits their situations. As Masemola explains, "these women, are harbingers whose attempts at liberating themselves from poverty and gender oppression do not necessarily mean abandoning motherhood or mothering practices" (2010: 120). Although most women view education as important in their children's lives, they still maintain that traditional and moral education should be treated just as important.

Perhaps the paradox of transformation of the self and the collective is better understood through the difficulty of dealing with change in the South African society and the need to keep up with the changing time as well as to transform along with time. Matlwa's characters are raised into a South Africa that is supposedly free for an African child and accepts her as an equal, but the situation proves otherwise.

Conclusion

The issue of education in South Africa is a complicated subject that has in the past been the centre of many debates. This chapter has analysed the education system in South Africa It takes into cognisance the fact that education in the country underwent a lot of change and is not yet ready to accommodate differences in the country. Due to the previous government of apartheid which fostered Bantu education for black people, the country's education is still in many respects a remnant of the separatist system of apartheid. The immersion of the young girls in the English language and the western culture does show the inferiority that other languages and cultures endure at the hands of a colonial aftermath. Other languages and cultures suffer tremendous side-lining in and out of school because of the glorification of English and westernisation.

The education system portrayed in Matlwa's novel reflects a South African society that is multicultural on paper but not in practice. However the analysis above

presents characters that are so engulfed and swallowed by the education system, particularly by the English language; that they lose themselves. In her portrayal of female characters, Matlwa shows the promises of education such as financial freedom that the young girls in her novel hope for. She also shows the challenges that the education system brings her protagonists. While John Tlou's education affords him and his family luxury, Ofilwe tells us how difficult leaving in that kind of luxury is. Fikile also starts off very eager to learn because her teacher told her that through education she can be anything she wants to be. However, her school education does not help her to deal with the problem she has at home with her uncle. Through reading magazines, she gains a new perspective about life and quits school, which is detrimental to her career plans as she ends up being a waitress.

The chapter also looked at how the young girls in Matlwa's novel negotiate their identities as black women who have education. The education they receive is not of equal value as Ofilwe goes to a well-equipped multiracial school whilst Fikile is stuck in a township school that is ill-equipped. This reflects how the education system of South Africa is governed by socio-economic factors. Fikile also suffers sexism and patriarchal tendencies through her uncle who molests her. Her experience illustrates that women in patriarchal societies have little control of their womanhood, which needs to change in modern society.

CHAPTER 4

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NOVELS *COCONUT* AND *THE BOOK OF NOT*

Introduction

This research shows that in matters pertaining to the education of African women; change has taken place, but that change affects the foundations and aesthetics of African womanhood in societies. The belatedness of the education of the African woman - having previously been omitted and delayed in the education system - only serves to magnify the undeniable change. Matlwa and Dangarembga, do well in expressing as well as exposing how access to education for African women affects societies. They do so while deliberately focussing on issues of the development of the girl-child into womanhood in postcolonial settings in Africa.

Access to Education and its implications

As has been argued before, the education of women in both novels is important as it informs the recipients' comprehension of the world and informs relationships with others. Of immense importance is the fact that Matlwa centres her novel in the urban dwellings of South Africa where both suburban schools as well as township school are found. These contradictory settings; the suburbs and townships, reflect on the issue of class that has been largely articulated in scholarly works in South Africa. Both schools are in urban areas; but they reflect the distinctions between 'haves' and 'have not's'.

During apartheid when the system of separatism was enforced, black people in urban areas were only permitted to live in townships and not in towns. That is how townships such as Soweto, Alexandra and Gugulethu were used to lock black people in their place. Similar to other Bantu areas, township schools received Bantu education that Dube (1985) elaborates consisted of inferior resources and teachers of inferior and low qualifications. Unfortunately, the complications that are associated with township schools were inherited by the post-apartheid government and in many

cases were never addressed. The poor education is reflective in the novel through Fikile who insists that the education in her school in the township is poor and she wishes that she attended a school in the suburbs. Ofilwe, on the other hand, talks about how rich the other students in her school are which shows that the class divide in the country informs the education that is received by a child. Fikile can only wish to attend multiracial schools that were previously white only schools, proving how elitist the education system can be in some areas of South Africa.

Matlwa does very well in depicting the reality of the South African community critiquing the glamourised ideology of multiracialism that continues to be a myth in this country. Her depiction of South Africa with its ideal of "The Rainbow nation" is one short of the beauty and colour of a rainbow. She depicts a nation where race is still a huge issue and produces individuals who are unhappy, angry, afraid, hurt and helpless. She shows how the glamourised system of multiracial education continues to stifle the African child and fails to address issues of society's perception of an educated African woman clearly. Although education is encouraged for progress and emancipation; education fails the girls as explained by Ndura, (2006: 12):

> The education and socialization processes to which they are exposed rarely help to gain a holistic perspective of what is happening to them. They do not know who they are and from whence they have come…do not know where they are going.

Similarly, Dangarembga's setting is also an urban learning environment where Tambu attends school. She also touches briefly on the mission school that Nyasha attends which is also where Babamukuru and Maiguru work. While Tambu's school is more affluent, Nyasha's is not. While the teachers in Tambu's school are more qualified and all white, in Nyasha's school the teachers are under-qualified and sadly Nyasha is forced to lower her standards to feel accommodated in the school. The mission school is instrumental in Tambu's development.

In *Nervous Conditions* (1989), Tambu starts by firstly attending school in the village. When she moves to the mission school which is how the narrative in Nervous Conditions begins, she is elated because she sees the huge difference between the village school and the mission school. Conversely in *The Book of Not,* Tambu sees the convent school as exceedingly better than where she started schooling because as she says, the beauty of "the aesthetics of my secondary school was,

demonstrating beyond any doubt I could muster, how languor was related to lethargy as elegance was to squalor" (2006: 21).

