

Negotiating Social Change in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*

D. A. Odoi¹, Lesibana Rafapa² and E. K. Klu³

¹*Language Centre, University of Ghana*
E-mail: daodoi@ug.edu.gh

²*Department of English Studies, UNISA*
E-mail: rafaplj@unisa.ac.za

³*Department of English, University of Venda*
E-mail: asongkwesi@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT Black African women writers have been publishing for well over five decades. They have, through their works, attempted to lend agency to hitherto objectified female characters within male dominated literary discourse. In spite of this laudable contribution, their works have received little critical attention from both sides of gender. Likewise, Tsitsi Dangarembga has not received enough critical attention, despite her making a distinct and worthy contribution towards an unbiased depiction of the plight of women on the African literary scene. This paper traces how Dangarembga's novel *Nervous Conditions* takes such a cause further by essentially interrogating the concept of agency manifested in choice, together with its attendant social reconfigurations. The means by which Dangarembga's outstanding literary innovation is demonstrated is the investigation of the characters Lucia and Nyasha within the framework of the misrepresentation of Black African women in the fiction of Black Africans writing in English. It will be investigated how the choices of women characters affect the lives of other women characters in the novel in a manner that enriches the discourse of social change/transformation. Thus Lucia and Nyasha show that women can stand up for themselves and become liberated in a male dominated society.