Critically, Dangarembga points at the differences between the mission school and the school in the suburb because of the unequal education imparted in both. Again, most students who attend the mission school cannot afford the one that Tambu attends because it is pricey. Babamukuru constantly reminds Tambu of how costly it is to keep her attending there. Therefore, Dangarembga and Matlwa both write on the difference that class plays on the education of women in their novels.

Besides the similarities in the settings of the two novels, there is also a similarity in the outcomes that the education brings out of its recipients. That is, the education system that is portrayed in both novels brings a dislocation of the self from her community, assimilation into another culture, as well as alienation because of the assimilation. In Chapter two and three, this research showed how the education of Tambu and Ofilwe received creates a dislocation. Through their eagerness to master the English language in school, the characters find themselves rejected by society. The research has also pointed how in South Africa, *coconutiness* which is the state of assimilating into English in South Africa is frowned upon as shown by Ndlagamandla (2010), and by Spencer (2010) who calls it a betrayal. Similarly, Dangarembga shows that because Tambu chose to speak English even when she had a liberty of not doing it, she lost communion with the other black girls in her school. Similarly in *Coconut*, Fikile wants so desperately to be white at a young age because she believes that white is better than black (2007: 136). She, therefore, from a young age takes to mastering English even when she is no longer in school. Matlwa presents an alternative for studying when she shows that Fikile learns even without attending school.

However, her most interesting alternative for education is highlighted when Fikile encounters Palesa's father on the train. Fikile believes in multiracial education and sees English as a better language to interact with. Palesa's father tells her that although her daughter has the liberty of attending a multracial school, he is not happy with that situation because Palesa was refusing to speak Xhosa at home. He explains that looking at his daughter play with other kids at her school:

> I was happy ... but listening to all those little black faces yelping away in English, unaware that they have a beautiful language at home that they will one day long for, just broke my heart... standing at the edge of that playground, i watched little spots of amber and auburn become less of what Africa dreamed of and more of what Europe thought we ought to be (2007: 189).

This man is aware of the great opportunities that a multiracial school has as opposed to a school in the locations or villages. He is however worried about the cost it comes with. The cost is not monetary but in the loss that is inevitable and apparent when one attends such a school. His solution for the predicament of alienation that his child stands to experience because of the school she attends is to school her at home. He wants his child to grow up speaking isiXhosa, their home language and is willing to go the extra mile to ensure that it happens. This man's resolve, however, makes Fikile uncomfortable because with her project infinity, she aimed at mustering English. Palesa's father confronts Fikile with the stark realities of how her choice disrupts lives. By telling Fikile about her own daughter, Fikile is forced to see how the adoption of English, a choice she makes, uproots her and leaves her without a base. This is something that Fikile never stopped for a moment to think about, and when she is seated in a train and hears this truth, she cannot help but wish the train would reach her destination so that she can flee back to her fantasy world (2007: 188). Palesa's father shows an alternative that the writer provides the reader with but it is never really tested as it appears at the end of the novel. Matlwa does present a few other alternatives to prevent dislocation, one of them being Tshepo's decision to study a degree in African languages.

Matlwa again shows that it is possible to find oneself through Ofilwe who relearns Sepedi which she had decided to erase completely from her vocabulary. This form of learning by returning to one's culture is fundamental in the text because it shows how education learnt in school should not be taken as the only way of learning but should be complemented by other forms of learning. This moment can also be understood in line with what Ayele Bekerie, (1994:131) elaborates that there is a need "to validate, regenerate, create, and perpetuate African life and living-whole and unhindered, informed by the African perspective or world outlook". Bekerie, advocates that Afrocentricity by Asante is the way Africans should live and practice life. Likewise, Dangarembga shows how Tambu in her moment of loss remembers

unhu and how it functions. Sepedi and *unhu* are teachings that are not found in the textbooks that Ofilwe and Tambu read. They are African teachings that are functional within African communities and amongst African people which the protagonists ignore, only to return to later. In *The Book of Not,* Dangarembga once again through the character of Nyasha provides an alternative learning method. In *Nervous Conditions*, Nyasha reads all of Maiguru's books and her mother admonishes her for that. However, in *The Book of Not,* she reads African literature *A Grain of Wheat*, which Tambu shrugs off as a book by a poor "Bongo in the Congo" (2006: 117). Nyasha was taught in England and it is safe to assume that African literature was not part of her reading list. Since she has realised how important it is to remain rooted in her culture which she has no foothold on because of her upbringing, she takes to reading literature that will inform her of it.

Raditlhalo's (2010) says Matlwa's characters are on a quest for "being" and this synthesis is analogous to what Hlongwane (2009: 450) in her analysis of *The Book of Not* denotes as a "search for wholeness" and "the process of becoming". It is the idealist principle of education that continues to render emancipation for African women as problematic in the two novels. This proves that it is true what Hlongwane means when she speaks of how it becomes overwhelming for a young woman to acquire education "in an alienating environment, where positive images of people who look like her are not only absent from the literature she reads" (2009: 456) but also absent from the lives they live.

Women obtaining an education in the two novels are not taught anything to do with their own cultures or backgrounds. The education they receive is western orientated. So their education teaches them nothing about their realities at home, their history or the lives they lead. As the young women in the two novels fail to cope with the aspirations of education; this research exposes how their studies are instrumental in their identity crisis. The argument is that if they were taught anything to do with their lives, their orientation of life will be different. This is what Afrocentricity advocates:

> Afrocentricity contends that our main problem as African people is our usually unconscious adoption of the Western worldview and perspective and their attendant conceptual frameworks. The list of those ideas and theories that have invaded our lives as normal, natural, or even worse, ideal is infinite (Ama Mazama, 2001:387).

Since what they learn at school has nothing to do with African people, the young girls in the novels find themselves baseless, without a core that Afrocentrity argues is necessary for one's development. Dangarembga through *Nervous Conditions* (1989) shows this very dilemma with Nyasha. These instances show that education in contemporary African societies still remains the same as it was in its early introduction to Africa. Critically analysing the education in Dangarembga's novel gives an understanding of the challenges faced by most women in Zimbabwe who underwent the colonial education system. This is also the case when analysing the education system in Matlwa's novel as it shows the predicament faced by women who undergo a post-apartheid education system. Next is an investigation of how Matlwa and Dangarembga present the concept of womanhood as it informs who and what women can be and do in society.

The concept of Womanhood as presented by the novelists

Tthe research interrogates ideas about and responsibilities of women through family, friendships and sisterhood as well as relations with male characters in the novels. These ideas are what theories such as Africana womanism that this research uses for analysis advocates. They are ideas that are principal and are supposedly grounding and necessary for African women to function in society. But these ideas are pitted against the domineering and imposing ideas of the western world like education. This is because unlike womanism's call for collective identity, education demands individuality. This research looks at the effects of the education encountered by the girls as detrimental to their everyday life. It does so with a special focus on African socio-cultural and political conditions that the young women in the two novels grow up in, begging the question of how their education impacts their everyday lives and the society they live in. The researcher also recognises loss of identity as a major factor in the two novels and the reason why the girls find it challenging to fit into their societies.

The two previous chapters showed how the development of the protagonists in the two novels is influenced by the women around them. Of great importance is how they conceive of their mothers who for the most part are not as educated as they are. Ofilwe says her mother is dumb, Fikile says hers is a coward and Tambu says

being her mother's daughter was a misfortune (2006: 228). Both Matlwa and Dangarembga depict the lack of modelling and teaching that should progress from one generation of women to the next, especially from mothers to daughters. This shows that although this research argues that education plays a part in the identity crisis of the young women in the two novels, it is not the only thing that informs their perspectives. Other issues like socio-economic problems that the protagonists experience also play a role. Ofilwe in *Coconut* is from a family background that affords to take her to the best school there is. She is from a privileged background, but her privileges only serve to heighten her problems. Because of the kind of school she attends, she finds herself uprooted from her Sepedi culture as she "was battling to put sentences together, speaking in slightest whimpers, hoping that" (2006: 60) people around her would pretend to hear what she was saying. Furthermore, she worries that she does not know anymore the role she is expected to play as a woman in society.

Tambu's background is an impoverished one that the writer fully articulates in *Nervous Conditions*. Because of her background, she tries not to get overwhelmed by the things she encounters when she lives her home, but as time goes by she gets carried away and just like Nhamo in *Nervous Conditions* she does not want to go back home to the same poverty that she knows. Similarly, Fikile says:

> But perhaps it is for the better that the conditions in this dump never improve. They can serve as a constant reminder of what I do not want to be: black, dirty and poor…a motivator for me to keep me working towards where I will someday be: white, rich and happy (2006: 118).

Tambu and Fikile's poverty makes them yearn for the life that Ofilwe lives. However, Ofilwe is not content with the kind of life that she and her family live. She can see that it comes at a costly price and says that she and her family do not belong to all those places that their money affords them. Both writers present this complexity. Through Nyasha, especially in *Nervous Conditions*, Dangarembga is able to show how miserable she is even when she has things that most children her age dream of.

In *Coconut*, Ofilwe grows from a naïve eight year old into a critically aware young woman who is able to discern and seek a clear understanding of herself as an African woman. However, by looking at the education process that she undergoes, it also becomes clear that there is a huge difference between women who attend

school in South Africa and those who do not. The comparison between her education in post-apartheid South Africa and her mother's education bears testimony to the contradiction that education brings to the lives of women in society today. A clear example is how her mother is able to quit her job so that she can take care of her family and how young Ofilwe sees that as way of surrendering power by her mother. Her multiracial education which is also presumed by her and her society as better turns out to be the opposite as it frustrates, infuriates and belittles her. Through multiracial education, the political ramifications of a not so racial free country South Africa are exposed.

The incident with her friends when her lips are described as too dark to kiss by a white boy only culminates into her final moment of awakening. It did not just start with the lips being defined as dark for her to realise that they do not treat her with the respect she deserves as a black woman. It is only because this moment is a total moment of public humiliation that sends her off to total self-realisation. The humiliation she suffers when Belinda, her white friend, scolds her for her African accent is always there but it does not rouse her from her dream of wanting to be white. Neither does the moment when a white girl asked her to braid her silky hair and was later mad at her for the results that came out. Before her real moment of awakening, Ofilwe had shoved all these small incidents to the back of her mind but they were triggered by the obvious racism when her lips were scrutinised as too black. That is the moment of reckoning for her, when she realises that she is African and that nothing she does or says will ever change that. Matlwa uses the character of Ofilwe to show how deep-rooted racism is in multiracial schools and how it has the ability to destroy its victims psychologically. Similarly, Fikile undergoes a lot of transformation in her life from the loss she encounters at a young age of both her mother and grandmother, to finding courage to stand against her uncle as well as finding a job to take care of herself. The reality in post-apartheid South Africa is that high rates of deaths continues to leave a lot of children stranded as orphans who sometimes have to take care of themselves and their siblings. Fikile is faced with such a predicament and is grappling with issues of growing up alone in a society where uncles and fathers are able to rape, molest, kidnap and kill their children. What Matlwa writes about does happen in the South African society. Moreover, when Fikile decides to quit school and go find a job in order to take care of herself;

society is also challenged as there are children who still opt to drop out of school in order to take care of themselves.

However, Fikile proves that the complexity of being a woman in society is not only due to her education alone but to the way society conceives of women. This means that her character development is not only influenced by the time she attended school, but also the time she decided to quit; as well as her experiences in her community. Similarly, Ndura (2006) does not only posit the complexity in the education alone but in the process of socialization too. Fikile quits school because she does not see it as capable of advancing her further in life. She however still sees the need to master the English language as a way to proceed in life. Even in this research that has its focus on women's education, to dismiss such a decision by young Fikile will be a total loss of sight. She succumbs to society's needs for her to be able to speak and act in a certain way in order to be employable and sociable. She even changes herself including her name telling her friend "Fuck, Ayanda, its Fiks. Not Fikile, but Fiks.F-I-K-S. Fiks. Got it?" (2007: 143); in order to fit in. This tactic works for her as she earns employment in a restaurant that caters for white people mostly. What this contrast shows is that even without an education, she is still able to find employment. However, the process of appropriating that place of her employment only serves to prove that the process of colonisation is seated deeply in the fabric of society.

As stated previously, young Fikile rebukes the school system and decides to quit. By this, Matlwa is able to point to society that even though modern society is education driven; it can be repudiated if one thinks it does not benefit them. She is able to point a scenario that also affords a chance to uneducated people in Africa, be it school dropouts or those that never set foot in school. This depiction also deviates a lot from the other characters. Ofilwe believes in education alone as a route to making it in life. Matlwa explores the possibilities, the not so idolised options for other opportunities of work. However, Fikile's job as an uneducated black person is analogous to the kind of job that Bantu education through Hedrick Vervood's policies strived to achieve; it is of an inferior state. Their education was education not meant to let them graze on greener pastures but to slave for their masters. She has enough comprehension of the language of communication between them and herself, so much that she believes that she is a vital part of the functioning of the restaurant

(2007: 160-166). The job requires that she be friendly, listening to other people's stories and be a flirt sometimes. The treatment she receives from Miss Becky (the owner of the restaurant), her daughter Carolina as well as the male customers from the restaurant proves otherwise. When Paul, an old white male, married and reeking like a bar (2007: 199-170) gives her a R200 note she feels obliged to return it because she knows that she is not as she says a whore who can be bought. But society looks at her job as Ofilwe a sixteen year old onlooker critically analyses, and judges:

> Is she not embarrassed? Does she not wonder what the rest of us will think of her Hanky-Pankies with that Oupa? The grey-haired, pale man with the blue eyes she has been speaking to looks...stale. The type you know is pathetically desperate. *Sies*. Is a lack of melanin her only criterion? (2007: 22)

The society is judgemental of women in society. There are preconceived ideas of what she ought to look like, how she ought to behave and carry herself.

Dangarembga on the other hand also shows how Tambu, because of the system she lives in loses herself and is made to conceive of herself as a failure. In *The Book of Not*, Tambu loses her spirit to fight because the white people that she had aimed at pleasing took away her hard earned recognition after qualifying as the best student in the whole A-level class. She is robbed of her achievement by the nuns in her school who take her title and give it to the second best learner in the A-Level class, a white girl. Tambu is shattered and defeated by the events that transpire but still manages to find a fighting spirit to carry on with her life. However, when it happens again during her career as a copywriter, she no longer finds it in herself to carry on or pardon those that do her wrong. Her copy wins an award for its brilliant creativity but, because she is African in a white man's environment; credit is given to a white male colleague who is not so good at his job. This shows the injustice that is done to this young African woman as she is denied the right to be who and what she wants. Injustice characterises her life and she has to cope with war and racism and grasp her identity as a woman.

Dangarembga clearly depicts a journey towards womanhood for young Tambu whose character has been described as the kind to despise. However, Tambu's life is intriguing and it is the journey she undergoes that propels the reader to find out whether she achieves her hopes and dreams. This journey gives the reader a view

of a life of a high school learner who undergoes trauma, racism and defeat but still propels herself forward in a quest to become not just a better person in the new Zimbabwe, but a better woman who can contribute meaningfully to society. Because it is a journey she undergoes, it is important to acknowledge other women like mothers, aunts and grandmothers who are also on the journey as African women; focusing on how their experiences shape the understanding of life and growing up for Ofilwe, Fikile and Tambu

Matlwa and Dangarembga do well in showing how the system of education continues to fail African women in the African setting. They also portray the vulnerable position of young girls living in a society where they see gender oppression, racism and a failing schooling system and have to grow in such an environment. That is the paradox of transformation. Whilst this research exposes how education has transformed the overtly constructed role of the woman in African societies, it still calls for "re-Africanization as the solution to challenging alien social structures and inappropriate values and behaviors among African women and men" (Hudson-Weems, 1998: 516). The societal part that this research emphasises is that, not only does the race of African women come into play when their characters are analysed, but that societal and cultural expectations influence such analysis.

For young women in Matlwa and Dangarembga's novels, rejection lies in the politics of race, gender and class that throughout the novel remain fully intact, that become easily distinguishable through their education. Young Ofilwe in the novel is startled by the contradiction of a racially free country that still does not embrace differences because:

> We dare not eat with our naked fingertips, walk in generous groups, speak merrily in booming voices and laugh our *mqombothi* laughs. They will scold us if we dare, not with the lips, Lord, because the laws prevent them from doing so, but with their eyes. They will shout "stop acting black!"... And we will pause perplexed, unsure of what that means, for are we not black, Father? (2007: 31)

The contradiction in Matlwa's novel is beset by feelings of inadequacy not just of being born black, but of being born a black woman in South Africa.

If Africana womanism says that gender is not a number one problem for African women, it fails to recognise that the woman passes a lot of stages before she can be

a woman. Therefore, her challenges need to be addressed from an early age in order to deal with her problems clearly. And because of that, she is mostly confronted with patriarchal and sexist issues in her family before she is exposed to issues of race outside of her home. This is reflected in both Matlwa and Dangarembga's novels because Ofilwe sees her father everyday ill-treating her mother while Fikile is raped continuously by her uncle. Conversely, Tambu from the onset of her journey in *Nervous Conditions* is overlooked because of her brother, and this causes a lag in her education and a discrepancy of age as witnessed in *The Book of Not*. These dilemmas that they face have nothing to do with race but sexism and patriarchy. In order for Africana womanism to be functional in South Africa and be applicable to the lives of multitudes of young girls who are house headers, brutally murdered and raped, born and living with life consuming illnesses like HIV/AIDS; the theory needs to operate differently.

Fikile is confronted by complexities of the society she lives in. Her identity is only defined by her, but determined by the environment she is in when she says "I AM TIRED of waiting, waiting for the day when it will all be different, when it will be my turn, my story, my rose. (2006: 181). She realises that she will not be able to be herself and exist in her own terms as a young black woman and has to find ways in which to exist, even if they are lies. But at the end she is aware that it is not her story that she is telling, but someone else's and is unable to be herself in a country where freedom is supposedly a given.

Relatively, Tambudzai in *The Book of Not* says she needed to "assure myself I was still, for all my failure and unfeminine passion, a likeable person" (2006: 200). Her failure in an education system that promises but does not deliver makes her feel angry and want to lash out at anybody that is black that is in front of her. She only feels that way towards black people and not to white people who rob her of the things that she is entitled to, after having worked for them. Therefore, it is in how the feistiness and zealousnes of these three young voices start and die down at the end of each narrative that the research concludes that education for young African women promises more than it can give. Their perception of society and womanhood in society also fails to accommodate other alternatives.

The analysis above has showed how Matlwa and Dangarembga represent the paradox of transformation through the education obtained by their characters. The paradox is deeply seated in how the young women reconcile their education with their lives in society. These writers present societies that have to contend with their history, grapple with their present and also anticipate and prepare for an uncertain future. The two novels present characters that are embroiled in what Nuttal (2009) calls the state of entanglement. This means that the reality of the characters in Dangarembga and Matlwa's novels can be better understood when keen recognition of their past and history is incorporated to fully understand their present. Even though an account of South Africa's apartheid is not the same as Zimbabwe's colonialism; there are similar trends of trying to fit into a now liberated country and having to deal with the haunting images and events of the past. This makes the analysis of the two novels, valuable to the understanding of the challenges faced by black women in some African countries.

The education system in *Coconut* and *The Book of Not* heavily influences the characters in the novels and their identities as women in society. The authors have portrayed obtaining an education as a daunting task that leaves their characters perplexed with an identity crisis. These two novels add an enormous value to the representation and review of women in contemporary African societies. The novels show that just because their characters have ample access to school education as opposed to other women before them does not mean they are guaranteed an uncomplicated life. If anything, they show that the ample access in itself attest to problems in the affirmative domain of women emancipation, albeit the preconceived notion that school is an empowering tool. As African women who undergo education, the young girls are riddled with issues ranging from race, class and gender. These are attributes that Africana womanism argues are the most poignant in the development of an African woman in her society.

Through Africana womanism, Ogunyemi foregrounds that African women's literature cannot be analysed with a theory that is devoid of cultural, racial, sexual and class concerns. She argues that those concerns are most likely to drive and inform literature written by African women because of the African societies from

which they write. Her theory has "a mandalic core: its aim is the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing that one sees in the positive, integrative endings of womanist novels" (1985: 72). This standpoint becomes highly important in the analysis of the two novels in this research.This research concurs with Ogunyemi's view but does not necessarily affirm the positive ending that Ogunyemi believes most African women's novels should possess. The endings of the two novels under study are reflections of a defeating system, thus they do not reflect the self-healing or positivity expected. They instead show the defeated spirits of African women who find it very difficult to fight racial, cultural and sexual wars and still come out victorious. This goes to show that African women face more far-reaching battles every day that cannot be won just by an ending that reflects positivity and optimism. It shows that writing literature that is encouraging does not mean that societal attitudes towards women are bound to change. They seem to remain the same and Matlwa and Dangarembga's writings reflect that.

Matlwa and Dangarembga as African female writers do well to reflect society in its constant changes which is what they are supposed to do as writers. This research attests that the role of the African writer is to reflect on society and its constant changes. The role of the African writer has changed over time. It changed because of the state that the African writers find themselves in. Since the African writer's quest has been to present the realities that the African societies find themselves in, the state of the Africans is in constant flux, and so is the literature by the African writers. In 2012, years after many African states gained independence, Achebe theorises the role of the African writer as this:

> My own assessment is that the role of the writer is not a rigid position and depends to some extent on the state of his/her society. In other words, if the society is ill, the writer has the responsibility to point it out. If the society is healthiest, the writer's job is easier (2012: 57).

Therefore, in view of the roles writers in relation to society, *The Book of Not* and *Coconut* have been put to the test on how their writers portray the societies that are in constant flux. Matlwa's first novel did so well that it has been hailed as heralding a new way of writing in South Africa. It not only dealt with the state of politics in the country, but also presented women who are from different backgrounds and are now

faced with the challenges of living in post-apartheid South Africa. A lot of critics have commended on her depiction of the class divide that continues to riddle the country of South Africa. Matlwa depicts a society that has multiracialism enshrined in the education system, however very little multiracialism is achieved. She shows that in a bid to attain multiracialism, society has mistaken using English to mean multiracialism and thus society is left perplexed with the products that multiracialism produces. Coconuts; shunned by society and alienated because of their Englishness. She has also done well to show how education has a bearing on identity through her characters. Matlwa's characters live in an ill society that is still characterized by racism even years after the apartheid system has been removed. Her characters still conceive of their identity as black women as something not likeable. Therefore, African womanhood in her analysis still has lots of issues to contend with including the way black women in society carry and perceive themselves.

Conversely, Dangarembga presents a society that undergoes a lot of change and so does her main character Tambu. The issue of schooling for young women in Zimbabwe complicates the clear understanding of women in this country. The lack of opportunities for the young woman in the Zimbabwean society, her silencing and her demoralisation through sexism and patriarchy all bear testimony to how important it is to trace her development in society. Such issues made it difficult for the protagonist Tambu who undergoes the "discrepancies" of age that she says attributes to her "inferior origins" (2006: 83) when she compared herself to other girls (mostly white) in the entire school. The fact that she starts school later than boys of her age has a bearing on her psyche and it somehow makes her feel inferior. This problem is what most Zimbabwean young girls who had to start school late because of reasons previously mentioned might have felt. This issue also makes Tambu unpleasant to learn with. She "was not a girl who could giggle and write notes to boyfriends in class, and still attain the honours roll" (2006: 25). Her development is fraught with discrepancies that make her way older than her time and causes her to lose out on some of the fundamentals of growing up for most young girls. Her studying is laden with the pressures of catching up with time. This is just one way in which Dangarembga shows the burdens of access to education for women in independent Zimbabwe. It is not easy and it comes with its own complications as it is

laden with history, presupposed as an empowerment platform and grappling with its place in a changing society.

Conclusion

This chapter has comparatively analysed Matlwa and Danagarembga's novels. This has been done in order to show the commonalities in these writers' novels.. The thesis did a comparative analysis of the novels because the two novels depict very young women who attend school and want to make a difference. In this chapter, the education presented by both Matlwa and Dangarembga is deemed similar because of the way in which multiracial and suburban schools in Zimbabwe and South Africa are thought of as better than village, township and mission schools. The other commonality is that both novels present school education as having a detrimental effect on character formation. School produces the most alienated individuals that Matlwa describes as coconuts. This chapter also looked at how both authors present different alternatives to learning.

The chapter also analysed the way in which Matlwa and Dangarembga represent their protagonists as young women on their journey to become women. Both writers present how the education of the young women impact on their idea of womanhood in society. Of immense importance is how both writers present the shifting roles of African women in society. They represent characters

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

This research investigated the representation of the paradox of transformation of African women in society by two African female writers. The researcher analysed the education of the female "Self" and the collective in *Coconut* (2007) *and The Book of Not* (2006). This was done in a bid to shed light on the state of education of women in Africa, with particular focus on South Africa and Zimbabwe. Thus, this chapter summarises all the concepts and themes addressed in the research and that take place. This chapter ascertains whether the aim and objectives of the thesis were achieved and give a summary of each previous chapter in the thesis. This chapter also gives the limitations encountered while conducting this study, as well as give recommendations.

The objective of this study was to critically analyse the education of women as presented by Matlwa and Dangarembga. In order to do so, the researcher started by giving the background of the education system in Africa as presented through literature. The main purpose was to show how literature on the education of African girl children which reflects reality has been written. This led to the finding that education in Africa has previously been imbalanced. This proved that the African boy child has always had more opportunities to be educated than the girl child. The studies also showed the relevance of Matlwa and Dangarembga's novels in the societies that they are written in as they represent female characters that have ample access to education. This background led to the hypothesis that since formal education has been unequal, with girls receiving lesser access to it, access to education must entail both formal education and non-formal to help guide young African girls in the two novels to grow from girlhood to womanhood. This is because the research takes a stance that modelling and grooming taught within communities are vital for the development of girls into women.

The first chapter also established that education creates a paradox of transformation if formal education only is embraced. The paradox of transformations is that inasmuch as it creates characters that are liberated and well versed in European

culture, it also creates characters that are dislocated and alienated from African societies. The problem statement argues that education also predicates the development of a girl child into a woman. Furthermore, this research notes that a lot of research that critically analyses the two novels has been done but none interrogates the concept of education presented in the two novels. This justifies the writing of this thesis. The fact that this research looks at how the education of the three young women shapes their identity as African women is also another important aspect that this research looks at and has not rigorously been debated by other critics. The thesis used Africana womanism by Clenora Hudson-Weems to analyse the two novels. It gave a background of feminism to show the evolution of gender studies and to support the reason for choosing Africana womanism over other gender theories. Africana womanism in the research is complemented by Afrocentricism. These theories made it easy to analyse the two novels looking at issues such a sisterhood, family, motherhood as well as African centered learning which afrocentricism advocates. Hudson-Weems' theory is very pertinent to the study as it helps analyse the representation of women in African literature using an African centered theory.

To achieve the first objective of this research, the research analysed, critiqued and interrogated how the education of the female characters in the two novels informs their identity and that of other women around them. These were done in subsequent chapters which showed how the transformation encountered through education impacted on the society at large, especially other women as it informed the idea of womanhood in society. This thesis synthesised that the idea of womanhood that this research looks at throughout implies a journey that is undertaken by the protagonists of the two novels as they grow up to become women in society. This journey yields transformation as we see the young women blossom from girls into adults and assuming, along the way, responsibilities pertinent to their development and growth as women in society. It acknowledged that Tambu starts in *The Book of Not* as a school child during war time but ends the novel as a working woman trying to find her way in independent Zimbabwe. Moreover, it took into cognisance that Ofilwe starts as an eight year old at the beginning of *Coconut* and her narration ends when she is sixteen, while Fikile started her narrative around nine years and ends it while she is eighteen. This research argued that in order for them to become women in

society, needs to modelling take place. However, that seldom becomes true as their mothers fail being models. Ofilwe's mother is no inspiration to her daughter because she quits her job for her family. On the other hand, Fikile's mother kills herself and Tambu's mother's biggest downfall is her lack of compassion mostly because, as Tambu sees it; she is uneducated. Inasmuch as the mothers suffer from circumstances caused by ripple effects from the ideals and believes in society, they have an effect on Tambu, Fikile and Ofilwe.

In analysing *The Book of Not* and *Coconut*, the research discovered that the education received by the protagonists in the two novels is important in their development from young girls into women. Chapter 2 solely addressed *The Book of Not* and its representation of education particularly on the protagonist Tambu and how it affected her conception of womanhood. The research gave background information on the author Tsitsi Dangarembga, followed by a brief synopsis of *The Book of Not.* A brief background of the education system in Zimbabwe was outlined in order to analyse education in the novel. In Dangarembga's novel, the education received by Tambu is set in a convent school where racism is prevalent and does affect Tambu as a black learner. Her education also takes place during the liberation war in Zimbabwe and these factors influence the kind of education that she receives and her world view. Because she attends a school where she is one of the only six black girls, her education is different as it is meant to instil in her a sense of inadequacy as a black person. As has been proven in the analysis, Tambu learns in a school where her blackness is shunned and looked down upon and where the education she receives teaches her nothing about black people or black life. Tambu thereby starts to assume that blackness denotes inferiority, and this has a huge bearing on her idea of a black woman in society. This forces her to adopt a western orientation of life and causes her to lose her African roots. At the end of the novel, Tambu is left feeling alienated as she can no longer fit in her homestead life or the kind of life she aspires to at the beginning of the novel.

Tambu's education teaches her nothing of great war heroines who have come out of Africa and this makes her look down at her own sister who is a freedom fighter. Of immense importance is how Tambu perceives her mother, as she sees her as a crude woman and wants nothing to do with her. In her development, she is firstly robbed of a sense of being when after working tirelessly to get her name printed on

the honours roll; the award is given to the second most achieving student in her school. This pulls her down but does not break her completely. However, when it happens again while she is working as a copywriter, a job she truly loves and her best copy is given to an underachieving colleague, she is totally left feeling debilitated and discouraged. She is robbed of her achievements that she works for and this only shows how the system that promised her liberation and freedom only pulls her down and shames her. It leaves her questioning her existence as a woman in Zimbabwe; a free a country. The end hints at the title of Dangarembga's novel as Tambu does not receive all that her education promised her as an African woman in society.

The analysis of *Coconut* hinted at the same themes that are analysed in *The Book of Not*; that is the education system underwent by the protagonists as well as their idea of womanhood. In the analysis of the education system, the research looked at the history of education in South Africa that before independence was characterised by inequality. This is because it was founded on the principles of inequality during the apartheid regime whereby black students received an inferior education as opposed to white education. The analysis showed how Matlwa's novel critiqued multiracial education in South Africa whereby class determines the type of education one receives. Matlwa's novel presents two different settings to show this class disparity; that is education in townships and suburbs or towns. Furthermore, the research analysed how the glorification of English does not allow for multilingualism as other languages suffer because of the adoption of English by young learners. This is what incites the derogatory term 'coconut' which is also Matlwa's title. While Ofilwe adopts English at school, Fikile does it outside of school.

Furthermore, the research analysed how the young women who received education perceive womanhood in their societies. It came to light that it is not just education that shapes Matlwa's characters' perception of womanhood. Ofilwe is influenced by her family relationships, especially how her father treats her mother and she decides that she never wants to get married but would love to have children. On the other hand, Fikile's upbringing has a huge impact on how she views womanhood because she loses her mother and grandmother at a young age. She is left with an uncle who is a paedophile and has to grow up fending for herself. This research made a critical observation that inasmuch as Ofilwe grows up within a picket fence family with a

mother and father, she does not want to have the same things when she is older. Fikile, on the other hand, realises that because she had to fend for herself at a very young age, she does not want to look after other people's children just because she is a woman and they are children. These scenarios in the two novels present a different perspective on womanhood which is contrary to the African view that promotes marriage and motherhood.

A comparative analysis of the two novels showed that both Matlwa and Dangarembga present a history that is affected by access and acquisition of education in their respective countries, and how that in turn affected women as individuals. Both authors showed how issues such as being overlooked affected access by both African boys and girls. Matlwa also showed in her novel how access to education through the enshrined idea of English is perceived as better than not having an education at all. This is also a historical issue that goes back to the apartheid era where black students insisted that they did not want to be taught in Afrikaans but in English. Schools in South Africa still perpetuate the gravitation of students to study and master English. Similarly Dangarembga presents a scenario whereby English is enshrined in the convent school. Nevertheless, the difference between both presentations is that in Dangarembga's novel the students are forced to speak English even when they are not in class while Matlwa shows that Ofilwe and Fikile choose to speak in English even when they do not have to; like in their homes.

The analysis also showed how Matlwa and Dangarembga present other alternatives to learning. In Matlwa's novel, Fikile quits school because the things she learns from reading magazines are more interesting to her than what she learns at school. Palesa's father chooses to teach his daughter at home in order to ensure that she does not lose her language isiXhosa. Tshepo decides to study African languages at university to learn more about other languages that he has not been taught in a multiracial education system that enshrines English. Dangarembga, on the other hand, shows how Nyasha who used to read renowned English novels now reads African literature in a bid to close the cultural lacuna that she has in her mind.

Both writers also show how difficult the journey to womanhood in their novels is as reflected through what their characters encounter in and outside of school. They

present characters that find it difficult to embrace ideas of sisterhood as well as relate well as mothers and daughters. These two themes are prevalent in the two novels as it has been shown in the analysis of each novel as well as the comparative analysis of both novels. In both novels, the girls are indifferent towards other women especially their mothers and they use different words to denote them as cowards, dumb and hollow. The protagonists are influenced heavily by what they see other women in society go through. This research argued that gender issues happen to be the most debilitating challenges that the young women face. These include being molested, seeing the oppression that fathers yield over mothers, fathers having affairs as well as catching up with time because as women they have been overlooked for school. Race issues are perpetuated mainly outside of their homes, at schools, in the work environment and social places such as malls and shopping centres. Class issues on the other hand are also influential in their lives as they determine where they study, who they can hang out with, what they eat and wear and so forth. All these issues are influential in the novels with none better than the other because they are encountered at different levels of their road to womanhood.

The thesis was able to critically analyse both Matlwa and Dangraembga's novels and how they represent women in society. It discovered that they represent women beset with problems in their attempt to gain education. The other objective of this research was to evaluate the presentation of education within the novels. This evaluation led to the conclusion that the colonial legacy is still rife in the education system in both novels. Matlwa presents this by showing how multiracial education is a myth in democratic South Africa where township schools are still beset with inadequate resources. Dangarembga also showed this by pointing at the difference between mission schools and schools in the suburbs. Both multiracial schools in the suburbs of Zimbabwe and South Africa produce coconuts because of their insistence on English. Fikile becomes a coconut because she believes that it is better than being black.

Another objective was to interrogate the place and role of women in the two novels as presented by Matlwa and Dangarembga. Matlwa and Dangarembga present young characters that conceive differently of the idea of womanhood. The research has shown different ideas of womanhood, some embraced by society while others shunned by some. Matlwa and Dangarembga's younger characters choose whether

they want to have jobs, babies and get married or not. The two authors also show older characters that choose family life over any other forms of life. Therefore, this representation has shown young women and older women's vacillation between the idea of womanhood in their society. By so doing, the objectives of this research have been met.

The research's findings are that education is seen as an empowering tool for African women, and concludes that education challenges the idea of womanhood in society. The two novels were analysed alongside each other because they deal with similar issues of education, race, class, patriarchy and women. At the beginning of each novel, education promises that they can be all that they want to be. However, at the end of each narrative, their education leaves them as characters that do not fit in their societies. Matlwa and Dangarembga's novels might have been set in different countries in Africa, but they produce similar characters that are eschewed by society and that once dared to dream big as women in their society. Therefore, Kopano Matlwa and Tsitsi Dangarembga do well in showing that African womanhood is a complex identity. Their novels are relevant as they reflect the complex identity of women as influenced by education. Alexander-Floyd and Simien (2006: 69) analyse Hudson-Weems's theory as advocating agency "through self-naming and self-definition". However, Tambu, Ofilwe and Fikile are denied the opportunity to name and define themselves by their society as class; gender and race all play a role in denying them self-naming. Most importantly, all three are influential at equal levels as they occur at different times.

The writers do not only depict the lives of the three young women as societal reflections, but choose to position their lives against the lives of other women in society and their men too. They showed the impact of education in society in general as an empowering and a disempowering tool. In light of the above statement, one could conclude that although society is changing, it refuses to adjust to the new developing gender roles. The women might be in different circumstances and thus their roles should be expected to be different and yet this does not appear to be the case. Matlwa and Dangaremga's protagonists at the end of their narratives are hemmed up in a society that they cannot fit in. Their characters arrive at a similar paradox, of transformed women who undergo education only to find themselves

excluded and standing in Bhabha's (1994) liminal position; fitting nowhere in their society, but still educated.

From the onset, the research undertook the argument that both school education and things learnt outside of school are important for the development of the protagonists in the two novels. It stated that in order for the young women to become women in society, modelling and grooming need to take place. This seldom happens in the two novels as the young women are more eager to embrace what they learn from their schools than what they learn at home. They do not rank their mothers highly and are not willing to learn much from them. But as the novels progress, they discover that the teachings from home are vital in their growth as women in society. The recommendation is that in order to curb the paradox that is apparent on the recipients of education; young women should embrace what they learn at home just as they do the things learnt in school. Writers of different generations have shown how western education results in characters that do not fit in society because they embrace western ideology over African ideology. Literature should show characters that are not eschewed by society, characters that from the onset embrace both cultures.

The South African constitution has a language policy which insists that no language is above or better than the other. However, it is up to society to ensure that the policy is put to action. English is put at the fore in education and maybe if all languages are treated equally and this is instilled in the youth from a very young age, the predicament of dislocation can be avoided.

Since this research applied a qualitative research method, which required critical analysis to explore, analyse and critique the nature and impact as well as representation of education, there have been certain limitations encountered. One of the limitations is that the researcher was limited only to written texts by the two authors and texts that have been written about the authors and their literary works. A few interview texts on Tsitsi Dangarembga were used which allowed her voice to be heard on the culmination of her writing. This assisted the researcher to discern from the written interviews the reason behind Dangaremgba's insightful work of art. There are fewer scholarly works that focused on *The Book of Not* (2006) in comparison to its predecessor *Nervous Conditions*. The novels are self-explanatory and easy to

read and this might be because Dangarembga is a seasoned writer with more exposure in the literary field.

The researcher was able to find enough secondary literature to overcome the limitation of lack of interviews on both writers. As a result, the limitation of lack of resources and funds to conduct interviews was supplemented by reading. Another limitation was that as a qualitative research, the thesis was limited to reading written texts only. The texts provided enough background on the thesis. No interviews were done with people as this is a literary research. Therefore, no ethical limitations were encountered.

In conclusion, this research analysed two novels looking at their development in their different societies and the premise put forward is that education is seen as an empowering tool for African women; however this study concludes that education challenges the idea of womanhood in society. Kopano Matlwa and Tsitsi Dangarembga therefore do well in showing that African womanhood is a complex identity. Alexander-Floyd and Simien (2006: 69) analyse Hudson-Weems's theory as advocating for agency "through self-naming and self-definition". However, Tambu, Ofilwe and Fikile are denied the opportunity to name and define themselves by their society as class; gender and race play a role in this denial of self-naming. Most importantly, all three are influential at equal levels as they occur at different times. The writers do not only depict the lives of the three young women as societal reflections, but also choose to position them against the lives of other women in society and their men too. This shows the impact of education in society in general as an empowering and a disempowering tool. In light of the above statement, one can conclude that although society is changing, it refuses to adjust to the new developing gender roles. Women might be in different circumstances and their roles are expected to change and yet this does not appear to be the case.

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